



2017 GSA Joint Section Meeting
Northeastern (52nd) & North-Central (51st)
Shale Gas Production: Views from the Energy Roller Coaster
19–21 March 2017 • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
Omni William Penn Hotel



32-3: THE UNCONVENTIONAL MINORITY: PREPARING SINGLE PARENTS FOR SUCCESS IN THE GEOSCIENCES

Monday, 20 March 2017

10:45 AM - 11:05 AM

📍 *Omni William Penn Hotel - Allegheny, 17th Floor*

Single parents are becoming a more prevalent group within higher education, specifically in undergraduate populations. According to the US Census Bureau, there were approximately 12 million single parent families within the US in 2015, with 84% of those headed by single mothers. When looking specifically at single mothers between the ages of 18 and 34, approximately 67% have some college experience, with 32% having obtained four or more years of higher education. We cannot deny that these students are present within our undergraduate classes, though many may be discouraged from majoring in a historically field-dominated science. This discussion focuses on acknowledging women in this unique situation and encouraging the recruitment of single mothers into geoscience fields through exposure and mentorship to create tangible paths for them to graduate school or enter the workforce.

In order to help this population of students, we must first acknowledge that they exist, and that their life experiences may lead them to have qualities that are not necessarily inherent to many other undergraduate students, such as time management skills and potentially a greater respect for the education they are receiving. Secondly, we must consider ways to prepare these women for being successful in the geosciences while being considerate of their extra-educational responsibilities. Emphasizing the building of skills that are compatible with non-field-based research, such as laboratory skills is just one example of how educators can help these women to be competitive within their field of interest. Women with children face challenges at all levels of academia; changing the stigma surrounding single mothers and seeing the potential of these students is one way to contribute to a more inclusive and diverse geoscience community.

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