Finding your strengths
Crafting a personal vision of success
Brutally honest subtitle:
Lessons Learned from an Accidental Career

• software developer
• educator
• textbook author
• CS researcher
• CS professor
The life algorithm that worked for me

1. say yes to what intimidates you
2. say no to what doesn’t challenge you
3. think for yourself
4. speak for yourself
To have a plan, to not have a plan ...
My path part 1: undergrad

1. say yes to what intimidates you
My path part 2: first professional jobs

• Rule 3: think for yourself

In the end, people will judge you anyway, so don't live your life impressing others- live your life impressing yourself.
My path part 2: first professional jobs

- who should be the assistant manager?
- speak for yourself (rule 4)
My path part 2: first professional jobs

• landed a big client due to rule 3 and 4: I’ll say what I really think
My path part 3: back to school for MS CS

- one of few women, which at first I found intimidating
- Rule 1: try something that intimidates you
My path part 4: motherhood

• ok, I would never have had the courage to follow my Rule 1 here, but nature had other plans
• Rule 3: go with your instincts and even put aside your own prejudices
My path part 5: Textbook author

• Rule 1: Try something that intimidates you
My path part 6: school teacher

- Rule 3: Follow your own instincts and shut out the noise

- eventually Rule 2: I was bored
My path part 7: get a PhD

• Rule 1: Try something that intimidates you
My path part 8: CS Professor

- Rule 1 again
What’s next?

• I have no idea but I love where I am right now
Defining success

• only you can judge your success
• ignore the culture when it tells you that you need x amount of $$$, to drive y car, or live in neighborhood z, because you are more than a consumer
• ignore the culture when it tells you that the way you look is not good enough
• ignore the culture when it tries to insulate you from “others”
A little philosophical diversion

• you are rich in potential for creativity and happiness, but outside forces will fight against you

• above all, maintain your independence
What are your strengths?
What is your personal vision of success?