Education Review
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PUSHMI-PULLYU: A JOINT AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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Author Hugh Lofting introduced the mythical creature the pushmi-pullyu in his 1920 children's book *The Story of Dr. Dolittle*. The pushmi-pullyu, a gentle and shy creature, had no tail, but a head at each end of its body, one with the horns of a gazelle, and the other with the horn of a unicorn. The two heads faced in different directions, so that you couldn't sneak up on it. When one head slept, the other was awake. And for the pushmi-pullyu to move, both heads had to agree on the desired direction.

We use the pushmi-pullyu as a metaphor for our academic lives together. Occasionally, our careers faced in different directions, and we had to agree on how to move forward. In what follows, you'll read our accounts of our individual academic lives, and also how we navigated moving once our heads were joined together in a single body, as in the case of the pushmi-pullyu.

We're grateful for the invitation to contribute to the corpus of *Acquired Wisdom*. But we lack a template for how to write a joint intellectual autobiography—The editor suggested we invent it. To that end, we begin with separate accounts of our development as scholars. After all, we had each lived 30-some years before we became a couple. The unique contours of our individual lives framed what we brought to the relationship, including the scholarship we produced, alone and together, thereafter. We attend especially to our joint intellectual interactions and real-world experiences in universities, disciplines, and fields. Some of these were marked by hardship and struggle; others by provocative exploration, learning, growth, and just plain fun.

By chance—or is it?—both of us have studied lives. Interviewing adults in Michigan, Aaron has researched the role of schooling in the human life course, including the transition to adulthood (Pallas, 2006; Pallas et al., 2003). He's also relied on large-scale quantitative surveys to understand patterns of schooling and work in the early career (Giudici & Pallas, 2014), including the concept of cumulative advantage (Pallas, 2002; Pallas & Jennings, 2009). Anna has studied the lives of mid-career professors, repeatedly interviewing 78 faculty at five research institutions. She's interviewed scholars at other career stages as well. We've learned a great deal from one another's methods, disciplinary frames, and analyses. Anna has previously published three autobiographical pieces about her personal and scholarly life, with the third, and most elaborate, currently in press (Neumann, 1997; Neumann, 1998; Neumann, forthcoming).

Neumann, A., & Pallas, A. (2026, January 28). Pushmi-Pullyu: A Joint Autobiography. Acquired Wisdom Series. *Education Review, 33*. https://doi.org/10.14507/er.v33.4495

Aaron has little experience with autobiographical writing (save for a brief foray in Pallas, 1998).

Throughout the text, you will see brief vignettes with the title "Annals of Academic Marriages." These are quips that Aaron has posted on Facebook, largely to amuse himself, which we hope are insightful.

Annals of Academic Marriages:

Aaron: Writing together is the true test of a marriage. There aren't many things we fight about, but writing is one of them. We have very different styles.

Former student: Is one of you like Faulk—

Anna: I'm Faulkner. He's Hemingway.

This first vignette will sensitize you to the fact that we do have different writing styles, and that there will be times when one of us is more expansive than the other in recounting events that culminate in our joint academic journey.

Aaron's Early Years

I grew up in Manheim Township, a suburb of Lancaster, PA, where my father was the Executive Director of the Lancaster Jewish Community Center. My school district was overwhelmingly white and middle class, a sharp contrast with the Lancaster City school district just a couple of miles south, and several of the other school districts in Lancaster County.

As a senior in high school, I participated in a one-day exchange with the high school in another neighboring school district, Solanco; officers of the National Honor Society of each high school spent the day at the other school, just to learn about it. Solanco was rural, also overwhelmingly white, and less affluent; my best estimate is that Manheim Township spent about 50% more per pupil than Solanco. I saw quickly that Solanco lacked many of the amenities I was accustomed to in Manheim Township. But

perhaps most striking, I sat in on a Solanco calculus class that was mind-numbing. I saw students learning formulas and concepts by rote, a sharp contrast from what I knew to be happening at my high school, where I was not even considered a strong enough student to enroll in calculus. This was my first awareness of educational inequality, heightened by realizing that the Lancaster city school district and Columbia, another county in the district, had substantial concentrations of non-white students, and their schools were regarded as dilapidated.

When I headed off to the University of Virginia as an undergraduate, I thought that I'd become a clinical psychologist. But I was away from home, and it was the 1970s, and in my first year, I didn't take my coursework seriously. I soon realized that a 3.2 GPA wasn't going to get me into a clinical psych graduate program. Serendipitously, I met a friend in an introductory drama class who was going to major in sociology, and he persuaded me to take a sociology course. Introduction to Sociology was pretty dreadful, a class of 300 students led by Robert Bierstedt, a distinguished professor who largely read from his notes. The one source of amusement, in hindsight, is that he'd written an introductory sociology textbook, as had another UVA professor, Ted Caplow. I learned that they each used the other's textbook when they taught Soc 101, ensuring both got royalties.

Thinking that this had to get better, I continued to take sociology courses and

eventually found myself in an introductory social research methods course taught by Rita Kirshstein, a relatively recent Assistant Professor hire in UVA's sociology department. Rita invited me to join a research team coding and analyzing data from surveys of Charlottesville High School students and parents. This was in the era when respondents circled responses or wrote down a few brief words, and these responses were coded onto Fortran coding sheets, keypunched, and then analyzed on a mainframe computer using SPSS. I found that I enjoyed coding, and Rita gave me increasing opportunities to develop a sociological sensibility. She also taught a course on the sociology of education that opened my eyes to the realities of educational stratification—how individuals are sorted into different positions in the education system, and the consequences of this sorting for adult socioeconomic success. I was aware of social class and racial inequality from growing up in Lancaster, but Rita's course got me thinking about the how and why of stratification. We read parts of the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966), *Schooling in Capitalist America* (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* (Jencks et al., 1972), and much of the edited volume *Power and Ideology in Education* (Karabel & Halsey, 1977).

As I neared completion of my BA in sociology, I didn't know where I was headed. I didn't think that sociology degree was going to take me far in the job market, but I'd learned that I liked research work. I applied to four doctoral programs with faculty expertise in the sociology of education and the sociology of law, another subfield I was exploring due to my undergraduate research work with UVA sociologist of law Bliss Cartwright and was admitted to all of them. But Johns Hopkins captured my heart, because the program was much smaller than the others I was entertaining, and the faculty and staff were so welcoming during my campus visit.

At Hopkins, studying with Karl Alexander, along with Doris Entwisle and Ed McDill, I began developing a quantitative skill set that I applied to relatively largescale survey data. I was largely content to follow Karl's lead, as he had a program of funded research that included the contributions of curriculum differentiation to students' achievements and attainments. There were some curious gaps in my training, though; the Hopkins sociology department did not offer any courses on organizations, nor on qualitative methods. (I later learned about both from Anna.) One great benefit, though, was taking a course on the Sociology of Human Development with Doris Entwisle. Doris introduced me to the literature on the sociology of the life course, an emerging subfield in sociology that became an active part of my scholarly identity. Life course studies in sociology emphasized the timing and sequencing of social role transitions in the arenas of schooling, family, and work, and how these transitions were contingent on historical time and place. I began to see how my interest in educational stratification and status attainment models—representing educational and occupational attainments as a function of family social background, academic talent, school organizational features, and the influence of "significant others" such as peers, parents, and school staff—could fit comfortably in a life course framework.

Along the way, I grew to understand the political nature of social research. Karl and I had been consultants to the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which produced the report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. Amidst the charged rhetoric of "a rising tide of mediocrity," the Commission called for raising standards, recommending that all students seeking to enter college take the "five new basics": four high school courses in English, three in mathematics, three in science, three in social studies, a half-year in

computer science, and two years of a foreign language.

There was no research basis for this recommendation; it was solely rooted in rhetoric. Karl and I were able to find a dataset that allowed us to see if students who pursued these curricular recommendations actually did better on tests such as the SAT or College Board English and History achievement tests. They did, but only if they were "B" or better students (this in the era pre-grade inflation; Alexander & Pallas, 1984). I went on to worry about the broader risks of raising standards in high school for high school graduation rates (McDill et al., 1985, 1986). I found the juxtaposition of the technical and the political dimensions of educational research intriguing, and at times maddening.

My interest in the social and political dynamics also helped me articulate something I was sensing about research and being a researcher. Though I had not yet read about the "Matthew Effect," a phrase coined by sociologist Robert Merton (1968), I knew it instinctively. Merton argued that consistent with the notion that the rich get richer, when higher-status scientists collaborate with lower-status colleagues, most of the credit will go to the scientist who is already esteemed. I had published a bunch of papers with Karl in my years as a doctoral student, but he was the first author on almost all of them. Although I did publish a few papers with other department faculty, those manuscripts were peripheral to my main intellectual interests. As I came to understand how the Matthew effect might operate in sociology and education, I woke up to realization that I wanted to distinguish myself from Karl, lest my accomplishments be seen primarily as his. I resolved to find a dissertation topic in my incipient academic wheelhouse, i.e., educational stratification, that was different from anything that Karl had tackled. This was not a source of friction. Karl and I continued collaborating for many years to come, and we remain the best of friends.

I elected to study the determinants of high school dropout, drawing on theories of educational stratification and the life course. I had access to a timely dataset, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)'s survey of high school sophomores in 1980 who were followed up in 1982, at which point some had dropped out of school. One could certainly approach this topic from a traditional status attainment perspective, looking at dropping out as an educational attainment predicted by students' social backgrounds, high school academic performance, and significant others' influence. But that struck me as overly mechanical. I introduced two additional ways of thinking about school dropouts. The first cast school dropout as a social problem akin to deviance and delinquency, and thus dropouts as "social misfits" (Elliott & Voss 1974; Matza, 1964) who lack the basic ties to society that promote healthy psychosocial development. The second, which drew on Doris Entwisle's ideas about the sociology of the life course, conceived of dropping out of high school as a step in the transition to adulthood (Marini, 1984). Drawing on both of these perspectives, I hypothesized that youth who had already taken on adult roles such as smoking, drinking, and working, and who were sexually active early, would be more likely to drop out. I had high hopes for the predictive power of "dropout as social misfit" and early entry into adult social roles. And indeed, these attributes did add some explanatory power to a bare-bones status attainment model of dropping out of school. But most of the variation in individual dropout decisions remained unexplained.

As I neared completion of my dissertation, I went on the academic job market and secured six interviews for tenure-track assistant professor positions in respected sociology departments. But I don't think I had a good story about where my scholarly work was headed, in contrast to some of the other young scholars I was competing with, such as

David Grusky and Mary Brinton. I only received one job offer, in a department I wasn't impressed with. I chose to work for the government instead, as one of the key staff of *The Condition of Education*, the annual volume produced by NCES. Sociologist and career civil servant Jay Noell recruited me on the promise that the *Condition* would become increasingly topical, with extended essays accompanying the usual battery of tables that populated the volume. I was looking for an opportunity to continue engaging in sociological research on education, in or out of academe.

What I did not anticipate was that my scholarly work at NCES, historically a politically neutral statistics agency, would become politicized. I wrote an essay for *The Condition* on school climate in American high schools, based on analysis of data from an Administrator and Teacher Survey supplementing the High School and Beyond study. I made two arguments. First, I showed that there was a lot of variation in reports of school climate among teachers in the same high school, thereby calling into question the very notion of school climate— teachers' perceptions of principal leadership, teacher control, teacher morale, staff cooperation, and student behavior—as a school-level attribute of the American high school. Second, I found that school climate was correlated with the school's external environment, particularly the academic and social composition of its student body. Since the student body composition was likely a feature of who was selected into a high school, more so than a function of something the school itself did, I concluded that a positive school climate probably did not *produce* better academic achievement but rather reflected the presence of higher-achieving students who facilitated a positive school climate. Thus, I concluded that we shouldn't count on manipulating school climate as the key to school reform.

However, the essay ran into roadblocks as it progressed through the various administrative reviews the government required prior to its publication in the *Condition of Education,* an official document of the federal Department of Education. I wrote it in the early stages of Ronald Reagan's second term as President, when William Bennett was the Secretary of Education. Bennett had been giving speeches championing school climate as a mechanism for school improvement, and his office did not want an official department document challenging his claims (those, of course, were not grounded in evidence). The essay was pulled from the *Condition*. Only after I left government service was it published, appearing in *Teachers College Record* (Pallas, 1988).

Disgusted by this experience, I responded quickly when my former Hopkins colleagues, Bob Crain and Gary Natriello, reached out to me from the Sociology and Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University (TC) where both had taken academic positions. George Bereday, a sociologist and scholar of comparative education, had passed away, and TC's Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences was seeking to replace him. I interviewed for and was offered the position in the late spring of 1986 and moved to New

York City in July of that year to work, first, on an evaluation of New York City's Dropout Prevention Initiative, and then to teach as a tenure-track Assistant Professor that fall.

The Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences was a heady place, as my colleagues included Larry Cremin, Maxine Greene, Ellen Lagemann, Harold Noah, Jonas Soltis, Robbie McClintock, Lambros Comitas, and other distinguished senior scholars. As the most junior faculty member in the department, I was charged with taking minutes at department meetings. You haven't lived until you've had your minutes reviewed by renowned historians like Larry and Ellen, who took artifacts seriously. I was grateful when, a couple of years hence, the department hired philosopher Rene Arcilla, who was junior to me, and thus assumed the note-taking responsibilities.

Still, I felt that my career was well-launched: I was situated in a department and program that respected the ideas, tools, and theories I cared about; I could teach about the sociology of education from a number of different angles; and I had time to develop a research agenda on school organization, the social psychology of the school and classroom, and educational stratification, both by myself, and with valued colleagues. Moreover, I was developing a deeper understanding of the limited role that research often played in the formulation of education policy, and how I might strive to close that distance.

Then I met Anna.

Anna's Early Years

In many ways, my intellectual autobiography—the story I tell of who I am as a scholar, and of how I developed this identity—contrasts sharply with Aaron's. I suspect that part of what drew us together is curiosity about each other's ways of working through questions about social life and education. We've learned a lot from each other.

I was born in Tiberias (Tveria), Israel, in 1952, the daughter of two Holocaust survivors. As central as those last two words are to my identity, saying or writing them disquiets me. I've struggled for years to articulate the living nightmares my father and mother endured, memories that often spilled into their daily lives. Children see and absorb these things—as did I, feeling caught between the Yiddish of my homelife, and the English, and Spanish, of schools in the new land we entered. We immigrated from Israel when I was six, settling first in Laredo, then Del Rio, Waco, and finally Brownsville, Texas. But I need to reach further back.

My father was born in a village in far eastern Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia) and grew up in Presov, a small city nearby. He and his siblings (four girls, three boys) were rigorously educated in traditional Judaic texts and practices. He knew by heart the many *brachot* guiding daily life—prayers uttered on awakening, at bedtime, when lightning streaks the skies, when thunder shakes the house. Years later, in Del Rio, he taught them to my sister Lily and me. Each morning, in our living room, he would *daven*, then kiss the mezuzah

before leaving for work. My father's deep Judaic training was the only formal education he would ever have.

My father was enslaved, tortured, brutalized in Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Flossenburg, and five satellite camps. He was forced on five death marches. He weighed 79 pounds when at the war's end the U.S. army set him free. Emaciated, unable to walk, he was transported to an American hospital in Nuremberg where he was treated for two years. Returning to his family home, he waited for brothers, sisters, nieces, or nephews possibly to return. No one did. In 1948, fearing Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia, my father fled once more, this time for Israel. Two brothers had immigrated to the US before the war. He hoped eventually to join them.

My mother was born in Suceava, a city in northern Romania, the daughter of a merchant who descended from a long line of scholars of the *Zohar*, the Jewish *Book of Splendor*, the central text of the mystical *Kabbalah*. I like to think of my mother as inheriting two minds—of the committed, serious learner, and the practical and extroverted merchant.

As a girl, my mother was passionate about her studies. She loved to read; she adored mathematics. Like my father, she led a rich Jewish childhood. But as for him, life changed. Antisemitism was open and vicious in Romania by the time my mother entered her eighth year of school. That year, she, and all Romanian Jewish children, were abruptly shut out of schools. Her formal learning would never resume.

The Jewish community of Suceava, including my mother, her parents and two young brothers, were shoved into cattle cars, beaten with bayonets, forced to walk 220 miles in icy cold to Shargarod, a ghetto in Transnistria, part of what my mother called "U-kraina." The plan, she said, was to hold Jews there until there was room in Auschwitz. In Shargarod, the family of five occupied a room, 8 x 8 feet. Soldiers forced her, with others, to labor year-round in the fields. They beat her, depriving her of clothes and shoes to shield her from cold. She contracted typhus, and was left with 80 others to die, on a floor. She survived, she said, "by miracle." When the war ended, the family set out, by train and on foot, for Suceava. Seized by Russian soldiers also on that train, my mother barely escaped being raped.

My parents were refugees to Palestine, soon renamed Israel. My father labored in construction, then managed a small grocery store. My mother began working in a food canning factory but worked her way up to become lead bookkeeper of Tnuva, then but a small dairy cooperative. (Tnuva is now Israel's largest food manufacturer and distributor.) Seeking to join his brothers, my father left for the US in mid-1958. In December, my mother, sister, and I boarded a ship to cross the cold and stormy Atlantic to join him in America.

I begin with this pre-history to underscore how important my deciphering of my parents' lives has been to me—flowing at times like story, full and harsh, but often as struggles to speak, sometimes wordless. I learned to listen, when and how to ask, when to wait. I learned what learning means, its value in life, the critical importance of having a space for it, and of having it bear meaning. It's not a surprise I was drawn to teaching as a tool for helping people to learn, to know, and to say what they know.[1]

[1] In my year as President of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), I selected "Freedom to Learn" as the theme of the annual conference. I first articulated the idea in the home of Maxine Greene,

I heard my father's stories, first, as broken words, phrases that, at times, had no beginning or end, as he shared with my uncle what he could of what had been; my mother, silent. The two men spoke only in Yiddish, the language of our home and of the homes they'd left behind. I'd just entered second grade in Del Rio when my listening began. Then, through my elementary school and junior high years, I used summers to seek out more, sifting through library books, examining newsreels and movies, combing through my parents' testimonials (petitions for reparation). It would be years before I could ask them, straight out, about their lives, my mother especially (Neumann, 1997, 1998, in press). Yet it was that early listening that taught me so much—how to be still, absorb, recall, connect. I learned, too, how words, hardly said, bear stories, and how some stories may never be told.

I'm often asked: Why Texas? Very simply, because my uncle was there, working for a New York-based chain of ladies' wear stores. He taught my father the work of managing a store, then connected him to the company's president who, at the time, was seeking to hire immigrant Jews, especially Holocaust survivors, in remote locations. My father, as store manager, earned a modest salary; my mother, as bookkeeper, cashier, and saleslady, worked alongside him two years for free, eventually convincing upper management that clearly in her case, they'd benefit from breaking the company's long-standing anti-nepotism policy.

I restarted school in Laredo and Del Rio, progressing through six months of "pre-school," learning English alongside immigrant children from Mexico. Promoted, then, to the low section of first grade (probably due to concerns about my English), I was shifted, in second grade, into the school's "accelerated" section. But I had a problem: No one seemed to know my name. I was using the Hebrew *Chana* (with guttural "ch") but was told that would not do. Over the next two years, I tried on (and nixed) possibilities: Helen, Hannah, Chanah (always mispronounced), Ann, possibly others I don't recall. Weary, I settled on Anna. In south Texas, the pronunciation of "Anna" varied between the Texas-sounding Anna ("a" sounds like apple) and the Spanish-sounding version Ana (amiga). I liked the sound of the latter, but it would be years before I felt I could insist on it.

Halfway through third grade, we settled in Brownsville, which I think of as my hometown. One of my first assignments was to write a poem. I wrote a five-line verse, with lots of rhyme, about a snowman. What could I, at age 9, possibly have known of snowmen? I'd never seen or touched snow (and wouldn't for many years). I broach this to signal that much of my school-based learning came through images wholly distant from the life I knew, stuff I took mostly from books. I just made do, coaxing the unknown to life, making things real in a world that, to me, felt largely unreal, or perhaps unknown, extending myself to know it, to live in it.

I think my parents did much the same, but their struggles were far, far tougher. They worked extremely hard in that store, leaving home Monday through Saturday by 7:30 am, returning at 6:30 pm, and after 9:00 on Saturdays, with many Sundays and weeknights devoted to what remained undone. But we were safe and free. That mattered more than anything. Still, the past remained, hovering ghost-like as background, but sometimes vivid, consuming my parents' present-day lives, extending into mine. My mother had left behind, in Israel, a family she deeply loved, a good job in which she had excelled, dear friends, a community she treasured. My father was haunted for all his life—dehumanized, injured in body and mind, grieving those he'd

not in talking about ASHE, but in talking about my life, about reading, and about a piece of art she was sharing with me. That said, I feel I have lived with this theme throughout my life.

loved and lost. Though he was unspeakably grateful for what he found and built in the US, his grief would course through his remaining years.

I studied very hard in school. That was *my* work, my way to contribute to the American life my parents so badly wanted to build. But schoolwork, especially reading, gave me places to go, in my head, that I could not have accessed otherwise. I worked just as hard at learning out of school, though that felt more like play. I read every text that caught my interest. Each summer, I checked out as many books as the library allowed. I lugged them to the store (we had no car) and set up a reading nook between two chairs in the furthest back cubicle of the store's dressing room, a quiet space where I could think and imagine. When I was about 10, my parents bought the *World Book Encyclopedia*, and in summer, I moved from topic to topic, taking in all I could — about cells and disease, the human mind, society and political change, the solar system and universe, evolution, history and especially the Holocaust. But each summer, too, I'd pull out my parents' box of old pictures, sift through them one by one, wonder what the lives in them, and mine too, might have been like if the people they portrayed had survived, regretting the sorrow my parents still felt, grieving with them.

My learning paid off. I was first, scholastically, in my class each year of high school and valedictorian in my senior year. I made close friends, girls my age, largely of Hispanic descent, spending many hours in their homes, and they in mine. We taught each other the cultures of our communities, blending ourselves into each other's lives, remaining close to this day.

In fall 1971, I enrolled in Texas Southmost College (TSC), a community college (we called it "junior college") about eight blocks from my parents' store. My learning took a critical turn when I took a part-time job tutoring a severely disabled Vietnam vet enrolled in developmental (then called remedial) English. Lacking formal preparation and support for the work, I drew on my own experiences as an English language learner, first to tap into his thinking, then to direct it as best I could. Tutoring helped me envision learning as that of a being beyond myself, even as I, too, was discerning how best to support it. That insight would stay with me for a very long time.

I transferred from TSC to the University of Texas in Austin in January 1973, majoring in English, graduating with highest honors in 1975; at my parents' insistence, I also earned a Texas secondary teaching license. Though I had absolutely no idea what I truly wanted for a career, I took a job in Brownsville teaching ESL in a junior high to newly arrived immigrants from Mexico and Central America. As I sank into this work, I realized, to my surprise, that I loved it: I loved my students. I felt their love in return. I loved creating lessons. I loved seeing them learn, helping them learn. I loved figuring it out, again, on my own; there was no PD for support.

As my first year of teaching ended, administrators at TSC, my community college, invited me to consider a new job as director of the college's Study Lab, recently funded by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The lab, already established, was a space where students, many new to U.S. education, could be tutored, or learn on their own via supports other than those that their classes offered. Would I build out and run the Study Lab? And if I wanted, I also could teach a class on ESL. Excited in ways I could not articulate, I jumped at the offer which, over two years, moved me to focus not only on students' learning, but also on spaces, strategies, and resources for supporting it. Students' visits to the lab multiplied many times over as I became enmeshed in it. I simultaneously earned an M.A. in English from Pan American University, 50 miles away. I loved

administering, teaching, and learning all at once. But something was off: The work felt good, and right, but what could I do beyond it? What more was there to learn, and how could I figure that out?

It was quite by chance that I happened on a poster in the TSC Registrar's Office about a Ph.D. program in the study of Higher Education at the University of Michigan. Graduates went on to do the kind of work I was already doing, but in far more expansive ways—as top college and university administrators, policymakers, leaders designing systems and assessing outcomes. I decided to apply, believing I'd found a field that would help me articulate the meaning of work I was already doing. I was accepted at Michigan and Stanford, choosing the former. But there was more to fill in: I was deeply aware that my identity, as a Jew and as the daughter of Holocaust survivors, was under-developed and unfulfilled. I understood well the Judaism of my home, and of my parents' lives; I had no sense of what it meant to encase this in an American life. I hoped that Ann Arbor would support me in examining and extending this key aspect of myself in ways that would stay true to my family's past.

My years in Ann Arbor were pretty much everything I sought: I came to understand higher education in breadth and depth, immersing myself in the study of organizations, policy, history, curriculum, college student development, financial decision-making, community colleges, and more. I unpacked ideas that would surface for me, time and again, in years to come: the power of the social and political contexts of higher education, and ways to understand and use their organizational dimensions; students' personal and intellectual growth through liberal learning; policy as a tool for transforming organizational and multi-organizational systems; community colleges, much like the one I'd attended and where I'd worked, as agentic social institutions.

Completing the Ph.D., I searched for a college leadership job, or one that would let me support leaders' work, substantively, conceptually, and analytically. I did do the latter, first, as Director of Planning and Evaluation, and Institutional Research, at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. But in short order, I realized I was missing scholarly research, plus I wanted to teach. My UM doctoral mentor, Marv Peterson, connected me to a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, Robert Birnbaum, who had just been awarded a large research grant from the U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) to conduct a five-year national study of college and university leadership. He hired Estela Bensimon and me to work with him as assistant directors of the Institutional Leadership Project (ILP), twice interviewing leaders in 32 colleges and universities throughout the U.S. (over 600 interviews), analyzing the amassed data, writing up results, alone and together. We were hugely productive, and I established a lifelong colleagueship and friendship with Estela. Our research marked a significant conceptual shift in the study of higher education from reliance on trait-based and instrumentalist leadership theory (focused on leaders' qualities and behaviors) to cognitive and constructivist theories, including sensemaking and communication (Bensimon et al., 1989; Neumann, 2012). Estela and I were further funded by the Lilly Endowment to study leadership team interactions, also a break from past research which had attended largely to the characteristics and actions of individual leaders (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993).

My work on the ILP confirmed what I suspected: I loved research, much as in earlier life, I'd loved to study, to learn. The learning and researching were linked, and central to my being. It became clear that as Bob's project wound down, I'd search for an academic job, and carve out a career of learning, my own

and others.' But first, I had to craft a project of my own.

"Meeting Cute"

And this is where my career, and my life, took another critical turn. I moved to New York in 1986 to take the job with Bob and Estela. On arriving in summer 1986, I knew nothing about big city life. Estela taught me about buses, subways, and cabs, and about stores, movies, restaurants and coffee shops where we'd meet to work. Importantly, I found synagogues of every kind and visited more than I could count. I found bookstores, art museums, and plays. Slowly, I made friends.

I had moved into Seth Low, a faculty apartment building, and as the new school year started up, I set out to meet my neighbors. I was heading downstairs to a meet-and-greet when I heard someone calling out my name. A resident literary scholar, Michael Macovski, and his wife, the distinguished linguist Deborah Tannen, had recently met a new professor who, they thought, I should meet. He's a sociologist, he said, Aaron Pallas—and oh, there he is! That is how I met Aaron, though at that gathering we barely talked. It would be a while before we did.

About two years later, I was writing an application for a Spencer Postdoc which, I hoped, would help launch my own research career. I knew the postdocs were very hard to get. I had heard from colleagues that Aaron Pallas, the young man I'd met at that early meet-and-greet, had just won one. He was, they said, the first TC faculty member to do so. I figured it was time to reconnect. So I reached out: Would Aaron review my proposal, suggest improvements? Aaron agreed, and a few days later, he showed up at my office door, full-length memo in hand. I thanked him and sat down to read. I did not get up from my desk for several hours: Aaron had taken my argument fully apart, pinpointing the logical flaw at its core. He was right, and I knew it. I was, at once, deeply disappointed and heartened. Aaron's thinking intrigued me; I wanted to understand it.

That is how we began. I did not, as foretold, win that post-doc, but I won big in a far more important way: As of May 2025, we've been married for 35 years. And by the way, I do still ask (require?) him to comment on my papers. (Insertion from Aaron: And vice versa!)

Annals of Academic Marriages:

Aaron: You printed out my paper to read?

Anna: Yes.

Aaron: That's an awful lot of green ink on it.

Anna: You wrote this version more clearly, so I have more to say.

Yes, it's a "meet cute" story, and yes, I was intrigued by Aaron's distinctive ways of thinking through thorny educational problems, and especially his proficiency in research design and analysis. But I was intrigued still more that he cared, he observed, he listened, he remembered.

Moving to Michigan State

Aaron: Anna and I were vacationing in Provincetown in August 1989, when she checked her answering machine in New York. Returning a phone call to Judy Lanier, the Dean of the College of Education at Michigan

State University, she learned that she was being offered a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor in the Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education (HALE) program in the MSU Department of Educational Administration.

This is where the pushmi-pullyu initially surfaced. We hadn't really figured out where our relationship was going, but all of a sudden, we needed to. Not long after, we decided we would get married. What would that mean for our careers? They had certainly not been pointed in the same direction, and we had to figure out how we might move, both physically and metaphorically.

Anna: We quickly determined that we did not want to begin our marriage living apart. Might TC offer me a tenure-track job? TC administrators were sympathetic, but responded only with a short-term contract teaching job, with no promise of a tenure-stream position down the line. I was worried: Aaron was doing so well at TC. After the complications of working for the federal government, it seemed he'd found his niche. His TC colleagues greatly respected him and supported his research. His teaching was going well. A tenure review was within sight. I could not bear the thought of threatening that. Well before Judy called, I'd opened up the possibility of taking an administrative job in a college in New York, and I'd launched a massive city-wide job search. Doors were now opening up, but they were less attractive after Judy's offering a tenure-track position at MSU. I decided to share my conundrum with Brian Rowan, chair of the MSU department in which I'd be appointed. I knew Brian only in print, having read his important work (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) while working on the ILP.

I can't recall, word for word, how my conversation with Brian went, but am sure I said that though I was very interested in the MSU job, I'd just become engaged to a man in New York, a scholar and, in fact, a sociologist like himself. Brian immediately asked who my fiancé was, and when I said Aaron's name, he briskly responded, "Let me call you back."

Aaron: Judy was, at this time, on leave from Michigan State as she tried to build out the Michigan Partnership for New Education, an ambitious $47 million project that brought together public and private funds, with a significant commitment from real estate magnate and philanthropist Alfred Taubman. A centerpiece of the Partnership was the development of dozens of Professional Development Schools (known as PDSs) which were to serve as sites for teacher preparation, and for university researchers to study the improvement of teaching practice. In Judy's absence, David Cohen was the Acting Dean. Shortly after Anna's talk with Brian—and a few more phone calls—David let us know that he was flying to New York. He would meet with us in Anna's TC office. (We later learned that a main appeal of the trip for David was an opportunity to dine at his favorite Chinese restaurant on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.)

Our visit with David was encouraging. He'd read one of Anna's papers and seemed interested in her developing perspective on college leadership during financial hard times—in particular, a case of a college president crafting her communication with faculty in ways that took their values and their sensemaking into account (later published as Neumann, 1995). We realized, later, that the paper's underpinning theory and method aligned well with the constructivist theory that MSU researchers were exploring in their studies of K-12 teaching.

That October, MSU brought Anna and me to campus, the agenda being to figure out where in the College of Education I might fit. I met with a dozen folks over two days, the academic equivalent of speed-dating, and then waited for something to happen.

It took a while, because Judy Lanier was wheeling and dealing. She persuaded the MSU

Provost to allow her to "mortgage" the position of an education faculty member who was scheduled to retire in a year or two and relied on an appointment in a unit of the Michigan Partnership to help fund the position. Eventually, an ad appeared for a potentially tenurable position in Policy Analysis in Education/Educational Indicators. The person selected for this job would work on developing a system of educational indicators for the state, with an academic appointment in the small policy wing of the College's K-12 School Administration program. This meant that Anna's and my positions would be located in different academic programs, but in the same department, Educational Administration.

I interviewed for the position just three days before Anna and I were to be married. The combination of the job interview and the wedding was heady, and I whiffed in one really big way. I had a grey suit I'd planned to wear to the interview. But upon arriving in East Lansing, I found that the pants were not on the hanger that held the suit jacket. I spent my two days there wearing the mismatch of a grey suit jacket and khaki trousers.[2] Everyone I encountered was gracious about it, considering the circumstances.

Shortly thereafter, David Labaree, a historically minded sociologist appointed in MSU's teacher education program, and soon to be a great colleague and friend, reached out to warn me. "Potentially tenurable" didn't mean what I thought it did. I had assumed that a position advertised as "potentially tenurable, depending on rank and qualifications" was unambiguously tenure-track. What we did not know was that a few years earlier, Judy Lanier had persuaded the MSU administration to allow her to offer positions that were not on the tenure track, but that could be converted to tenure track later without a new national search. This configuration gave her great power over any faculty member hired into a "potentially tenurable" position, as it was solely at her discretion whether such a position would be converted. An outsider would never know this.

Having seen junior colleagues in comparable positions pushed into uncomfortable directions via Judy Lanier's ambitious Professional Development School agenda, Labaree wanted me to know the score. This was critically important. As Anna notes, I was on the fast track at TC. In my fourth year there, my colleagues had voted to promote me to the rank of Associate Professor without tenure. I was scheduled to be reviewed for tenure the following academic year.

Anna and I were married on the first Sunday in May, 1990, at B'nai Jeshurun, a venerable synagogue on Manhattan's Upper West Side. The Sunday ceremony was intimate, with just family attending. Anna and I got away to Cape May, a lovely town on the Jersey shore, for a few days, while friends in our building kept an eye on Anna's mother and father, who were staying in Anna's apartment. We'd return and have a wedding reception the following Saturday at Columbia's Faculty House.

Three days before our wedding reception, I received a call from David Cohen offering

[2] In hindsight, I now understand the mismatched clothes as a variant of the "two-body" problem!

me the advertised potentially tenurable position. Anna and I had discussed how to handle this. I told David that the odds of my accepting the position hinged on the terms. If the position were to be Associate Professor with tenure, there was an 80% chance I'd accept; if it were Associate Professor on the tenure-track, the probability was 50%; and if the position remained potentially tenurable, there was just a 20% likelihood of my accepting it. David listened carefully, and said he'd get back to me. But it was certainly awkward to go into our wedding reception not knowing where we'd be in three months! Eventually he came back with a tenure-track offer, and I asked that the appointment letter state that I'd be reviewed for tenure in my first year at MSU. That was the schedule I would have been on if I had stayed at Teachers College.

What I did not appreciate while negotiating with David about my MSU appointment was just how deep the antipathy was between most of the faculty in the K-12 School Administration program, where I would be appointed, and Dean Judy Lanier. Judy was committed to developing the MSU College of Education as a hothouse for research on teaching, and she had little patience or respect for the faculty engaged in preparing principals and superintendents, some of whom substituted bromides for research. Unbeknownst to me, I was thrust on the K-12 School Administration program and its faculty without their having been consulted.

And of course, I *wasn't* in the business of preparing school administrators. I knew nothing about it. I wound up teaching a required masters-level research course, and a couple of other courses in that first year, including Foundations of Administration: Practice and Problems. (To complicate matters, our Department Chair, Brian Rowan, announced that he was about to decamp for the University of Michigan at the end of the year.) In the middle of the fall, I approached Brian to discuss the promised tenure review. "What are you talking about?!" he asked. I told him that I'd negotiated in writing with David Cohen that I'd be reviewed in my first year at MSU. Brian was puzzled, and not happy. After talking to a few of the program's senior faculty, he came back with the recommendation that I wait. They wanted another year or two to figure out if I was going to be a team player and fit into the unit. After talking with a central MSU administrator who Anna knew, I decided to push the issue, and began preparing all the required tenure materials.

When the time came for the tenured faculty in my program to vote, one faculty member abstained, and another turned in a negative vote but after the deadline, so it didn't count. The remaining votes were positive. I felt no hostility from my colleagues and came to understood that what had transpired really wasn't about me or my suitability for tenure. Rather, the vote was an opportunity for the senior faculty in my program to voice their unhappiness with their station under an imperious Dean. Still, it evoked a lot of anxiety for Anna and me. Our pushmi-pullyu had led us to Michigan State. Would we be happy there? The initial signs were ambiguous.

Anna: We were relieved, though. We'd landed, finally, two tenure-track jobs, with Aaron tenured on schedule. Feeling calmed, we made a down payment on a house in nearby Okemos. Plus we made wonderful friends, many of whom we've retained through the years, and comprising, for us, a family of sorts. All were MSU colleagues, with most appointed in Teacher Education, or the closely aligned, Educational Psychology.

The faculty in Aaron's program—and as I'd soon realize, mine as well—did not look well on our building relationships with colleagues appointed to those programs, perhaps due to their ties to Dean Lanier. Aaron was tenured, so in terms of job

security, this did not matter much, though in some ways, it did: He did not feel known, or appreciated, by his Ed Admin colleagues who had little understanding of his scholarship.

As for me: I was on the tenure track, but not yet tenured. My colleagues in the higher ed unit liked my research on leadership, a topic central to my field. But I was unsure I'd stick with it. Inspired by the research that my Teacher Education and Educational Psychology colleagues were doing, I was envisioning new questions about learning and teaching in college, theoretically aligned with the work in K-12. But I muted this interest, turning all my energies toward closing out my leadership research, publishing all I could out of it as preparatory to a tenure review.

Teaching Together

Aaron: When we arrived in East Lansing in 1990, Michigan State University was converting from a quarter system to a semester system, a change that opened the door to some rethinking of academic programs and curricula. For its part, the College of Education created, among other things, a semester-long course entitled Educational Inquiry, required of all 120 doctoral students entering the College's four departments each year. The course was designed to be co-taught by pairs of faculty, with the pairs having complementary interests and expertise. Because of the presence of statistical content in the course, one member of each teaching pair was to be drawn from the College's Measurement and Quantitative Methods program. The other faculty member was usually recruited on the basis of expertise in qualitative research approaches, though it was deemed helpful for them to have some facility with statistics.

Originally, Educational Inquiry was scheduled to be taught only in the fall term, as doctoral students started their programs. But sufficient demand existed for a summer session, and Dick Prawat, the chair of the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Special Education, invited me to teach the course alone in the summer of 1993. Though not thrilled about teaching four days a week for seven weeks in the summer, I agreed to do so, as I hoped to broaden my teaching beyond the program in K-12 Administration, and to gain access to doctoral students in other corners of the College. Though Anna was not directly involved in the teaching of the course, she made many suggestions, including casting educational research as a social process, and adding in the notion of reflexivity in educational research. At her urging, I introduced feminist writings by Carol Gilligan, Sandra Harding, Susan Krieger, Shulamit Reinharz, and Donna Haraway into the course, and also added consideration of research ethics, the social and personal origins of research (drawing on accounts by Annette Lareau, James S. Coleman, Dorothy Holland and Margaret Eisenhart, and Alan Peshkin), and issues of persona, voice and rhetoric in research. I would never have thought of some of these authors and ideas on my own, and they had not surfaced in earlier versions of the course taught by other MSU faculty.

> *Annals of Academic Marriages:*
>
> *Anna: I think the ice cubes are easier to remove from the trays when the water level is all the way to the top. It's just a hypothesis.*
>
> *Aaron: You're hypothesizing now? I didn't think that was part of your epistemology.*

Anna: Aaron invited me to join him as a co-instructor of Educational Inquiry the following summer, 1994. With a focus on how researchers think, we opened the course by asking: What is research? As students responded, typically citing something they'd read or heard, we probed for fresh meaning, asking them what they meant, and probing then for how their response might show up through a real research project. We then discussed key phases of research, asking

students to imagine how a researcher whose work we'd just read may have come to their research questions; how, and why, they may have selected or shaped their guiding theory; how, as best we could tell, the researchers had selected (or crafted) a particular research design, and how, once in the field, they changed it; how researchers may have thought through the meanings of the data they'd collected, what may have helped and hindered them.

We did *not* teach these phases in the abstract and made it a point not to introduce the technical term for each phase (e.g., research question, conceptual framework, etc.) until students saw it in the thinking and actions that the authors presented in texts. To make this possible, we used books representing the full process of a research project, including compelling first-person discussions of what went on, phase by phase. For example, in teaching conceptual frameworks, we did not start out with this term. Instead, we had students read Annette Lareau's (1989) *Home Advantage*. In class, we directed students to pages where she discussed her struggles with three bodies of work—institutional discrimination, class-linked values, and cultural capital—as these scaffolded her thinking about the research topic of social class and parental involvement in elementary classrooms. What was it about these bodies of work that made her struggle, and what was her struggle about? Why did she eventually set aside the first two in favor of the third? We listened closely to students' responses, encouraging respondents to consider what others said—until one (or more) expressed the possibility that each literature that Lareau considered gave her a distinctive way to think about her research questions and about what her data revealed. With more conversation, we "hit" on the technical term, in this case, *conceptual framework*. A student might state it, or we would.

Annals of Academic Marriages:

Aaron and Anna are texting about moving their courses on-line [during the pandemic].

Anna: I can't teach without whole-group discussion.

Aaron: Yes.

Anna: I forgot how to lecture. I used to. Around 1984.

Aaron: I'm pretty sure you can lecture. Personal experience.

We used this approach because we did not want students simply memorizing technical terms; we wanted our students to see them as arising in the process of inquiry, as a necessary part of the thinking and doing of research. We thus taught inductively, creating an experience that students would have to make sense of themselves, much as mature researchers do. We selected research cases that covered all the phases of the research process, though typically emphasizing one phase more so than others. We found that doctoral dissertations, eventually published as books, were ideal for this purpose. Each case, then, needed to do double-duty: It had to convey the insides of key phases of the research process. It also had had to convey the message that graduate students could produce publication-worthy research. We gravitated toward cases written in first-person voice, allowing readers to quickly zoom in on the author-researcher's thinking and actions. We did assign plenty of other articles and chapters pertaining to one or more of the phases, or discussing epistemology, reflexivity, and ethics.

Teaching in this way cannot be done without teachers' awareness of what is going on in students' thinking and feeling, then navigating between students' internal thoughts and the course's learning goals. This meant we had to be attuned to what and how students thought about each case, and how they made sense of classroom discussions of them. To help with this, we asked students periodically

to share with us ungraded written reflections on how they understood a particular idea, we'd talked about in class, what they saw in a case, what puzzled or troubled them. We asked them to write in their own first-person voice.

Aaron and I had to work out our approach to the course, hashing through our goals and pedagogical approach, reformulating as we proceeded class to class, as we developed insight into students' thinking. We did this through sustained prep sessions, often over long dinners, or popping into each other's offices to share an idea we did not want to lose. To organize ourselves, we prepared a detailed written agenda, but we never let it become a script, and typically, in class we'd pursue it, but out of order. Often we didn't "cover" it all. The approach let us come to class with shared ideas but prepared to voice a different view. We were, then, partly choreographed, and not, and in class, students would hear us nudging the other: "You go first, and then I'll jump in," or "*You* go first and *I'll* jump in," the other way around.

The approach worked well except for the sessions on statistics, which Aaron led, and through which I sat on the sidelines. This was not a source of tension for us. As a student, I had taken my share of statistics courses, but honestly, never felt that I had the kind of conceptual grasp I'd need to teach them.

But my sitting out those sessions, when previously Aaron and I had been so interactive, was, we concluded, a problem for our students. That made it a problem for us. I worried that in stepping back I was confirming the age-old bias that women lack facility with mathematics and numbers. I worried too that because so much of my work with students was rooted in the careful teaching of subject matter, I would have to rebuild my relationship with the class.

I also wasn't crazy about the shift in the "feel" of the course. The first half of the semester was very discussion-oriented, with lots of open-ended questions about what research is and how it proceeds. But Aaron's teaching of statistics was not discussion-oriented. It seemed to give little mind to students' thinking about statistical concepts, or ways of visualizing them. Instead, it was procedural, offering explanations of "right ways" to do things, and wrong ways to avoid. It was discontinuous with what had come before, and what we hoped to return to.

Aaron: I of course agreed, and it didn't help that we had to move into a computer lab with students in rows in front of stationary desktop computers (the state-of-the-art technology at the time). At some point, I was sufficiently frustrated that I invited my MSU colleague Deborah Ball to observe me teaching statistics, hoping that she might offer pointers. Deborah, already a renowned mathematics educator, was exceedingly generous, gently asking how I knew what students understood about statistics, and noting that I only saw their ability to generate correct responses to statistics tasks. She pointed me towards some mathematics curriculum guides designed for teachers of elementary school children, and suggested I look at how they approached the teaching of elementary statistics concepts such as the middle of a distribution, and how spread out away from the middle the data were. Upon exploring these materials, I did in fact see how the images in the guides mapped on to statistical concepts. I began to imagine ways to use such images with doctoral students.

Deborah's comments fundamentally revolutionized my teaching of statistics, and I continue to rely on this discussion-oriented approach (which also downplays the idea that there is one right answer). It's led Anna to invite me to her graduate-level course, Curriculum and Instruction in Higher Education, each fall for the past 25 years to deliver a lesson on finding the middle of a frequency distribution, illustrating how this kind of teaching is as applicable to graduate

students as it is to elementary school children (this being but one example of how our learning to teach, and about teaching, at MSU, stayed with us when we left). The approach can, at times, be very frustrating for advanced students, as typically, they learn how to calculate a mean or an average often by third grade, and thus they automatically reach for the formula. But what makes the value that results the *middle*? That's where conceptual knowledge comes into play. The middle of a distribution of values is a fundamental building block for other key concepts in introductory statistics, such as variance, correlation, and null-hypothesis significance testing. A deep understanding of the middle of a distribution opens the door to understanding these and other concepts much more so than relying on a formula.

Anna: Aaron's guest teaching about the middle of a frequency distribution to the master's and doctoral students in my TC Curriculum and Instruction course is not an attempt to teach statistics (though many students have told me that indeed they learned something about it in that one lesson). Instead, it's a concrete case example of the teaching and learning of a single subject-matter concept. Rather than lecturing in the abstract, Aaron draws students into a case example. Since they themselves enact the example, they can reflect back on it fairly easily. For the purpose of my Curriculum and Instruction class, the case helps students grasp a few key concepts about teaching and learning: (1) that teaching can draw on things that students know already and that are embedded in their daily lives, (2) that students can reason their way through seemingly knotty subject-matter problems (as opposed to having it dropped on them via lecture), and (3) that teachers do best in helping students learn one idea at a time—preferably core subject-matter concepts (Pallas & Neumann, 2019) that open doors to their learning of other related concepts. ("Core concepts" is the term Aaron and I adopted for the basic building-block ideas in a discipline or field of study.) A key task, for an instructor, is to identify such core concepts and offer students cases, exercises, simulations, and the like that they work through themselves to derive those concepts. This teaching is anything but didactive, abstract, or formulaic. It requires teachers' authentic understanding of their subject matter, their students, and themselves.

A final project for the Curriculum and Instruction course is to have students, working in small groups, design an undergraduate course syllabus featuring a few carefully selected core concepts for a subject of their choice. My students typically are deeply challenged, as they must both write up the syllabus, and in a separate paper, explain it, as though to an audience unfamiliar with its content. My course evaluations and post-class debriefings suggest that most students love this assignment. My own assessment over the years, of students' final products for the course's Syllabus Project, suggests that the assignment works.

Growing Pains

Anna: As I began my years at Michigan State, I continued to mine the data from the Institutional Leadership Project, cementing my expertise as a scholar of organizational leadership; it would be my pathway to tenure. But questions of "leadership for what?" as well as what the study of leadership might be hiding from my view, were never far below the surface. I wondered if I'd slid over important stuff that I needed to examine, stuff that would give leaders, teachers, and others something, truly, to lead toward. What was I missing?

What I finally said out loud—to Aaron, and I'm sure at first, to no one else—was that I was becoming intrigued by the experiences of faculty and students in the academic spaces where postsecondary subject-matter learning occurred. I began to think about subject-matter learning, about teaching as a way to

spur this learning, and about teachers and students, *both*, as learners. Attending to organization, administration, and leadership, as important as these are, sidesteps the learning that students and faculty must do *inside* organizations chartered to create and deliver the nation's and the world's higher learning. How do they do so? And what does it mean for faculty, as subject-matter experts, to learn?

The questions I was starting to ask about learning and teaching were inconsistent with the dominant orientation, at the time, of the field of higher education, and of MSU's Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education (HALE) Program in particular. HALE included a mix of higher education scholars whose work was anchored largely in the epistemic standpoints of administrators, and MSU central administrators who had "retired" to tenured faculty positions. And it's true that I'd built my early career within that epistemic view; it shone through my cache of publications and record of teaching. But did that mean I could not go on to something new? Would tenure, assuming that worked out, give me the freedom to stretch my wings, substantively and epistemically? Or alternatively, might it lock me into an identity that I had developed, or perhaps simply inherited, years earlier? A flashpoint occurred as I prepared for my tenure review when a senior scholar in the administrative camp volunteered to write my tenure narrative for me. I declined the offer, worried that others were seeking to define who I was as a scholar. Though I was willing to hear others out, I very much wanted to lead in defining myself.

Tenure is awarded, usually, in a deserving scholar's seventh year on the tenure track; this gives them up to six years to produce research and demonstrate teaching proficiency and commitment to service. I made the case that although I had been "on the track" for less than six years, I had researched and published enough, at TC and MSU, to warrant an early tenure review. I was known in my field, and my research, appearing in laudable outlets, was valued. My teaching and advising were going very well. My service was expanding. I was reviewed in my third year at MSU, 1993, successfully securing tenure and promotion to Associate Professor.

Tenure was a relief, but it did little to reduce my sense of being ill-fit to HALE. If anything, I felt freer than ever before to connect, and collaborate with, the extraordinary scholars of K-12 teaching that Judy Lanier had assembled. I was seeing ever more clearly how the perspectives these scholars had fashioned to study children's learning and instructors' teaching in schools could inform research on college students' and professors' learning and teaching.

Once again, the pushmi-pullyu reared its two heads. As HALE came to feel increasingly constricting, and as Aaron, too, saw few ways to link with the work of his K-12 admin colleagues, we explored job opportunities at other universities, even as we remained drawn to the fascinating research on K-12 teaching and learning at MSU. We won't recount all of these forays, but each of them required us to think about our two-headed, living career, and what a particular move might mean for us. We remained intent on not having a commuter marriage.

It's no surprise then that we also explored the possibility of reconfiguring our appointments at MSU. We consulted extensively with the College of Education's new Dean, Carole Ames, a source of great support; Dick Prawat, chair of the department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education (CEPSE); Penelope Peterson, a distinguished professor in educational psychology, and others. On the heels of Aaron having an offer at Penn State to lead the Education Theory and Policy program in their College of Education, we negotiated moves into the Educational Psychology program in CEPSE, where we would spend our remaining time at MSU.

Aaron: The main ongoing challenge for me was that MSU's College of Education simply didn't care about the sociology of education. I had a courtesy appointment in the MSU Sociology department, but that counted for little. And I wanted very much to maintain a professional identity as a sociologist, as it is how I saw myself.

I did benefit from the Midwest Sociology of Education group, a loose consortium of faculty from MSU, the University of Michigan, Northwestern, University of Chicago, Indiana University, and the University of Notre Dame. Here I could run into the "usual suspects," Adam Gamoran, Pam Walters, Charles Bidwell, Bob Dreeben, Jim Rosenbaum, Maureen Hallinan, Valerie Lee, and their students, and feel that I was still connected to the field.

My intellectual horizons were expanding, as I re-engaged with the sociology of the life course, and it didn't seem as important to engage in large-scale quantitative analysis as it once did. At the invitation of my MSU colleague Mun Tsang, I wrote a review article for *Review of Educational Research* that joined schooling and the transition to adulthood, looking at the role of schooling in the life course over time, and in comparative perspective (Pallas, 1993). And living with Anna, and teaching about qualitative methods and texts in the Educational Inquiry course, led me to design a study of how adults subjectively experience the meaning of education in their lives. I went on to interview 51 randomly sampled adults in mid-Michigan, and years later, publish a series of journal articles and book chapters (Pallas, 2006; Pallas et al., 2003).

But I had an institutionalized identity, and qualitative life course researcher wasn't it. Sociologists such as John W. Meyer see institutionalization as a process by which norms and practices become expected and taken for granted in the eyes of a wider society—in this case, a society of sociologists with the power to confer an identity on an individual, rooted in who they studied with, where they publish, and the topics they study. The identity conferred on me—my institutionalized identity—was that I was a sociologist who used quantitative methods to study the nature of stratification in schools.

Thus, my senior colleagues in the sociology of education, including James S. Coleman, Maureen Hallinan, and Alan Kerckhoff, didn't understand what I was doing or why, and were not shy about telling me so. In hindsight, I wonder if there was anything I might have done to "soften them up." It's true that virtually all of my published empirical research to that point was rooted in quantitative studies of school effects, status attainment processes, and education policy analysis. My newer lines of work were just emerging.

I also sought affirmation of my identity as a sociologist in professional associations. I ran for the Chair of the Sociology of Education Section of the American Sociological Association, losing to John Meyer by one vote. (And John wasn't even eligible to run, having served in that role many years before, but no one remembered the rules.) The following year, I ran again, outpacing my Northwestern friend Jim Rosenbaum, and putting together the section's program for the annual meeting in August. I also decided to apply for the editorship of the ASA journal *Sociology of Education*, seeking to succeed my grad school friend, Pam Walters of Indiana University. The ASA Publications Committee must have liked my proposal, because they selected me as editor, and providence smiled when Annette Lareau agreed to join me as Deputy Editor. We really hoped to broaden both the submissions to the journal and the kinds of papers it published but learned that journals also have institutionalized identities. *Sociology of Education* was seen as a high-status outlet for quantitative work on educational stratification, and we struggled to move

beyond these substantive and methodological "guardrails," with only limited success.

Along the way, Anna and I had an interesting dalliance with the University of Notre Dame. I was offered a position as Professor in Notre Dame's sociology department, working alongside my senior colleague and mentor, Maureen Hallinan, recent President of the American Sociological Association. (Maureen told me in no uncertain terms not to give my job talk on that qualitative stuff I was doing.) But Notre Dame did not have a school or department of education, and Anna would have had to relinquish tenure to take a position on Notre Dame's faculty. Ultimately, that made Notre Dame a non-starter.[3] The pushmi-pullyu would not be heading to South Bend.

But the most vivid memory of the recruitment was our meeting with Notre Dame's Provost, who asked us, "What will you contribute to the Catholic character of the University?" We looked at each other, and I replied, "Diversity!"

Anna: With the departmental transitions in play, I turned fully to my new agenda with learning at its center. I had recently read Susan Krieger's (1991) classic *Social Science and the Self: Personal Essays on an Art Form*, along with others on the sociology of knowledge, all while asking myself what I would be doing next in my research. What would spur me most to learn in scholarly ways, and why? Building out Krieger's self-reflexive turn, I turned to ask, instead, what others in positions comparable to mine (i.e., newly tenured) experienced through this period of their lives and careers, a timepoint when faculty might feel less constrained in their choice of research topics than they did before tenure. Were some drawn, post-tenure, to new topics differing from those they'd studied earlier, or differing perhaps in perspectives that field-based colleagues typically used to study them? Or did they stay with their prior agenda, and if so, how did they position themselves to uncover new insights on topics they had already studied in some depth? What else did they encounter in this career period, and how did those encounters shape their scholarly work, and identities? What was new for them, and how did they respond to it?

Questions such as these led me to the People's State University Study, wherein I interviewed two cohorts of newly tenured professors (n's of 20 and 18) at a single university once yearly over three years. I had made my way into an AERA reception, where Pat Graham, then President of the Spencer Foundation, was chatting informally with young scholars. Hearing me describe my work, she asked me to send her a note describing where my research might go next. Of course, I did, and she, or a staff member, responded with the application for a major Spencer grant. Following on intensive writing, and even more intensive revision, my proposal for the Four Universities Study was funded. It allowed me to identify changes up to five years post-tenure in the scholarly learning of a total of 40 professors in the sciences, social sciences, arts/humanities, and applied/disciplinary fields, working at four major U.S. research universities. Elsewhere I have described the findings of these two studies as portraying:

> the power of faculty members' personal and emotional connections to their scholarship, its rooting (for many) in early life experiences arising outside of school, and professors' post-tenure pursuits of scholarly learning in more varied ways than before tenure—for many, via engagement in research, for a small but substantial number via service, often anchored in subject matter, and

[3] There is an eerie parallel to Julianne Turner's experience, chronicled in her Acquired Wisdom piece (Turner, 2022). We met Julie during our Notre Dame visit.

> for nearly all, via their teaching (quoted from Neumann, in press, detailed in Neumann, 2009).

The findings about teaching provided grounds for my next set of studies: on professors' subject-matter teaching in undergraduate classrooms enrolling under-served students, their learning to teach in these settings, and their professional development as teaching professors.

Although the People's State University and the Four Universities projects were front and center in my attention until about 2010, I launched other work as well. Drawing on my co-teaching of Educational Inquiry with Aaron, he and I, and Penelope Peterson, by then the Dean at Northwestern University, carried out a study of how education doctoral students learn research, with implications for instructional strategy and curriculum development (Neumann et al., 1999). Additionally, at the invitation of my MSU colleague Steve Weiland, I wrote a paper on the personal origins of my research questions, attending to how I'd learned in childhood, about the horrors of my father's life (Neumann, 1998); doing so helped me understand that I'd crafted a mode of inquiry long before I embarked formally on research. I also collaborated with Penelope in editing a book on the personal origins of women researchers' scholarship in the field of education (Neumann & Peterson, 1997); my chapter in this volume portrays how I'd learned about my mother's life, which had been shrouded in silence until I purposefully asked her about it (Neumann, 1997). The chapter reveals the power of untold story, and considers the intricate ethics of its pursuit. The insights I've gained from this body of work, alongside those I gained from my research on professors' learning in the early post-tenure career, guided my subsequent studies, and my teaching of interview as research method.

The body of scholarship I produced over nine years at MSU—the remaining leadership research, my two new studies of professors' learning and development in the early post-tenure career, the writings on doctoral students' learning of research, the autobiographical publications—along with my course development, teaching and mentoring, and emerging plans for research on college teaching set me up well for promotion to full professor. It was no small thing that I "came up" for this review in a program (Educational Psychology) set distinctly apart from the field of higher education in which I had been trained. This did worry me a bit. It meant that for formal evaluation purposes, I would need to demonstrate outstanding research and teaching expertise, and strong service contributions, both in my own field of higher education, and in one or more of the fields represented under the umbrella of educational psychology. My record of productivity, highlighting philosophical, cognitive, and sociological aspects of professors' and college students' learning, stood me well. I learned that I had the full support of my new departmental colleagues and many others in the aligned Teacher Education department, and in other corners of the College. All to say that my review was successful. In Spring 2000, I was notified, formally, that I'd been promoted to full professor.

Looking back, I am awed at how the scholarship I initiated at MSU has infused just about every facet of the work I took on thereafter. No doubt but that my scholarship had its origins in my childhood penchant for drawing out and making sense of others' life stories, in my attunement to its emotional content, and also in my sustained and deeply sustaining connection to Aaron over many years. But I think that my scholarship originated, too, from the distinctive culture of teaching and learning that permeated MSU's College of Education, and the distinctive friendships it inspired. I underline especially the incredibly enriching conversations I've

had with Penelope Peterson over the years. I've learned that colleagueship without

friendship is impoverished.

Aaron:-A highlight of our decade at Michigan State was my joining the College's rock-and-roll band, which initially was called School Violence. The anchors were three College faculty members: Bob Floden, guitarist and vocalist; Chris Clark, bassist and vocalist; and Michael Sedlak, drummer. They were supplemented by Michael's wife Rhonda Sherwin, a local art teacher who sang (and later played bass in the band), David Cline, a doctoral graduate in science education who was a professional-quality guitarist, and a variety of other students, family members, and acquaintances who cycled through. We occasionally benefited from some terrific doctoral students joining the band, and I would joke that we required demo tapes along with GRE scores for admissions applications. I had to audition as a guitarist for the band and was the weakest musician of the group (in my opinion). But my colleagues let me join anyway, and performing live with them, particularly at the annual AERA meeting, was always a thrill. At that point, I may have been better-known at AERA for being in the band than for my scholarly work, and that was okay.

We even recorded and released a vanity CD entitled "Permanent Record," for which Deborah Ball wrote liner notes. (In 1999, we had the misfortune of performing at AERA the night of the Columbine High School massacre, and all of a sudden, the tongue-in-cheek band name School Violence wasn't so funny. The band changed its name to Against School Violence, later shortened to ASV, and now performs as School's Out.)

Horizons

Anna: About eight years after we left Teachers College, I received a surprise call from Aaron's former TC colleague Gary Natriello. TC was conducting a search for a senior position in its Higher Education Administration Program. Might I be interested in applying? About a year later, TC also posted a senior position in its Sociology and Education Program. Though these postings may seem synchronized, they were not, at least until the outcomes of the respective searches were clear.

Both heads of our pushmi-pullyu were fully engaged in figuring out our future. Aaron and I endured the ambiguities of two independent searches. We remained committed to living in one place and knew that this effort might not work out. As in the MSU search a decade earlier, there were countless ups and downs. We applied, agonized, made spreadsheets putting numbers to our feelings about our respective destinations, and eventually accepted the offer: two tenured full professor positions.

The decision to leave MSU was difficult, but we knew it was time: Many of our colleague-friends had left or would be leaving soon—to Northwestern University, the University of Michigan, Stanford, the Spencer Foundation, among other destinations.

Aaron was ready to return to an institution that openly valued sociology. And New York's public schools were at the cutting edge of leading change, struggling with important questions of how to organize

schools, fund K-12 education, evaluate teachers, and address the educational needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population. School leaders needed answers, as did state policymakers, the courts, media outlets, and parents. Aaron wanted to use research to advance the thinking and decision-making of voters and policymakers. He was primed to do it, and it was very exciting to watch.

As for me: Though I knew that the future of MSU would differ from its past, leaving was hard. I'm slow to tear up roots. Settling into New York City, I threw myself into work: I still had half the data collection and most of the analysis and writing on the *Four Universities Study* before me. I also had the unparalleled opportunity at TC to build a slate of new courses that, I decided, would draw on my MSU learning, applying it to higher education. I had no models for this, so envisioned the course development, and teaching, as a new thread of my scholarship. I kept a close eye on related work at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, headed by Lee Shulman. He voiced strong interest in, and encouraged, my research and teaching. Plus, I uncovered a treasure trove of TC doctoral and master's students eager to enroll in my new classes, wanting my advisement, inviting me to direct their dissertation research, excited to work on my projects. I was still learning and growing, but now in research, teaching, and service entwined.

Aaron: Michigan State was a great place for us for many years, and we made many friends with whom we are still in touch. But even after our move into the Education Psychology program, we were still navigating the mismatch between our own scholarly identities and those of the department and College which housed us. I really wanted to teach the sociology of education, and to advise doctoral students who were studying it. That's what most of my professional peers were doing, and it simply wasn't possible at Michigan State.

Still, we were committed to living together, and that probably meant being at the same institution. Michigan State's College of Education was quite nonchalant about having a married couple on its faculty; there were many pushmi-pullyus, totaling about 10 faculty couples in the College when we arrived. As we continued to keep our eyes open for joint opportunities, we developed a logic for considering them: A new configuration would, at the very least, have to be better than at MSU for one of us, and at least as good as MSU for the other. We did not want to find ourselves sacrificing professional wellbeing in the context of our marriage. That *did* rule out some possibilities, but not all of them. We would become the first tenured faculty couple in the history of Teachers College.

The TC Years

Anna: Almost immediately, it became obvious that my service load would escalate. I became the Director of TC's higher education program, leading on key fronts: revising the program's identity (mission) and devising new curricula (one doctoral, two master's) for enacting it; reversing enrollment patterns by increasing master's while decreasing doctoral enrollments; clarifying and documenting how students were to progress through their programs of study; inventing ways to monitor students' progress; improving student advisement; expanding within-program communication; going public with program, student, and faculty accomplishments. Though I thought my colleagues and I would get all this work done quickly, it took a good five years. In line with our interests, we renamed ourselves as TC's Program in Higher and Postsecondary Education (HPSE).

Program-building work means little without a story, or theory, to lend it coherence. Elsewhere I've described HPSE's guiding theory, approved by the program's

faculty, then applied distinctively to each of the program's three curricula:

> … a three-part framework comprised of three concentric circles. The innermost represented college students and their learning and development, faculty careers and lives, and other person-centered knowledge domains attuned to human learning and development. The middle circle represented organization, leadership, and other systemic features of postsecondary institutions. And the outermost circle represented environments including cultural shifts, national and international political swings, alterations to postsecondary education's civic mission, among others. We portrayed the three circles as interactive and permeable, allowing new ideas, actors, and projects to enter and depart over time. We also foresaw the desirability, when opportunities arose, to treat a unique problem across all three levels at once (Neumann, in press).

Though policies, guidelines, forms, and other artifacts have changed greatly over the past quarter-century, as did our courses, research projects, and faculty, the model has held. I don't know if this is a good thing or not and suspect that change is now needed. In my case, I have learned that having a curricular model, adaptable to master's and doctoral programs and organized around faculty members' and students' thinking, gives faculty and students ways to talk, internally and externally, about what they are up to.

In addition to directing HPSE for well over a decade, I took on other significant service at TC: leading my department as its chair, designing and conducting a College-wide in-service program for new faculty, serving multiple terms on TC's tenure and promotion-to-full committees, among others. I have served on multiple proposal review committees for the Spencer Foundation and chaired key policy and award committees for AERA. I served as president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. This is not the place to unroll these many ventures but suffice it to say that Aaron has stood by me, supporting me through complex decision-making, offering perspective, encouraging me. He's been great about telling me when to back off, but also when to go for something that, I thought, was beyond my reach (such as the ASHE presidency).

2012 ASHE Presidential Address

Teaching has been central to my work at TC. It's been exciting to build courses from ideas I gained at MSU or developed in my research. My core course offerings are Curriculum and Instruction in Higher Education, followed by College Teaching and Learning. Together, the two translate K-12 learning and teaching theory to higher education (for more, see Neumann, in press). Initially, I taught these courses with theory and examples from leading studies of K-12 classrooms. But my later studies of college teaching (summarized in Pallas & Neumann 2019), and those of my students (e.g., Bolitzer, 2021; Delima, 2025; Terosky & Conway, 2020; Woodson, 2021), have filled in important content that was missing, including

some of what does and does not transfer from K-12 to college classrooms, what needs to be added, what needs reconceptualization. Several of my students (Milagros Castillo-Montoya, Liza Bolitzer, Jolie Woodson, Dianne Delima) worked with me to develop and run an intensive 10-month professional development program, MetroCITI (Metropolitan Colleges Institute for Teaching Improvement) for college instructors seeking to deepen their teaching; the institute sparked and supported the development of our ideas.[4]

Through my years at TC, Aaron has served as my primary collaborator and/or sounding board as I designed new courses, wrote papers and prepared talks, and conceptualized MetroCITI and related research. He also has supported the dissertation research of countless of my students seeking out sociological interpretations of college learning and teaching, or strategies for devising meaningful research designs. We realized, in due time, that both our fields would benefit from our drawing together the many discrete projects on which we'd collaborated, both at MSU and TC.

The result was a book, invited by Laura Perna and Bill Tierney, with generous guidance from our editor, Greg Britton of The Johns Hopkins University Press. *Convergent Teaching, Tools to Spark Deeper Learning in College* presents our theory of teaching via cases, most derived through MetroCITI, to support our key claims: that teaching involves targeting core subject matter concepts (after all, you can't teaching everything), surfacing what students already know as starting points for their learning of core concepts, and navigating then between these two, and beyond (Pallas & Neumann, 2019). The volume has anchored significant portions of my teaching.

Annals of Academic Marriages:

The feeling when some students in your survey research methods course are getting a homework assignment on cognitive interviewing wrong because they took Anna Neumann's course on interview research methods.

The preceding run-down speaks to the professional side of my life, and I've tried to show how Aaron wove into it. Yet it hides from view a great deal of what we went through personally. I'll share a bit of this. Shortly after Aaron and I were married in 1990, we learned that my father had developed Alzheimer's; it ravaged his memory, his life with my mother, his ability to connect with me. I knew nothing about this disease before a doctor in Houston diagnosed it. Expert dementia care was scarce in South Texas, and we struggled with what to do, eventually moving him into a locked Alzheimer's ward in Brownsville; his well-being, and my mother's, were at stake. I cannot begin to describe his terrors, and my own, at the prospect of a lock-up for this survivor of the death camps. He lived in that ward for two years before dying in his sleep at the age of 84. Back home in East Lansing, Aaron and I researched library books and journals, consulted with nurses specializing in Alzheimer's care, bought texts to educate the staff of my father's care facility, consulted (sometimes daily) with doctors, flew (usually together) to arrange special treatments or address my mother's growing financial, physical, and psychological needs.

The other side of this tragedy surfaced slowly through the next 24 years. My mother lived to 96; living alone for more than 20 years after my father's death, she astounded us, growing into herself in countless ways. She educated local South Texas schoolchildren and community members about Judaism, Israel, and the Holocaust. But her last years,

[4] It also led directly to my ASHE Presidential address, and the use of cartoon graphics to make college teaching more visible.

like my father's, were hard. As a survivor, too, she was determined not to let go of life, and she fought for it to the end. My trips to South Texas with Aaron increased. She wanted both of us there, and she would sometimes say that Aaron was her child too. Together, we did all we could to ease this last phase of her life. Her death in June 2017 was another long, dark passage for me, one that Aaron lit up with support, with jokes at just the right time, with gifts of his presence.

In spring 2002, I was diagnosed with colon cancer, and a year later, with a bowel obstruction, each requiring major surgery. A decade later, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and endured courses of radiation and additional surgeries. I can't imagine getting through these diagnoses, the hard decisions they called for, the physical assaults on my body and the treatments they required on my own. Aaron was with me at every major turning point.

Aaron: My scholarly work took a turn when we returned to New York. Michael Bloomberg was elected Mayor, and appointed Joel Klein to serve as the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education. Klein was fond of saying that he wanted to shift New York from a great school system to a system of great schools. To do so, he established the Children First agenda, a market-based model that closed large comprehensive high schools, replacing them with smaller ones, devolving authority to school principals, and creating a high-stakes accountability system in which the letter grades assigned to schools could enable parents to vote with their feet, enrolling their children in "good" schools, and fleeing "bad" ones. These reforms paralleled some of the features of No Child Left Behind, the federal school reform legislation that Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings oversaw.

I began to grow uneasy with some of the claims about the success of these reforms. But it wasn't until I saw a new anonymous blog called *Eduwonkette* that I began thinking about giving voice to my misgivings. *Eduwonkette* sought to explain some features of the federal and the local education landscapes, writing with clarity, style, and playfulness. I had a strong suspicion that its author was Jennifer Jennings, a doctoral student in sociology at Columbia who worked with me, but she initially denied it. Eventually she came clean, and I started filling in for her on occasion, using my own pseudonym, *skoolboy*. Not long after, Jen had to reveal her identity to the public, and step away from blogging to write her dissertation. I also dropped the pseudonym, and continued to blog under my own name, for the local education news service *Chalkbeat* (nee *GothamSchools)*, and for *The Hechinger Report,* which is based at Teachers College. Hechinger often arranged for my posts to be picked up by *The Answer Sheet*, a *Washington Post* blog managed by Valerie Strauss. I blogged about topics such as the imprecision of teacher and school evaluations, school quality reviews, charter school accountability policy, the performance of virtual charter schools, the selection of Betsy DeVos as Donald Trump's first Secretary of Education, why teachers think about leaving their schools, test score inflation … the list goes on and on.

New York City has many colleges and universities, and I was always puzzled by the fact that relatively few faculty across the city were comfortable being quoted in the media. I

felt that I should speak my mind on topics that I knew something about; my ability to analyze data and make sense of evidence was my competitive advantage as a pundit. I was viewed by the media as an "honest broker," offering balanced reactions to politically charged education policies and practices such as school report cards, teacher value-added ratings, and the expansion of and success of charter schools. Increasingly, local and national journalists sought me out for comment. I'd be lying if I didn't acknowledge that being quoted in a major newspaper, or appearing on a national TV news show, was gratifying. But I wanted my comments to matter. I was especially motivated to engage when I was irked that an emerging narrative about a policy or practice was going to distort reality. The public should be able to count on academics to deliver a straight story, even as politicians and policymakers twist research findings to their own ends.

Like Anna, I also took on new service responsibilities at Teachers College, leading the Sociology and Education masters and doctoral programs for many years, and serving as Chair of the Department of Education Policy and Social Analysis for six years. I even did a stint as Acting Dean of Teachers College for six months in the spring of 2003, which persuaded me that I didn't really enjoy that kind of administrative work. Anna and I are still in the electronic Rolodexes for several executive search firms, and it's always a source of amusement when some hapless recruiter, unaware that we are married, reaches out to both of us about the same Deanship. It's pretty clear that taking a Deanship at another institution would pose a significant challenge to how we have enacted our distinctive pushmi-pullyu relationship.

Writing Together

Aaron: Our first stab at writing something together was an AERA paper that later appeared as a chapter in a 1995 book titled *Restructuring schools: Promising policies and practices*, edited by Maureen Hallinan (Pallas & Neumann, 1995). Its title, "Lost in translation: Applying Total Quality Management to schools, colleges, and universities," conveys our skepticism about the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) to educational organizations. Management guru W. Edwards Deming was the foremost proponent of TQM, and since we were a stone's throw from Detroit, at that time still the center of the American auto industry, there was great interest in having Michigan's schools and colleges emulate a seemingly-successful management philosophy to enhance their legitimacy.

I had some ties to educators studying TQM and its potential applications, and Anna had a deep knowledge of organizational theory and leadership that enabled her to see the differences between production processes in the automobile industry and how schools and colleges work. Deming's philosophy drew on scientific management and human relations frames, but gave little attention to loose coupling, goal ambiguity, political power in organizations, or the discretionary thought and action of individuals that might drive organizational learning. Anna took the lead on the critique, but I chimed in as appropriate, as I was more knowledgeable about the workings of K-12 schools than she was.

Anna: Since then, we've written many things together, including journal articles, book chapters, technical reports, grant proposals, and the book *Convergent teaching: Tools to spark deeper learning in college* (Pallas & Neumann, 2019). In some cases, it's been easy to decide who will take the lead in drafting a particular section of a manuscript. In others, we just play it by ear, recognizing that simply putting words on a page is a form of thinking, and that there will be plenty of opportunities to revise and sharpen these words. We mark up our collaborative texts *a lot*. The Faulkner-Hemingway contrast is no joke. We have very different writing styles, and invest a lot of

time in trying to find a common voice for our jointly-written pieces. By design, this paper displays more of our idiosyncratic voices than most.

> *Annals of Academic Marriages:*
>
> *Anna: What should the order of authorship be on that chapter we just co-wrote?*
>
> *Aaron: Oh, I thought we'd go with the customary alphabetical by first names.*

Acquired Wisdom

We end this unusual piece with some wisdom we've acquired over the years and that we cast here in the form of advice to readers who seek it. This section draws on both of our voices and experiences.

Recognize the distinctive features of academic couples. Couples often live linked lives, in the sense that the life course circumstances of one partner affect the life course circumstances of the other. This is particularly true for academic couples, because good opportunities are typically geographically circumscribed and idiosyncratic. Members of academic couples should acknowledge their distinctive relationship, clarifying whether and how much time they want to live together in one locale, and/or are willing to live apart (though one or the other's views on this may shift over time). We suggest that they then strategize their careers, each responding to their own intellectual (and personal) callings while attending to, respecting, and supporting that of the other. Conversations about such matters, repeated regularly (because we all change), can clarify values, tradeoffs, and necessary compromises, as well as surprising overlaps and opportunities.

Get clear on your intellectual identity. The appointments of academic couples often force one, or perhaps both, members into a particular lane that feels alien. Both of us experienced efforts to pigeonhole us into intellectual boxes that were overly confining. A first step in resisting an overly-narrow institutionalized identity is periodic reflection on who you are and where you are going as a scholar. Don't wait until a high-stakes decision like a reappointment, promotion, or tenure review to give words to your intellectual identity. Say it and write it out. Do it annually and ask trusted colleagues—and your academic partner—to read and comment on it, and to raise questions. For two decades, Aaron has been leading workshops on preparing the personal statements that typically are circulated in high-stakes promotion and tenure reviews, emphasizing criteria such as tackling problems of interest to one or more scholarly communities, demonstrating growth and development over time, conveying a sense of coherence in one's research as well as across the domains of research, teaching, and service, and claiming an impact on one or more communities. It's important to produce well-crafted personal statements for these reviews. It is even more important to devise and use them as guides for the many decisions you'll make, alone and with your partner, throughout your life and career.

Not all risks that you take pay off, but some do. Academic life is shot through with rejection. Job applications, grant proposals, journal submissions … the odds of success are usually slim, and one must develop a tough skin to steel oneself about the realities that await. But "nothing ventured, nothing gained" is definitely applicable to the academic life. It's okay to dream big, as long as you don't find yourself counting on the improbable. We encourage junior scholars to develop a diversified portfolio of projects, some high-risk, and some relatively sure bets; this holds for scholars at other career stages as well. In brief, remind yourself that it's okay to reach for something you want, even if you don't get it. Remind your partner of the same. A bit of encouragement can go a long way.

Some projects don't pan out. That's okay. Each of us has file drawers—maybe file cabinets!—

stocked with projects that didn't go where we had hoped. Sometimes a project doesn't go anywhere because no one wants to fund it, and the resources to pursue it simply aren't available. Experienced researchers can try to shift a project's focus to adapt to funders' priorities, or start smaller, in the hopes that early data and findings can generate momentum for something more ambitious. We've learned to launch projects on a shoestring, but it can be challenging to publish out of such projects. Some of what's in that drawer (or cabinet) are data derived from such projects—just not enough there to write something solid and defensible.

Projects sometimes don't fly because the thinking behind them is muddled. A research question might not be as interesting as you thought it was, or you realize that you already knew the answer to the question you were posing. A research design may be ill-suited for the question you hoped to ask. On occasion, you might realize that you have the wrong collaborator. (That's never impaired our joint work!) In all such instances, you are learning *something*, though the knowledge may be private more so than public. Take seriously what you are learning. In doing that, you'll likely inform a future study—your own, or that of students whose dissertations you are directing. As before, don't be shy about sharing this view with your partner when things don't go their way.

Institutions don't love you back. We love our work, though there have been times when the institutions that have employed us have driven us crazy. Sociologist Lewis Coser coined the phrase "greedy institutions" to denote organizations that demand commitments of time, labor, and energy that are designed to instill feelings of loyalty in their members, and to compromise their ability to develop outside interests and commitments (Coser, 1974); this includes commitments to life at home and with those you love and who *do* love you back. Such "greed" is produced and reproduced in an organization's culture, creating norms about what kind of citizenship is expected of the organization's members. Sociologist and former UVA President Terry Sullivan (2014) discusses contemporary colleges and universities as greedy institutions, noting how cost-cutting places ever more responsibility on the faculty to do the work of the institution, and how advances in technology have made it increasingly difficult for individuals to disconnect from the demands that the institution places upon them. Students and administrators alike form expectations that faculty have nothing better to do with their time than to respond immediately to requests and inquiries, at any time of day or night. It's all too easy then for one to immerse oneself in institutional work, setting aside one's self and one's relationship to one's partner and family. At times, it's best to turn off the institutional call.

Annals of Academic Marriages:

"I won't nominate you for that time-consuming committee if you won't nominate me."

We have, we believe, done more than our fair share of institutional service work. As we've noted, Aaron was the Acting Dean at Teachers College for half of 2003, and both Anna and Aaron did stints as chairs of their respective departments at Teachers College. Our departments were wildly different in their size and complexity, with Anna's having an annual budget of about $13M, and about 30 full-time faculty, and Aaron's with an annual budget of about $3M, and about 18 full-time faculty. We have both directed our respective academic programs (Sociology and Education for Aaron; Higher and Postsecondary Education for Anna), often for years, with no end in sight. You could even say that we both "re-founded" our respective programs, creating new curricula (as though from scratch), consolidating degree programs and offerings, developing new records systems, creating new cultures of scholarly learning, and so on. We've lost track of the College committees we've served on or chaired.

Annals of Academic Marriages:

Aaron: I think we should be writing each other doctor's notes. "Please excuse Anna from writing this tenure review. She has to have a minor academic procedure in the next few weeks."

Anna: Yeah. And "Please excuse Aaron from serving on this committee. It aggravates his acid reflux."

Each of us learned the 80/20 Rule: 20% of the faculty cause 80% of the problems. Our faculties didn't always appreciate our efforts to introduce fairness and transparency into departmental operations, or to enrich opportunities for students' learning, or their own learning. Or if they did at some point appreciate any of these, they quickly forgot. We've found it helpful to have one another to remind us not to take institutional indignities personally, even when their consequences are intensely personal.

When juggling academic opportunities and responsibilities, seek out opportunities to learn. Our careers illustrate our efforts to juggle, and balance, research, teaching, mentoring, service, administration, anything else institutions and associations need. But you can't do everything all at once, nor can you stay with just one feature of academic life for too long a time. Be strategic in ensuring that regardless of the form of work you take on, there's something in it for you to learn. Learning feeds energy and interest into the most boring of tasks. And if you truly learn something of value—say, in service or teaching—it may eventually feed your research.

Don't die in your office. It might sound a bit grisly to say this, but we have had colleagues who passed away while still in their faculty positions, and were deprived of the opportunities and pleasures of retirement. It's great to enjoy your work, but the academic career has a rhythm that should indicate when it's time to move on from the dailyness of academic life. Some people hang on too long because they don't know what else they might do with their time, and colleges and universities generally don't provide much support for preparing for retirement. It can be helpful to imagine what retirement might look and feel like, and what sorts of resources and structures might best support that imagined future. Being able to plan this way, with one's partner, can bring joy into a time of "letting go" that can, at times, be hard.

We know that we write this article from positions of great privilege. At Teachers College, we have the benefit of a phased retirement program that is enabling us to stage our retirement in a sensible way, moving from full-time, to 75% time, and now to 25% time in the current and next academic years.

We've both been recognized with endowed professorships at TC. And in 2025, Anna received the Howard R. Bowen Distinguished Career Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education, the highest honor the association bestows. A few months before, Aaron was recognized with the Distinguished Career Award of the Children and Youth Section of the American Sociological Association. It's gratifying to receive these accolades as we embark on retirement.

We entered the academy and its labor market at a time when students, and dollars, were relatively flush, and academic jobs were plentiful. That's not the case right now, as contingent faculty positions with limited job security are supplanting tenure-track positions across the country, and as research funding dries up. American higher education is being challenged like never before, and we worry about its future. We hope that it, and our readers, will thrive.

Annals of Academic Marriages, Chapter 309:

"Hey, I asked you to read it, not edit it!

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