Obtaining a doctorate at the BGHS

Report on the findings of the 2016 evaluation survey

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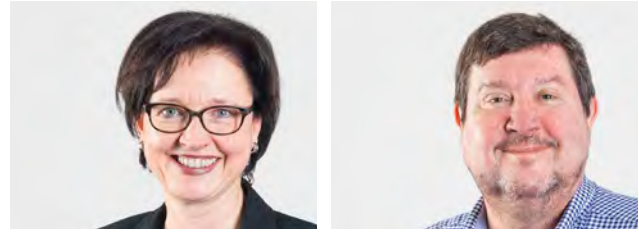
Universität Bielefeld

BGHS New Messages

Bielefeld Graduate School
in History and Sociology

1965
1969
1973
2003
2007
2012
2015
2017
2021
2035

A Dialogue
between History
and Sociology

Foreword

Ursula Mense-Petermann and Thomas Welskopp,
Director and Deputy Director of the BGHS

The Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS) was established in 2008 as the international and interdisciplinary graduate school of the Faculty of Sociology and the Department of History in the Faculty of History, Philosophy and Theology and has been funded from the beginning as part of the Excellence Initiative. At the BGHS, we provide a comprehensive doctoral programme in which all doctoral researchers enrolled in structured doctoral programmes in these two faculties participate. We have developed and expanded this programme on an ongoing basis over the past eight years, always taking into consideration the needs of the doctoral researchers, the situation of the faculties, the strategic planning of Bielefeld University, and not least the expertise of the supervisors.

Following the initial approval and establishment of the BGHS, the first evaluation was conducted in 2010. It examined the BGHS's successes as well as opportunities for its strategic development with respect to the renewal proposal in the subsequent round of the Excellence Initiative. This approach proved so productive and so successful with regard to the continuation of funding from 2012 on and the expansion of the programme that we included an evaluation in the renewal proposal as well.

The present Report on the findings of the 2016 evaluation survey is an important basis for this current evaluation. It serves to present the strengths and weaknesses of the BGHS and its programme from the perspective of the doctoral researchers and the supervisors in order to provide information for preparing a concept for the strategic development of the BGHS that shows options and necessities for continuing it after Excellence Initiative financing has been phased out in October 2019.

In the first part of the report, we present the results of the standardised online survey of doctoral researchers at the BGHS, which was conducted in January and February 2016. This part provides an overview of the heterogeneous composition of the respondents and their social situation as well as the procedures of doctoral studies and the doctoral researchers' assessments of the opportunities offered at the BGHS. This survey is not a follow-up of the first survey of doctoral researchers which was conducted in 2010 in the course of the evaluation being prepared at the time, but has rather been developed further. Where comparable data are available, we study changes and developments.

In the second part of the report, we present the findings from eight qualitative interviews conducted with professors of the Department of History and the Faculty of Sociology between April and June 2016. They permit insights into the supervisors' perspectives on the situation of the doctoral researchers, the doctoral studies, and the supervisory relationship, which has only rarely been examined specifically to date and was not surveyed in the first evaluation of the BGHS, either.

In the third part of the report, we synthesise the findings of the first two parts to provide information about which strengths of the BGHS are attested to by doctoral researchers and supervisors, which aspects are met with ambivalence, and where critical assessments show the need for further development.

Prepared by staff members of the BGHS Office, the present report's primary purpose is to provide, at a descriptive level, insights into the various perspectives, experiences, and opinions about the BGHS and doctoral studies as a whole so that you as readers can form your own opinions. It is our desire to learn from the conclusions and recommendations that you as evaluators, as doctoral researchers, supervisors, and institutions cooperating with the BGHS derive from what is presented in this report to guide the BGHS towards a promising future.

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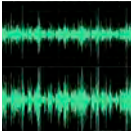
II. Survey of supervisors

III. Synthesis of results
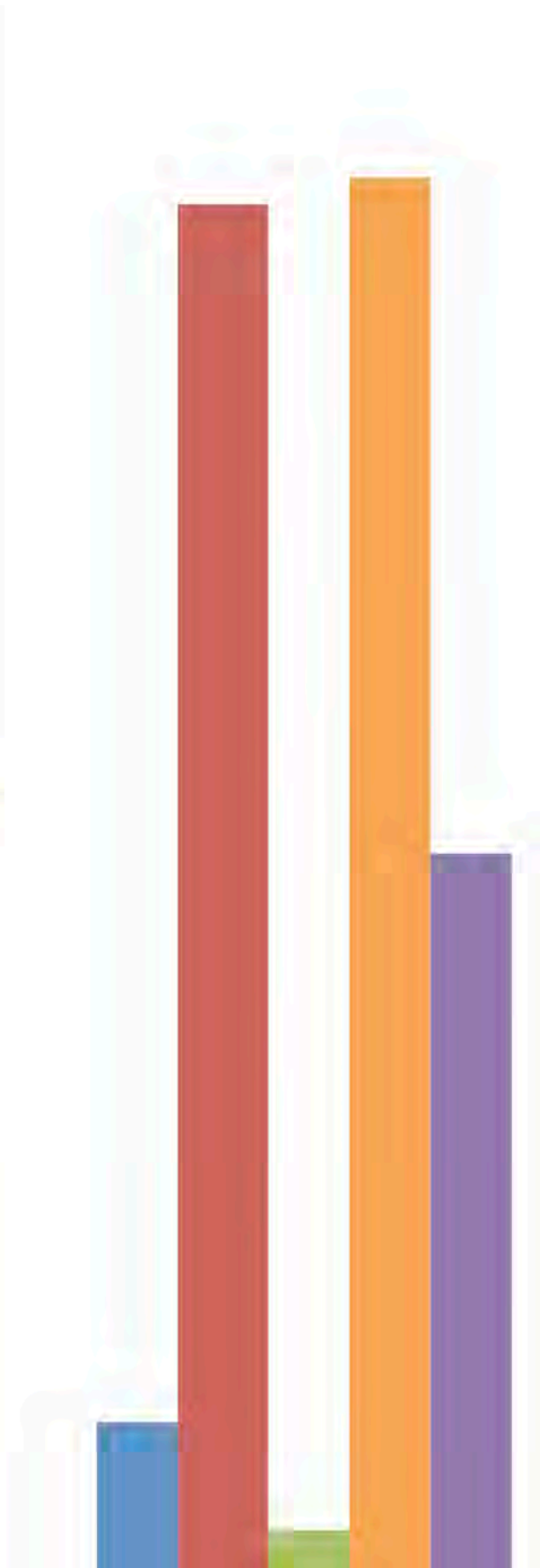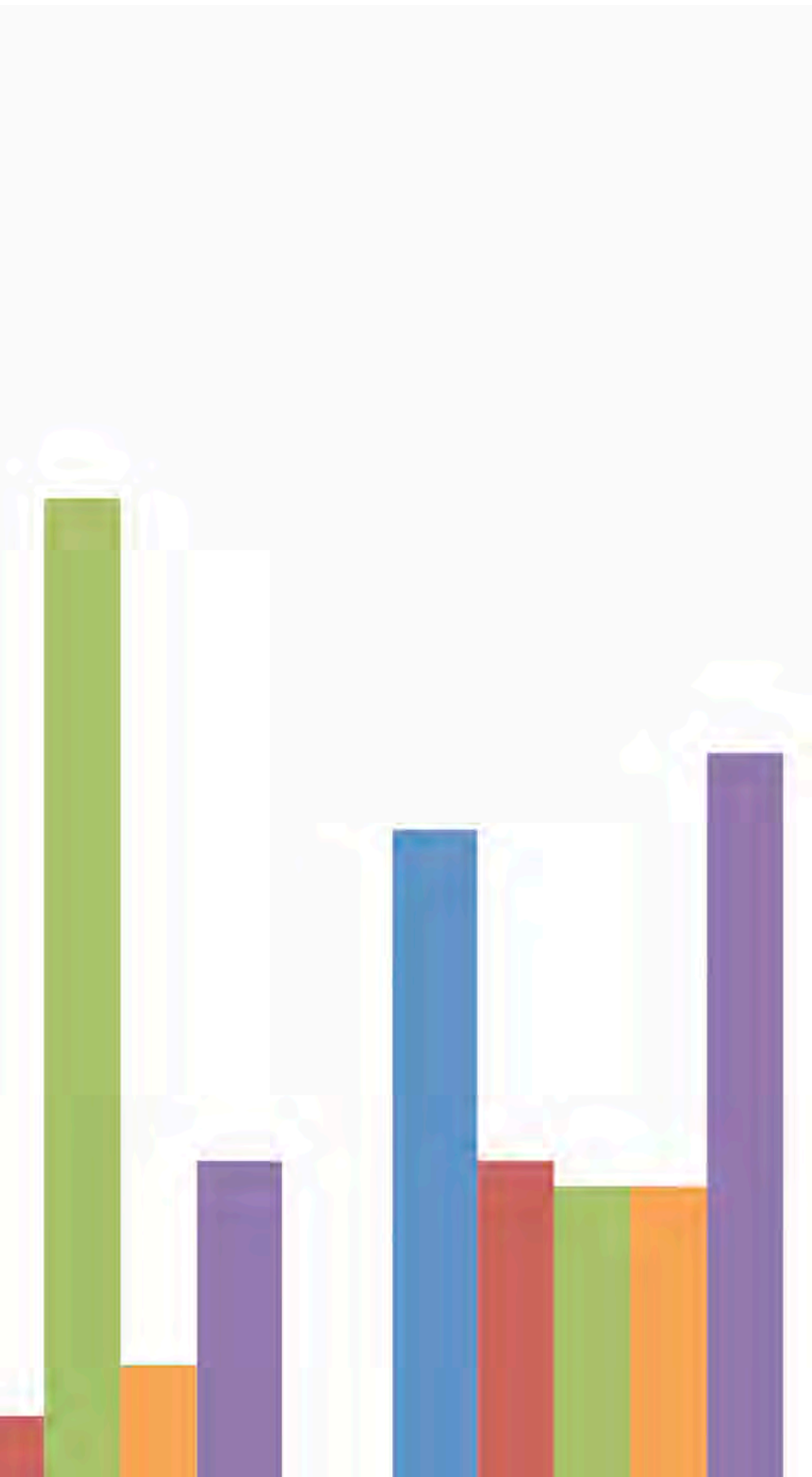
I. Online survey

The first part of the report is devoted to the doctoral researchers' assessments of the doctoral studies and the opportunities provided at the BGHS, and the findings from the online survey of doctoral researchers are presented. The purpose of the online questionnaire was primarily to gather standardised data. In order to give the respondents the opportunity to contribute additional aspects to the survey, it was rounded out in many places by open-ended questions. During the evaluation, it became apparent that the overwhelming majority of the responses to the open-ended questions confirmed the tendencies of the closed-ended questions, but yielded hardly any additional knowledge. That is why the answers to the open-ended questions are not included systematically in the evaluation, but only where they can illustrate and elucidate findings.

In addition, sociodemographic data, e.g., gender, discipline, country of origin, etc., were surveyed and correlated with the responses to the closed-ended questions. However, only those calculations are included in the report on findings that appear instructive for the evaluation process and show strong correlations or significance. We are aware that this is a survey with a small sample size[1], for which reason the sample may be biased because participation in the online survey was voluntary.

The basic indicators for the survey of doctoral researchers are presented in the chapter "Overview of the survey of doctoral researchers and the doctoral researchers at the BGHS" and are related to the BGHS member management statistics to the extent possible. The purpose of this chapter is first to present the very heterogeneous group of doctoral researchers at the BGHS with respect to their demographic, academic, and professional situations. It is followed by four thematic chapters presenting the assessments of the doctoral researchers surveyed on the study programme at the BGHS, the opportunities for strengthening self-initiative and interdisciplinary exchange, positioning in their academic fields, and the institutional structures at the BGHS.

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[1] For one thing, the values of the test statistic chi-squared are mostly at a fairly low level, for another, there are often fewer than five cases per cell in the contingency tables, which further weakens the robustness of the value of chi-squared.

Overview of the survey of doctoral researchers and the doctoral researchers at the BGHS

The BGHS had 117 doctoral researchers at the time of the survey (January/February 2016). Of these, 79 (67.5%) completed the entire online questionnaire.[1] Thus, the survey was distinctly more successful than the one in 2010, when only 41.2% of the 182 doctoral researchers contacted participated in the survey. The high response rate bears witness to the respondents' strong interest in the BGHS.

Demographic information

At the time of the survey, 54 women (46.2%) and 63 men (53.8%) were doctoral researchers at the BGHS. Of the 79 survey respondents, 45.6% (36) classified themselves as female, 46.8% (37) as male. Six individuals (7.6%) did not answer the question about their gender. The gender distribution of those who classified themselves according to gender corresponds roughly to that at the BGHS. Although not all of the respondents provided information about their gender, we decided to use gender as a dichotomous and independent variable for the report and to correlate it with other variables because some interesting correlations emerged. We are aware of potential biases because of the cases not classified according to gender and the frequencies that are missing for this reason.

61 (77.2%) of the respondents spoke German as their native language, 18 (22.8%) indicated a native language other than German.[2] Thus, the share of the latter group was almost four percentage points higher than in the first survey of doctoral researchers in 2010 (18.9%). Seven respondents were from EU countries other than Germany and 13 from non-EU countries (see figure 1). One-quarter of the respondents were thus international doctoral researchers, which corresponded roughly to the share of

international doctoral researchers at the BGHS at the time of the survey (22%).

Academic conditions

Just under one-third (37 individuals, 32%) of all doctoral researchers at the BGHS were enrolled at the Faculty of History, Philosophy and Theology in the Department of
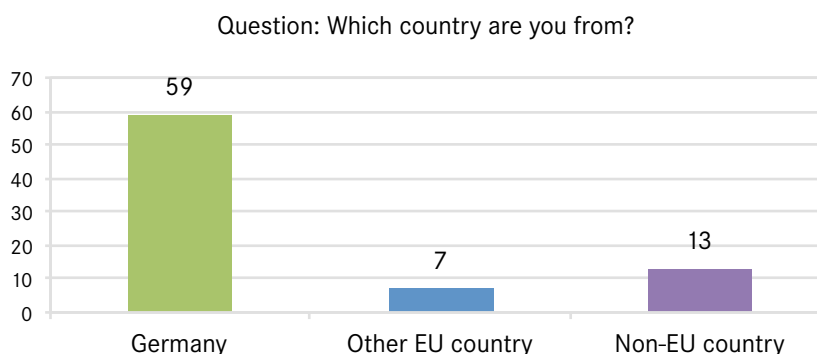
Question: Which country are you from?

Figure 1

History at the time of the survey. Two-thirds (80 individuals, 68%) were enrolled at the Faculty of Sociology, which includes political science, social anthropology, and didactics of social sciences in addition to sociology. Compared with the statistical universe, the share of respondents who were doctoral researchers in history (28 individuals, 35%) was somewhat higher than that of doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology (51 individuals, 65%).[3]

About half of respondents (41 individuals, 51.9%) received their degrees at a university other than Bielefeld University; in 2010, this share was 58.9%. 15.2% (12) of the respondents to the 2016 survey were graduates of a university outside Germany. Relating these figures to the number of respondents whose native language is not German shows that foreign students with a German

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1 Potentially lower numbers of cases for individual items result from filter questions or the refusal to answer a specific question (item non-response).

2 The online questionnaire was available in both German and English.

3 Concerning gender, discipline, and country of origin, this online survey is therefore certainly valid for the universe of doctoral researchers at the BGHS, even if this is not a truly random sample and doctoral researchers in history are slightly overrepresented.

Question: Which stage of your doctoral phase are you in?
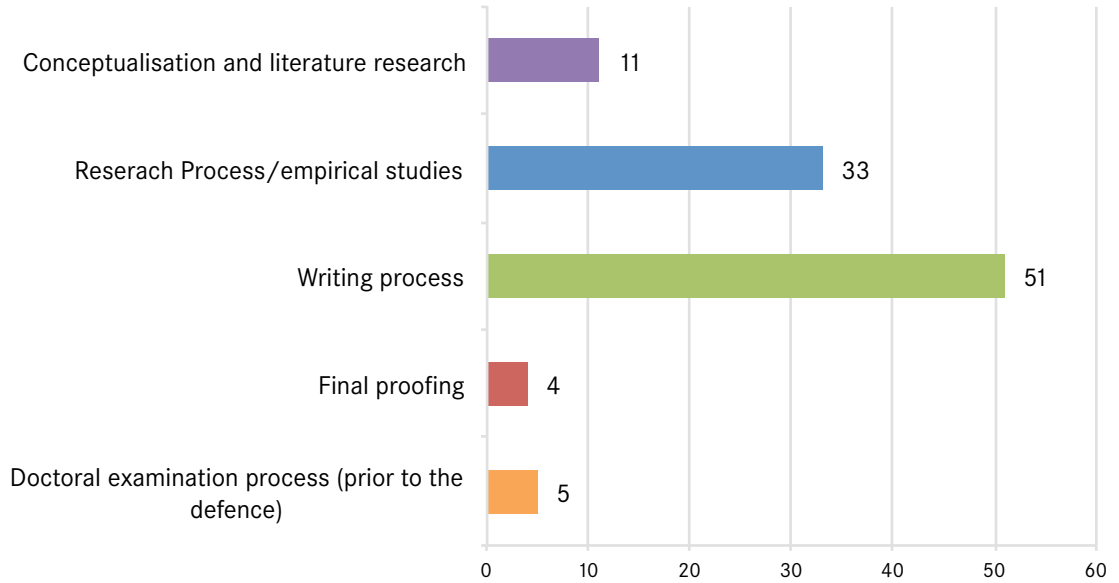(two responses possible)

education have comprised only a small group among the members of the BGHS to date.

65.8% (52) of the doctoral researchers indicated that they are preparing their dissertations in German, 34.2% (27) in English. Distinctly fewer English-language dissertations are prepared in history—14.3% (4)—than at the Faculty of Sociology—45.1% (23).[4] The doctoral researchers' native language has a significant effect on the language of the dissertation (↗ survey of supervisors, page 50): of the German native speakers, 48 indicated that they were writing their dissertations in German (78.7%) and 13 (21.3%) in English. Of the doctoral researchers who indicated that their native language was not German, only four (22.2%) are writing their dissertations in German and 14 (77.8%) in English.[5]

At the time of the survey, 10.1% (8) of the respondents were in the first year of the structured doctoral programmes of the Department of History or the Faculty of Sociology, 26.6% (21) in the second year, and 21.5% (17) in the third year. 41.8% (33) of the respondents had been enrolled for more than three years. For this reason, it should be assumed that most respondents had considerable experience with the BGHS and the conditions for obtaining a doctorate and were familiar with the structures of the BGHS.

The respondents' numbers of years of study were also reflected in the stage of the doctoral phase[6] at the time of the survey: Eleven (13.9%) respondents stated that they were in the phase of conceptualisation and literature research; 33 (41.8%) were in the research process or conducting empirical studies; 51 (64.6%) were in the writing process; four (5.1%) were in the final proofing phase; and five (6.3%) respondents were preparing for their defences (see figure 2). Since two responses were possible here, it is to be assumed that a number of respondents were both in the research process or conducting empirical studies and in the writing process.

One-fifth (16) of the respondents were employed in positions financed by the BGHS; another fifth (15) were funded by scholarships. Almost half of the respondents (38) were financed through an academic activity within the university[7], 15 each as research associates with a teaching requirement and as research associates in projects with third-party funding. In addition, three respondents worked as graduate assistants, two in science management, and two as "Lehrkräfte für besondere Aufgaben". Eleven

[6] In the German academic system, the phase of preparing a dissertation is generally seen as the first phase of a scholar's academic career, not as the third phase of his/her studies. This is also reflected by the fact that many doctoral researchers have jobs in academia during this time. In order to make this special situation of the doctoral researchers abundantly clear, we call this phase "doctoral phase" instead of using the more common term "doctoral studies".

[7] Multiple responses to the question about financing were possible.

[4] Chi-squared=7.628 d.f.=1, p=0.006, Cramer's V=0.311
[5] Chi-squared=19.699 d.f.=1, p=0.000, Cramer's V=0.499

doctoral researchers who responded to the survey were employed outside of the university.

A total of 58% (46) of respondents indicated that they worked in addition to their doctoral studies; those with positions at the BGHS were not included in these figures since they devote their time exclusively to their doctorates. On average, the respondents worked 52% of a full-time position.[8]

Compatibility of work on the doctorate, employment, and family

86.1% (68) of the doctoral researchers indicated that they were not responsible for any children; 13.9% (11) were responsible for one or more children. These figures have shifted slightly compared with the 2010 survey, which showed that 17.3% were responsible for children and 82.7% were not.

The BGHS offers part-time status to doctoral researchers who have caregiving responsibilities and/or are employed, which formally extends the time scheduled for obtaining the doctorate from three to five years. Figure 3 shows how the respondents take advantage of this opportunity. It was above all women respondents (10) who were already making use of part-time status. In contrast, there

in projects with third-party funding had part-time status or were seeking to obtain it.

Little or no use has been made to date of the other services for making child-raising responsibilities and doctoral studies compatible (see figure 3), and only a few respondents could imagine making use of them in the future.

Question: Which services of the BGHS for the compatibility of family and work on doctorate or of employment and work on doctorate (and family) have you already used, or do you plan to use? (multiple answers possible)
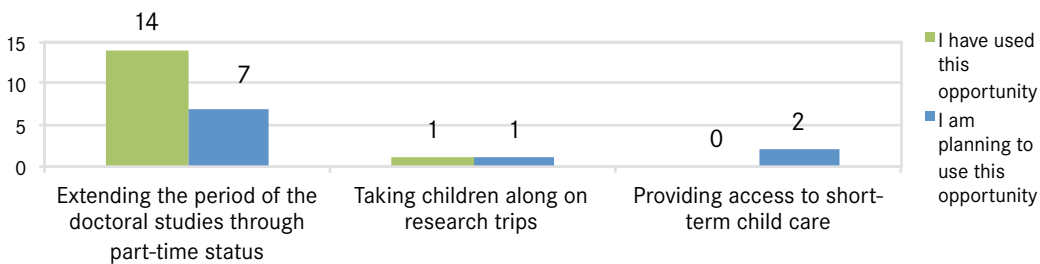
Figure 3

was hardly any difference between men (4) and women (3) with respect to scheduling. Of the total of eleven respondents with one or more children, only two indicated that they were taking advantage of this opportunity; three were planning to do so in the future. Ten of the 14 respondents who were already making use of the extension option indicated that they were gainfully employed. This was true of four of the seven respondents planning to apply for part-time status. It is evident that this opportunity serves above all to make their doctoral studies and employment compatible. The focus seems to be less on making doctoral studies and family activities compatible. The correlation with the type of employment shows that especially research associates with a teaching requirement and research associates

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[8] The standard deviation is 22.82.

José Antonio Villarreal is an example par excellence of interdisciplinary research at the BGHS. A sociologist, he is writing his dissertation in history on Insurgent Citizenship, State Power and Regional Differences in Ecuador.

The study programme at the BGHS

The study programme at the BGHS includes mandatory parts: Research Classes, Theory and Methods Classes, as well as courses in the area of transferable skills. The first part of the online survey gathered data about the doctoral researchers' levels of satisfaction with the study programme at the BGHS, the extent to which they consider it helpful, and where they see a need for improvement.

Research Classes, Theory and Methods Classes

The doctoral researchers were first asked to assess the **Research Classes** (↗ survey of supervisors, page 56)—a format that was introduced at the beginning of the second funding phase of the BGHS in 2012 in order to enable the junior researchers to discuss their research with a stable group over two years (↗ New Messages, page 14). The Research Classes are offered by professors of the two faculties involved and form the core of the BGHS study programme. Participants in the Research Classes include not only the doctoral researchers supervised by the faculty member teaching the Research Class, but also doctoral researchers supervised by other professors, some of whom are obtaining their doctorates in the other of the two faculties. More than half of the doctoral researchers responding considered the number of Research Classes offered to be sufficient, as shown in figure 4.

However, there is a distinct difference between the historians and the doctoral researchers obtaining their doctorates at the Faculty of Sociology with respect to how they assessed this question. While only approximately 42% (10) of the historians agreed with the statement that the number of Research Classes was sufficient, the figures for the doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology were 32 respondents, or two-thirds. These values correspond to the responses to the open-ended question: "Do you have concrete ideas for a Research Class?"; some doctoral researchers in history expressed their desire for more Research Classes in history. In fact, history professors usually offer just two Research Classes. One reason for this is that the Department of History is smaller than the Faculty of Sociology, but another appears to be that the professors at the Faculty of Sociology are more willing to teach Research Classes. Both faculties make a certain number of teaching hours available to the BGHS – 13 SWS (weekly sessions of 45 minutes) in the Faculty of Sociology, eight SWS in the Department of History – whereby the Faculty of Sociology often offers more than 13 SWS in some semesters and the Department of History less.

Most doctoral researchers responding appreciate the constructive criticism in the Research Classes, with 81% (60) agreeing with this statement. The figures were somewhat lower for women (77%) than for men (85%). 75.7% of respondents agreed with the statement "The Research Class is a protected space in which I can develop my work." It is striking here that more than half of the women agreed entirely with this statement, but only just under one-third of the men. 79.2% (19) of the doctoral researchers in history and 74% (37) of the doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology considered the Research Class format beneficial to their work.

The **Theory and Methods Classes**, which comprise the second building block of the mandatory academic study programme, serve to deepen knowledge of theory as well as methods and methodologies from an interdisciplinary perspective. They too are taught mostly by faculty members of the two faculties involved, but external experts from Germany and abroad are invited to do so as well. Each of the classes comprises one SWS, and they are often conducted in the form of two-day blocks. The doctoral researchers must attend one Theory and one Methods

Statement:
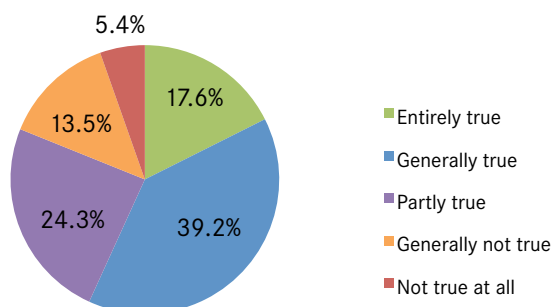The number of *Research Classes* offered is sufficient.

- Entirely true
- Generally true
- Partly true
- Generally not true
- Not true at all

5.4%
17.6%
13.5%
24.3%
39.2%

Figure 4

15

Class as part of the study programme, but they are certainly permitted to participate in more classes. The doctoral researchers' assessments of the variety and quality of the Theory and Methods Classes and of the classes in this area taught in English are presented in the following.

The doctoral researchers responding were moderately satisfied with the **diversity of topics** offered. A larger share of respondents selected the middle category "partly true" (35.3%) than in the survey of doctoral researchers in 2010 (25%). The more advanced they are in the doctoral programme, the more critically they view the variety of topics offered in the Theory and Methods Classes. Hardly any of the advanced respondents selected the responses "entirely true" or "generally true". One possible explanation for this is the passing of time between respondents attending the seminars and assessing them in the survey. Doctoral researchers who have already spent more time working on their doctorates also often have in-depth and specialised theory and methods skills that cannot necessarily be supplemented by the seminars offered. In addition, it has become apparent in recent years that if a very large number of classes are offered, attendance is so low that many must be cancelled. Since the study programme requires doctoral researchers to attend just one Theory Class and one Methods Class, the roughly 100 doctoral researchers in total cannot provide the "critical mass" that would both enable and require a broad range of classes.

The respondents' assessments of the **academic quality** of the seminars offered was distinctly more positive. A total of 80.9% viewed the statement "The academic quality

where the doctoral researchers earned their degrees, it is striking that those who earned their degrees at a university elsewhere in Germany or abroad selected the response category "entirely true" more often (approximately 40%) than alumni/ae of Bielefeld University (18%), who more frequently selected the category "generally true" (see figure 5). It can be concluded from this that Bielefeld alumni/ae (↗ survey of supervisors, page 51) are familiar with the level of teaching, which is why they did not classify the quality of the Theory and Methods Classes as remarkably high. Graduates of other universities, in contrast, considered the quality of these seminars to be especially high.

The number of **English-language seminars** was assessed as moderately good by the doctoral researchers surveyed in 2016. Whereas 45.7% of the doctoral researchers surveyed in 2010 were (entirely) satisfied with their number, but 18.6% were not satisfied at all, a larger share of the 2016 respondents, namely 35.3%, selected the middle category "partly true" (2010: 22.9%), and just 5% the negative category "not true at all" (2010: 18.6%), even though the actual number of English-language courses offered has not changed distinctly (see figure 6). Interestingly, the share of German native speakers (37.7%, 20 respondents) who thought that the number of English-language seminars offered was sufficient was smaller than that of respondents with a different native language (46.6%, 7 respondents). Overall, just under 70% (47) of those who had already taken a Theory and/or Methods Class attended English-language seminars.

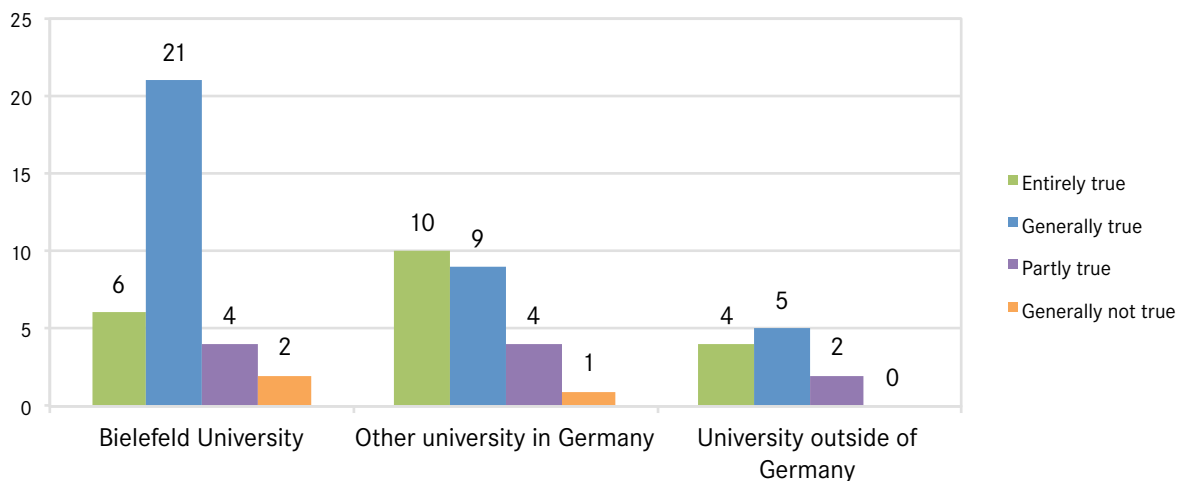Statement: The academic quality of the *Theory* and *Methods Classes* is high.

of the classes is high" as entirely true or generally true (see figure 5). This is a clear improvement compared with the 2010 survey, in which 60.9% assessed the quality as high or very high. If the responses are broken down by the place

International Guest Lecturers and Guest Researchers
The BGHS study programme, and especially the Theory and Methods Classes, are enriched by **international Guest Lecturers and Guest Researchers**. Doctoral researchers

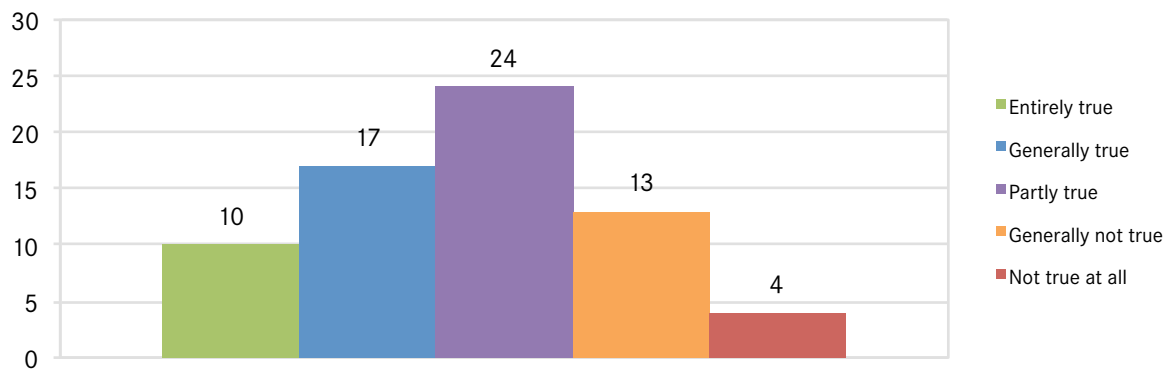and teaching staff have the opportunity to invite international guests to the BGHS for workshops or longer stays. In particular the latter opportunity, namely to enter into intensive contact with a Guest Researcher over a longer period of time, has hardly been taken up to date. Overall, however, the doctoral researchers found the Guest Researchers to be enriching (see figure 7). Agreement with the statement "It is exciting to meet scholars from other contexts" was high: 36 (45.6%) respondents agreed entirely and 30 (37.9 %) generally. There are no differences here with respect to gender, degree programme, time already spent in the doctoral programme, or the respondents' own networks.

Statement: There is a sufficient number of English-language *Theory Classes* and *Methods Classes*.

Figure 6

Statement: The courses taught by the *Guest Lecturers* and *Guest Researchers* are enriching BGHS formats.

Figure 7

The longer the period that respondents have spent in the doctoral programme, the lower their agreement with the statement "The Guest Lecturers/Researchers Programme enables me to come into contact with international scholars". 79.3% (23) of doctoral researchers in the first two years of the doctoral programme agreed; the value in the third and fourth years was 66.6% (24), and in the fifth year just 57.1% (8). German doctoral researchers (37 respondents, 62.7%) considered the Guest Lecturers and Guest Researchers Programme to be less helpful for entering into contact with international scholars than international doctoral researchers (18 respondents, 90%). This finding can be interpreted in various ways. Perhaps German doctoral researchers consider it less important to network with international scholars, or they already have a network they feel is sufficient. One reason for the international doctoral researchers' stronger agreement with this statement could also be that they do not consider the BGHS and/or Bielefeld University to be sufficiently international and therefore appreciate this kind of exchange all the more.
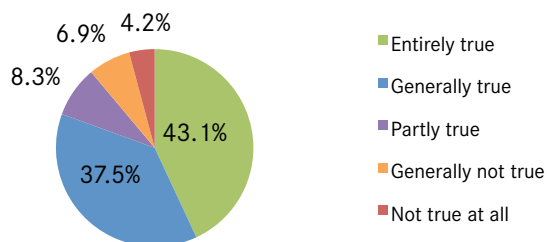
Transferable skills

Besides the Theory and Methods Classes and the Research Classes, the mandatory part of the BGHS study programme requires doctoral researchers to take workshops in the area of transferable skills. Some serve to prepare doctoral researchers for the academic and non-academic labour markets and to support their professional orientation and career planning (↗ survey of supervisors, page 51). Others are intended to support the doctoral phase, for example organisation of the phase in which the dissertation is completed. These classes are now partly offered at Bielefeld University in the context of the Personnel Development Programme (PEP) at Bielefeld University, whereby the BGHS can ask for its doctoral researchers' particular needs to be met and in some cases provides partial funding. Some workshops developed at the BGHS are now regular parts of the PEP programme. The BGHS also organises its own workshops in areas where demand is high or where it appears reasonable to do so specifically for doctoral researchers in history or the social sciences. Doctoral researchers must attend classes in the area of transferable skills totalling four whole days (30 SWS) within three years (five years for part-time doctoral researchers).

The doctoral researchers considered this area to be very important: 92.4% (73) agreed entirely or generally with the statement: "I consider it important to acquire knowledge

going beyond scientific procedures during my doctoral studies." An analysis of the classes which the doctoral researchers indicated as the ones they have attended to date, however, shows that courses on conducting scientific research are by far the most common: more than half

transferable skills important, this was true of only 40.5% (15) of the men.[9] In connection with research findings about gender relations at universities, this finding could indicate that women assume to a far smaller degree than men that scientific research will lead to a career in academia. This

Question: Which of the following courses in the area of *transferable skills* have you already taken?
(multible answers possible)

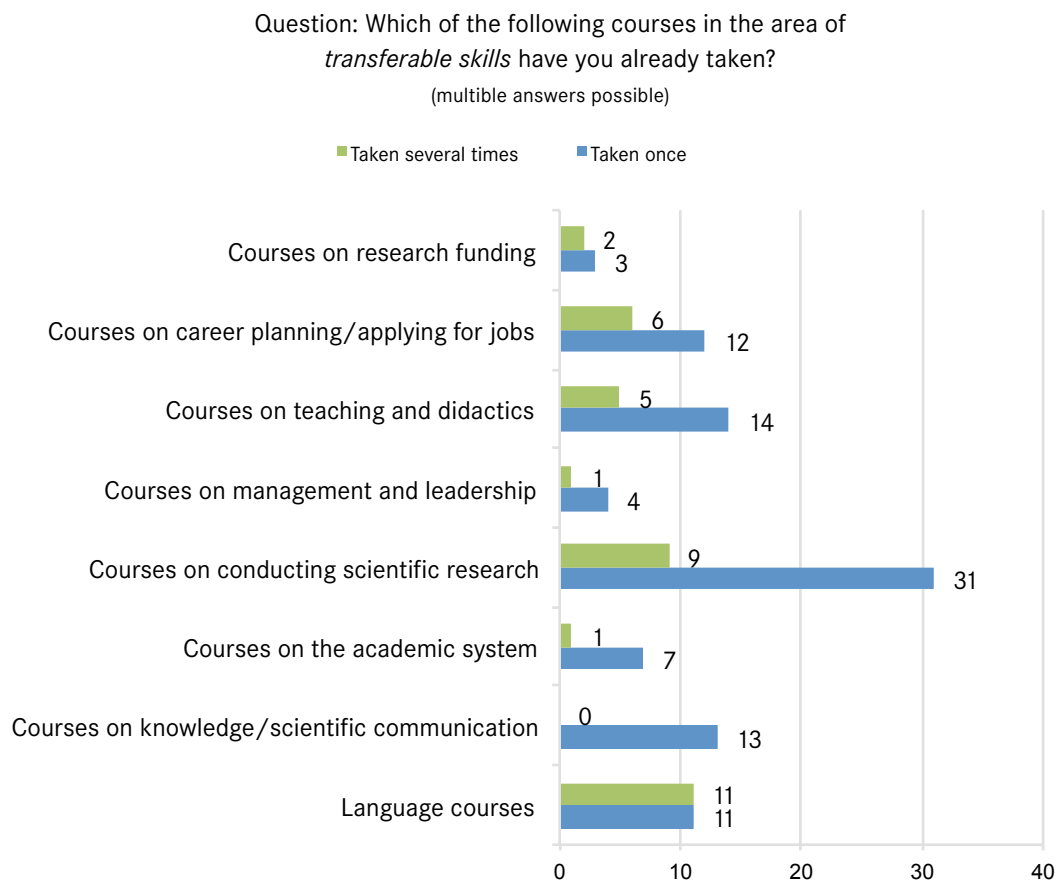■ Taken several times   ■ Taken once

Figure 8

the respondents have already taken part in one or more of them (see figure 8). The workshops on the other topics were attended less frequently, but for each type of transferable skill, between just under 50% and 65% of respondents indicated that they were interested. For one thing, this discrepancy between interest and actually attended classes can be correlated with the courses offered. More courses are offered on conducting scientific research than, for instance, on research communication, in which 50.6% (40) indicated their interest, or on the academic system, in which 53.2% (42) indicated their interest. For another, mere interest says little about how important the topic is to the doctoral researchers and even less about whether they would actually attend a workshop on research funding, in which 64.6% (31) of respondents indicated their interest.

A statistically significant correlation with gender emerged with regard to the question about the relevance of acquiring skills beyond conducting scientific research: whereas 80.6% (36) of the women considered such

may also be due to the current debates about precarious employment conditions in academia and the insufficient compatibility of family and a scientific career.

Roughly 90% of respondents agreed entirely (61%) or generally (30%) with the statement "Qualifications exist that are applicable both in academia and in other areas of work" (see figure 9). However, these values changed over the course of the doctoral programme. Whereas 62.5% (5) of the doctoral researchers in the first year agreed entirely, these figures dropped to 47.1% (8) in the third year and rose again to 71.4% (10) of respondents who were at least in their fifth year. Even if the numbers of cases are very low, this fluctuation may indicate that the questions about what will follow after the doctorate and the degree to which the doctorate will be helpful on the labour market are relevant especially at the beginning and the end of the doctoral programme, but that the focus is stronger on the substantive

[9] Chi-squared=12.371 d.f.=2, p=0.002, Cramer's V=0.412 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

work of the dissertation during the process of conducting research and writing.

Statement: Qualifications exist that are applicable both in academia and in other areas of work.
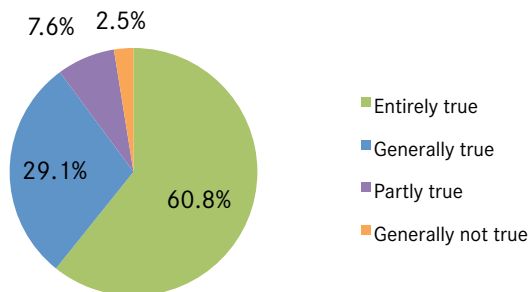
In this context, the question arises how the doctoral researchers envisage their professional future (↗ survey of supervisors, page 51). They were asked which two areas of work they considered most suitable for themselves, out of a total of eight (see figure 10). More than two-thirds (53) could imagine remaining in academia. Yet the respondents' interests were also distributed broadly among the areas of work mentioned in the questionnaire that were outside universities. 24 of the 79 respondents (30.4%) could imagine working in policy, for example for foundations or ministries. In addition, 83.5% (66) of the respondents indicated that they could "definitely" or "perhaps" imagine working abroad. This was out of the question for just 16.5% (12) of them.

Question: If you look to the future, which areas can you best imagine working in?
(two answers possible)
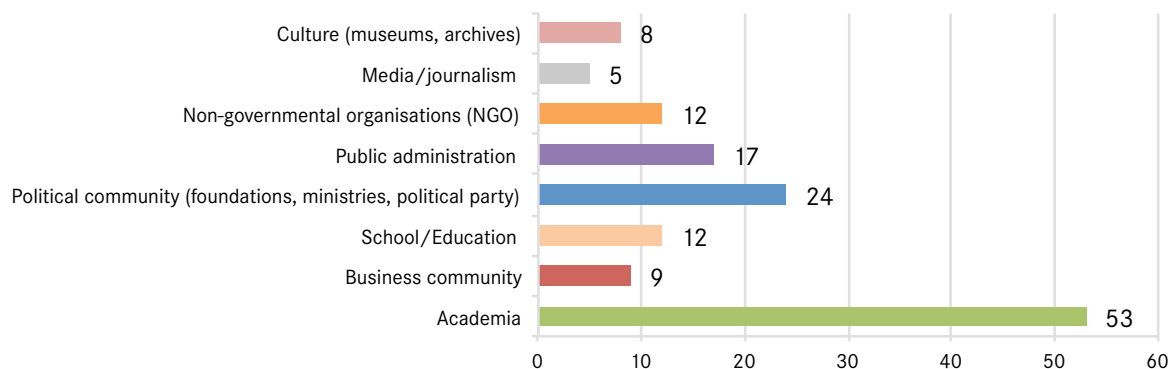
In a BGHS Art & Science Project, Nicole Zielke collaborated with two illustrators at the Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences; she would like to continue to use this cooperation arrangement for her dissertation on the significance of personal belongings for seniors.

Strengthening interdisciplinary exchange and self-initiative

Support for interdisciplinary exchange and simultaneous orientation within the doctoral researchers' own disciplines as well as support for doctoral researchers with respect to their independent research and career development are two basic pillars of the BGHS programme. For this reason, individual academic activities within and outside the BGHS are recognised as academic work performed in the area of the Optional Course Programme, for example participating in summer schools, giving talks at conferences or in colloquia, teaching classes, taking on leadership functions, for instance in organising the BGHS Annual Seminar or interdisciplinary workshops, or serving as a doctoral representative within the BGHS (see table 1). Four of a total of ten required credit points of the study programme must be acquired in this area.

Course Requirements: Optional Classes

- Colloquium with own paper: 1 CP

- Colloquium without own paper: 0.5 CP

- Seminar: 0.5 CP

- Research Retreat: 0.5 CP

- Teaching a course of one's own: 0.5 – 1 CP

- Contribution to an external conference: 0.5 CP

- Organisation of a workshop: 1 CP

- Participation in a study group: 0.5 – 1 CP

- Post as a doctoral researchers' representative: 0.5 CP

- Other academic achievements: 0.5 – 1 CP

Table 1

The following section is concerned with the questions about the doctoral researchers' participation in the relevant activities offered by the BGHS – the Research Retreat, the Interdisciplinary Seminar, study groups, the Annual Seminar, and the Interdisciplinary Colloquium – and what they consider especially important in this regard.

Participation in BGHS activities for interdisciplinary exchange

Figure 11 makes clear that doctoral researchers participate in only some of the activities. For three of the five activities, the share of doctoral researchers who had not yet participated in them and did not plan to do so, either, was larger than the share of those who had done so or planned to. It is possible that the doctoral researchers responding consider that there is already enough interdisciplinary exchange in other settings, e.g., the Research Classes, or in informal contact. But interdisciplinary exchange is surely not a priority for all doctoral researchers.

Participation was highest in the **Research Retreat**. This is not surprising since this is an activity for BGHS members newly enrolled in the doctoral programme. They present their research projects and discuss them with their peers and professors from both faculties during the two-day event that usually takes place at a conference venue outside the university. So the purpose of the Research Retreat is not only interdisciplinary exchange, but becoming part of the BGHS community. The format of the Research Retreat was introduced following the 2010 evaluation, where the desire for a format specifically for new members was expressed. Participation is not mandatory, but the BGHS encourages all new doctoral researchers to attend.

The second format for which more respondents than not indicated that they had participated or intended to do so was the **Interdisciplinary Seminar** (see figure 11) – even though it was last offered in the winter semester 2013/14 and is next scheduled for the winter semester 2016/17. The goal of this format is to encourage joint interdisciplinary theoretical discourse about research approaches of the disciplines involved among junior researchers and professors. The seminar is organised and carried out by doctoral researchers at the BGHS together with teaching staff of both faculties. The **study groups**, which are initiated by doctoral researchers interested in a particular topic and supervised by postdocs or professors, are quite popular. 26 doctoral researchers have attended them so far, and 13 indicated that they intended to do so.

The three formats mentioned above serve to support interdisciplinary exchange and focus on the doctoral

Question: Which of the opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange offered at the BGHS have you already participated in, or do you plan to participate in?
(multiple answers possible)

- ■ Participated
- ■ Planning to participate
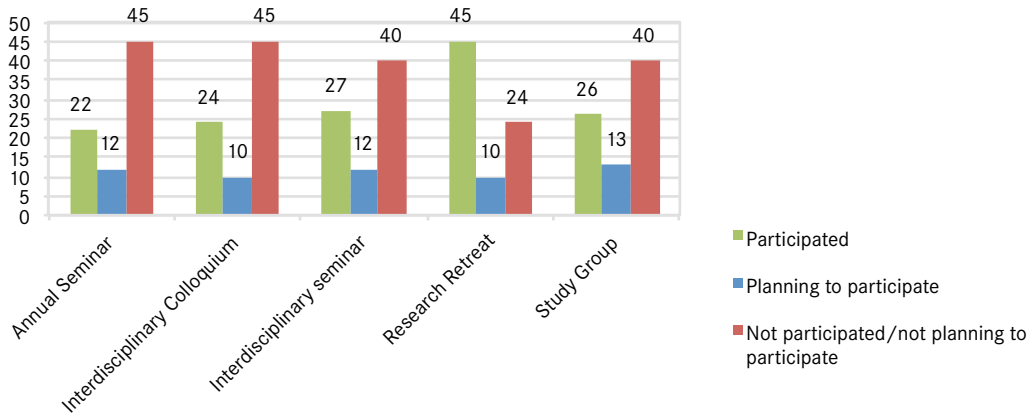- ■ Not participated/not planning to participate

Figure 11

researchers' individual research projects and interests. Advanced scholars are always involved in directing or supervising them. The **Annual Seminar** and the **Interdisciplinary Colloquium**, in contrast, explicitly provide for the doctoral researchers to take on leadership functions and require dedication going far beyond their own research. The fact that more than half the respondents refrained from participating in these two formats or planning to do so may be due to the exposure, commitment, and major responsibility that they entail. But perhaps the doctoral researchers think that the formats directed by advanced scholars provide higher (academic) quality or the opportunity to gain visibility among those scholars.

Dedication on the part of the doctoral researchers for BGHS formats

One question posed in the online survey was about the formats the doctoral researchers had already been involved in organising or were planning to organise, in order to survey the level of their commitment to organising various BGHS formats (see figure 12). The results show that the respondents have been most active in organising their own workshops, study groups, and the Annual Seminar. In terms of the organisational activities they were planning, their own workshops were by far the most common, but the respondents also expressed interest in the newer BGHS activities, especially the public science activities and the Working

Question: Which formats for interdisciplinary exchange have you already been involved in organising, or are planning to do so? (multiple answers possible)

- ■ Annual Seminar
- ■ Workshop of my own
- ■ Interdisciplinary Colloquium (self-organised)
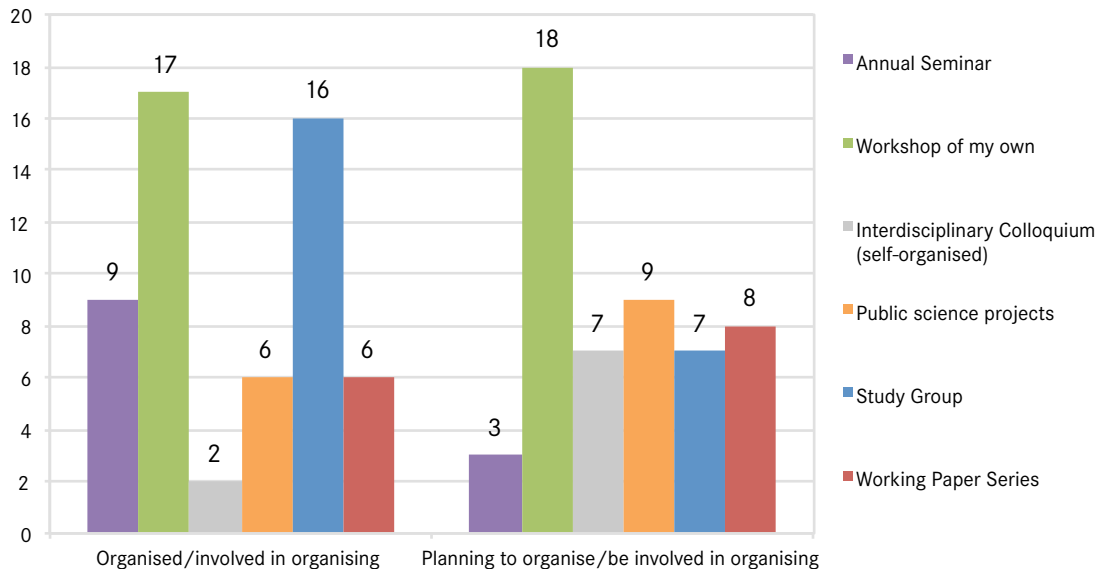- ■ Public science projects
- ■ Study Group
- ■ Working Paper Series

Figure 12

Paper series. In the following, we present in more detail the assessments of three prominent and well-established formats – the Annual Seminar, the doctoral researchers' own (i.e., self-organised) workshops, and the Interdisciplinary Colloquium – with respect to differences according to discipline, gender, and dedication. The public science activities will be examined in more depth in the subsequent chapter.

The **Annual Seminar** is the international yearly BGHS conference, and it is conceptualised and organised by doctoral researchers. The three-day conference supports academic exchange between the disciplines and is an international platform for presenting ongoing research projects. Lectures by renowned keynote speakers from Germany and abroad provide a framework for the discussions about the research projects. But the Annual Seminar is also explicitly intended to be a prominent educational tool that offers the doctoral researchers organising it the opportunity to gain comprehensive experience in hosting an international conference, including conceptualising such an event academically, coordinating procedures, planning catering and accommodations for the guests, and overseeing travel expense accounting.

Participation in the Annual Seminar differs significantly between the two **disciplines**: whereas 75% (21) of the historians responding had neither participated in it nor planned to do so, the corresponding figures for the doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology were only 47.1% (24).[10] This difference may be explained by the distribution of the organisers to date: of the nine respondents who indicated that they had already been involved in organising an Annual Seminar, seven were from the Faculty of Sociology (or 13.7% of all respondents from the Faculty of Sociology) and two were historians (7.1% of all historians responding). Yet the few historians responding to the survey who indicated that they had participated in an Annual Seminar saw the opportunities it provided as very positive, for example exchange with other scholars (see figure 13).

Gender differences in views of the Annual Seminar also became apparent. Male respondents indicated more frequently that they had already participated (twelve men,

32.4% vs. nine women, 25%) or were planning to do so (six men, 16.2% vs. four women, 11.3%). The assessments of those doctoral researchers who had already participated in an Annual Seminar yield an even more distinct picture in relation to the statement "The Annual Seminar offers me the opportunity to grapple with exciting topics." 57.1% (12) of them agreed with the statement, whereby more men (66.6%, 8 respondents) agreed than women (44.4%, 4 respondents).

Previous **involvement** in organising an Annual Seminar plays an important role in respondents' perception of the event. The correlation between the statement "I can gain valuable experience when organising the Annual Seminar" and involvement in organising it is statistically significant.[11] All respondents with experience in organising the Annual

Statement: I can meet German and international scholars at the *Annual Seminar* an exchange ideas with them.
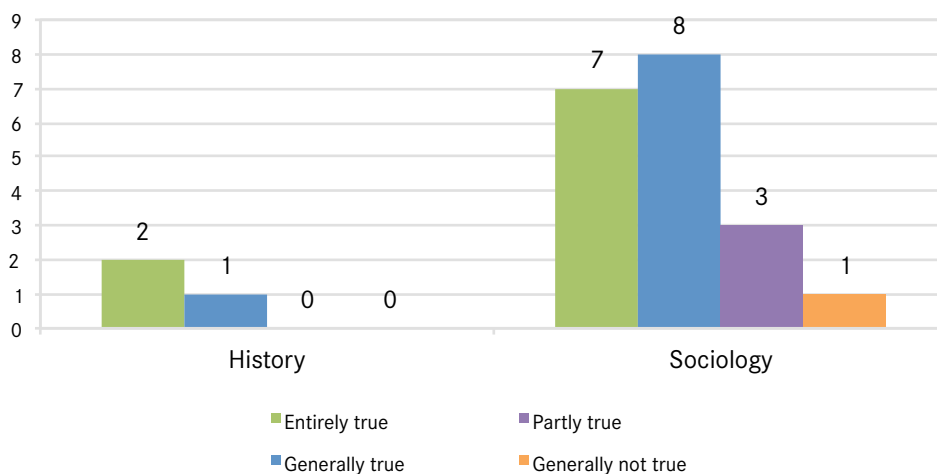
Figure 13

Seminar agreed with the statement, whereas only approximately 43% (6) of those who had only participated in the Annual Seminar did. Even if general interest in the Annual Seminar is not as great as might be desired for the key annual event of the BGHS, it obviously does work very well as an educational tool.

A similar format, which is somewhat smaller and more popular among the respondents and which requires self-initiative and simultaneously helps doctoral researchers to establish themselves as scholars, is organising their **own workshop**: here, an interdisciplinary research topic they have selected themselves can be discussed in depth with other scholars (see figure 12). The workshops are supported financially and in non-material ways by the BGHS, and co-financing from third parties is explicitly desired. Keynote speakers, some of them highly prominent, are

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[10] Chi-squared=7.073 d.f.=2, p=0.029, Cramer's V=0.299 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

[11] Chi-squared=11.821 d.f.=4, p=0.019, Cramer's V=0.733 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

also invited to the workshops. At the same time, doctoral researchers gain initial experience in organising events, which the respondents valued highly, as evidenced by the practically unanimous agreement with the statement: "I can gain valuable experience for organising future conferences by organising a workshop." More than 90% of respondents with experience in organising a workshop of their own and those planning a workshop agreed with it. And even 72.8% of the doctoral researchers not aiming to actively organise a workshop of their own agreed. Agreement was similar for both genders.

The workshops can also contribute to establishing a network of one's own. Doctoral researchers who have already organised a workshop of their own were convinced of this effect [12] to a significantly higher degree: 94.1% (16) of them agreed with the statement "Organising a workshop enables me to expand my academic network", whereas the corresponding figures for those who have not organised and are not planning a workshop of their own are 70.5% (31). 88.8% (16) of the respondents who indicated that they were planning a workshop agreed. Thus, the format of a workshop of one's own also fulfils the intended educational function very well and is in addition met with particularly strong interest and recognition by non-organisers. There are, however, differences between the disciplines. Agreement with the statement mentioned above was greater among historians (24 respondents, 85.7%) than among doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology (39 respondents, 76.5%).[13]

An interesting finding also emerges from correlating the assessments of this statement with the respondents' familial backgrounds. Doctoral researchers whose parents completed academic training expressed significantly higher agreement with this statement (23 respondents, 88.5%) than doctoral researchers who were not from such families (39 respondents, 75%). Apparently, proximity to universities – as institutions in a person's personal surroundings – is beneficial for the perception that it is important to establish personal networks extending beyond one's own university.

Another format that is intended to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration at the BGHS and simultaneously gives the doctoral researchers the opportunity to gather leadership experience is the **Interdisciplinary Colloquium** (see figure 12). It is different from the otherwise customary format in that it is not organised and directed by a professor, but by doctoral researchers. This is intended to enable a discussion of ongoing research topics in the absence of evaluations predetermined by the formal hierarchy.

In terms of gender, the differences for this format are similar to those of the Annual Seminar. Female respondents also had significantly less interest in organising the Interdisciplinary Colloquium. Two of the male respondents indicated that they had already been involved in organising an Interdisciplinary Colloquium, but none of the women; six (16.2%) of the male and one of the female doctoral researchers planned to participate in organising one. [14] However, 52.8% (19) of the female respondents agreed with the statement "Exchange between the two disciplinary cultures (history and sociology) is facilitated in the Interdisciplinary Colloquium" as against just 43.2% (16) of their male colleagues (see figure 14). Differences between the disciplines also became apparent. For example, more (26 respondents, 51%) of the doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology agreed with this statement than historians (twelve respondents, 42.9%). A person's own activities also

Statement: Exchange between the two disciplinary cultures (history and sociology) is facilitated in the *Interdisciplinary Colloquium*.
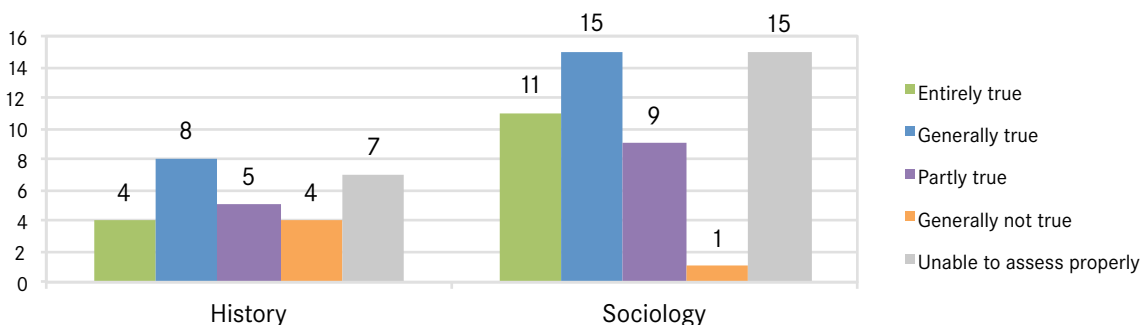

Figure 14

[12] Chi-squared=15.750 d.f.=6, p=0.015, Cramer's V=0.316
(some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

[13] Chi-squared=8.274 d.f.=3, p=0.041, Cramer's V=0.326
(some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

[14] Chi-squared=6.121 d.f.=2, p=0.047, Cramer's V=0.290
(some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

had a highly significant impact on their assessment of this statement. [15] 75% (18) of the respondents who indicated that they had already participated in a workshop agreed. Of the 45 respondents who had neither participated in an Interdisciplinary Colloquium nor intended to do so, only 31.1% (8) could imagine that the format could have a beneficial influence on exchange between the cultures of the disciplines.

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[15] Chi-squared=24.595 d.f.=8, p=0.002, Cramer's V=0.395
(some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

Torben Möbius is active as a
Doctoral Representative for Social
and Cultural Affairs. He also
presented his research about
factory communities in the Nazi
period to a broad audience in the
public lecture series Linie 4.

Positioning in the academic field

As junior researchers, the doctoral researchers begin to position themselves in the academic field early on (↗ survey of supervisors, page 50). Activities in the areas of mobility, networking, teaching, and publications play an important role here which will be illuminated in the following.

Mobility

The BGHS offers multiple programmes and funding opportunities that enable doctoral researchers to conduct research in other places in Germany or abroad, to attend national and international conferences, and to establish and strengthen their own academic networks, or that support such endeavours (↗ survey of supervisors, page 51). Besides funding for research trips and visits to archives, which have already been used by one-third of respondents, as well as trips to international conferences, which have also already been used by one-third of respondents, the BGHS has its own format of mobility grants (see figure 15). They are targeted towards doctoral researchers at the BGHS who would like to spend three to six months at a

university institution or a non-university research institute abroad during the advanced phase of their doctorates in order to foster their own doctoral projects and to establish long-term contacts to international scholars. The survey shows that the doctoral researchers gladly take up this support: 14 (17.7%) of the respondents had already taken advantage of a mobility grant, and one-third of the respondents stated that they intended to apply for one (see figure 15). Two respondents had taken part in the nine-month exchange programme with Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA, and nine more were planning to do so. Eleven respondents had already participated in the annual PhD workshop conducted jointly with the University of Notre Dame, USA, and another eleven intended to do so in the future.

Networking

Establishing a network early on is of great importance for a career in academia and thus for junior researchers (↗ survey of supervisors, page 49). Respondents were

Question: Which mobility opportunities of the BGHS have you already used, or do you plan to use? (multiple answers possible)
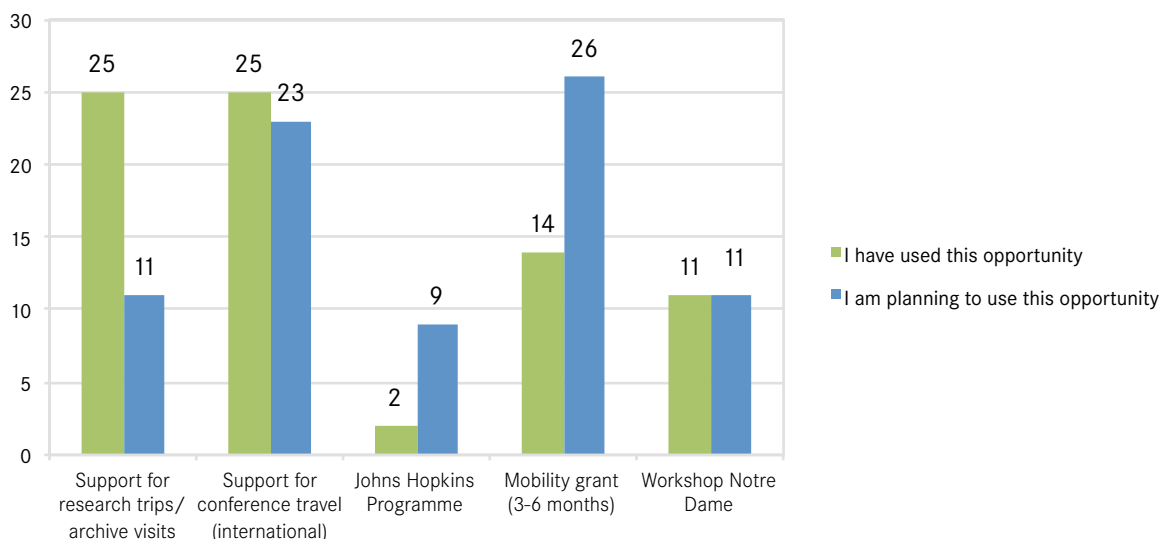

Figure 15

asked in the online survey how they assessed their own networks and which types of networks they were involved in.

28% of the respondents considered their networks to be very good or good (see figure 16). Distinctly more than half of the respondents (58%) considered their own academic

doctoral researchers' local networking. All respondents are members of the BGHS and are thus also on its email distribution list. Yet they obviously do not regard this as a membership in an academic network.

Comparatively few respondents indicated that they were members in **national networks**, compared with the

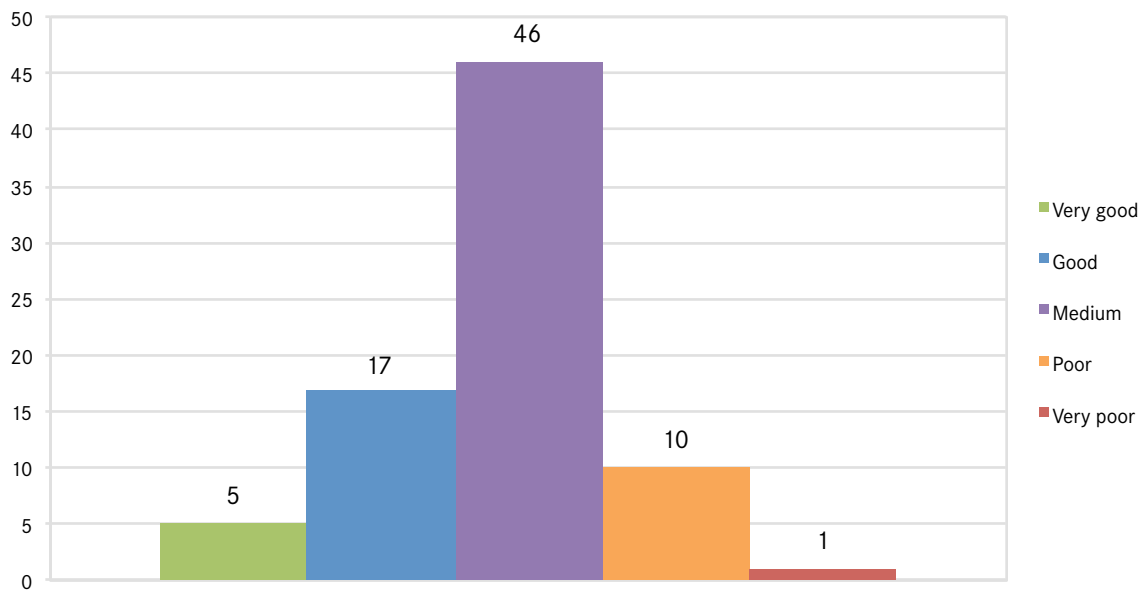Question: How would you assess your own scientific network?

Figure 16

networks as medium, and 14% even as poor or very poor. The questions about doctoral researchers' own concrete networks concerned different levels. Networks were differentiated in two ways: local, national, or international; and institutionalised networks such as scientific associations or less institutionalised networks, e.g., working groups. The doctoral researchers could also indicate the degree of their network activities, i.e., whether they had a leadership function in one of the networks, were active or passive members, or did not use this type of network. Multiple responses were possible (see figure 17). In the following, an overview of the findings will first be given for each level of network, in relation to the group of all respondents. Then, these findings will be examined regarding links to gender distribution, discipline, and nationality (German or international).

When asked about belonging to **local networks**, roughly the same number of respondents indicated that they were active members, passive members, or not members. A small group of three respondents indicated that they served in leadership positions (see figure 17). The share of 29 respondents (of a total of 79) who indicated that they were neither active nor passive members of a local network or working group appeared to be fairly high, in particular because it is important to the BGHS to support the

local networks: 18 doctoral researchers (22.5%) indicated that they were active or passive members of the German Sociological Association (DGS) or the Verband der Historikerinnen und Historiker Deutschlands (VHD), and 62 respondents (77.5%) were not members. The situation is similar for the networks or working groups that are institutionalised to a lesser degree: here, 19 respondents (21.3%) indicated that they were passive members and seven (7.9%) that they were active members; 63 respondents (70.8%) did not use such networks.

Integration of doctoral researchers at the BGHS in **international networks** is somewhat stronger than in the national networks: 19 respondents (21.8%) indicated that they were passive members of an international academic association, eleven (12.6%) that they were active members, and one that she or he had a leadership position. With regard to lower-threshold networking in international working groups and networks, 15 respondents (17.6%) indicated that they were active members, and two that they had leadership positions (see figure 18).

Correlation of the information about local, national, and international networking with gender shows that women were active especially at local and national levels: 41.7% (15) of the female respondents indicated that they were actively involved at local level, two in a leadership position. Of

28

Question: Which of these institutional pathways of networking with the local scientific community do you use? (multiple answers possible)

Local working group/network

Leadership function

Active membership (participation in meetings etc.)

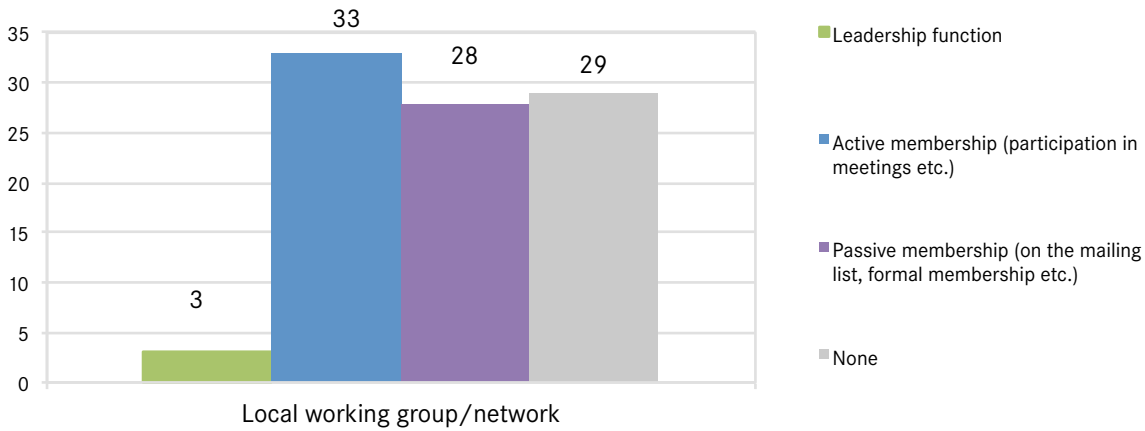Passive membership (on the mailing list, formal membership etc.)

None

Figure 17

the men, 35.1 % (13) indicated that they were active at local level, one in a leadership position. At international level, however, the share of men who indicated that they were active in an academic association is almost three times as high as that of the women.

Correlation of the information about networking with the academic discipline shows that the historians responding were more active at local and international level in the less strongly institutionalised networks, whereas the doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology had distinctly stronger networks at national level: 26 of them indicated that they were active or passive members of a section of the DGS; among the historians, just one respondent was a member of the VHD.[16] This finding is reflected in the

open-ended responses in that multiple sections of the DGS were mentioned as beneficial, for example the Political Sociology section or the Family Sociology section. The reasons for the distinctly higher share of active historians in less-institutionalised international working groups and networks may be that the Department of History has more cooperation arrangements than the Faculty of Sociology, for example that the annual PhD workshop with the University of Notre Dame was initiated by the Department of History and includes doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology in Bielefeld, but includes only historians at the University of Notre Dame.

Correlation of the various levels of networking with nationality (differentiated between German and non-German

Question: Which of these institutional pathways of networking with the international scientific community do you use? (multiple answers possible)

International academic association

International working group/network

Leadership function

Active membership (participation in meetings etc.)

Passive membership (on the mailing list, formal membership etc.)
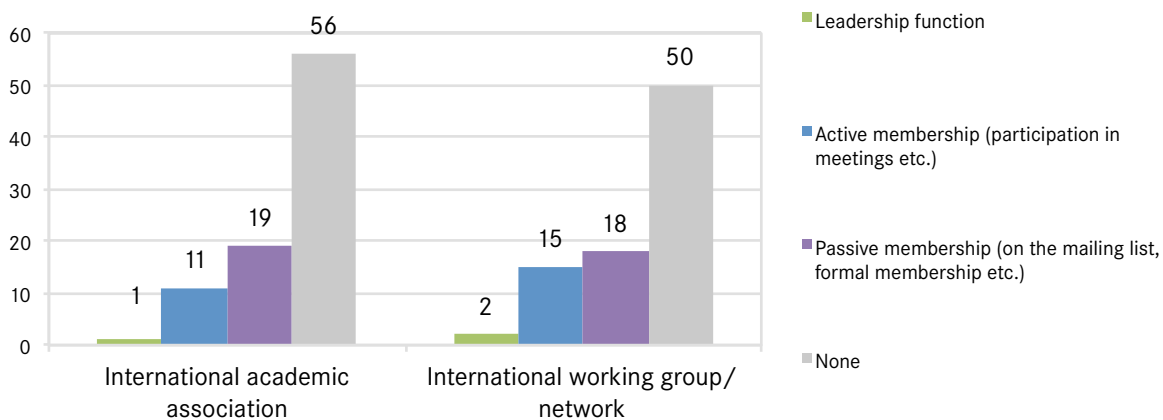
None

Figure 18

[16] In contrast, four (8%) doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology indicated active membership, twelve (23.5%) formal membership, and ten (19.6%) inclusion in the email distribution list.

doctoral researchers) shows that the international doctoral researchers were less strongly networked overall, compared with the German doctoral researchers, but this is due mostly to their weak local and national networking. At international level, their networking was distinctly better than that of their German colleagues. Accordingly, internationalisation of the structures at Bielefeld University could be improved, which would then also benefit the German doctoral researchers.

Conferences provide important opportunities for networking (↗ survey of supervisors, page 49). It was already shown in the section on mobility that many respondents have taken advantage of the financial support for travel to conferences provided by the BGHS. This is also reflected in the information given about attending national and international conferences taking place locally, i.e., at Bielefeld University. The doctoral researchers could indicate "participation with/without a presentation of my own" or "did not participate". Figure 19 shows that the respondents actively participate in local, national, and international conferences, whereby their tendency to present their own topics increases with increasing distance. The comparatively large tendency to attend a conference in Bielefeld without making a presentation shows that especially the local conferences – including the Annual Seminar, the PhD workshop with the University of Notre Dame, and the workshops organised by the doctoral researchers themselves – can apparently serve to begin the process of networking.

Teaching activities

Teaching experience is an important qualification for academic and non-academic careers. At the same time, teaching is associated with the notion that it keeps (junior) scholars from research (which is considered more important). Since the members of the BGHS are very heterogeneous in terms of their employment situations and therefore also their teaching activities, the questionnaire included questions about their teaching experience.

68.4% (54) – more than two-thirds – of the doctoral researchers responding indicated that they had teaching experience (see figure 20). 17 respondents (21.5%) had taught one class, but the same number of respondents indicated that they had already taught more than four classes. In contrast, one-third (25) of the doctoral researchers indicated that they had not yet taught any classes themselves. Involvement in teaching was roughly the same in the two disciplines. But among the doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology, there were more respondents who already had a lot of teaching experience, i.e., who had taught more than four classes.

Publications

Publications were a topic of the online survey because they are considered important indicators of a person's positioning in the academic field. The questions about publications already existing concerned both the number and the forms of respondents' publications (see figure 21). The doctoral researchers indicated most frequently that they had published journal articles: just under half of the respondents indicated that they had already published one or more journal articles,[17]

Question: Have you already sought out exchange with the scientific community at a conference? (multiple answers possible)
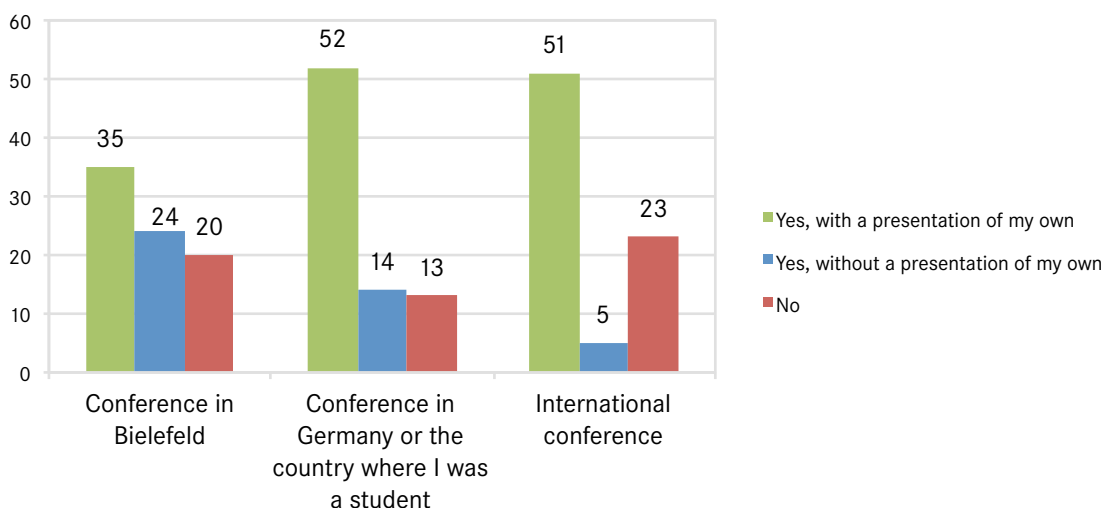

Figure 19

[17] The online questionnaire did not differentiate whether journal articles were peer-reviewed or not.

Question: How many classes have you already taught during your doctoral phase?
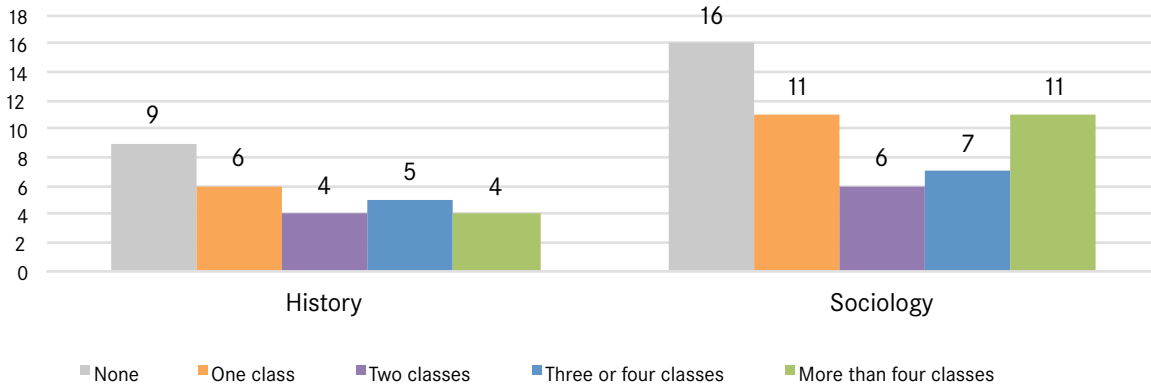

Figure 20

almost as many have already published contributions in edited volumes or conference proceedings. Writing a monograph or taking on the task of editing a volume are uncommon during the period of obtaining a doctorate, and it is hardly possible to complete such tasks during this time, which is generally envisaged to be three years. Nonetheless, 10% each of the doctoral researchers responding indicated that they had already published a monograph or had been involved in editing an edited volume. Figure 21 shows that the most common response was one publication per format, but is was not uncommon that respondents already had more than two publications in the formats reviews, journal articles, grey literature, and other formats. And there was a group of respondents who indicated five or

more contributions in the categories journal articles, grey literature, and other formats.

Correlation of the publication of journal articles as a prominent type of text with gender shows that male respondents indicated more publications overall than female respondents. For example, 59.6% (22) of all men responding indicated that they had published at least one journal article, the corresponding figures for the women were 38.9% (14). A difference with respect to publications of journal articles can also be discerned between the two disciplines: 32.1% (9) of the doctoral researchers in the Department of History and 58.8% (30) at the Faculty of Sociology have already published at least one journal article.

Question: How many scientific texts have you published to date (print and online publications)?
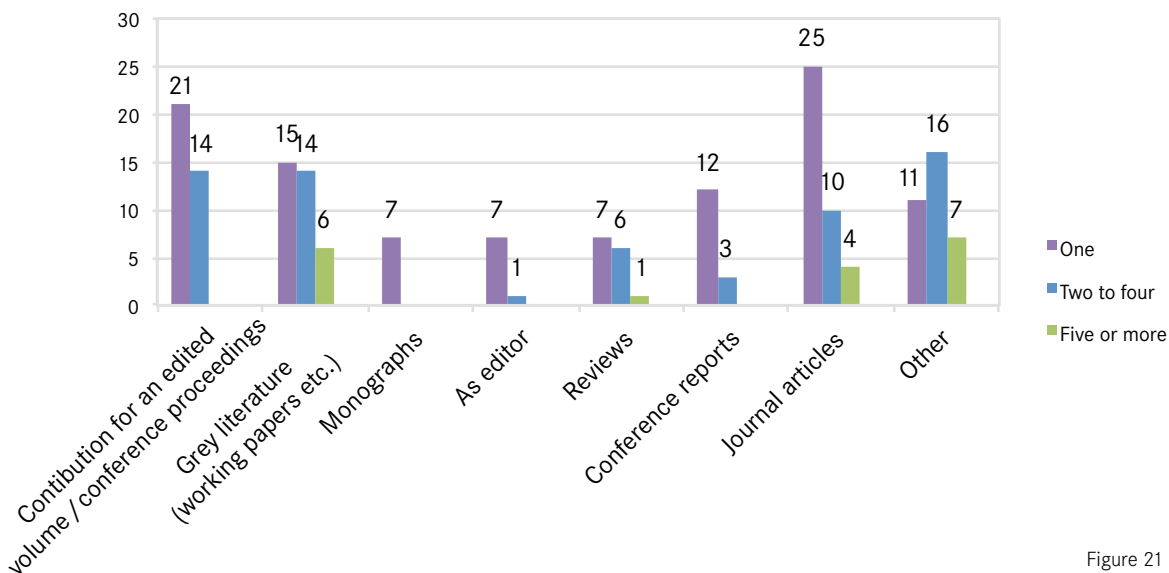(multiple answers possible)

Figure 21

Statement: I consider it important to make scientific research accessible to a broad public.
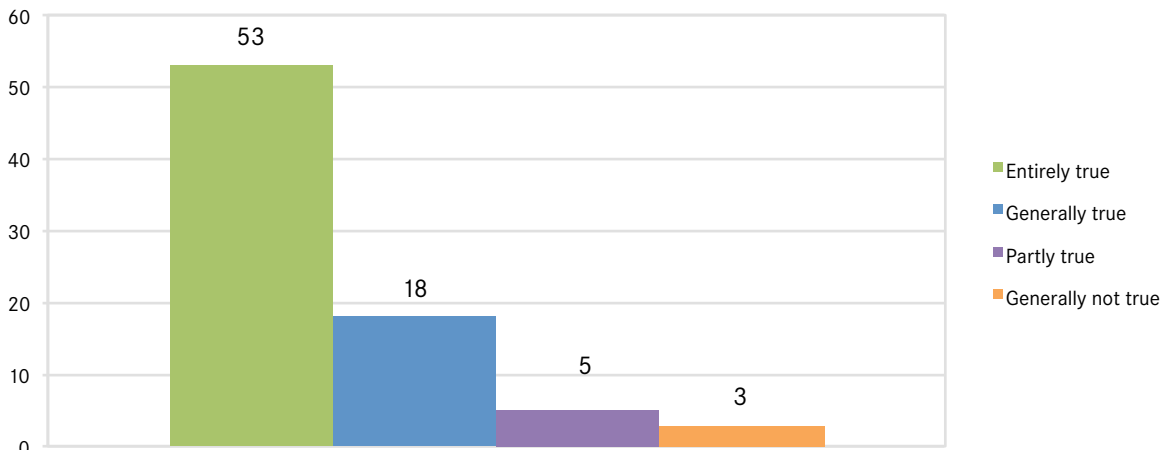
Research communication

Various projects at the BGHS are intended to enable doctoral researchers to present their dissertations in public. One example is the lecture series Linie 4 in which BGHS doctoral researchers discuss their research projects with a broad public at the premises of the Volkshochschule Bielefeld (Bielefeld Adult Education Centre, ↗New Messages, page 67). How do the doctoral researchers feel about presenting their research outside of the scientific community?

Almost 90% of respondents agreed entirely or generally with the statement "I consider it important to make scientific research accessible to a broad public" (see figure 22). Agreement among the women was even 97.2% (35), among the men 86.5% (32). Agreement with the statement "I think it is useful to be able to describe my dissertation project in three sentences" was also high. 81% of the doctoral researchers responding agreed entirely or generally with this statement. And again it was the women who agreed very strongly (94.4%, 36), whereas the men were distinctly more reserved (75.7%, 28). However, when it comes to putting concrete **opportunities for science communication offered by the BGHS** into practice, agreement is lower: just 39.2% of respondents agreed entirely and 26.6% partly with the statement "I enjoy the opportunity to present my topic in a different way (visually, as in the Art & Science and Visualise projects and/or in a non-academic context such as Linie 4)." One reason for this may be that in particular the BGHS's Art & Science projects aimed at visualising research projects in artistic forms (↗New Messages, page 69), may appear unfamiliar or "unacademic" to the doctoral researchers.

One tool for communicating one's own publications is the **publication server PUB** at Bielefeld University. Scholars at Bielefeld University can upload their publications to PUB, which makes them available on the university's website under the scholar's name. This is a good opportunity specifically for young scholars who have not yet been able to make a name for themselves in the scientific community to gain public exposure with their research topics. And no less than 71.4% (50) of the doctoral researchers responding considered the opportunity to mention their own research in their profiles on the BGHS website useful (↗Structures at the BGHS, page 35). Yet only 13.9% (11) of the doctoral researchers responding regularly used the

Question: Do you upload your publications to the PUB (publication server of Bielefeld University)?
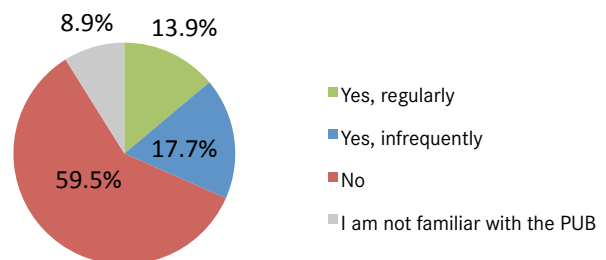
PUB, and more than half (59.5%) did not use it at all (see figure 23). In addition, seven respondents (8.9%) indicated that they were unfamiliar with the PUB. There is a striking difference between the disciplines: 39.2% (20) of all doctoral researchers responding from the Faculty of Sociology have already used the PUB for their publications, but only 17.9% (5) of all historians surveyed; this may be connected to the cultures of publishing in the two fields. In addition, a scholar's number of publications may play a role with respect to using the PUB. Doctoral researchers who have published only one or two contributions may not (yet) consider the opportunity attractive.

Social scientist Dorothea Wehrmann benefits especially from the interdisciplinary exchange in the Research Class.

Structures at the BGHS

The BGHS provides an organisational framework for a structured doctoral programme which take various aspects of the doctoral studies into account. The results of the online survey concerning the workspace on the BGHS corridor, doctoral researchers' representation of interests, the information channels at the BGHS, the BGHS Office, and the support provided for the supervisory relationship will be presented in the following.

Workspace
The BGHS currently has excellent spatial facilities, which encompass approx. 50 places for doctoral researchers and scholarship holders to work, a seminar room, a conference

doctoral researchers who do not have a right to a place to work at Bielefeld University, for example because they are financed through a scholarship from a political foundation or the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) or external employment, may apply for most of the places to work. 40.5% (32) of the respondents to the online survey indicated that they had places to work on the BGHS corridor, and 36.7% (29) had places to work at the university, e.g., at one of the faculties (see figure 24). Just under one-fifth (15) indicated that they worked at home, and three respondents worked in the library or elsewhere.

The spatial situation at the faculties apparently plays a role in the distribution of the places where the respon-

Question: Where do you conduct most of your scientific work?
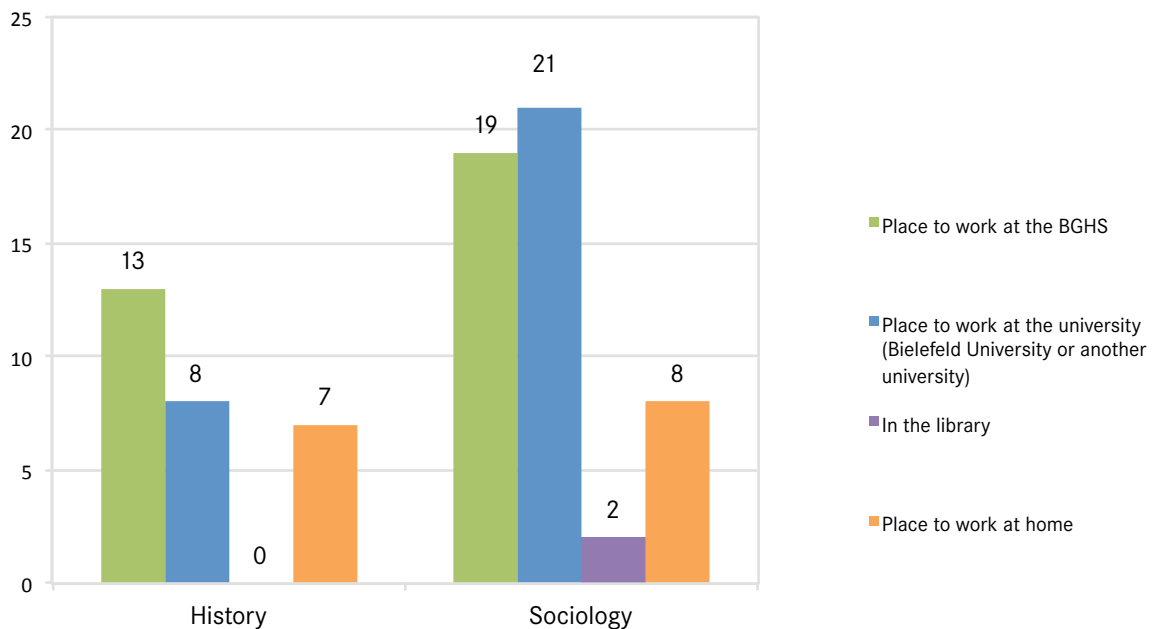
Figure 24

room, and a lounge with a small kitchen in addition to the spaces occupied by the BGHS Office (↗ New Messages, page 59). Of the places for doctoral researchers to work, 17 were assigned to doctoral researchers with positions financed by the BGHS at the time of the survey. However,

dents work. Whereas 21 doctoral researchers at the Faculty of Sociology (41.2%) indicated that they had places to work at the faculty (or at a different place at a university), these figures were just 28.6% (8) for the historians. Yet compared with their share of the respondents, which was

roughly one-third, it was somewhat more common for the latter to have a place to work on the BGHS corridor.

How important a place to work in the spatial vicinity of the BGHS is for the doctoral researchers' exchange with one another (↗ survey of supervisors, page 47) is shown by the respondents' assessments of the statement "It is easy for me to come into contact with other doctoral researchers at the BGHS." 78.1% (25) of the respondents with a place to work at the BGHS agreed entirely or generally; of those with a place to work at the university, it was 51.7% (15), and of those working at home, 40% (6). In addition, the respondents with a place to work at the BGHS appreciated this fact highly, with 96.9% (31) considering it to be an advantage. Only 17% (8) of the respondents without a place to work at BGHS shared that opinion. 43.4% (34) of the respondents indicated that they could not tell whether or not it was an advantage. [18]

There were similar results concerning the responses to the statement: "I find the atmosphere on the BGHS corridor pleasant." More than half of all respondents (42, 53.1%) considered the atmosphere to be good or very good (see figure 25). The 24 respondents (30.4%) who indicated that they could not assess the atmosphere did not have places to work at the BGHS – here too it is apparent that the location of their places to work had a significant impact on their responses. [19]

study, the figures were 55.5% (20); from the fifth year of study on, only 50% (7).

Doctoral researchers' representation of interests
One fundamental principle at the BGHS is extensive involvement of the doctoral researchers in all processes and decisions. One core component of this principle is the doctoral researchers' representation of interests. It represents the interests of the junior researchers and has two votes in decisions taken by the executive board, for example. The doctoral researchers elect their representatives from their midst for a one-year term. The doctoral researchers' representation of interests is comprised of a total of six individuals: one doctoral researcher each from the Department of History and the Faculty of Sociology for the area "Doctoral Programme" and two each for the areas "Internationals" and "Social and Cultural Affairs".

The proximity of the respondents to the BGHS also plays a role in their **perceptions of the doctoral researchers' representation** of interests. More than three-quarters (25) of the doctoral researchers with places to work on the BGHS corridor and more than half (16) of the doctoral researchers with places to work at one of the faculties agreed with the statement: "I think that my interests are represented well by the doctoral researchers' representatives." In contrast, many doctoral researchers without

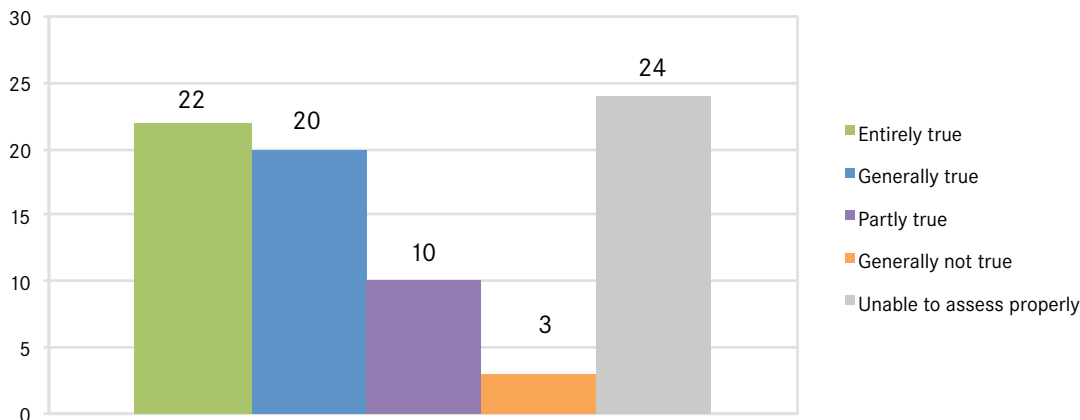Statement: I find the atmosphere on the BGHS corridor pleasant.

Figure 25

The length of time that respondents had already spent on their doctoral studies also impacts the creation of the BGHS community: 72.4% (21) of the doctoral researchers up to their second year of study indicated that it was easy for them to come into contact with other doctoral researchers at the BGHS; in their third and fourth years of study

places to work at the BGHS had no idea about the (work of the) doctoral researchers' representation of interests, so they did not feel they were in a position to assess it. 19% (15) of the latter group could not respond to the statement: "I think that my interests are represented well by the doctoral researchers' representatives." Concerning the statement: "The doctoral representatives 'Internationals' make a decisive contribution to improving the situation of international doctoral researchers at the BGHS", the relationship between agreeing with the statement and

[18] Chi-squared=61.759 d.f.=16, p=0.000, Cramer's V=0.442 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)
[19] Chi-squared=40.526 d.f.=20, p=0.004, Cramer's V=0.358 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

having a place to work on the BGHS corridor was significant [20] – 23 doctoral researchers with places to work on the BGHS corridor (71.9%) agreed with this statement. Of the 20 respondents from a country other than Germany, twelve (60%) had places to work on the BGHS corridor, which is a higher percentage than for the German doctoral researchers; 20 of the 59 German respondents (33.9%) had places to work on the BGHS corridor. The international doctoral researchers' assessments whether the doctoral representatives "Internationals" improve their situation is significantly more positive than the assessments of the German doctoral researchers: eleven (55.5%) agreed with the statement (vs. 27 respondents, 45.8%), three (15%) indicated "partly true" (vs. one respondent, 1.7%), two respondents indicated "not true at all" (vs. zero), and four (20%) indicated that they "could not say" (vs. 31 respondents, 52.5%). [21]

Serving as a doctoral representative not only supports the representatives' colleagues, however, but offers the doctoral researchers the opportunity to introduce their own expectations and needs to the processes at the BGHS and to put their own ideas into practice. Yet interest in doing so is only moderate.

The responses to the question about **being active as a doctoral representative** show that only just under one-third of the BGHS's doctoral researchers surveyed were active or planning to be active at this level of academic self-government (see figure 26). Interest and activity in the doctoral researchers' representation of interests was equal in both genders: eight women and eight men had already been active; four women and four men planned to become active in this regard. The willingness to engage at this level differs between the disciplines involved. Two respondents from the Department of History planned to be active in the future, as against six from the Faculty of Sociology. The longer the respondents had been working towards their doctorates, the more they indicated that they had already been active in the doctoral researchers' representation of interests, but the less they were interested in doing so in the future. [22] Spatial proximity to the BGHS apparently also results in stronger activity as a representative: the respondents who indicated that they used a place to work at the BGHS as the main place of their academic work comprised 81.3% (13) of those who had already been active in the doc-

Question: Have you been active as a doctoral researchers' representative, or do you plan to do so?
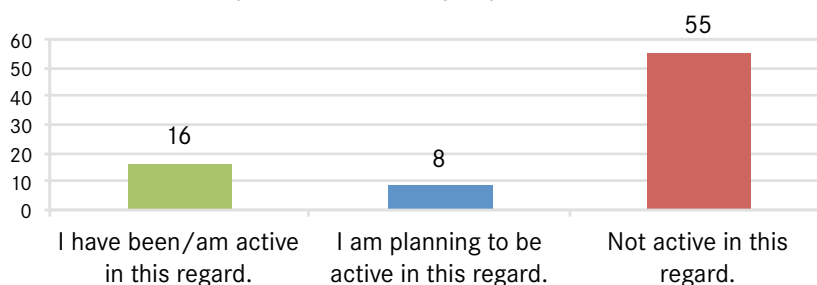
Figure 26

toral researchers' representation of interests. [23] Doctoral researchers with positions financed by the BGHS are more active in the doctoral researchers' representation of interests to a highly significant degree: of these, 50% (8) were active; of those who did not have positions financed by the BGHS, only 12.7% (8). [24] However, a position financed by the BGHS also involves the expectation that the person holding that position will show above-average activity, e.g. in the doctoral researchers' representation of interests.

Information at the BGHS

Information about the programme of the BGHS, its work, and its activities reach the doctoral researchers through various formal and informal channels (see table 2). In the online survey, the doctoral researchers were asked to select three channels through which they most frequently catch up with news at the BGHS and to rank them according to their importance (see figure 27). The weekly newsletter was ranked first as the most important medium by the most respondents, 55.7%. Conversations with other

Channels for information at BGHS – asked in the survey:

- Conversations with other doctoral researchers
- Conversations with professors
- Conversations with staff members of the BGHS Office
- Homepage
- Jour Fixe
- Newsletter
- Notices (e.g. on bulletin boards)
- Plenary meeting

Table 2

[20] Chi-squared=38.634 d.f.=16, p=0.001, Cramer's V=0.350 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)
[21] Chi-squared=13.556 d.f.=6, p=0.035, Cramer's V=0.392 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)
[22] Chi-squared=23.605 d.f.=10, p=0.009, Cramer's V=0.387 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

[23] Chi-squared=22.778 d.f.=8, p=0.004, Cramer's V=0.380 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)
[24] Chi-squared=10.992 d.f.=2, p=0.004, Cramer's V=0.373 (some cells with fewer than 5 cases!)

Please select the three ways you use most often
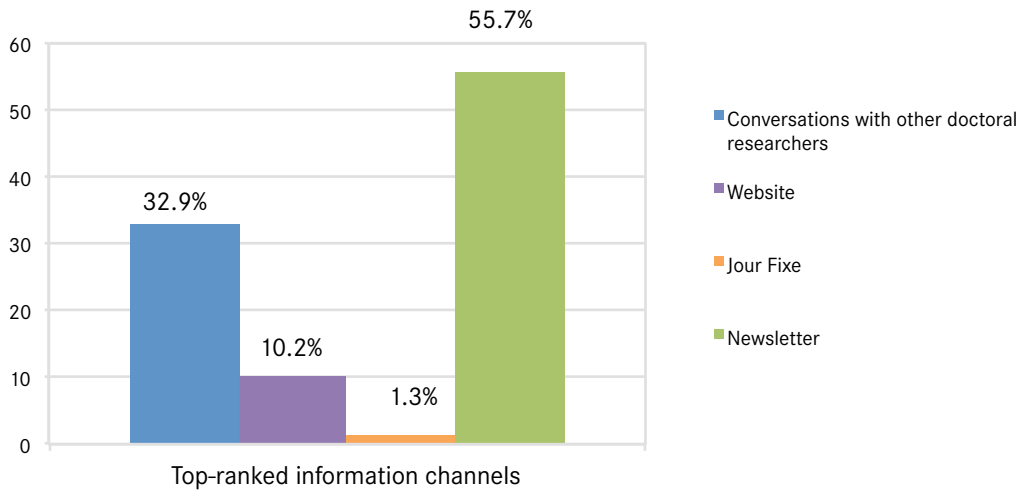to find out about new developments at the BGHS.

Figure 27

doctoral researchers and the website were ranked second and third. The other information channels given as response options played only a minor role. Half of the doctoral researchers with places to work on the BGHS corridor put conversations with other doctoral researchers in first place (16), followed by the newsletter (twelve respondents, 37.5%). For those who did not have a place to work on the BGHS corridor, the newsletter was more important than conversations with other doctoral researchers.

The newsletter was the key information medium for the BGHS doctoral researchers and was considered to be useful or very useful by 93.7% (74) of the respondents (see figure 28). All the respondents indicated that they were familiar with the newsletter. 87.1% (69) of the respondents considered the website to be useful or very useful overall (see figure 28); just one of the respondents indicated that she or he was unfamiliar with it.

The online survey differentiated the information on the **website** in various areas. 96.2% (76) of the respondents considered the opportunity to download forms and templates as (very) helpful. Just under 90% each considered the BGHS.NEWS blog, announcements (prior to events), and reports on people and guests at the BGHS (very) helpful. All doctoral researchers also have the opportunity to place their own profiles on the BGHS website, which 71.4% (50) of respondents considered a good or very good way to present themselves and their work.

Special events, especially the **Jour Fixe**, a meeting of the doctoral researchers twice per semester, and the **plenary meeting**, an annual event where the BGHS Office reports on all important events and projects and to which all BGHS members are invited, serve to provide information to the members of the BGHS (see figure 27). These events were also assessed as very helpful or helpful by

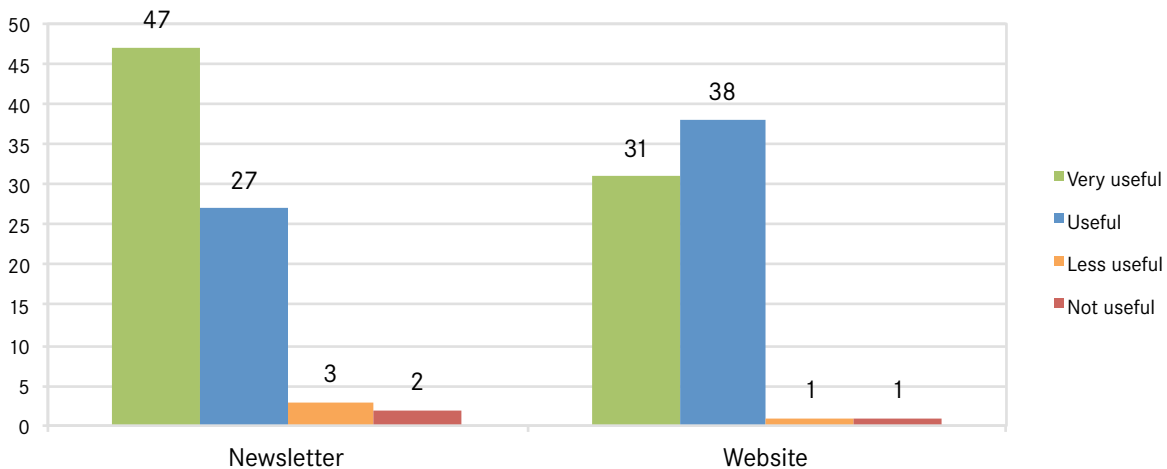Question: How useful do you consider the following information channels of the BGHS to be?

Figure 28

approximately half of the respondents, even if they did not function as prioritised information channels for them. It must be stated, however, that each of these meetings was considered "not useful" by one-fifth of the respondents. In addition, eleven respondents (13.9%) were unaware of the Jour Fixe and 13 respondents (16.5%) were unfamiliar with the plenary meeting, despite the fact that invitations to both events are disseminated throught the BGHS email distribution list and the newsletter.

The BGHS Office

All doctoral researchers surveyed indicated that they were familiar with the BGHS Office, and it was mentioned as an important contact point. One-third of the respondents (26) stated that they used it often, half (39) that they used it sometimes. A total of 65 of the 79 respondents used the Office regularly, and only two respondents indicated that they had never used it at all. Thus the BGHS Office is more important to the respondents than all other institutions at Bielefeld University concerned with doctorates (see figure 29): the BGHS Office was mentioned as the contact point used most often – even more than the faculties. The Department for Research Administration and Technology Transfer, in contrast, was hardly used, and some respondents were unfamiliar with it. The localities of the doctoral researchers' places to work also influenced their perceptions of the BGHS Office: again, it was the doctoral researchers with places to work on the BGHS corridor who consulted the BGHS Office most often – 56.3% (18) of them indicated it was a contact point they used often, of

the respondents with places to work at the faculty, it was only 13.8% (4).

Figure 30 shows the topics for which the BGHS Office was seen as a competent advisory service institution. It was mentioned as a very important contact point especially for advice concerning the study programme and technical problems, but it also played an important role in providing advice about the doctoral studies.

The online questionnaire also used an open-ended question to give respondents the opportunity to express criticism of the work of the BGHS Office. Only a few points were mentioned. Besides the desires for improvement of the study programme mentioned above, in particular more activities for historians (↗ study programme of the BGHS, page 15), small corrective measures were mentioned, for example "more information about financial opportunities". Two respondents used similar wording to ask for clearer information about the responsibilities of individual contact persons at the BGHS Office and the times when they were available for providing advice. In general, this shows recognition of the work of the BGHS Office, which is also apparent in the statistics: just under 90% of the respondents indicated that they were highly satisfied or satisfied with the work of the BGHS Office.

Support for supervision

In the online survey, the doctoral researchers were asked to assess some tools that the BGHS provides to support the supervisory relationship. The first question was about the **supervision agreement** (↗ survey of supervisors, page 55)

Question: Where do you go with your questions and concerns?
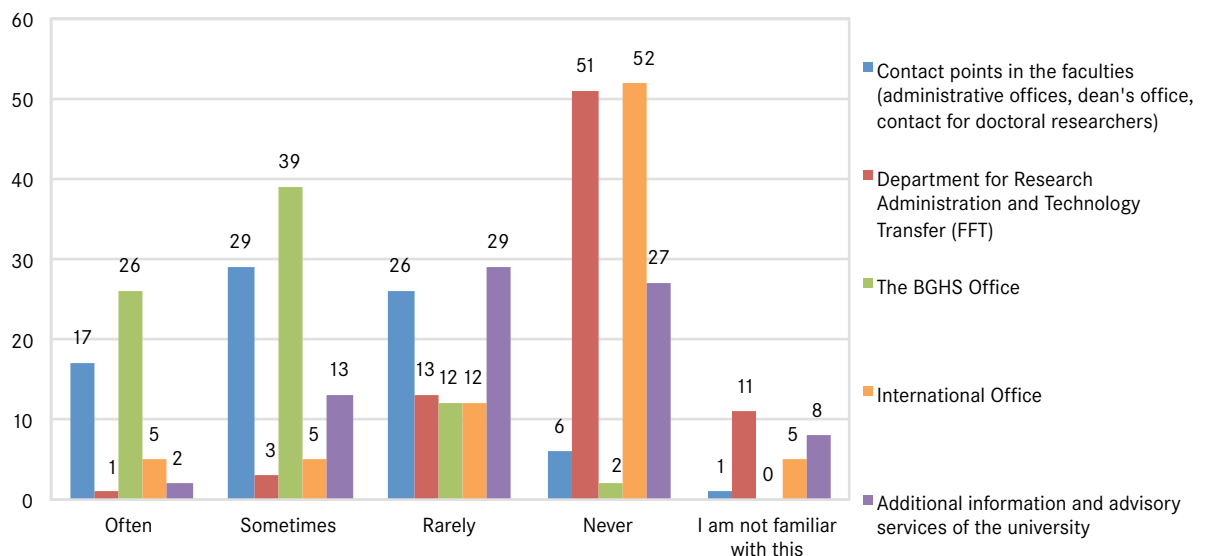(multiple answers possible)

Figure 29   **39**

Statement: I feel that I could turn to the BGHS Office with the following concerns:
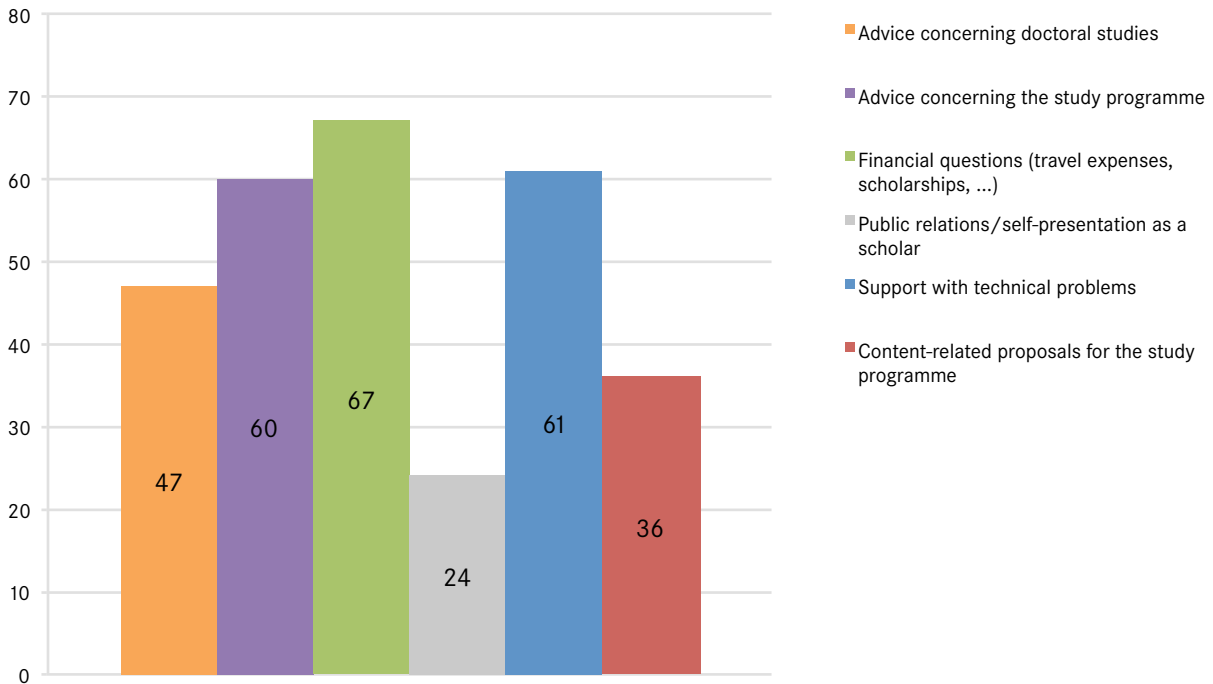(multiple answers possible)

Figure 30

signed by the doctoral researcher, the supervisor, and the BGHS Office at the beginning of the supervisory relationship. The doctoral researchers were asked to assess the following statement: "The BGHS's supervision agreement helps my supervisor and me to organise the supervisory relationship better." A normal distribution can be discerned here – 29 doctoral researchers (36.7%) agreed entirely or generally, 28 (35%) were undecided and responded "partly true", and 22 doctoral researchers (27.8%) said the statement was generally not true or not true at all. One possible explanation for the fact that roughly 60% of respondents at least cast doubt on the value of the supervision agreement is that the supervision agreement is a tool whose purpose is to document agreements in the beginning, but is often used only if problems arise. Perhaps the respondents no longer recall the substance of the agreement, which is why they considered is less beneficial.

The second question was about the **academic liaison** at the BGHS (↗ survey of supervisors, page 50), whose purpose is to support supervision. The academic liaison advises BGHS members and supports them in solving problems that may arise during the doctoral studies. 13 respondents (16.4%) agreed entirely and 35 (44.3%) generally with the statement: "The BGHS's academic liaison helps solve problems in the supervisory relationship." But 22 doctoral researchers (27.8%) only responded "partly true", and nine (11.3%) considered the statement generally not true or entirely not true. Similar to the supervision agreement,

the academic liaison is most likely to come into play when problems arise. So it is possible that his/her usefulness is not perceived specifically by those doctoral researchers who have not yet had to make use of him/her. Of course, it is also possible that some doctoral researchers have a certain resistance to calling in a professor – whom they may not know – in case of problems.

Statement: I consider it helpful that the BGHS exists alongside doctoral researchers and supervisors.
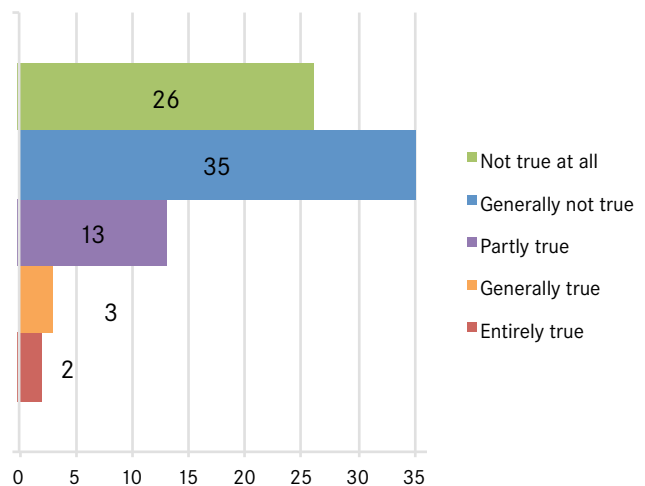

Figure 31

The fact that the BGHS exists is seen in a different light (↗ survey of supervisors, page 56): The **fundamental existence of the BGHS** besides the doctoral researchers and the supervisors, and thus the circumstance that someone else may be available if problems should arise, was welcomed by more than three-quarters (61) of the respondents (see figure 31).

II. Survey of supervisors

The second part of the Report on the findings of the 2016 evaluation survey is devoted to professors' thoughts and experiences that are important with respect to supervising doctorates. It presents the findings from eight qualitative guided interviews conducted between April and June 2016 with three female and five male professors supervising doctoral researchers at the BGHS. The purpose of this presentation is not to prepare an in-depth analysis of the supervisors' attitudes, for example in order to localise them in certain social positions in the academic field. Instead, the respondents' statements are systematised on the basis of the guide used for the interviews in such a way that this part of the report provides a descriptive overview of the entire range of ideas mentioned. In other words: this presentation is not an analysis of the supervision of doctorates at the BGHS, but provides systematised data on the supervisors' perspectives.

Besides gender distribution, the criteria for selecting the interviewees included appropriate representation of both faculties and their fields of research or epochs as well as the supervisors' varying levels of experience. In order to safeguard anonymity as promised, the respondents are called R1, R2, etc. without making gender, discipline, or experience as a supervisor apparent. All the interviews took place in the professors' offices and lasted between half an hour and one hour.

The first topic is the relative importance of supervising doctoral researchers in professors' everyday work and their exchange about this with one another. This is followed by the supervisors' views of the doctoral researchers, whereby the relationship between supervisors and doctoral researchers, the notions of "ideal doctoral researchers", challenges and problems during the doctoral studies, the situation of international doctoral researchers, and the doctoral researchers' prospects for the future are examined more closely. Finally, the respondents' assessments of the BGHS are explained; this concerns some tools used at the BGHS and the respondents' relationships to the BGHS in general.

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Supervising doctoral researchers as a part of professors' everyday work

Relative importance

When asked about the relative importance of supervising doctoral researchers in their everyday work, all the respondents emphasised that it was important, that it was "fun, that you see people developing" (R5), and that it was "attractive" (R7) to enter into exchange with young scholars. R5 said, "In a way, it's a part of the job description; for me, it's simply an important part of my job which I also enjoy." The respondents acknowledged that the task of supervising doctoral researchers competed with other tasks and had to be reconciled with them against the background of limited time. For example, R1 mentioned the "many meetings and deadlines" in everyday work "that are beyond my control". R7 reflected on the special position of professors in this context: "As a professor, you belong to a privileged caste. You can

> Question: "As a professor, you work in research and teaching, but also have administrative duties. What is the relative importance of supervising doctoral researchers in your everyday work against this background?"

decide what to do and for how long. [...] That is not the case for other status groups at the university, nor for other people working outside of universities. So in that sense, I have [...] the privilege that I can focus more on certain activities rather than others. [...] Well, I enjoy both teaching and research very much. So the ideal interface of teaching and research is interaction with doctoral researchers."

This quotation shows the particular interest in the doctoral researchers as young scholars, which was also described by other respondents. For example, R3 and R6 reported that it was unproblematic to reconcile various demands if the doctoral researchers were involved in research projects. And R4 gave the following reason why supervising doctoral researchers was so important: "after all, you're both bound up in the topics in a certain sense, because they're topics you're interested in, and also naturally an interest in the person". R2 said "that in the first ten, twelve years here, I put so much effort into third-party funding that my own research practically suffered because of it, but I hope that [...] my supervision of doctoral researchers did not suffer for this reason." And R8 pointed out that the Research Class made supervision easier because of the regular meetings it involved, but that at the same time, conducting the

Research Class was counted as part of their teaching load. Others said that they offered the Research Class in addition to their teaching load.

R6 reported, "Well, I take the time. Then that time is missing elsewhere. Perhaps I would have been able to publish even more if I hadn't taken so much time, but occasionally I publish together with the doctoral researchers, which can also be very fruitful for both."

Exchange between supervisors

When asked whether they exchange views about supervising doctoral researchers with other supervisors, the respondents indicated that this was rare and not systematic, and that it was more likely to take place in a private or informal setting than in a body such as a committee: "If I really had a huge problem, then I would know that I have enough colleagues at the faculty with whom I could talk about it [...] but of course not in the professors' meeting or some such setting, (laughs) that's clear." (R4)

Whereas some of them were apparently content with this situation, others desired more systematic exchange. R2 made clear that this could not be about making supervision uniform: "Then, the department would have to come to an agreement about it. I mean, there are certain points, I believe, you simply have to permit diversity, but maybe there are other things, too, concerning requirements or such, where agreement might come about."

The supervisors' views of the doctoral researchers

Supervisory relationships

Hierarchical relationships of different kinds may exist between supervisors and doctoral researchers. First of all, they are in a relationship as a supervisor and a person to be supervised, which is traditionally expressed by the German terms "doctor-mother" (Doktormutter) or "doctor-father" (Doktorvater). In many cases, however, a supervisor is simultaneously a superior, for example as the principal investigator in a research project. Then the level of an organisational employment relationship is added to the purely supervisory relationship. Both levels were addressed in the interviews.

The terms "doctor-mother/doctor-father"

When asked what they thought of the term "doctor-father" or "doctor-mother", the supervisors gave very diverse assessments on a continuum ranging from complete agreement to complete disagreement. Comparisons with family relationships were made very explicitly at both ends of the spectrum, whereas other comparisons and terms tended to be used more in the middle of the continuum. Yet all respondents measured the relationship in terms of the degree of independence on the part of the doctoral researchers (↗ online survey, page 21).

R3 compared the relationship with that to one's own children and agreed with the term: "Well, I do think that's correct in the [...] positive sense [...], of actually creating room for opportunities for development. I do have [...] children, and I'm not a helicopter dad when I take care of them, [...] they have to organise things themselves, depending on how old they are at the time. [...] But I'm not responsible for taking them by the hand, as it were, and guiding them through life."

R6 considered the term appropriate, but also compared the position of the supervisor with "this Chinese image of the listener, the teacher, well, in that sense too because in a certain sense you spend a very important phase of life together". R4 also pointed out that there "may be a certain proximity" to being a (biological) father, even if that

Question: "In Germany, supervisors are often called 'doctor-mothers' or 'doctor-fathers'. Would you call yourself a 'doctor-mother' or 'doctor-father'?"

included other aspects as well: "It certainly [...] isn't the normal working relationship in a company" (R4). The dependency in the relationship between the supervisor and the doctoral researcher, R4 said, had lessened distinctly. R1 described his/her own position as "a combination of mentoring and care [...]. And it always involves this feeling that you want them to succeed in getting a good start in their professional lives or their academic lives, and of course, I make every effort in that regard."

R8 reported very positive experiences with a personal relationship when he/she was a doctoral researcher, but rejected the term for him/herself. From the perspective of R8, the most important thing was that the type of relationship was reflected and potentially discussed jointly so that personal and unquestioned structures of dependency were prevented as far as possible: "I would call myself an academic mentor. And then it is also clear that [...] I'm there, but that they can also go on further. Well, a mentor can also stop and say, you don't need me any more from this point on."

R2 argued in support of a "professional working relationship" and rejected the "highly interesting and highly problematic" term "doctor-father": "Well, doctor-father is the classic term, and in my view, it really translates this family-like structure of [my discipline], that is, research basically as a social practice, that people really take their families and then place them, as it were, and that these family ties are basically overlaid on a professional culture or influence it."

R7 also compared family relationships and relationships in academia on the basis of his/her own experiences and categorically rejected the term: "That would not correspond to my self-understanding. Doctor-father, [...] that can suggest that you take on a kind of [...] parent-like role as a mentor, [...] well, I think people are independent, so how you can call that father, that's a mystery to me. Well, I didn't perceive my reviewer [...] either as a father or as a supervisor. [...] I would certainly have been able to go to people who had established a particular school of thought,

but I didn't want to go to them. They were doctor-fathers. [...] They formed schools of thought, they established schools of thought, and [...] one dissertation seemed just like the next. You could tell them from ten kilometers off."

Superiors vs. supervisors

On the basis of their own experiences, most respondents denied the danger of conflicting roles if a supervisor was also the doctoral researcher's superior. They each found individual ways of dealing with the dual hierarchical relationship that this situation implies.

As a matter of principle, R2 hired only postdocs as research associates because there were significantly fewer positions for them than for doctoral researchers and also because they were already better integrated into the scientific community, which reduced dependencies.

Some respondents referred in particular to the situation in research projects. R3 emphasised that working on a project and writing a dissertation were fundamentally different things: "Well, it's possible to do good project work, [...] but for dissertations, for accessing and working on an academic problem, he does have to do a bit more than what the project would require."

While it was suggested here that project work may be less qualified than a dissertation under certain circumstances, other respondents accorded high relative importance to the work in research projects in various respects. R4 acknowledged feeling more strongly challenged in research projects he/she initiated himself/herself than in the case of a doctoral project developed by the doctoral researcher on his/her own, "but I don't believe [...] that that [...] has concrete impacts on the supervision of the doctoral researchers". R6 also reported that working in projects tended to be more advantageous for the doctoral researchers and that they benefitted from it, "because if I work in a research project, I also have immense resources, I have great data, I have contact with other projects, and that makes my dissertation better". R7 also saw advantages for the research project arising from the dual functions as a staff member of a research project and a doctoral researcher because "every person writing the dissertation adds their own twist".

The impacts on the supervisory relationship had more to do with the number of projects: "The more projects, the farther away I am from things".

Whereas R7 stated that problems tended to arise more because of doctoral researchers' lacking skills than because of the allocation of roles, R8 emphasised that structural circumstances could be the cause of conflicting roles. For this reason, R8 conducted workshops with doctoral researchers in which the various roles were clarified. And R5 pointed out the distribution of roles within the organisation which defined superiors and their subordinates: "We simply aren't all equal, and despite all the external casualness, I'm relatively Prussian in this regard and say, okay, [...] work is also performance per unit of time – there are clear agreements that must be fulfilled. [...] And that makes up a part of a certain tension, but where I also try to convey the idea that it can be solved through communication."

The ideal doctoral researcher

Asked about how they imagine the ideal doctoral researcher to be, the supervisors mentioned qualities and prerequisites that the doctoral researchers should have, if possible already at the beginning of the supervisory relationship, and behaviours that they were to develop during the doctoral phase.

Personal qualities and prerequisites

The supervisors responding assumed that a person who was interested in obtaining a doctorate and approached them already had an idea for a topic that they were "excited about" (R4) or even "have a burning desire to work on" (R5) and that he/she was "intrinsically motivated" in this regard (R8). That person was also to be interested in the research or the research perspectives of the supervisor he/she approached and was to seek to enter into academic exchange about it. Most respondents preferred not to make a spontaneous decision about entering into a supervisory relationship, but first wanted to get to know the person interested in obtaining a doctorate if they did not know him/her already, e.g. from classes in the master's programme: "I always insist on meeting several times before we (laughing) decide that we belong together." (R1)

R1 emphasised that the selection process conducted by the BGHS when hiring doctoral researchers for positions funded by it had "guaranteed quality" and had reduced the uncertainty when taking on the supervision of external doctoral researchers. R6 pointed out that even in the case of intensive supervision, "one [cannot] completely control [the course of the doctorate], of course", but that the faculty's good reputation meant that above all, good doctoral researchers applied.

Besides these prerequisites relating to academic research, the supervisors expected that ideal doctoral researchers should have certain personal characteristics:

> ### Question: "How do you assess the situation of being a superior and a supervisor at the same time?"

> ### Question: "What does the ideal doctoral researcher look like to you? Do you know anyone who fits the description?"

they should be open to suggestions, but also develop their own independence as researchers early on; they should be capable of "analytical thinking" (R3) and have important preferences, for example enjoying reading (R3) or "an appetite for thinking one step further" (R4). Perseverance and steadfastness in crisis situations were desirable as well. R6 summarised this as follows: "He or she must be willing to learn, must be open, and must also have a certain psychological stability to withstand crises. I basically always say in the first conversation [...] that the academic achievement is practically only half of it; the other half is to persevere while obtaining the doctorate. Even in crises and even if it is difficult; after all, that is almost always the case."

Developments over the course of the supervisory relationship

Most respondents described an ideal supervisory relationship as "productive collaboration" (R1) between doctoral researchers and supervisors. Since the doctoral researchers were seen as personalities who were just as independent as the supervisors, some of the respondents pointed out that a mode for exchange had to be found: "Well, there are people who need more intensive supervision, others get very nervous if you meet every month. And that's something you have to find out during the process. And then you have to agree that it's important to bring up things you find problematic, and that applies to both sides. [...] To me, that's a sign of being professional." (R2)

R4 reported that he/she conducted individual meetings with the doctoral researchers once a month in addition to the Research Class in order to be informed about the progress of their work. Some respondents emphasised that it was easier to find a suitable modus operandi if they already knew the doctoral researchers well. R2 called doctoral researchers he/she already knew from their previous studies as "self-directed", i.e., as "extremely masterful in organising their own work". R8 pointed out that the integration of the doctoral researchers in the BGHS prevented problems: "That may also have to do with the high degree of structuredness that this programme offers and [...] being integrated in something." (↗ online survey, page 40)

The respondents underlined independence as an important characteristic of ideal doctoral researchers that should constantly be developed further over the course of the doctoral phase. The purpose was not to make them into "individualistic fighter types" (R5); instead, academic and personal independence were to be developed through intense involvement with others – the supervisor, other doctoral researchers, and other scholars. Doctoral

Question: "Have you supervised problematic doctoral researchers? Could you tell us briefly what you felt to be problematic?"

researchers' intense involvement in the Research Class through their own research topics was considered just as important as regularly attending conferences and establishing their own networks. R3 also highlighted the importance of longer stays abroad, potentially in connection with interdisciplinary exchange, which resulted in doctoral researchers being able to develop "much better standing" in the academic field.

Challenges and problems

Asked about the problems and challenges that doctoral researchers faced during the doctoral phase, some of the supervisors responding described a kind of negative foil of the ideal doctoral researcher. For example, perseverance, ability to self-organise, and development of personal and academic independence were mentioned as great challenges. Problems directly linked to the topic of the dissertation were reported only rarely, for example that the topic had been published by someone else or that problems arose in finding the appropriate theory. These problems were mentioned only briefly in the interviews. Other problems and challenges that the doctoral phase implies seemed to be much more decisive: the duration of the doctorate, financing, errors of judgement on both sides as well as interdisciplinarity and positioning in the academic field.

Duration and financing of the doctorate

The link between financing and the duration of the doctorate was presented as problematic by almost all respondents (↗ online survey, page 12), whereby they referred in particular to the three-year duration of the doctorate, which was now the general rule. R6 called this short period "unrealistic", R4 even "absurd": "I do believe that the quality of the work actually suffers for this reason: you have to define the topic in a different way [...] I needed two years to even find a hypothesis for my dissertation. Two years. Nobody has the money for that nowadays." R4 emphasised that the doctoral phase was also an intellectual and personal phase of maturation that took time. R3 reported on international journals' long review procedures that could delay cumulative doctorates.

Other respondents pointed out that on the other hand, a protracted doctoral phase could be a burden in itself: "I'll have a meeting today with a doctoral researcher [...] who has been working on his doctorate for six years, and he isn't happy with the situation. But his problem is simply that he has to finance his living expenses, which is why he doesn't have much time for [the dissertation]." (R1)

Whereas R1 presented external employment as a problem, R2 also saw it as an opportunity (↗ online survey, page 13): "Well, in most cases, my experience has been

that most of them say: well, I want to complete this dissertation, but I've also realised that, for example, I really enjoy my current job, and somehow, that suits me much more. And of course it's splendid if they realise that already."

In academia, precarious employment above all was seen as problematic, which could also conflict with personal plans for the future (e.g., starting a family). R8 also saw the danger here that the "internal freedom" that academic work requires could be lost due to concerns about the future.

Errors of judgement

Various kinds of errors of judgement were seen as causing problems in the supervisory relationship. The respondents mentioned errors of judgement on the part of the doctoral researchers, for example that the dissertation was "only" a somewhat larger master's thesis and preparing it would accordingly take a fairly small amount of time and effort, or that "summa cum laude", the highest mark, was the standard.

But above all, the respondents spoke about their own errors of judgement relating to doctoral researchers. R1 talks about how he/she had always considered the texts submitted by a particular doctoral researcher to be drafts and had treated them as such until it became apparent at some point that they were already final versions: "Then I changed the way I supervise, and I always ask them to give me the texts that are the most difficult for them, and then I work with them until these passages are final, so I can judge the situation better now."

R3 and R6 spoke about how they had misjudged doctoral researchers' skills, for example the ability to focus on a topic or deal with suggestions and criticism. Both referred to the opportunities for obtaining external guidance and support in such cases, e.g., from the academic liaison of the BGHS, with whom they had had very good experiences (↗ online survey, page 40). It appeared to be key in this context that the supervisor and the doctoral researcher were a good match in principle or that they could make their relationship work in the course of the doctorate. For example, R2 reported that he/she had to inform one doctoral researcher "that I do not see any way to, as it were, supervise her differently from the way I'm supervising her". Such conflicts relating to fit could arise especially when supervision was provided by supervisors of different disciplines, as R5 said.

Interdisciplinarity and positioning in the academic field

Some respondents described the process of doctoral researchers positioning themselves in academia as a major challenge that was even larger in the interdisciplinary

Question: "What do you consider the greatest challenge for the doctoral phase from the perspective of doctoral researchers?"

framework of the BGHS. R2 wished "that [the doctoral researchers] learn over time to be secure in their own disciplines and then, on the basis of this security, as it were, enter into interdisciplinary conversation". R5 saw the danger in a strong interdisciplinary orientation to be a lack of (academic) professional prospects "because the jobs are filled by the individual disciplines". R3 also saw a challenge in "finding a place for yourself somewhere, both with your own peers and within the entire system". R8 described this challenge as follows: "[The dissertation] is a piece of work to obtain an academic qualification in which they must prove that they master the state of the art and the relevant theories, that they have incorporated them, and that they link up with them. They have to prove that and at the same time, they have to do something completely independent, something new, something different in their doctorate. And finding a balance between those things, [...] is an enormous challenge for most of them."

International doctoral researchers

When asked whether different things were important when supervising international doctoral researchers in contrast to Germans, the respondents reported particular challenges in some respects, both for the doctoral researchers and for the supervisors. R1 pointed out that residency in Germany for doctoral researchers from outside the EU was linked to their financing "and for them, that is an even more existential threat" than the situation of doctoral researchers overall, which was precarious in any case. Those respondents who supervised international doctoral researchers emphasised that they were an asset for them as well as for the academic institutions – the faculties, the university, the BGHS. But they also spoke about special challenges in terms of language, reconciling different cultures, and prospects for the future that could significantly increase the amount of time and effort required for their supervision.

Language

R1 described the linguistic challenge for those international doctoral researchers who wrote their dissertations in German or English, which were not their mother tongues (↗ online survey, page 12). "To be honest, I totally underestimated that. Because these doctoral researchers are so intelligent and it is very, very, very difficult for them to get a really good mark at the end. [...] You have to invest a whole lot of time, it's just a very, very large amount of work on the text. And so it almost develops into a kind of supervision for which I am not 100% competent."

Conducting academic work in a foreign language (English) was a challenge not only for the international doctoral researchers, but also for the supervisors, and in class, it was also a challenge for the other doctoral researchers who were used to discussing their research topics in German. R4 reported the following experiences: "On a day like today, I'm meeting with a doctoral researcher at two in the afternoon, and then I have to switch into English, and it's about specialised terminology, then that's [...] demanding, [...] and in the research workshop, if there are just one or two people who speak English and suddenly everyone has to speak English, and it's about issues that require specialised knowledge, then sometimes the participants aren't willing to speak English for the sake of those few. But conversely, members of the research workshop have also pointed out to me when I inadvertently spoke German in an English-language session."

R4 also acknowledged that there were moments when this situation could not be managed: "Then I apologise to the person involved and say, now I have to say (laughs) two sentences in German, I can't help it. Because at some point, I can't manage in a foreign language, there are language barriers and specialised terminology, and things get difficult."

Different cultures

Referring to problems when translating specialised terminology into a foreign language linked up to a different area in which the respondents saw particular challenges: reconciling different cultures. Whereas the respondents underlined that it was "great" (R1) and "fun" (R4) to work with the international doctoral researchers and that they appreciated the "doctoral researchers from the global South" (R6) and the "new input" (R4), they always also pointed out that cultural differences had to be overcome. This referred very significantly to the academic cultures. R4 reported how interesting it was to be confronted with a new corpus of sources he/she was unfamiliar with, "but when it is about conceptualisation, when it is about really developing a hypothesis, at least it's been my observation [...] that they have a different mindset. And it isn't always easy to come to agreement."

Experience apparently played a major role overall, and it was gained through increased time and effort for supervision. R8 said, "In these situations [...] I also feel inexperienced and have to learn a lot and [...] I also have to observe a lot of things in the first place so that I can establish contact, which I can do very quickly with people who come from here because so many things can be taken for granted." But R8 also pointed out that on the other hand, moving in international academic contexts was much more

a matter of course for the international doctoral researchers than for people born and bred in Bielefeld, for example travelling to international conferences.

Other supervisors also reported on cultural challenges in the supervisory relationship. They explained that some of the international doctoral researchers "still have a much, much stronger [...] notion of a hierarchical relationship" (R1) and that some of them presupposed "a classical student-teacher relationship" (R6) that stood in the way of developing independence. But R6 also reported that it was possible to resolve such difficulties arising from these cultural differences with the support of the academic liaison of the BGHS.

Prospects for the future

R8 emphasised that the topic of migration was linked to the situation of the international doctoral researchers and that their decisions to go to Bielefeld University and Germany certainly could be coincidental (for example, because positions were available there). This raised the question: "Will this coincidence become something permanent? Or will the next step to another country be just as coincidental?"

Some respondents pointed out that it was difficult to give the international doctoral researchers appropriate prospects for the future, in particular in academia. One reason mentioned was that the international doctoral researchers were not sufficiently familiar with the German academic system and its implications and perhaps had expectations that were too optimistic: "Well, sometimes I think it's unfortunate that they can't concentrate fully on research and teaching in the time following the dissertation, but that we have this third-party funding and all these structures." (R2)

But R1 also pointed out that the German academic system as well as other areas of society "are still quite rigid" and that international doctoral researchers had hardly any professional options for this reason.

Doctoral researchers' prospects for the future

Although the development of good prospects for the future seemed to be a particular challenge for the doctoral researchers, some respondents also saw problems for the German doctoral researchers, even though they reported that most of their former doctoral researchers had found satisfactory employment within or outside of academia. The problems desribed by the respondents mostly had to do with the conditions in the German academic system, since most respondents mentioned a career in academia as the first option, not least because the supervisors "naturally [have] limited [knowledge] about other professional

Question: "You also supervise international doctoral researchers. What would you say is special about supervising them?"

fields, we aren't specialists there" (R6). Concrete non-academic professional prospects were hardly mentioned in the interviews; instead, the respondents used non-academic careers as a foil against which they assessed career options in academia (↗ online survey, page 19).

The respondents' assessments of the junior researchers' chances of pursuing an academic career differed widely. R1 saw the prospects for a permanent position in academia as so poor that "[I] usually recommend [that the doctoral researchers] seek employment outside the university. Unless they are really absolute top achievers." Only if the opportunity for a postdoc position or a tenure-track assistant professorship arose could it really be recommended.

R2 described that the doctoral researchers, and among them in particular the women, considered precarious employment an obstacle. When advising doctoral researchers, R2 tried "simply to make [the discipline] interesting in some way and to show people that you can get a doctorate and then perhaps do other things, too, and in a sense [...] develop another leg to stand on." People had to realise, R2 claimed, that the academic standards were the same, however, regardless whether they remained in academia or not. Since professors could not influence where their doctoral researchers would find employment, the BGHS's career development activities were so important. For this reason, R2 did not consider it a problem, but rather an opportunity, if doctoral researchers were employed outside the university and already gained professional experience there. In this context, R4 mentioned schoolteachers obtaining a doctorate, whom one "[need not] worry about in this regard".

Some respondents reported that it only became apparent over time whether someone wanted to remain in academia or not. R4 recommended "looking around a bit". R5 stated that it was important to make a clear decision for or, as appropriate, against a doctorate: "Neither in academia nor elsewhere is anyone waiting for the doctoral researcher to show up; instead, it is relatively hard work to obtain such a position [...]. I consider that a [...] task [...] for us to at least encourage or tell them to explore their broad spectrum of qualifications."

R7 also reported the experience that career goals only emerged over time, but emphasised that it was easier to supervise those who knew from the outset which path they wanted to take. For those who wanted to stay in academia, working in collaborative research projects, for example in a Collaborative Research Centre (SFB), was advantageous. Academia was a good professional option at first: "Well,

the first three years are no problem at all, the first six may not be, either, but then ...".

R8 pointed out that openness to various career paths also supported creative openness in thinking, whereby this could be problematic for a career in academia: "The unusual things I indulged in [...] in order to be able to think freely, they would no longer work at all today. In other words, my list of publications wouldn't be long enough by a long shot." But R8 did not consider it problematic for people holding doctorates to be employed outside academia, after all: "They go into other areas of society, and it's good if thoughtful people take positions there and are involved in shaping those fields."

In contrast, R3 emphasised that doctoral researchers were socialised for academia and that support for doctorates, e.g., in Research Training Groups, "always involved at least a small promise: we need you as a scholar". For this reason, it was important not to "produce" too many doctorates because there were not enough permanent positions in academia. People who wanted to work outside academia could do so even without a doctorate. R3 considered international experiences and publications as well as the development of a "brand" for positioning oneself in the academic field to be necessary for a career in academia: "Well, in my experience, in my career, it was always quite good [...] to somehow represent a particular method or a particular topic. [...] where after five, six years, everyone says: Oh yes, that's such-and-such." Doctoral researchers who worked in research projects additionally had the opportunity to gain professional experience "that actually is usable in other institutions on the labour market, including those outside the world of academia".

Question: "How do you imagine the future of the doctoral researchers you supervise?"

Question: "Would you say that the doctoral researchers have a fruitful academic environment here in Bielefeld?"

To Mahshid Mayar, the purpose is intercultural exchange: the Iranian historian has just completed her doctorate on US Empire and World Geography Knowledge and was involved in organising the 2016 Annual Seminar of the BGHS on Eurocentrism.

Assessments of the BGHS

Tools of the BGHS

The BGHS's programme includes various tools that are intended to support the doctoral studies. Three of them were mentioned in the interviews, whereby the supervision agreement and the doctoral researchers' annual reports have more of a structuring function and the purpose of the Research Class is above all to support the doctoral researchers' academic progress.

The supervision agreement serves to structure the supervisory relationship and is signed by the doctoral researcher, the supervisor, and the BGHS Office at the beginning of the doctorate. The doctoral researchers' annual reports are intended to help structure ongoing work, and besides brief descriptions of the dissertation and progress since the previous report, they also include information about classes attended and taught, lectures, and publications as well as an assessment of the doctoral researcher's membership in the BGHS. The doctoral researchers submit their reports to their supervisors and the BGHS Office. The supervisors prepare brief statements on them, which they also submit to the BGHS Office. In addition, the BGHS Office gives the doctoral researchers personal feedback. The Research Class is a stable interdisciplinary forum that is directed by a professor, but whose topics are determined by the participating doctoral researchers. This class format is intended to meet the needs of the doctoral researchers in their ongoing research work and to activate and support peer learning.

Supervision agreement

All respondents pointed out that the supervision agreement was a good idea because it created mutual commitment and reliability (↗ online survey, page 39). R1 stated that it was particularly helpful for supervisors who are still inexperienced, but also for the doctoral researchers because the agreements inform them about their rights. Most respondents described signing the agreement as a "symbolic act" (R4) that had "no direct impacts" (R6) on normal everyday work and had effects especially "if problems of whatever kind come up so that the doctoral researchers

Question: "The BGHS uses supervision agreements. Do you work with them, and how do you assess the support they provide?"

have something to refer to and can say, "but here you said you'll do such-and-such", and conversely too, of course" (R3). R8 pointed out that they were a good "formal framework for a conflict-prone relationship" that one could make use of more: "Now that you bring it up, I realise that I do not work with it, and I think that's a bad idea". However, it became apparent in all the interviews that the respondents were not spontaneously aware of the contents of the supervision agreement.

The doctoral researchers' annual reports

The annual reports were also considered to be a useful tool for reflecting on progress that did not require too much time and effort. R1 pointed out their fundamental function for time management: "Well, for everyone involved, it's a sign: hey, oh my god, another year has gone by". R3 called the annual report a "structuring element" of the work process and "a good disciplining tool that is also useful pedagogically". And R2 said that the doctoral researchers also appreciated this tool and "don't simply crank it out or just write down whatever comes to mind, but that they also use it as a brief moment to stop and take stock". R7 assumed that reflection was not assured by all supervisors to the same extent and emphasised: "I think they make sense. I enjoy reading them, some more intensively than others. To see, well, hm, what has actually happened."

R5 placed preparation of the reports in a context with the BGHS as an institution and pointed out that "the BGHS needs them too, to provide a reason, as it were, for its own existence" and that at the same time, the report had the function of the doctoral researchers "presenting themselves" to the BGHS and that the quality of the reports also said something about the quality of supervision: "First of all, it reflects on me." Against this background, R1 assumed that the reports were "always sugarcoated".

R5 and R6 suggested using the reports even more intensively as a supervisory instrument. R5 assumed that the reports "more or less disappear [...] once they have been prepared" and would "discuss them in a bit more

detail". R6 went further and proposed that the supervisors be asked "to point out problems honestly and clearly" and "dig deeper" as appropriate.

Research Class

The Research Class format (↗ online survey, page 15) was greatly appreciated by all respondents, and some were even highly enthusiastic. R1 "enjoyed very much" teaching the Research Class and described it as an "intellectual challenge and delight". R4 called it "simply great", R6 "a highlight" that "thrills" the doctoral researchers and the teaching staff. R2 appreciated in particular that the Research Class was scheduled for multiple semesters "because you can really see the development there". R3 emphasised the advantage of a heterogeneous group as "mutually fruitful", and R2 "liked it a lot because you have [...] other [professors'] doctoral researchers in your group".

The ability to make decisions flexibly about the substance of the Research Class was also greatly appreciated. Whereas R2 used the Research Class to discuss theoretical texts with the doctoral researchers, among other things, R3 had the doctoral researchers present lectures there that they give at conferences. R6 also appreciated the "very sharp focus on methods and theories and research designs, and not simply talking about ongoing work" as well as the unchanging composition of the group and summarised: "Well, to me, the Research Class is a very strong tool that has really raised the level".

The Research Class was also used flexibly in terms of scheduling. Whereas R6 conducted it as a class with four hours per week, R7 preferred block seminars held outside Bielefeld, where all participants presented something and gave each other feedback: "Since everyone is away from Bielefeld, and also away from work, of course they're always online, but not as distracted as they are here [...] and the intensity [...] of dialogue is already great, as it were, I think that's important for the Research Class."

Some respondents considered it problematic that the Research Class was part of their teaching load. R4 suggested opening up the Research Class for master's students to make the group somewhat larger. R5 proposed coordinating teaching schedules so that they made up only a small part of the teaching load, to the extent possible. Whereas R4 and R5 referred mostly to the teaching load at the faculty, R8 mentioned his/her own teaching load: "I have to teach a lot here. And at some point, I thought [...] if I use two hours per week for four semesters for a Research Class, then I'm really tied down. That's a problem here, and I don't want to teach more than nine hours per week."

Relationship to the BGHS

When asked about their relationships to the BGHS, the respondents brought three perspectives into play: firstly, as supervisors of doctoral researchers, i.e., from the perspective of doctoral training; secondly, as professors; and thirdly, as members of the faculties involved.

Question: "What do you think of the annual reports that the doctoral researchers at the BGHS prepare?"

The BGHS as an institution for doctoral training

Overall, the BGHS was highly valued as an institution for doctoral training. Some of the respondents were involved in preparing the proposals for the BGHS and were still "proud" (R1) of the institution, considered it a "fantastic idea" (R2), and "appreciate it enormously" (R6). This recognition referred largely to the achievements of the BGHS relating to the structured doctoral programme. The reasons given why the BGHS was a good and meaningful institution included, for example: because the Research Class was a great format (R1), because the doctoral researchers benefitted greatly (R2), because it provided structure for "disciplines that previously had little structure" (R3), thereby creating "really a completely different world of obtaining a doctorate" (R6), because the doctoral researchers enjoyed "a generally very caring atmosphere" (R4), because it provided resources for the doctoral researchers (R7), and because it offered a space "like a home or a good place" in particular to the international doctoral researchers (R8).

Yet the assessments of the BGHS in relation to the doctoral researchers were quite ambivalent in some respects. R3 appreciated that the doctoral researchers work their way through a programme that academically speaking goes beyond "what they do in a small format in their dissertations, as it were, and that they can do things in a broader field too." This was an "intellectual stimulus" that made sense, "but the substantive progress for their dissertations and for their own development in their disciplines actually takes place outside the BGHS". R4 pointed out that although the many and diverse activities and opportunities within the BGHS could take a significant amount of the doctoral researchers' time, the good atmosphere was praised too, "and people enjoy that as well".

The relationship between the professors and the BGHS

The respondents tended to assess their own positions within the framework of the BGHS as ambivalent, but that did not mean that the BGHS as an institution was called into question. In particular those who were not (or no longer)

Question: "How would you assess the Research Class format at the BGHS?"

members of the Executive Board of the BGHS felt more distant. The reasons they mentioned were above all a lack of time to get more involved because of other commitments, or that they preferred to invest their time in other activities, e.g., in supervising their doctoral researchers (R6). R5 pointed out that the BGHS as an institution was initially anonymous, but that "this anonymity and this distance"

Question: "How do you see your relationship to the BGHS?"

were easy to overcome through personal contacts to the management or the BGHS Office. R8 stated: "Beyond the doctoral researchers I supervise, I have nothing to do with the BGHS". But this could change, e.g., through a cooperation arrangement for a proposal for a collaborative research project.

The relationship between the faculties and the BGHS

The respondents linked their own distance to the BGHS to the distance between the BGHS and the faculties involved by localising themselves as professors in the faculties. R1 reported "that it certainly is difficult, when you're in the normally intensive life of a professor at the faculty, that the BGHS does not become a parallel institution beside the faculty. And these things always have two sides, the side of the faculty and maybe the side where the BGHS could promote collaboration even more intensively." R2 also suggested: "maybe one should think about interfaces again". The spatial proximity in the X building "makes things easier, of course", and they had the opportunity to participate in the faculty's scheduling of classes, in which the BGHS was also involved.

R7 pointed out that one could view the BGHS not only as an institution for doctoral training, but "I could also see it differently, as an interface of faculties, of interdisciplinary research, I think that's important. And when I think back to 2006, when it was established, that was what we were talking about, that's what we were going to do. [...] But this second, somewhat – how shall I say – closer understanding of the BGHS, I don't see that among the professors. But there are always exceptions."

R7 saw the professors as having the duty to dedicate themselves to this task and stated, "But I still think, well, in light of this state of affairs, in light of this situation, the BGHS makes a lot out of what's available." It was recognised and institutionalised within the faculty as an institution for doctoral training, and "the faculty [...] would definitely be quite a bit poorer if the BGHS didn't exist, when it comes to doctoral training".

Some of the doctoral researchers at the BGHS. The BGHS had 117 doctoral researchers at the time of the survey.

III. Synthesis of results

Parts I and II of the present report on findings both aim to evaluate the work of the BGHS, yet each focusses on different aspects: Whereas the online survey of doctoral researchers in Part I provides information about their assessments of the study and training programmes, the structures of the BGHS, and the underlying conditions of the doctoral phase from the perspective of doctoral researchers, the survey of supervisors in Part II sheds light above all on the general conditions of the supervisory relationship that seem important to the professors, whereby the main focus is not necessarily on the BGHS. Against the background of the supervisors' assessments of favourable and unfavourable factors during the doctoral phase, the structures and activities of the BGHS are placed in the context of the process of obtaining a doctorate, and the doctoral researchers' assessments with respect to the quality and usefulness of the activities of the BGHS can be placed within this context. In other words: this approach makes it possible to visualise the services which the BGHS actually provides for doctoral training and also to reveal additional current development needs.

The final synthesis of the results of the two surveys has three sections: the first deals with the strengths of the BGHS, the second shows where the assessments are ambivalent, and the last indicates the field with clear development needs.

Strengths of the BGHS

Both the doctoral researchers and the professors responding consider even the fact that the BGHS exists as a third actor involved in doctoral training to be a great advantage, and they value its many and diverse activities. Viewing the two studies together makes clear that the greatest strengths of the BGHS at the substantive level currently lie in the Research Class format, and at the structural level in the areas of financing opportunities, advisory and support services, as well as the available workspace.

Research Class

Doctoral researchers and supervisors agree that the Research Class is an outstanding format for interdisciplinary scientific exchange. The male doctoral researchers appreciate the opportunity for constructive criticism above all, the female ones also value the Research Class as a protected space in which they can develop their own work. For the supervisors, the appeal of the Research Class lies in the scientific exchange in a heterogeneous group, "which has really raised the level" (R6), and in the possibility to track the scientific development of the doctoral researchers over a longer period of time. Thus, the Research Class is the tool that actually brings the interdisciplinary aspirations of the BGHS to life.

Funding opportunities

The surveyed supervisors underline the major importance of attending conferences and spending time abroad for the personal and academic development of the doctoral researchers and their professional prospects in the future. The doctoral researchers appreciate and make use of the funding opportunities offered by the BGHS in these areas. Some supervisors explicitly request that doctoral positions at the BGHS be made available for German and/or international doctoral researchers, including the period after discontinuation of Excellence Initiative funding. And the results of the online survey show that it is especially the doctoral researchers holding these positions who take full advantage of the activities and opportunities of the BGHS and simultaneously show the greatest dedication to the community, e.g., as doctoral researchers' representatives.

Advice and support

The results of the online survey reveal that the doctoral researchers consider the BGHS Office a competent centre for advice, for example about funding opportunities, the study programme, technical support, and the doctoral studies. The BGHS Office staff members are evidently capable of providing information not only about BGHS activities, but also competently conveying information from the faculties, which alone have the right to confer doctorates. Some supervisors also appreciate the advisory services and events about non-academic career development offered by the BGHS, whereby it is also apparent that an academic career is the priority option, but one fraught with major uncertainties. The doctoral researchers responding have a similar

view, both valuing the transferable-skills workshops and prioritising further academic training.

In addition, the supervisors consider the supporting tools of the BGHS at the structural level, namely the doctoral researchers' annual progress reports, the supervision agreement, and the academic liaison very important for the supervisory relationship. The doctoral researchers' approval of these tools is not so strong. The reason for this may be that each of the doctoral researchers has just a single supervisory relationship, and that they do not see why such support should be necessary if that relationship is smooth. The supervisors, in contrast, have more experience with various supervisory relationships, so as a result, they value such support more highly even if they themselves have not (yet) made use of it.

Workspace
How important the workspace at the BGHS is overall is revealed rather indirectly. Some supervisors pointed out in the context of the Research Classes how important communication among the doctoral researchers is for their doctoral studies, in other words, that a strong BGHS community represents added value. This is confirmed by the results of the online survey which show that such a community develops especially among those with places to work on the BGHS corridor. These doctoral researchers indicate that not only do they have more contacts to other doctoral researchers, but that they are also actively involved in shaping the BGHS and participating in the opportunities to promote their self-initiative.

Ambivalent assessments
Overall, the activities offered by the BGHS are seen as above-average, but some aspects are considered ambivalent or are valued differently by different respondents. They concern areas of the academic study programme, internationalisation, and the development of independence above all.

Study programme
The doctoral researchers consider the quality of the classes in the academic study programme at the BGHS to be very high. This is true of the Research Classes as well as the Theory and Methods Classes. The supervisors also pointed out the high academic level in their Research Classes. However, the doctoral researchers are less satisfied with the number of Research Classes in history and the variety of topics in the Theory and Methods Classes. This could perhaps be remedied by better coordination of the study programme by the BGHS Office and more varied classes offered by the teaching staff from the faculties. Yet the fact remains that it is not possible to offer a large variety of classes every semester because the BGHS does

not have the "critical mass" of doctoral researchers that would require, so variety must be created across multiple semesters.

Internationalisation
In this context, the doctoral researchers also pointed out problems with respect to internationalisation. German-language doctoral researchers in particular criticised that the number of English-language classes offered in the study programme was too small. Some of the supervisors also called attention to linguistic challenges in classes and in supervising doctoral researchers, but referred above all to the problems arising for academic discourse conducted in a foreign language. Nonetheless, the majority of supervisors think that the international doctoral researchers provide enrichment for them (the supervisors) and for the BGHS.

It also becomes visible in both studies that the BGHS plays a decisive role for the international doctoral researchers because it gives them "a home" (R8) that they would not find elsewhere at the university; their low level of local networking refers to this fact. However, the information provided about local networking structures also shows that the BGHS is not perceived as an academic network – if that were the case, then all the doctoral researchers responding would have had to indicate that they have a local network –, but perhaps more as an organisational network.

Development of independence
The supervisors emphasised in the interviews that the development of academic independence is one of the major challenges of the doctoral phase. In its training programme, the BGHS promotes opportunities in which the doctoral researchers can learn to position themselves as independent scholars and to establish and expand their own networks, namely the Annual Seminar, the self-organised workshops, and the Interdisciplinary Colloquium. The format of the self-organised workshops is well-received by the doctoral researchers, but the two other formats are appreciated to a clearly lesser degree, especially by the female doctoral researchers. Experience with the two formats also plays a role in their assessment. Doctoral researchers who were already involved in organising these formats or who planned to do so assessed their impacts on their own development distinctly more positively than those who have not yet been involved.

Development needs
In an overall view of the findings, one field becomes apparent in which there is a clear need for development: the relationship between the BGHS and the two faculties. R7 pointed out that the BGHS was also conceived of as an "interface of faculties, of interdisciplinary research" (R7)

from the beginning. Concerning the doctoral researchers, this is achieved at least in part, as the assessments of the Annual Seminar and the Interdisciplinary Colloquium as well as the great interest in the Interdisciplinary Seminar, the Study Groups, and the self-organised workshops show. Some supervisors also emphasised that the discussions in the Research Classes are more fruitful because of the interdisciplinary composition of the group. Regarding support for academic collaboration, the supervisors responding believed that both the BGHS and the faculties and their members have some catching up to do.

The fact that a structural distance exists between the faculties and the BGHS is also indicated in the doctoral researchers' responses to the statement about whether they come into contact easily with other doctoral researchers at the BGHS. Only about half of those who have a place to work at the university, but not on the BGHS corridor, agreed. In contrast, almost 80% of the doctoral researchers with a place to work on the BGHS corridor agreed. In the interview, R5 spoke about his strategy for overcoming this distance, namely through personal contacts to the management and the BGHS Office. Deliberations on the part of the management of the BGHS and the BGHS Office also go in the direction of speaking to scholars from the faculties in person and getting them involved in the BGHS. As described in the survey of supervisors, closer collaboration tends to fail because of a lack of time, not because of a lack of appreciation. The format of the Research Class shows that not only the doctoral researchers, but also many supervisors certainly are interested in interdisciplinary academic exchange. The question arises how this interest can be made fruitful for concrete collaboration in the context of the BGHS.

Publishing information

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