

Overcoming Insufficient Academic Preparation: Perceived and Real

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Dilma Da Silva



Education

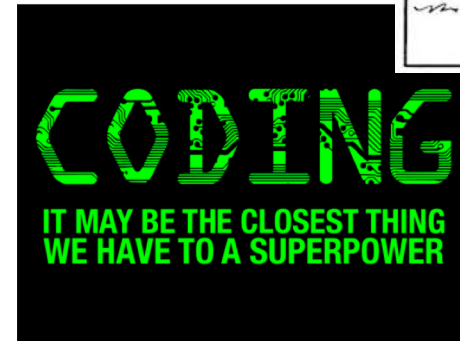
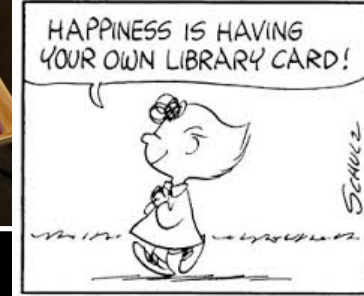
BS 1986 USP-Brazil / MS 1990 USP/ PhD 1997 Georgia Tech

Professional (Academia → Industry → Academia)

- Professor at USP-Brazil 1996 -2000 (tenure 2000)
- Research Scientist at IBM TJ Watson 2000-2012
Manager since 2007; several other leadership titles
- Principal Engineer & Manager, Qualcomm Research (2012-14)
- **Professor and Associate Head, Texas A&M University**

Personal

- 1 cats, 125+ first cousins;
- caretaker 2010-2015
- Fun: knitting, reading, travel with people I love, babysitting for friends



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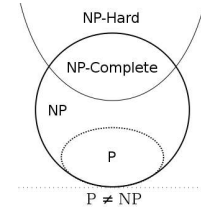
Richard Ladner

- Education
 - B.S. St. Mary's College of California, 1965
 - Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, 1971
- Jobs
 - University of Washington, Seattle 1971 – present
 - Officially retired in 2017
 - NSF grants in broadening participation
 - AccessComputing
 - AccessCSforAll
- Area
 - Theoretical Computer Science (35 years)
 - Accessible Computing (15 years)
- Personal
 - Born in California to deaf parents
 - Twin brother who was schizophrenic
 - Married with two daughters both in their 30s
 - Enjoy golf, skiing, sailing



AccessComputing

AccessCSforAll



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Imposter Syndrome



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What is it?

The imposter syndrome is a psychological term referring to a pattern of behavior where people doubt their accomplishments and have a persistent, often internalized fear of being exposed as a fraud.



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What does the research say?

- 70% of people experience it at some point in their career.
- Affects women and people of color more, particularly if they are a underrepresented in their profession.
- Affects graduate students quite often.
- Affects successful people.



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What do you do about it?

- Recognizing it in yourself
- Expressing self-doubt in a safe environment where encouragement can be found
- Don't be paralyzed by self-doubt
- Make slow and steady progress toward goals



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Exercise

- Pair and share
- Introduce yourselves to each other
- Share at least one self-doubt related to your academic career
- Without judgement, encourage each other



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I believe I am unprepared
while taking a course 😞
What do I do?



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Techniques to Catch Up in a Course

- Pair and Share
- How did you handle it in the past?



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Speakers Experience

- Find guidance – instructor, TAs, classmates, advisors
- Prepare ahead of time
 - TA in the prerequisite
 - Audit the prerequisite
 - If course was captured, review the captured course

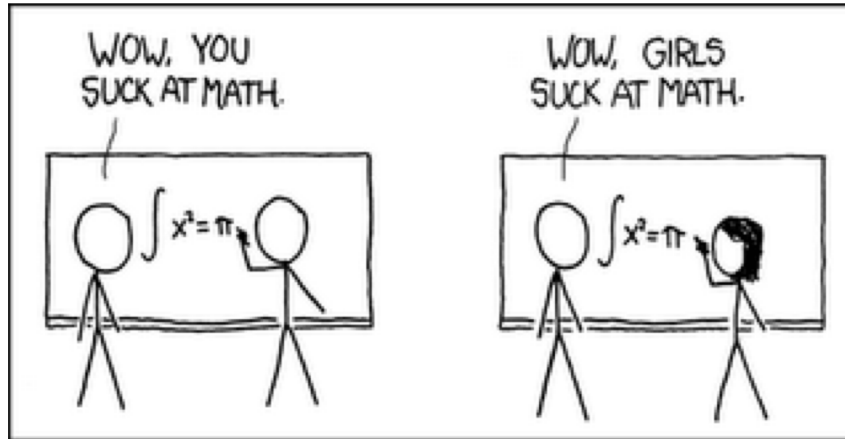


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Speakers Experience

- Let go of perfectionism
- Let go of **vanity** and shame
- Let go perceptions of you as representing your tribe



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My preparation level is
underestimated
by instructor or classmates 😞

What do I do?



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My preparation level is underestimated

- How did you handle this in the past?
- Pair and share



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Tactics we have seen

- Ignoring
- Point it out (in a thoughtful, non-judgmental way)
- Making a point of speaking up where there are opportunities to “shine”
- Offer help to other people who may be struggling
- Visit office-hours showing complete work and asking for pointers to more advanced material
- Document it in course/TA evaluations



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Witness

- What do you do if you see someone who is underestimated?



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Perpetrator

- What if you underestimate someone else?



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I believe I don't have sufficient
preparation for my
research project 😞

What do I do?



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Closing the Gap in Preparation for Research

- What has worked for you?
- Pair and Share



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Our Experience

- Get help in assessing the gap
 - It is often smaller than you think
 - Find concrete suggestion of what to read or problems to practice
- Be aware that going after better preparation is a common procrastination technique
 - Research is hard. (Most valuable things in life are hard.) It is tempting to stay in the learning phase instead of venturing in the producing phase of the work



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Our Experience

- For certain areas, you need knowledge on how to build the artifacts you need for your research
- Being active in reading groups
- Reserve a regular slot of time for learning
- Tactical practice
 - As you learn, practice necessary skills. Write summaries of papers and critical review of the literature or build pieces of software needed in other projects.



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My preparation for this research project is being underestimated 😞

What do I do?



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My research preparation is underestimated

- Did this happen to you?
- How did you handle it.
- Pair and Share.



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Our Experience

- It can be painful: leverage your support group
 - Don't have one?
It has been a game changer for many careers
- Don't take it personally.
We all make judgements and many are incorrect



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Our Experience

- Speak up and show initiative:
getting the spotlight is not a bad thing
- Know your strengths and look for opportunities to make them known
- Be well prepared for meetings and presentations
- If you find “gold stars” and awards silly ...
... it may be helpful to think of them as part of being well-dressed for the occasion



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Thank you!

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