



Academic Optimism and a Touch of Wisdom

Anita Woolfolk Hoy



I am honored to be part of a series that includes many of my academic idols – scholars I have read and cited for years. Because my involvement in educational psychology has lasted for over half a century, I have been asked before to share some “acquired wisdom” (Shaughnessy, 2004; Woolfolk Hoy, 1996, 2000, 2008a, 2008b, 2018). Selected ideas from those previous musings made their way into this essay.

A Bit of History

I spent the first 24 years of my life in Texas, Fort Worth and later Austin. My mother, a Wisconsin native, had been

deployed to the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in Fort Worth as her first assignment in the Red Cross. There she met my father, an Illinois native, who had moved to Fort Worth to stay with his aunt and attend Texas Christian University on the GI Bill. As fate would have it, my dad’s aunt was my mom’s supervisor at the hospital. That both my parents were transplanted from the Midwest seems to explain why my friends kept asking me, “Why do you talk like a Yankee?”

I grew up in a working-class section of town. My dad and many of my friends’ parents worked at Convair (later called General Dynamics and now Lockheed Martin) building airplanes for the government. At that time not many graduates from my high school went to college and those who did mostly stayed close to home. My friends were going to Texas Tech in Lubbock and I applied there as well, but also added the University of Wisconsin (where my mom had graduated) and the University of Texas. I was accepted at all three. But like the naïve kid I was, I dismissed Wisconsin because I did not get into the dorm I wanted and eliminated the University of Texas because my school counselor warned me, I would be “lost on that huge campus.” So off I went to Texas Tech where I entered the honors program. Luckily, I had some great teachers, especially an English professor who taught me that I could write (but not spell), a philosophy professor from India who gave glimpses of a world larger than Lubbock, and a chemistry professor who told me to drop the class because I was not a (male) chemistry major. As an act of resistance, I got an A. At that point I realized that both my high school counselor and the chemistry



Figure 1. High school senior picture.

professor had been wrong, and I probably was not going to go from an A student in high school to a C student in college. Lubbock also brought sand storms and tornados hovering over the football stadium during a game and several other experiences, including a brief stint in a very traditional sorority, that helped me figure out who I was *not*.

After two years, two different majors, and a love affair that ended badly, I fled to the University of Texas and found my academic home. In another lucky turn of events, I moved into College House, an experimental living situation designed by John Silber, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UT. College House was really several older homes a few blocks from campus divided into oddly shaped bedrooms and baths and porches. The resident faculty member (a sociology professor) and his family lived on the first floor of my house. The goal of College House was to duplicate the kinds of intellectual opportunities found in the classic residential colleges of the great universities around the world such as Yale, Harvard, Oxford, or Cambridge. There were communal meals, discussions of current events (it was the late 1960s, so quite a bit

was happening on college campuses), and a regular Sunday night dinner with invited favorite faculty at the home of the resident professor – his wife was a fabulous cook. I still have and use the cookbook of “College House Dinners: 1967-1968” that she personally typed for me as a wedding present. I had been their go-to babysitter and a big hit because I always did the dishes and cleaned the kitchen after I put their two boys to bed. I also babysat for Vartan Gregorian’s family. He later was Provost of the University of Pennsylvania and president of the New York Public Library, Brown University, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. I was amazed when he insisted on paying me minimum wage, triple what I was used to making. I left their kitchen spotless.

At Texas I finally settled on a major in psychology, graduated in May and started a master’s program in Educational Psychology immediately. After all, what can you do with a BA in psychology? Go to graduate school. One day, the administrative assistant for the department called me in to say I had gotten a full NDEA Title IV fellowship for doctoral study. This came as a shock to me because I was in the master’s program. I had not applied for doctoral study or for a scholarship. It turns out that the administrative assistant, was in the habit of putting forward students for awards. I decided that doctoral study, fully supported, was an offer I couldn’t refuse. So, I changed my focus from counseling to developmental-social and school psychology, and never regretted the decision. Texas was a great place to study educational psychology. While I was there Tom Good, Jere Brophy, Gary Anderson, and Ed Emmer among many others were on the faculty. Ed was my dissertation advisor. The only bump in the road came the day a senior professor in school psychology called me into his office and told me it was a shame I was spending all this time earning a doctorate (and taking up a scholarship), when I was “*just* going to get married and have children.” Some words you never forget even when you know they are wrong.

My current husband Wayne Hoy knew about my experience with the school psychology professor, but he found it hard to believe someone would actually say that to a graduate student. Then he read *The Fifth Risk* by Michael Lewis. One evening while I was writing this essay Wayne said, “listen to this” and read from Lewis’s book about Dr. Catie Woteki, a professor of nutrition who spent six years as President Obama’s chief scientist in the Department of Agriculture. Lewis tells her story:

Her fellow graduate students were all men. It took her a while to sense how the professors treated her differently from the way they did everyone else. “I finally figured it out when all the guys were given assistantships and I wasn’t.” She went to the head of the department and asked what she needed to do to get an assistantship, too. “He said I would not be given one because women were a poor investment. I’d probably only have children and drop out... If you talk to women scientists my age, almost all of them have a story similar to mine,” she says. (Lewis, 2018, pp. 107-109)

Woteki was in graduate school in the late 1960s. I was not alone.

After graduation I worked for a year as an itinerant school psychologist for the Education Service Center, Region XIII, serving 16 counties in Central Texas. Some days I drove 200 miles round trip to assess students for learning disabilities or collaborate with teachers. Then the opportunity came for my former husband to do postdoctoral work at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Some of my Texas friends wondered why we would move to England – their East Coast geography was a bit shaky. I was offered a job as a school psychologist for a large district and as an assistant professor at Douglass, the women’s college of Rutgers. Thinking I might not have the opportunity to serve on a faculty again, I turned down the much more lucrative school psychology job to join

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a great education faculty at Douglass. As a new assistant professor, I threw myself into teaching. The Douglass women were some of the best students I have had, often the first in their families to attend college. My colleagues became close friends. That summer, my daughter was born two months early and weighed only 2 pounds 12 ounces. She was and is a fighter and brilliant but has had to deal with some physical disabilities as a consequence of her early arrival.

In the midst of all this, a sales representative from Prentice Hall stopped by our offices – we had the best snacks – and said, “You seem to love teaching educational psychology. Have you thought about writing a book?” I looked up from changing my daughter’s diaper and said, “What?” The sales rep convinced me to think about it, do an outline, and then a prospectus. Amazingly, Prentice-Hall signed the book. This was crazy. I was 27 years old, had a tiny new baby and an untenured position. As I have said before, beside the words “naïve” and “optimistic” in the dictionary should be my picture (Woolfolk Hoy, 2018). I had a co-author at the time, but that situation deteriorated, and I took over the entire project. I was fortunate. I survived and learned some valuable lessons about not wasting a minute of writing time.

A few years as a professor at Rutgers became 21 years. During that time, I moved to the Educational Psychology Department in the Graduate School of Education on the Rutgers Queens Campus, became chair of that department, divorced and remarried, and with my new husband, Wayne Hoy, moved to The Ohio State University where he became the Novice Fawcett Chair in

Educational Administration. Once again, as in the move to Rutgers, being the “trailing spouse” worked out well, even though when I arrived at Ohio State there was no Educational Psychology program. We finally got one going with great students and colleagues.

So, What Have You Done Lately? Contributions and Collaborations

All the while, from naïve beginnings through promotions and moves, I continued to revise my *Educational Psychology* text (Woolfolk, 2019, 2020) and pursue research. I have completed 14 editions of the text, working with almost 10 editors and three publishers, because publishing houses keep buying each other. With Nancy Perry at the University of British Columbia, I also wrote a child development text (Woolfolk & Perry, 2012, 2015) and with my husband, a book for instructional leaders (Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, in press). My main lines of research have focused on classroom nonverbal behavior, teachers’ sense of efficacy, and academic optimism. In my research, my best collaborator has been my husband Wayne. Texts and research were the bases for my contributions to our field.

A Text That Almost Wasn’t

The education psychology text almost didn’t happen. My co-author left the project after months of legal wrangling and negotiation. My editor changed three times. The upper level management at Prentice-Hall, I later discovered, thought the project was doomed. But amazingly and with much support from editors, friends, and colleagues, the first edition came out in 1980. After a few more editions, it became the most widely read text in the field, translated into more than a dozen languages and adapted for Canada, Australia, and Europe.

I believe a textbook is only one of many resources that students need to understand educational psychology, but a text can provide a frame or support to better utilize those other resources. My goal in writing is for readers to *understand, value, and apply* the

knowledge of the field. Educational psychology is rich with ideas, theories, principles, and research results. Just presenting this wealth of information, however, is never enough. Students must understand and value the ideas before they can apply them productively. As to understanding, a text should be clear and encourage students to think beyond the words on the page. Some books don’t stimulate this “thinking beyond” because students spend all their efforts dealing with the text’s complexities. I try to strike a balance between clarity and complexity.

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Professors teaching educational psychology also have to make the case for the value of the field. I try to help them make that case through examples, cases, videos, and other illustrations, but also by connecting with students’ interests and anxieties. I taught a student-teaching seminar and graduate courses, so I saw students at different periods of their development who were focused on different concerns. For example, many of my students in elementary certification programs felt conflicted about the desire to be caring and the need to control. Years ago, Jim McLaughlin (1991) also identified this tension in his research on beginning teachers. My early research on student teachers’ evolving beliefs about management also suggested that teacher preparation programs need to acknowledge prospective teachers’ struggles to reconcile caring and control as they develop personal theories about management. This important issue is never directly addressed in most teacher preparation programs, so much of what we do cover on classroom management seems irrelevant or off target. We do not listen to our students enough but rather give them

solutions for problems they are not experiencing. How can they value or apply such solutions? I try to incorporate an appreciation of developing students into my writing and talk directly to them.

I continue to write because my book is a connection to students I will never meet, but who are very real to me. I trust that these future teachers will learn how to teach, motivate, and assess their own students if they take educational psychology seriously. I know they will become experts as they gain experience because they have told me so. I believe in the value of the text for learning to teach (Woolfolk Hoy, 1996, 2000, 2008b). Educational psychologists provide unique and crucial knowledge to “any who dare to teach and all who love to learn” (Davis, personal communication, November 20, 2007), like this daring student who wrote to me a few months ago:

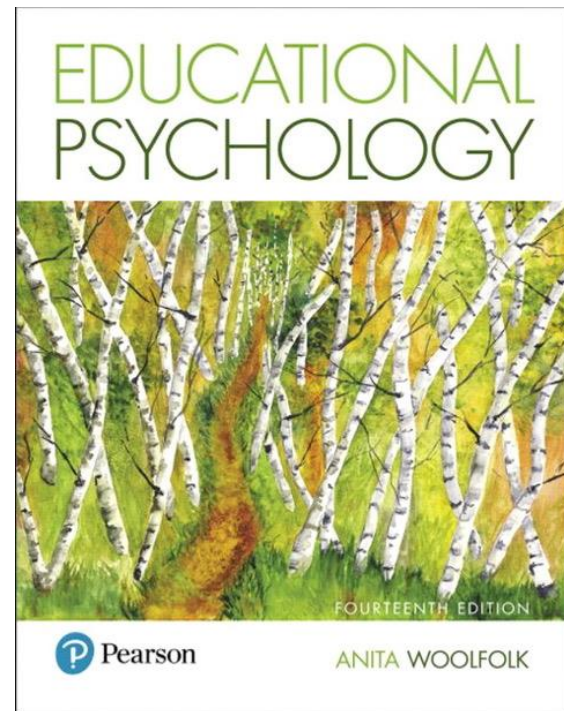
...we are using the fourteenth edition of your Educational Psychology textbook in my educational psychology class. As a future secondary level teacher and lover of reading, I just wanted to thank you for creating such an amazing text! I enjoy reading a new chapter every week and find myself captivated in your research and examples. I find all the new topics we learn from your text extremely interesting and helpful for any level of teacher or educator. I plan on purchasing my own permanent copy after this semester to reference for the rest of my college years and beyond....Thank you for creating this text, I am a huge fan!

Over the years these kinds of letters have sustained and humbled me. I hope they indicate a contribution to the preparation of teachers.

Research Contributions

My early research focused on attempts to bring theory and findings about nonverbal behavior from social psychology and communications into education. Major

outcomes of that work were a chapter in the *Review of Research in Education* (Woolfolk & Brooks, 1983) and several other articles (Brooks & Woolfolk, 1987; Woolfolk, 1985; Woolfolk & Brooks, 1985, Woolfolk & Galloway, 1985). But then I turned to a fascinating concept that held my attention for the remainder of my research career – teacher efficacy.



Teachers' sense of efficacy.

Teacher efficacy – more accurately called teacher self-efficacy or teacher's sense of efficacy – is teachers' judgments of their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The notion of teacher efficacy originated during the mid-1970s in studies by the RAND Corporation and has evolved since then, becoming a frequent focus of education researchers. As Zee and Koomen (2016) remarked, ever since the early RAND work, “studies on teacher self-efficacy (TSE) have been popping up like daisies in a spring field” (p. 981). In the journal *Teaching and Teacher Education* alone, 111 articles on teacher efficacy were published between 1985 and 2013 (Kleinsasser, 2014). In fact, over the years,

teacher efficacy in its many conceptualizations continues to be consistently related to important outcomes such as teacher motivation and self-regulation; teachers' use of instructional and managerial practices such as differentiation, inclusion, effective teaching strategies, student-centered approaches, and proactive humanistic classroom management; student motivation and engagement; peer and administrator evaluations of teacher effectiveness; and teacher commitment and well-being. In addition, there are modest relationships between teacher self-efficacy and overall student achievement in elementary school and beyond, though the links are stronger for elementary school students, perhaps because they tend to have one teacher (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Woolfolk Hoy, in press; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

My work on teacher efficacy began in the late 1980s with Wayne Hoy. Our initial research examined how prospective teachers' feelings of efficacy related to ideas about motivating and managing students and how all these beliefs changed with initial teaching experience (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). Next, we looked to the school climate to identify organizational factors related to teachers' efficacy judgments such as the leadership of the principal and the collegiality of the faculty (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). This research program really expanded when we moved to The Ohio State University. As is so often the case, students inspired our own learning. With our students, we studied the meaning and measurement of teachers' sense of efficacy and collective teacher efficacy. This work focused primarily on developing a model of efficacy that reconciled some of the seeming inconsistencies in early research and on designing survey instruments for assessing both individual teacher's efficacy judgments and teachers' sense of collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, &



Figure 2. Dinner with Wayne Hoy during the Rutgers days.

Hoy, 1998). Rich Milner and I examined the role of cultural context in the development of efficacy and the value of qualitative methods for understanding teachers' experiences of efficacy (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003). As an aside, Rich gave the 2018 Brown Lecture for AERA, the youngest scholar to receive that honor.

Assessing efficacy. Our early research on efficacy left us unsatisfied with the most frequently used two-factor instrument, the *Teacher Efficacy Scale* or *TES* (Gibson & Dembo, 1986). We questioned whether the general teaching efficacy factor as assessed by the *TES* actually measured outcome expectancy as claimed, or even had much to do with an individual teacher's sense of efficacy. As we developed our integrated model of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), we encountered Bandura's instructional efficacy scale, read Tom Guskey's writings about efficacy measures, and decided to develop a measure that fit our model and also corrected some of the problems identified in other measures. The timing was right because Megan Tschannen-Moran and I were conducting a graduate seminar on self-efficacy in teaching and learning with a room full of experienced teachers as students. We tackled the problem of developing a new measure, beginning with Bandura's instructional efficacy scale, and adding items we thought captured the important tasks of teaching. We reasoned that teachers' sense of efficacy would be

connected to tasks that they thought were central to good teaching – not to routine tasks that don't really connect to student learning, like taking attendance. We also wanted to heed the guidance of self-efficacy researchers such as Bandura, Pajares, and Guskey who cautioned that measures must be situation specific.

Our class included two teacher educators and six practicing teachers. All eight had teaching experience, ranging from 5 to 28 years, with a mean of almost 12 years. These teachers helped us develop items that were both specific and represented valued but moderately difficult teaching tasks. In keeping with our model, we also thought about factors internal and external to the teacher that might support and hinder the accomplishment of the tasks. A series of pilot tests, factor analyses, revisions, and more tests led to our short and long forms of the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale*, or *TSES* (available at <http://u.osu.edu/hoy.17/research/instruments/#Sense>). This instrument has been translated into dozens of languages and included in hundreds of studies. Currently the *TSES* is probably the most frequently used measure of teachers sense of efficacy (Kleinsasser, 2014).

Academic optimism: A new construct. Over the years, my husband Wayne Hoy had identified a number of school characteristics that were related to student achievement, controlling for socioeconomic status, but three in particular stood out. The first was *academic emphasis* – the degree to which a school is driven for academic success, sets high goals, believes in and respects student achievement, and creates a serious learning environment. The second was *collective trust* – the teachers' beliefs that they could trust the principal, their colleagues, and the students along with their parents to support each other and move the school forward. The third was related to teachers' self-efficacy, but this time it was the *collective efficacy* of the teachers in a school, the judgment that the faculty as a whole could organize and execute actions

that positively influenced student achievement. These three factors proved strong predictors of student performance on achievement tests. Using these three powerful predictors of achievement together, we thought we could explain more variance in achievement than each variable explained alone, but we were wrong. In fact, collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis were highly correlated, even though the items were quite different.

One day, Wayne and I were walking on the beach, and Wayne raised the question, "Why do you think academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and trust are strong predictors of school achievement, even controlling for SES? What is it about those qualities? They are highly correlated. Do they have something more general in common?" As we discussed this problem (yes, we really talk about this kind of thing in our free time), we began to focus on the notion of optimism. I was excited about the idea because learned optimism (Seligman, 2006) is an important concept in psychology, especially as psychology turns to a more positive focus (Seligman, 1998, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). On that walk and since, we hypothesized that together, teachers' collective sense of efficacy, trust in others (administrators, colleagues, students, parents), and academic emphasis form the construct *academic*



Figure 3. Family portrait with Wayne Hoy.

optimism. This construct encompasses teachers' beliefs about themselves, their students, and their instruction. As such, academic optimism includes both cognitive and affective dimensions and adds a behavioral element. Collective efficacy is *the perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students*. Collective teacher efficacy is a belief or expectation; it is *cognitive*. Teachers' trust in students and parents is based on feelings that the students and their parents are *benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open* (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, 2003). Trust is an *affective* response. Academic emphasis is a *focus on learning* and a press for particular *behaviors* in schools. Thus, academic optimism is a triadic set of interactions with each element functionally dependent on the other, producing a positive learning environment.

Since that time, we have examined and elaborated this concept of academic optimism and improved its measurement at the school level (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006a, 2006b; McGuigan, & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007) and the individual teacher level (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010; Fahy, Wu, & Hoy, 2010; Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). Measures of individual teacher academic optimism at the elementary and secondary level, as well as school level academic optimism can be found at <http://www.waynekhoy.com/individual-ao.html>.

Contextual Factors

The greatest influences on me have been my family and teachers (Woolfolk Hoy, 2008a). My grandmother taught me to take care of others but always be ready to take care of myself, no matter what comes along. She was born in 1902, married at 19, and had six children, yet she knew the value of a woman in charge of her own life. She lived 100+ years and never stopped teaching me. My mother taught me to be concerned

about children's development and to turn to research to learn more. She remembers being an undergraduate in Harry Harlow's classes at the University of Wisconsin. My father taught me to understand, not just memorize, and insisted that girls could be excellent mathematicians and anything else for that matter. A youth minister, Julian Rush, helped me make sense of my commitments in life. My children have taught me that knowledge is not enough and helped me understand compassion, humility, and the joy of play. My husband continues to teach me how to work with graduate students, so they become lifelong colleagues and friends.

My fourth-grade teacher, Ms. Guthrie, showed me how learning can be exciting – we never knew what color her hair would be week to week. She was, it turns out, not just a 4th grade teacher, but a music teacher by training and active on stage in the Ft. Worth Community Theater. Sometimes she dyed her hair for a part in a play or the cast parties on closing night. Of course, we thought it was for our entertainment and we loved it. In fact, she saw in me a girl who could learn the hundreds of lines to play the murderous Rhoda in “The Bad Seed” at the Community Theater. I auditioned, got the part, learned the lines, finished the play (got pretty good reviews), attended the cast party and saw another hair color on my teacher – exciting, exhilarating, challenging – 4th grade was grand. I recently learned that Ms. Guthrie went on to earn a master's and doctorate in psychology and her pilots' license. Amazing!

My senior year in high school, I had English with the legendary Mrs. Young. She would work us hard, the legend promised. We would write, and write, and write. We would memorize classic poems and recite them. She taught us how to research a topic we had chosen. Mrs. Young must have known about goal theory – set specific, moderately difficult, proximal goals. Step by step, we learned to do library searches and annotate note cards, how to outline and

I benefited from serendipity, in part because I insisted on finding it.

revise, how to cite and quote sources. *Ibids* and *op. cit.*s danced through my brain at night. The final product was long and pretty good. I could not have imagined authoring such a piece at the beginning of the year. No other class had expected this quantity or quality of writing. In Mrs. Young's class, reading and writing were about living – laughter and sorrow, hard work and accomplishment. We left the class feeling that we might be ready for college. Mrs. Young prepared me for Mr. Adams, my first



Figure 4. From the University of Texas days.

college English teacher who reinforced my sense of efficacy for writing. Mr. Adams was really Dr. Adams, but he did not use his title. We wrote in his class and we wrote outside. He read everything, wrote back, and then we revised. Writing became more natural – a way of thinking, but on paper. He taught us to make sense. Without ever being effusive, he recognized what was good in my writing and returned mediocre work with clear indications of what was needed. I didn't want to disappoint him.

I was blessed to have wonderful professors at the University of Texas who showed me that psychology was a valuable and fascinating field – Ira Iscoe, Elliot Aronson, Bob Helmreich, Michael Kahn,

Guy Manaster, Jere Brophy, and Ed Emmer. In my own career, I am indebted to the colleagues and students who continue to make educational psychology a dynamic field and show me new questions that connect educational psychology to classrooms. I also had a number of teacher/colleagues in my editors over the years at Prentice-Hall, Allyn & Bacon, Merrill, and Pearson. Bob Sickles talked his reluctant boss at Prentice-Hall into supporting a 27-year-old first time author. Susan Katz was a clear-eyed guide and a fellow runner in the New York Leggs race through Central Park – we were so fit then! Nancy Forsyth and Paul Smith eased my transition when Allyn and Bacon took over my text, but they also guided the project flawlessly and became good friends. Kevin Davis, my scholar editor at Pearson after another publisher change, gave me the phrase, “those who dare to teach and love to learn.” He was his authors' true north in a publishing world that seems to have lost its compass.

Geography, institutions, and time also were critical to the decisions I made along the way. I have already described the opportunities provided by the University of Texas and College House. The time, the late 1960s and early 1970s, also shaped my decisions and commitments. On November 22, 1963, the students in my Fort Worth high school lined a street to cheer for John Kennedy and his entourage as he drove to the plane that would take him to Dallas and to his death in a motorcade there. By the time we walked the mile back to our school, the shots had rung out over Dealey plaza. Mrs. Young had us write about that day, and helped us to understand Whitman's, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed,” that speaks to the ordinary details of our lives burned into memory with the death of an extraordinary person. Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated while I was at the University of Texas. The four college students killed by National Guard soldiers at Kent State, the Vietnam War, the continuing struggle for civil rights, all these events seemed to converge to direct me to

education, joining those who dare to teach and love to learn. Maybe that was a path through the chaos to resist and to build.

In my early years as a professor, the great excitement for me and for many in the field was research on teaching. I remember joining the Invisible College for Research on Teaching, sponsored by the National Institute of Education and Michigan State University. There was such a sense of discovery and purpose as the results of many large, well-designed studies seemed to converge on a base of knowledge for teaching. At one of these meetings I learned about an upcoming issue of the *Elementary School Journal*, edited by Walter Doyle. The issue was devoted to research on teaching; I used it as the first text for a research on teaching course. Around the country many other educational psychologists were enthusiastically doing the same and exchanging their ideas for the course and for research. During that time in the 1980s and early 1990s, the meetings of the Invisible College right before AERA every year were engrossing. To attend the Invisible College was to be immersed in the key issues in research on teaching with the luminaries of the field. Many of the attendees left exhausted but sure that nothing we would hear at AERA would top the presentations and discussions of the two days at the Invisible College. The notion of knowing something valuable and true about teaching was exhilarating.

Lessons Learned

Many of the following lessons learned pertain to the perennial task, especially for professional women, of juggling roles. I have written about the first two lessons before (Woolfolk Hoy, 2018). The remaining eight are in no particular order.

Learn to work tired. In my late 20s, my first daughter's early arrival and my growing writing commitments taught me that the idea of waiting to write until "I had time" had to be dispelled. I wrote while my daughter napped, I proofread in doctors' and dentists' offices, and I wrote as soon as

the family went to sleep. This last effort was the hardest because by night time I was so tired. But the bargain I made with myself was that if I just sat down at my desk and worked for 10 minutes, then I was allowed to go to bed if I still felt too tired to work. Almost every night, the work carried me for hours once I began, but without the first step of getting to my desk, those hours of writing would have been lost – *just sit down and learn to work tired.*

I also benefitted from a few other writing tips you may have read:

- Don't push to the end of a project before you stop for the day. If you have to mobilize for a whole new section or project the next day, you may procrastinate. Instead, stop with something left to complete – you will get right back into writing faster the next day if you can pick up where you left off. Then if you finish and have time, you will have the energy to start on a new task and stop that one before you are done so the next day it is easy to pick up again, and on, and on.
- Even if you only have a little time, think of a small task that moves you forward – poke holes in the project. You can grade papers or edit manuscripts anywhere these days if you have Wi-Fi.
- Set interim deadlines for parts of a writing task and note them on your calendar. No matter what, always, always write at least one page a day.
- Reward yourself with answering email when you finish a chunk of writing.
- Use goal theory on yourself – specific, moderately difficult, proximal goals. Mrs. Young would approve.

If you are a professor, take advantage of your university setting. This lesson may seem to contradict the first – relish the unique joys of being on a college campus. I learned this lesson very late and wish I had acted on it sooner. My focus on having a family, faculty

duties, and writing made me turn down or overlook many opportunities at my universities – talks, museum exhibits, concerts, walks through university gardens and parks, social gatherings with students and colleagues, working out in beautiful facilities, great swimming pools – the list of university events and opportunities for individuals and families is endless. Take advantage of them – after you write that one page.

Spend time with students – invest your time in their futures. Time with students leads to lifelong friendships and continuing collaborations. We devoted hours to developing ideas. I always poured over my students’ writing and did heavy editing, perhaps inspired by Mr. Adams. But I wish I had spent even more time with them outside work. When I invested those hours, the return was always greater for me than for them. For a number of years my husband and I had our own reception at AERA, especially for current and former students and colleagues around the country we wanted the students to meet. It was great fun to bring a student over to an eminent scholar and say, “I want you to meet____. She is reading your work and has some interesting ideas.” The reception continued for years as we searched for larger and larger spaces to accommodate our growing list of students and colleagues. Thank goodness for places like Trader Joe’s in Chicago that let us afford the food and drink necessary for the get-togethers. The year we finally ended the tradition, we heard from many friends wondering when the party was planned and why they were “off the list.” Maybe we should resurrect the tradition as a reunion. You can’t spend too much time with friends.

Don’t be afraid to trail your spouse but know when to leave. As I wrote the first section of this essay, I realized how often I made a major career move as a “trailing spouse.” The move to the University of Texas, to Rutgers University, and to The Ohio State University all were predicated on staying in a relationship. At



Figure 5. Group picture at the 2006 Global SELF Conference (with Ohio State students with psychologist Albert Bandura)

the time, I never questioned the wisdom of such a plan. I was confident, even optimistic, that opportunities for me awaited and, in fact, they did. Without the move to Texas I would not have gotten a doctorate in a field I love. Without the move to Rutgers, I would never have written a text that continues today. Without the move to Ohio State my research program in teacher efficacy and academic optimism might never have happened. My stance was, there is something great for me in the next place, even if I did not initially choose that place. As I read Catherine Snow’s contribution to this series (Snow, 2017), I saw that she valued serendipity in life decisions, as long as there was sufficient preparation and confidence to take advantage of the possibilities. I benefited from serendipity, in part because I insisted on finding it.

But I did know when to stop “trailing” and counting on serendipity. While at Rutgers I made the hard but crucial decision to divorce the spouse I had accompanied to New Jersey for his post-doctoral study. Without knowing when to leave, all the benefits of my final years at Ohio State – the research, the students, the colleagues – would have been lost. This is beginning to sound like a country western song – “Know when to hold ‘em, know when fold ‘em, know when to walk away, know when to run...” Sometimes you need to run from a relationship that is toxic.

There are many paths to doing good work. Over the years I had a few small grants for research, but most of my research was completed without funding. I was always able to work with students who were also teachers or administrators to gain access to schools. By putting together teams of students gathering related data from many schools, Wayne and I were able to build large data sets as our students earned degrees and publications.

Invest in teaching, but don't hide in it. Teaching is one of the great gifts of being a professor. To teach well requires continued scholarship and reading. Designing lectures, visuals, activities, case and video analyses, assignments, projects, role plays, simulations, debates, discussions, assessments – these possibilities make teaching always new, never boring. Then we get to incorporate advances in technology with all its many toys and what could be better! Often at dinners with friends at AERA or APA, we would end up talking about teaching and strategies that worked well. One of my favorite courses at Ohio State was College Teaching. I had graduate students from every field – veterinary medicine to anthropology and English literature to art. We even developed a Certificate in College and University Teaching with the cooperation of other schools and colleges at Ohio State (<https://ehe.osu.edu/educational-studies/gis-gim/college-university-teaching/>). What better way to show a potential employer that you take teaching seriously than to have earned a certificate!

There is a caution, however. Because teaching is absorbing and can constantly be improved, it is sometimes seductive. Feedback from teaching is immediate and much quicker than feedback from research. Teaching seems more under your control than publishing. So, some people hide in teaching. They never seem to have time to write because they are absorbed in teaching. Beware. Do research so you keep abreast of your field. Write clearly so you can teach well.

Collaboration can make projects better, and certainly makes them more fun. Collaboration is not always easy. Who should do what? Who is first author? But making commitments to others to complete your share of work is a great antidote to procrastination and ideas developed together can be more creative. Setbacks are easier to take as well when the misery is shared. I believe the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* we developed at Ohio State continues to be a valuable instrument in part



Figure 6. At conference in Taiwan.

because it was the product of a team of experts – teachers who knew classrooms and students, theorists who dug deep into self-efficacy and triadic reciprocal causation, and researchers who understood methodology and statistics. The project also gave our class a sense of purpose and authenticity. Several master's theses were inspired by the work. In addition, developing the *TSES* taught another lesson. If you want to provide resources for doctoral dissertation students all over the world, create an instrument that assesses an important concept and put it on the web. You will never miss a week without an email from someone asking for permission to adapt, apply, or translate the instrument.

Get your students involved in professional groups. One important role of a mentor is to bring students into



Figure 7. With former student, Rich Milner, after the 2018 AERA Brown Lecture, in Washington, D.C.

professional networks. Many divisions of AERA, UCEA, and APA have graduate student seminars. *Professors*, point your students toward those opportunities and prepare them to be successful in the selection process. Encourage students to volunteer for committees in professional organizations. Serving on program committees helps young scholars understand how the game is played. Developing webpages or blogs showcases the technology talents of your students and connects them to useful networks of colleagues. *Students*, prompt your professors to nominate and support you in seeking these opportunities. Young scholars, including graduate students and new faculty, often think they won't be welcomed and appreciated on committees, but their contributions are sought after and valued.

Supporting efficacy. My work on teachers' efficacy judgments suggested that certain kinds of support encourage teachers' sense of efficacy. The support that matters is not "cheerleading" or close supervision but help in doing the work of teaching – help in reaching the teachers' goals of reaching the students. The same can be said for students and colleagues. Providing resources to do the work supports efficacy. This was the lesson I also learned from my earlier teachers who persuaded and pressed.

But first they taught what it takes to master. Miss Guthrie challenged us to learn long passages and gave us tools for learning too – tools that used images and sounds and fantasy. We saw other people like ourselves do more than they thought they could – powerful models for our own efficacy judgments. In Miss Guthrie's class we celebrated mastery and it was exhilarating. Mrs. Young broke down an unfamiliar and overwhelming task – a 30-page paper – into its parts and taught us each one. She showed us what the annotated note cards looked like, what made them helpful or not, how to sort and order them into sections of a paper. The task she set was always right at the level that challenged our skill, so she already knew about flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997). Mr. Adams was a master of meaningful persuasions and affirmations – just enough said, just at the right time, remembered years later. He also taught us how to judge good writing and made us experts at criticizing our own work.

The role of educational psychology in teacher education.

I believe educational psychology is important for pre-service teachers because for over a century, this field has explored how children and adults learn--much of that work situated in classrooms. We study, and teachers need to consider, questions such as: What are the possible effects when students repeat a grade or skip a grade? How are individual students affected by different approaches to teaching reading or by grouping students based on ability? What are the qualities of teachers and teaching that seem to support student learning? Findings from research in educational psychology often challenge conventional answers to these questions.

This suggests another reason why studying educational psychology is important for pre-service teachers – it helps them see familiar phenomena in new ways and thus gives them new cognitive tools for understanding teaching and learning. The same is true of other fields; the lenses of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history, sociocultural theory, critical theory,

and many other perspectives provide new views of the familiar classroom landscape. These new lenses are essential for pre-service teachers because everyone entering teacher preparation is what Frank Pajares (1992) termed an “insider” – the beneficiary of over 10,000

I believe the study of educational psychology helps to make the familiar strange and invited prospective teachers to (re)view what they know and believe about children and learning.

hours of experience in classrooms, about the amount of time it takes to become an expert in a field. In many other professions, novices enter as “outsiders,” expecting to learn and change in order to succeed in the architectural, medical, legal, or business worlds they aspire to join. As Pajares noted, these worlds “are new to students, what goes on in them is alien, and understandings must be constructed nearly from scratch” (p. 323). Not so in learning to teach.

Prospective teachers come to us after completing a 12-year-long “apprenticeship of observation” in classrooms very similar to those they will encounter when they join the profession (Lortie, 1975). They do not enter teacher preparation expecting to revise or reinvent what they know about teaching and learning, yet there is much to learn about these processes that was not available or apparent to the student/observer during those 12+ years of schooling. I believe the study of educational psychology helps to make the familiar strange and invites prospective teachers to (re)view what they know and believe about children and learning.

This is why educational psychology has so much of value to offer prospective teachers. Students should learn about the findings of relevant studies because teaching is not simple. “Holding students back” has effects; ability grouping has effects; different approaches to teaching reading support and produce different kinds of learning; certain signs suggest that a student might have learning, vision, hearing, or emotional problems; stanine scores and percentiles tell us some things and not others about students’ performances; there are alternatives to traditional testing and

grading; there are advantages and dangers in small group learning; some explanations clarify and others confuse; certain ways of interacting with students support and others undermine motivation – the list goes on. Educational

psychology invites prospective teachers into a culture of thoughtful, reflective, critical analysis that asks clear questions and seeks convincing evidence for answers. Teachers must be researchers as they strive to understand their students and the effects of teaching. Teachers are ethnographers as they enter the world of their students and study life in their classrooms. They are experimenters as they try a different approach to the unit on fractions and carefully note the results in terms of the students’ learning, not just the “feel” of the lesson. Research in educational psychology gives teachers new ways to think and new ideas to think about. Research should also produce a healthy skepticism as teachers consider alternative explanations for why things happened as they did.

So far, I have spoken about the value of educational psychology for the prospective teachers’ application in the future. But given the timing of most educational psychology courses early in the prospective teachers’ college program, I believe that one of the most valuable applications is to the students’ current lives. Educational psychology should help prospective teachers become expert learners so that they can help their students become the same. In addition, they must become self-aware experts who have a sense of how they developed expertise and how they might make the process visible to others. I encouraged my students to “take the educational psychology personally.” Doing so has served me well for 50 years.

After I finished the first draft of this essay, I started searching the web for the people I had mentioned as powerful influences in my life. The first entry in most

of those searches was an obituary. Perhaps that is my final lesson learned – gratitude

cannot be expressed too early or too often, but it can come too late. Thank them now.

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About Acquired Wisdom

This collection began with an invitation to one of the editors, Sigmund Tobias, from Norman Shapiro a former colleague at the City College of New York (CCNY). Shapiro invited retired CCNY faculty members to prepare manuscripts describing what they learned during their College careers that could be of value to new appointees and former colleagues. It seemed to us that a project describing the experiences of internationally known and distinguished researchers in Educational Psychology and Educational Research would be of benefit to many colleagues, especially younger ones entering those disciplines. We decided to include senior scholars in the fields of adult learning and training because, although often neglected by educational researchers, their work is quite relevant to our fields and graduate students could find productive and gainful positions in that area.

Junior faculty and grad students in Educational Psychology, Educational Research, and related disciplines, could learn much from the experiences of senior researchers. Doctoral students are exposed to courses or seminars about history of the discipline as well as the field's overarching purposes and its important contributors. .

A second audience for this project include the practitioners and researchers in disciplines represented by the chapter authors. This audience could learn from the experiences of eminent researchers – how their experiences shaped their work, and what they see as their major contributions – and readers might relate their own work to that of the scholars. Authors were advised that they were free to organize their chapters as they saw fit, provided that their manuscripts contained these elements: 1) their perceived major contributions to the discipline, 2) major lessons learned during their careers, 3) their opinions about the personal and 4) situational factors (institutions and other affiliations, colleagues, advisors, and advisees) that stimulated their significant work.

We hope that the contributions of distinguished researchers receive the wide readership they deserve and serves as a resource to the future practitioners and researchers in these fields.



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