

## Alumni Update: Summer 2016 Edition

Hello Everyone, and a happy sweltering summer to you – that's what it has become here in Baltimore; the good news is that we've had an easy go of it until now.

Some of you may have noticed a pattern to my post-retirement Alumni Updates: the interval between them has stretched out and they invariably begin with an apology about that. Well, I've noticed and I don't like it. I don't like the feeling that I am letting you down and I don't like having it weigh on me. So what's the solution? There are two obvious options – be more self-disciplined or hand them off to someone else. I've opted for the second and have told Beverly Silver that this Alumni Update will be my last.

This shouldn't come as a great surprise. After my retirement in June 2014 I reported that Andy Cherlin, Chair at the time, gave me permission to continue with these mailings. Beverly did likewise when she succeeded him, but she and I agreed that I would continue them "for time," meaning "not forever." Well, it seems the time has come. I am focused laser-like on getting my school improvement initiative, the Thurgood Marshall Alliance, launched. I've written about this before and if anyone wants an update, let me know and I'll be happy to oblige (it's still [karl@jhu.edu](mailto:karl@jhu.edu)). Everything other than family has taken a back seat. This is unexpected, but it is what it is. When I retired I didn't have in mind launching a big, all-consuming project, and I most certainly did not anticipate distancing myself from the department. I knew I didn't want to hang around like a lost puppy getting in people's way, but just one or two faculty meetings and a like number of PSI brownbags last year? That sends a signal and I am mindful of it.

I remain welcome in the department and will contribute where I can (I still am reading 2 dissertations!), but I try to honor the commitments I make and on this one I've been falling short. Please don't get me wrong. My affection for the Alumni Updates is unchanged. I think of them as one of my finest accomplishments as Department Chair and they have been a great joy for me personally – I've heard from lots of you that you enjoy them, and receiving your Update notes has been a delight! Going forward, it is my hope that Beverly will recruit someone to carry on with the Updates and that I can continue keeping up as a consumer of them. And maybe as a contributor! But it is time to pass the baton.

Ok, there, I've said it. Now let's get on with the real business at hand.

**Robert Bozick (2005)** has proven to be rather elusive in my quest for updates, but his spring note makes amends. And it is a fine report on all fronts:

"I have been out in Los Angeles for six years now. It feels like I just moved here. I took a job somewhat on a whim with RAND and had the opportunity to move to their Santa Monica office. I envisioned my entire career being in DC and so when the opportunity presented itself, I figured "why not?" So few public policy research jobs are outside the beltway and even fewer are blocks from the ocean. I figured it was worth checking out.

Our office is literally two blocks from the ocean. We are spoiled. Even on the most stressful work days I am able to see the ocean and the beach. It definitely helps me to appreciate what I have. I live about a mile south in Venice Beach, and have a super short commute by LA standards. I am not a fan of LA, but I do like the beach cities, especially Venice. It feels village-like and despite the movement toward gentrification it is still relatively peaceful here. I always thought I would be a city

guy for life, but I am increasingly drawn toward the quiet life. I suppose this is what happens when you grow up?

Career-wise, things couldn't be better. I have a full (overflowing?) portfolio of projects nicely diversified in terms of topics, some more policy driven for clients and some more in the spirit of basic science for NIH and NSF. I have maintained an interest in how education overlaps with the life course, with a more focused look at career and technical education and broader workforce development strategies for disadvantaged populations. I lead a project on the efficacy of educating prisoners for the Department of Justice and the findings brought a ton of press coverage as it coincided with Obama's decision to reinstate Pell Grants to prisoners. We found that prisoners who received education while incarcerated were less likely to recidivate and more likely to find jobs post-release. The part that really caught attention was that we quantified the cost savings to tax payers (every dollar spent on correctional education saved tax payers five dollars). The study was cited in over 200 media outlets, I gave a briefing to Congressional staffers and to a White House task force, and I testified in front of the California senate. I even appeared as a guest on a local NPR show to talk about the findings. It was cool. On a different note, I just landed a NIH grant with a team of researchers at U of Michigan to add some additional health measures to the PSID with the goal of better understanding how childhood health and the intergenerational transmission of health affects the transition to adulthood. There is a Hopkins connection, too: Paula Fomby is on the research team!

Currently, I am the Co-PI on a major study for the state of California on changes in the state's welfare policies. The part that I am leading has some Hopkins flavor to it as well. We launched a longitudinal study of 1,500 families in the state receiving welfare, with funding to follow them for three years. Named "The California Socioeconomic Survey" it is modeled directly on Andy's three-city study. I spent six months reading all of the technical documentation and every study that used Andy's data set in prep for the launch of our own study. We just wrapped up the first wave and are knee-deep in data analysis. The other major thing that is occupying my time is less glamorous: I am the Associate Director of RAND's Labor and Population Program, which is a business unit comprised of 70 economists, sociologists, and statisticians. A lot of my hours are spent on management. I enjoy it most of the time, but balancing it with research can be a little tricky. So far, I am able to get it all to work, but not sure management is where my heart is in the long run.

In non-work life, I started competing in the sport of olympic weightlifting about four years ago. I somewhat stumbled into it and then it quickly became a passion. I was training with a team, and competing at regional events. After putting in a solid year of intense training, I came up just 2.2 pounds (or a 1 kilo, as the sport uses metric measurements) of qualifying for Nationals. It was heart wrenching to come so close and miss the mark. Four years of training and competing really took its toll on my body, and so I am taking a hiatus to recover and to recalibrate. I am deciding if I want to make another run at Nationals or retire. [Robert sent along a couple of pictures – trust me, he's a real beast! But I do worry about his knees down the road. It's got to be punishing!]

**Peter Grimes (1996)** and I shared an exchange not too long ago about *The Long Shadow*. I commented that he has faced many challenges in his life and he replied with the following thoughtful reflection (I hope I am not overreaching in sharing this, but I found it to be provocative and hope it will encourage a bit of reflection):

"You wrote in in your note that I had known considerable adversity. Very sweet! That is correct, regarding my emotional, social, and economic rejections and deprivations. However, this phase of

global history has been structurally difficult for many beyond myself.... Although I admire many of my colleagues for their upward mobility within academia, I have also learned from them that they too have had to master how to bob and weave through and around the rising pressures of university corporatization, and heard the cries of relief from among those that have retired.... Fortunately, my intellect and motivation remain strong, so I have maintained professional correspondence among those around the world with whom I share interests. Further, I continue to publish, read, and pursue further research on the deepest questions: the unification of physics, evolutionary biology, and human social evolution on a global scale. The diversity of these areas has always seemed alien to my Sociological employers (e.g.—“What does the evolution of life have to do with modern social groups? Or educational outcomes that we can get grant money for?”), which partly explains why I was never fully accepted or tenured by any conventional Soc Dept. Without these disciplinary corporate shackles, I am free at last to pursue the deep intellectual inquiry of my childhood dreams. It was what I was born to do. It has been the prime directive since I was eight years old, and its lure has drawn me forward... I was called to follow the ball of scientific unification. In that regard, we are legion. There are millions like me pursuing that same dream.”

For balance **Alice Willard’s (1999)** report is of a more conventional character:

“I am currently working on a five year contract in Mali, improving the capacity of the USAID Mission staff and their implementing partners on monitoring & evaluation. This includes training, coaching, designing review instruments, reviewing scopes of work for evaluations, designing surveys (thank you, Dolores), and creating systems by which the Bamako Mission can review and revise their own data collection systems. I started this work in September 2015 (remembering that I graduated in 1998), and that continued the type of work I'd brought with me when I started at JHU in 1987). And I have to say, each time I have to derive a sampling frame or revise a survey instrument, it is hard not to think of Doris and her impact, which has been profound, and far beyond the sociology of education parameters.”

And kind words about Doris always are welcome, and appreciated.

As is **Salvatore Babones’s (2003)**:

“In the meantime if you want some small news, I've become a regular contributor to Foreign Affairs online:

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/authors/salvatore-babones>

and I'm now writing a monthly column for Al Jazeera.”

And **Adia Wingfield’s (2004)**”

“Hi Karl! Your updates always prompt me to share my own news. In addition to my faculty work, I've also been working as a contributing writer for The Atlantic and also written for Fortune. I've also been working to start a new sociology department at Washington University in St. Louis. We've hired three assistant professors who will start in the fall, and will have a major ready for undergraduates then as well too. More hiring (next year at the senior level) and a graduate program to follow! I'm hopeful the department will return to its former status, but without the attendant controversy.”

It's impressive having so many of us venturing into a more public brand of sociology. The wave of the future? Perhaps, but most certainly of the present. And Adia as an institution-building seems quite right for her!

It has been a while since we encountered Pete Rossi in these mailings, but **Lynn Burkhart (1975)** takes us there, and also shares a bit about the non-academic turn her life has taken:

"I doubt if you can call up my face after so many years -- think "Willie" as she and I were joined at the hip as acolytes to Pete, rest his soul [Willie and I cross paths occasionally; not so Lynn and I]. I was (am) an anthropologist (nothing published since the book from my dissertation), taught at Colgate for a while but finally faced up to my utter lack of platform skills and did other things (my first food business won Best of Boston in the eighties for example). And of course there's the grandchildren and now my most beautiful mixed-race great grandchild Odin who has stolen my heart completely even though the hours on the floor with him take their toll as I turn 80 in May.

Willie and I are in constant communication and of course I read every tidbit that comes out of the department... It probably goes without saying that this lifestyle I've chosen means low-income housing (Hatfield, MA right beside Northampton) and no frills. I actually am more than content -- running the world, so to speak, with a view from my desk of the town common and lovely town hall -- just a few hundred feet from a path that takes me to a walk along the banks of the Connecticut River across which is Amherst -- and with borrowing privileges at all the superb libraries in this college area."

Take that Robert -- the east coast can be pretty and fulfilling too! And mention of Pete really does bring back memories. When I arrived in 1972, Pete and Jim Coleman were still on the faculty. Indeed, I even got drawn into Pete's orbit as third reader on several of his dissertations. But they left in successive years -- in 1973 and 1974 as I recall. That left the department in quite a bind, but Doris and Mac, as the remaining senior leadership on the sociology side, held us together and we managed to weather those treacherous waters better than anyone at the time might have anticipated.

**Marty Levin**, another oldie (**1967**) is another best bud who has managed to pretty much ignore my entreaties, but he wrote a while back about his and wife Wanda Rushing's retirement plans and I'll take that as license for sharing. Marty is retired and Wanda will be following shortly. They are leaving Memphis for Wilmington, North Carolina, on the coast. Most of us down-size at this stage of life, but that's not Marty's style (and trust me, this is Marty's doing, not Wanda's). Here is how he describes his new digs:

"We believe the house will be a wonderful venue to entertain out-of-town guests as it has 6 bedrooms (though we will be using two of them for offices) of which one guest bedroom has a private bath and the other two share a bath. We will be about 1 mile from the beach (Atlantic Ocean) and we can see the Intra-coastal Waterway from the house which is about ¼ of a mile from the house. All told there are 5 full baths and 2 half-baths."

I've seen pictures -- it's quite the place! Let's all keep in mind the spacious accommodations for visitors -- Kathy and I most assuredly will! And though there is a generational divide, I'm worried about Marty's knees too. His is age, not abuse through weightlifting. Perhaps the ocean air and long walks on the beach will prove to be therapeutic. Best wishes, Marty and Wanda, for a wonderful life together in retirement!

Pam Bennett isn't an alum, but she is a good friend -- of me personally and of the department. So it is with great pleasure to share the news that Pam will be returning to the area with a faculty

appointment in the School of Public Policy at UMBC! Pam's wife Carrie has been living in Baltimore the whole time Pam was on the Queen's faculty, so this move is a big deal for the two of them, and for Pam professionally. I am thrilled for both of them!

I have confessed above that I have been an infrequent visitor to the department. But I do look around when I stop by and the following postings caught my eye recently on one of the hallway bulletin boards:

Dan Thompson has received an NSF dissertation Research Grant & Dean's Teaching Fellowship;  
Ryan Nielson, Rishi Awatramani & Samantha Agarwal were awarded Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships;

Alvin Camba received honorable mention for the PEWS 2016 Terrance K. Hopkins Graduate Student Paper Award;

Anna Rhodes has received a coveted NEA & Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship;

Anne-Marie Livingstone was awarded the Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et culture (FRQSC) Doctoral Research Scholarship.

Hearty congratulations to all of them!

Done. Checking out. Love to all.

Karl