

Chapter 18

ApPARENTly We're Scholars: ParentScholars Navigating Academia

Stacie Lynn Finley

Missouri State University, USA

Dennis L. Rudnick

Missouri State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter is a culmination of conversations between two ParentScholars. One, an academic mother; the other, an academic father. Both share their journey from PK12 classrooms into higher education. Their lived experiences have shaped their identities and continue to transform who they are as parents and as scholars. The ParentScholars in this chapter examine not only their roles as parents and scholars, but also the ways in which gender and other social identities impact their lives. Major themes explored through their personal stories include expectations, communications, teaching, and decision-making. The authors name ParentScholar in an effort to better define and understand the complexities of what it means to be a parent and a scholar.

INTRODUCTION

Two assistant professors start at the same institution, in the same department, at the same time. They first met at New Faculty Orientation and quickly learned each of them have one child, around the same age. One is an academic father. One, an academic mother. While they ended up in the same place, at the same time, their journey to this place has been filled with similarities and differences. Lived experiences have shaped who they are as parents and as scholars in higher education. Expectations not just as parents, but within their role as a mother or father influence their career path.

Stacie started her teaching career after taking a nontraditional route into teaching. She grew up in California before moving to Missouri where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology. After graduating and taking time away from school, she went back to earn her teaching certificate and a Master of Science in Elementary Education. She began her elementary school teaching career in a large school

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-3460-4.ch018

district in Southwest Missouri. After becoming a mother, she made the decision to transition into higher education. She moved to Alabama to complete her doctoral program, while working full time and being the main caretaker for her small child. Now, she is an assistant professor navigating her way through being an academic mother.

Dennis also started his teaching career via a non-traditional route. After earning his Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, he spent several years as a preschool teacher in New York. He moved to Seattle, Washington for graduate school, where he completed his master's and Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, Multi-cultural Education, got married and had a child. After several years in a predominantly administrative role, he is now an assistant professor navigating his way through being an academic father.

Being what we term ParentScholars has been a journey with various points of transition. Moving from being classroom teachers to graduate students and then assistant professors in higher education created opportunities to experience being both a scholar and a parent in different spaces and places. Through this journey there have been times of struggle and triumph, failure and growth, disappointment and joy. Many variables, both positive and negative, have impacted their lived experiences, such as strong mentoring relationships, being exposed to different world views, gender discrimination, caregiver bias, and more.

Drago et al. (2005) wrote about caregiver bias within higher education after studying institutions across the United States, stating, "Combining any family commitments with the extreme demands of a fast-track career makes simultaneous career and family success difficult to achieve" (p. 23). This chapter looks to explore the stories of these two ParentScholars trying to achieve success, as they find their place in their new positions and reflect on their journey: how has being an academic parent shaped their identity? How does parenthood inform their instructional practices? How does being an educator influence their parenting? Additionally, this chapter looks to explore how differences in roles, which often carry societal norms, have impacted the journey into academia.

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

This chapter stems from conversations between these two ParentScholars, with the aim to share the stories and perspectives of an academic mother and an academic father. This is not done to be exclusionary of any parent and with full recognition and respect for non-binary identifying ParentScholars. We hope our stories will inspire, connect with, and challenge all readers, but we also acknowledge the role our identities have within our experiences. The vignettes detailed in this chapter will explore expectations, communication, decision-making, instructional practices, policies, and more—much of which will examine how gender and other social identities may have impacted, and continues to impact, our journey.

Themes, questions, and other considerations are generated from our collective reflections. Our conversations include stories from the beginning of our teaching experiences up to our current positions. Some of the lived experiences bring great joy and remind us all why we are on this journey; while other experiences bring frustration and mental exhaustion. This is not to discourage, but to acknowledge the complexity of being an academic parent. Some of the stories we will share are deeply personal. We name these experiences that have happened and are happening. We seek to move through these things to improve them. How can our experiences, along with reflecting and sharing them, inspire other ParentScholars? How might institutions of higher education shift to do and be better?

15 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/apparently-were-scholars/301953

Related Content

Promoting Primary School Chinese Teachers Teaching Competence: A Case Study From China

Xinyao Ma (2025). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development* (pp. 1-21).

www.irma-international.org/article/promoting-primary-school-chinese-teachers-teaching-competence/368002

The Impact of Corporate Culture on Education and Training Environment Success: Application to the Case of Saudi Universities

Fakhri Issaoui, Abdulrahim Zaher Mashariand Akram Jamee (2024). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development* (pp. 1-32).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-impact-of-corporate-culture-on-education-and-training-environment-success/347379

Digital Tools for Accelerating Preservice Teacher Effectiveness

Rachel Harringtonand Steve Rhine (2019). *Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 926-955).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/digital-tools-for-accelerating-preservice-teacher-effectiveness/215601

A Scenario That Works: Adapting the Army's Soldier Skills Training Model to Teach K-12 Teachers Technology

Patricia K. Gibson, Dennis A. Smithand Sarah G. Smith (2019). *Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1689-1696).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-scenario-that-works/215636

The Design of an Interactive Science Literacy Model Using Design and Development Research (DDR) in Early Childhood Education

Romarzila Omar, Ahmad Zamzuri Bin Mohamad Aliand Song Xiangwei (2025). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development* (pp. 1-26).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-design-of-an-interactive-science-literacy-model-using-design-and-development-research-ddr-in-early-childhood-education/382756