

Illustrations by Mathieu Lampron

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PROF OR NOT, HERE I COME!



Prof or not, here I come!

Andréanne Gagné, Geneviève Brisson, Jo Anni Joncas, Myriam Villeneuve-Lapointe and Claire Moreau
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Presentation of The Authors



Name: Andréanne Gagné

Current job: Professor at the Université de Sherbrooke (December 2019 - present)

Status: Nuclear family

Former occupation: Doctoral student in education, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

Hobbies: Exploring university campuses; brewing and drinking coffee

Expertise: Guidance, identity dynamics, and transition journeys

Name: Geneviève Brisson

Current job: Started at Université de Sherbrooke on August 1, 2020, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic

Status: One-child nuclear family

Former occupation: Assistant professor at Simon Fraser University, Librarian in Francophone and French immersion schools in British Columbia

Hobbies: Keeping a list of novels I need to read, knowing fully well I will never get to read them all

Song: "It's My Life" by Bon Jovi

Expertise: Plurilingual children's literacy practices, children's literature, identity positioning, and post-qualitative inquiry



Name: Jo Anni Joncas

Current job: Professor at the Université de Sherbrooke (December 2020 - present)

Current status: On maternity leave

Former occupation: Postdoctoral researcher at the University of Ottawa

Hobbies: Challenging the system

Expertise: Sociology of education, diversity, equity and social justice, and learning trajectories

Name: Myriam Villeneuve-Lapointe

Current job: Started at Université de Sherbrooke on August 1, 2020, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic

Status: A nuclear family with two young children

Former occupation: Postdoctoral researcher in education at the Université du Québec à Montréal, Lecturer at Université du Québec en Outaouais

Hobbies: Going for a run (after a day of running between various tasks)

Expertise: Teaching writing and grammar, spelling practice, emergent literacy



Name: Claire Moreau

Current job: Started at Université de Sherbrooke on Decembre 1st, 2019 - parental leave mid-March 2020 - Back to UdeS on April 1st, 2021

Status: A young family, international and bilingual

Former occupation: Pedagogical counselor in a higher education setting

Hobbies: Playing Tetris with my schedule, and challenging the status quo

Songs: "Si l'idée nous enchante" - "Debout sur le zinc"

Expertise: Feminist research, Nontraditional Adult Learner, University instructors and pedagogical counselors' professional development

How the Project Started

I am a wife, a mother, a friend, and a partner. I am an academic and a professor at a university in Quebec. Additionally, I'm the creative mind behind this book!

This is us: the five authors of this book. We not only share a common reality but also the experience of being new university professors. Between the age of 33 and 42, we also shared being born into white francophone families in Quebec and France.

While these common characteristics are where we began, and although we have sought to go beyond them, we want to be as transparent as possible, which means that we recognize that these characteristics, our positioning and our biases are influencing us. Our goal with this project is not to depict new university professors' multiple realities, but to provide a range of portrayals highlighting the challenges of professional integration in order to foster a stronger sense of belonging to the university community. In a way, our project strives to demystify this profession, as exciting as it may seem elusive.

Without delving too far into the past, it's safe to say that none of us harbored childhood aspirations of pursuing higher education, becoming an academic, or donning the researcher's white lab coat. We dreamed of becoming teachers, sociologists, and activists - our goal was to make a positive impact on the world. We wrapped up our undergraduate studies, entered the workforce, and began our initial careers. Through a series of events, chance encounters, challenges, and opportunities both seized and missed, we eventually found ourselves seated in university classrooms, drafting dissertations, and immersing ourselves into master's theses. At different paces, we progressed to a doctoral

program, leading up to the pivotal thesis defense and its ultimate submission. Some of us also worked as postdoctoral fellows after their doctorate.

If we weren't dreaming of degrees, what were our aspirations upon entering higher education? The short answer would be: "To make it count." It's a journey filled with ups and downs, moments of uncertainty, and occasions when we contemplated moving and leaving academia, thinking the grass might be greener elsewhere. While an academic career isn't the only path for those who have earned a PhD, it remains a hoped-for path - one we eventually chose, or that chose us... And by "choosing," we mean being presented with the opportunity to apply for a position in our field of expertise, at a university in Quebec or another Canadian province.

Among all the adventures that higher education takes us on, the pursuit of a job stands as a distinctive juncture. At the end of our PhD, the well-known québécois phrase "on n'a plus 20 ans", meaning "we are not getting any younger" holds true. Yes, time flew! With family, financial (hello student debts!) and professional obligations, juggling numerous contracts as research assistant as well as teaching courses a lecturer, the urgency to attain some kind of professional and personal stability rapidly grows. Moreover, in academia, the prospect of having to relocate to a different region, province, or even country is very real. This is the scenario that unfolded for us. All five of us were presented with opportunities in places beyond our current residences. With each application, the stakes are high.

Applying for a position as assistant professor for the first time, receiving an invitation for an in-person or online interview - depending on

timing, location, and preferences – putting in the effort to excel, regardless of the eventual outcome. Applying for another position, receiving another invitation or not, and going through the process once more, potentially being invited for a second interview. This cycle continued, as we juggled additional responsibilities and roles, until we finally got selected for either the first or second teaching position.

Our unique paths and individual stories all came together at the Université de Sherbrooke, specifically within the Faculty of Education. This is where most of us became the “real” thing: a university professor. You see, to quote Simone de Beauvoir, one is not born, one becomes, a professor. Initial moments were both exciting and challenging. Worth mentioning, as far as we are concerned, is the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a profound impact on our first two years in this new role. Working remotely, isolated in our apartments or houses, facing uncertainty as well as changes in research, teaching, program management, committee work, and everything else, we took the initiative to form a (support) group. Out of interest, yes, but mostly because we needed to connect with people who understood our situation. While bonds are often forged naturally over casual chats in a corridor or between office doors, over lunch at the cafeteria or during a visit to the research center, we had to give destiny a little push to create our small community of “new teachers”, in our “Teams” team.

Our group’s strength had an impact beyond what we expected or could have hoped for. At the technical and moral levels, each of us has made (and are still making) a significant impact on the professional (and frequently, personal) journeys of the others. We can only conclude that we have encountered similar

trials and hurdles, took on the same challenges, and learned much of the same. The anecdotes we have gathered are truly remarkable!

Speaking of anecdotes, we had a great time comparing the funny or sometimes quirky experiences that came with our new lives as professors. Through our conversations, an idea emerged: why if we crafted a book full of anecdotes about life as a new professor, but in the format of comic strips? The question was: where should we start? Well, it all began with funding! We reached out to various organizations involved in assisting professors in their integration in their university careers. And guess what? Our university gave a resounding “yes!” and offered the support we needed. Next, we sent out a survey to professors who had been hired in the last five years. We reached out to people from across different departments and faculties Canada. We received over 80 stories from new professors in fields ranging from humanities to social sciences, health sciences, natural sciences, and engineering. Many of these stories intersected, touching on similar themes and sparking shared emotions. Fueled by these narratives, the pages of this book gradually took shape.

The tone had to be right... for we did not want to discourage anyone, nor were we trying to paint this career as a beautiful walk along the water – unless it was like a hike on a stormy day, battling the wind wearing sandals (now that’s a story that would have fit perfectly on the upcoming pages). Humor quickly became our guiding star, because through laughter we navigated, shared our insights, made new connections, broke down barriers, and even braved bad weather with a smile. Because, at the end of the day, when a new professor leaves work, it’s always a good idea to carry some of his or her cheerfulness and sense of humour for his or her loved ones.

Far from being experts in this humorous style of writing or the creation of comic book, we teamed up with an illustrator to bring our ideas to life and animate our characters. Besides, just for the sake of writing it, any resemblance to a person you know is mere coincidence. And then, none of the anecdotes are faithful accounts of the words shared with us or of our own stories. They are a mix, sometimes a bit whimsical... an imaginative take rooted in shared truths. It's all a work of fiction, yet every now and then, it's so close to reality that it could easily be mistaken for the real thing!

With a blend of heartfelt emotion and excitement, we are delighted to introduce you to our cast of new professors. It's important to mention that we don't label them as "young professors," because age has nothing to do with this profession. From their initial hiring to getting tenure (a milestone that marks not an end, but a new beginning), they will take you on a journey through some of the experiences that await those who venture into life as a university professor.

Meet the Cast



Philippe, 32 years old,
Social Sciences



Emma, 35 years old,
Engineering



Maria-Josée, 40 years
old, Health



Anne, 48 years old,
Arts



John, 45 years old,
Management

University Studies

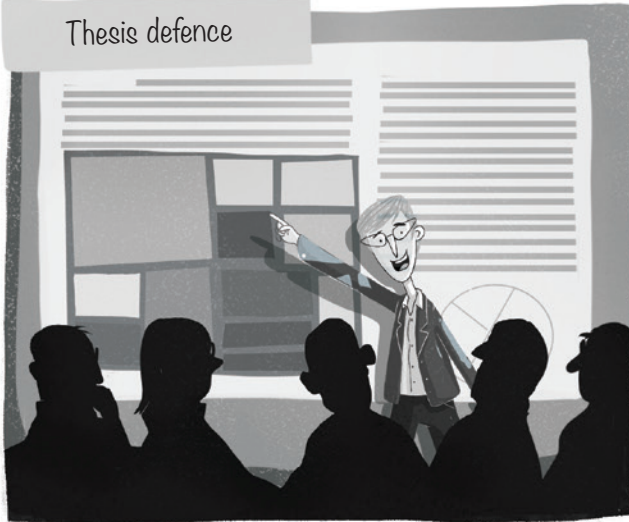
Bachelor's Degree 2007



Master's Degree 2015



Thesis defence



PhD 2020



Bye bye studying!

CHEERS!



Beyond the Thesis

Congratulations on your PhD.
So, what's next?

Uh...



Great news! Our electric bike project, done in collaboration with community partners, got the green light! We're thrilled to offer you a position as a research professional.



The news is in — we've successfully secured funding for research on...

...digital integration. Your postdoc is now guaranteed.



Uh... I've jumped at a bunch of opportunities lately.



Recruitment Time

