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**Modern day Latino Professors used C.H.I.L.E. to succeed in graduate school:
Five strategies from the front lines**

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Abstract

Latinos with doctorate degrees working in academe were interviewed about their experiences in graduate school. They were asked to elaborate upon what they considered to be their most meaningful experiences that shaped their personal, academic and intellectual lives that influenced their success throughout graduate school. A thematic analysis of the interviews revealed five major findings that can be summed up by the acronym C.H.I.L.E. These crucial events and circumstances were experienced by all the interviewees. They were both positive and negative, and were shaped by a complex interplay of the influence of critical masses and peers, a search for identity and individuality, professional guidance, intellectualism, varied campus culture and time.

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Using C.H.I.L.E. to succeed in graduate school.

People labeled as Hispanic/Latino/Chicano according to the US Department of Education (2006) remain the least educated ethnic group in the United States. They fail out of primary and secondary schools and universities in the highest rates in proportion to their enrollment numbers. They are also the least likely to enroll in college and graduate (Adam, 2001; Garcia, 1998). While a significant percentage of Whites who attain their bachelor degrees will eventually move on to graduate school, only one percent of Hispanics and three percent of Blacks do (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000). Similarly, in 1999, 82.6 percent of all Masters degrees and 83.2 percent of all doctorates were awarded to Whites, while Hispanics attained 4.1 percent and 3.2 percent of those degrees respectively (Gaquin & Debrandt, 2000).

The bulk of research explaining this phenomenon purports that this group will encounter four main problem areas preventing them from succeeding in higher education: 1) that monetary constraints is denying them access to college, 2) the lack of substantial mentoring and role modeling relationships between faculty and student, inadequately provides guidance or direction, 3) cultural and ethnic differences of the student prevent them from participating fully in college life, and 4) lack of academic skill development (Aguirre & Martinez, 1993; Cuadraz & Pierce, 1994; Gandara, 1993; Gonzales et. al., 2000; Hurtado, 1999; Tinto, 1993). These projects provide researchers with broad insight into a significant social dilemma but are still limited; the following section examines these issues in depth.

Latino's in Graduate School

It was not until the mid 1960s that a Chicano movement directed considerable attention, energy and resources toward educational change. Student organizations throughout the US like El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA) battled discriminatory practices grounded in notions of language and cultural deficiencies (Araujo, 1996). Likewise, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin in voting rights, places of public accommodations, and employment. Additionally, by 1970 the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare had called for steps to rectify language deficiencies and an end to placement in limited access classes in education. These policies began to create institutional change which eventually propelled many students into the higher levels of the educational spectrum.

The first studies to compare and contrast the backgrounds and performances of graduate students of different ethnic backgrounds were produced by the Educational Testing Service in 1979 (Nettles, 1990). This research generated test score comparisons among Blacks and Hispanics but did not explain the reasons for any differences in those scores. In 1982, Patricia Gandara published a study where she interviewed 17 Mexican American women who had completed their J.D., M.D., or Ph.D. degrees. Her intent was to understand why they succeeded. Her findings revealed that respondents were most influenced by what they had learned at home: persistence, hard work, equality, and being comfortable in Anglo and Mexican worlds. In the early 1990's, more research began to emerge that specifically detailed the experiences of Hispanic doctoral students (Gandara, 1993; Hurtado, 1994; Ramirez, 1999). The work of Nettles (1990) revealed that Hispanics and African

American students who interact with faculty perform better, are happier, have higher grade point averages, and enjoy a greater amount of satisfaction with their doctoral programs when compared with those who do not interact with faculty. In 1994, a significant qualitative study aimed at understanding the experiences of Hispanics/Latinos in graduate school emerged (Cuadraz & Pierce, 1994). This research, through a narrative exploration of specific points in the author's lives, described the emotional, physical, and intellectual transformations that were necessary to succeed in graduate school. In 2000, Morales investigated the lives of Latinos who were enrolled in or graduated from doctoral programs in the 1980s. Her results revealed critical emotional and intellectual strategies employed by students to survive in school. Morales found that those students who survive frequently challenged pedagogy and stereotypes in the classroom and rejected any underlying messages of their unworthiness. It is around this time that we begin to see the emergence of literature specifically targeted at understanding these issues more precisely (Gandara, 1995; Gonzalez et.al, 2000; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Solorzano, 1998).

Gloria Cuadraz and Jennifer Pierce (1994) explore the dilemmas graduate education poses for women of working class origin who come from different ethnic and racial backgrounds (p. 22). Through a narrative exploration of specific points in their lives, they describe the emotional, physical and intellectual processes that occurred as they proceeded to attain graduate degrees. Cuadraz and Pierce succinctly describe their relationships within departments that they believed were necessary for success, including the process of inculcation and socialization which gave them insight into the attitudes and motivation that is expected in academe. The socialization processes and how it might vary between ethnic groups is an important phenomenon for researchers. It was also explored by Michael T. Nettles (1990). Nettles found that Hispanic students were better off than their Black counterparts, especially in ways that lead to easier transitions into doctoral programs and better experiences once enrolled in doctoral programs (p.514). Moreover, Nettles states, "Hispanics were still more likely to receive graduate teaching and research assistantships and they devoted more time to studying than both Blacks and Whites in graduate school and had more frequent interactions with faculty" (p. 515). These findings are important because they parallel what Cuadraz and Pierce (1994) ultimately discovered that students who interact most with the faculty perform better and enjoy the greatest amount of satisfaction with their doctoral programs. Angela Louque and Helen M. Garcia (2000) examined the dynamics of educational attainment by Hispanic American and African American women who have obtained the Ph.D. Through in-depth interviews their work revealed several items identified as crucial to the academic success for Hispanic women. The first is a cultural value system. This was attained through the knowledge of traditional family values. It is characterized as "respect, traditions, hard work, fairness, religion, compassion, community, education and deference to mother" (p. 12). These informants cited these items as core to their family values system. The second factor was an intact language system, where they were able to speak Spanish and English freely, without being castigated for speaking either one. The interviewees mentioned they had a strong sense of language background, language proficiency and had acquired proficient English skills early on. Louque & Garcia (2000) findings are significant. They argue that the Hispanic culture and language allowed their research participants to feel more at ease within uncomfortable environments. Similarly, Ramirez (1998), Ruiz (1997)

and Garcia (2000) found that the maintenance of language and cultural identity is of primary importance to successful and healthy adaptation to foreign environments. Healthy adaptation influences how relationships with the university culture and with others develop and created the attitudes about the sensitivity of the university as a whole. Also, experiences that can provide students with the opportunities to engage their cultural identities are beneficial because they provide reciprocating relationships; where students develop a sense of belonging to the university and the institution is viewed as a positive influence on the intellectual development of the student. Additionally, the maintenance of Hispanic/Latino culture for these women was important in their experiences as graduate students. As Martinez & Mendoza (1984) describe, the language spoken at home is the primary language of choice, the one to which we retreat in times of need. The authors explained that during times of high stress they would begin to speak Spanish and long for their cultural roots. Speaking Spanish, they describe, was intrinsically tied to their cultural identity, which manifested itself by clinging to friends who were culturally similar and finding a place where they could speak Spanish, openly and freely about the pangs of graduate school. The authors highlight the importance of forging experiences where they could dwell in another emotional and intellectual state, where they could think and act different, and feel as if they were close to home, and quite possibly, more comfortable and relaxed about the hard times in front of them. The ramifications of this research suggest the necessity of developing diverse, culturally appropriate avenues of expression within the academic climate. Places to feel comfortable, to identify with what is known and safe places to say what is on their minds. Patricia Gandara (1993) provides an in-depth narrative analysis of family experiences, cultural influences, community characteristics, and individual perseverance that lays the foundation for an understanding of how these variables influenced student academic achievement and success. Gandara lists the value of retaining a hard work ethic, making good grades, being challenged by White peers, having a primary care taker that was directive and remembering how much parents espoused the importance of education to forge ahead in life as factors that were attributed to student success. She further emphasizes however, that in all cases, the subjects were exposed to a high-achieving peer group against whom they could realistically test their own skills and validate their performance. These peers also helped to keep them on the right academic track, even in the face of competing peer values. The fact that almost all had extensive exposure to middle-class; White students also provided the opportunity to learn to move easily between different cultures and to adapt to widely differing situations. Specifically, her research suggests that a mix of motivation, persistence, ability, and hard work as the most frequently cited variables that were inculcated at a very young age that made people successful. Successful outcomes were developed through the maintenance of culture, through the family, by strength and faith in religion, the extended network of family support, and mostly honed by opportunities; either those provided by exposure to other people, or to varied educational contexts. Gandara's findings are important because they describe a process where Hispanic youth learn how to become enduring and resilient. Through the process of maneuvering through the diverse opportunities of the university, a more resilient person emerges, one who has built up a repertoire of experiences and has added inner strength and faith in oneself along the way. A project by Gonzalez et al. (2000) highlights the adverse nature of the academy, with respect to the Eurocentric curriculum, the lack of research opportunities, and the lack of respect for student's research interests. The project was accomplished in two phases. From their dialogues, the group arrived at three conclusions. The first

concerns the nature of the academy. The participants discovered the academy to be conservative, restrictive, and racist. The students exchanges showed how intellectually confining institutions of higher education to be, in regards to the limited Euro centric curriculum, the breadth of research opportunities available, and most importantly, the perception that the students research interests, were not respected or nurtured. The second conclusion revealed forces that were perpetuating the conservative nature of the academy. The market culture, b) elitism, and c) faculty rewards and the tenure system were seen as manipulating the students into work and research they did not necessarily like or was needed, because of its utility in the market place. These forces were seen to pressure students, faculty, and staff in behaving, thinking, and researching in particular ways. Additionally, the academy market culture was seen as a kind of status quo mechanism that discouraged these students from pursuing topics that resonated within their identities. This pressure, coupled with the obsession of prestige and status associated with tenure leads to a stifling environment, and the upholding of a system of socialization, where students are pushed to accept the values of prestige and status of the academy. The final conclusion revealed an alternative framework for doctoral education. Two main responsibilities while pursuing the Ph.D. for these students are to be kept in mind. The first was to become an independent scholar and the second involved creating a type of scholarship that would affect the social conditions of their individual communities. The benefits of connecting these two responsibilities would provide society with much needed leadership while maintaining a vision that was necessary for the students' professional and individual well-being. Gonzalez et. al. (2000) research is essential because it demonstrates how the socialization processes of the academic climate shapes students intellectual pursuits, their experiences with other faculty, and the types of student activities that are accepted. In the end it seems to describe a process of inculcation where the experiences of students are nearly entirely determined by departmental politics and self-interests. They also demonstrate how students who may rely too much on peripheral or external sources of mentoring, like those from outside the department or from the community, may find their much-needed intellectual alliances within their department stifled. Consequently, students are unable to forge the types of meaningful intellectual relationships with faculty advisors they need to be successful in school. A 1998 research project by Daniel G. Solorzano provided an examination of how racial and gender micro aggressions affected the career paths of Chicana and Chicano scholars; at the pre-doctoral, dissertation, and post-doctoral stage. Micro-aggressions are described as subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges and acts of disregard toward one another. The intent of this project was three fold: 1) to apply a critical race theory analysis to the field of education, 2) to recognize, document and analyze racial and gender micro aggressions from the perspective of Chicanas and Chicanos, and 3) to hear the voice of victims of discrimination by more closely and thoroughly examining the cumulative effects of micro aggressions on the lives of Chicana and Chicano scholars. His methodology included the analysis of initial interviews, of open-ended survey questions, and then finally of in-depth interviews. Using critical theory as a basic framework, he analyzed the interviews looking for examples of race and gender micro aggressions. His results revealed three patterns. First there, were scholars who felt out of place in the academy because of their race and/or gender. Because of the content and varied experiences one can expect in academe the validation of personal and professional attitudes and opportunity for people of color and females is ignored, resulting in feelings of intense isolation and hostility, where there was no place to

complain or no one to blame but oneself. Secondly, lower expectations resulted in stigmatization and differential treatment among students and faculty was reported. Some examples suggest students believed others viewed them as less than serious professionals, because of accents, being perceived as coming from a lower socio-economic background, gender status, interest in ethnic research, and the lowered prestige and social status of not being educated in a research-intensive institution. The final pattern that emerged focused specifically on the racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors of faculty and fellow students. These include, disparaging stereotypical remarks or slips of the tongue, sexist attitudes, inappropriate sexual advances, and racist remarks from both genders. Extrapolating from this work shows how racism and discrimination still exists within educational institutions even at the higher levels of the intellectual spectrum. Thus, job and intellectual security is not guaranteed in academe, and women's experiences will be more trying than men's. In addition, pressures to perform and become tenured are great; those interested in this career path should expect a difficult time. Solórzano's argument also discusses that the nuance of people's behaviors and attitudes results in ill feelings not just toward other faculty and staff, but also to the entire university environment. Some of his respondents described their isolation within the institution. This unfortunate reality demonstrates the idea that campus climates are transactional. It suggests how one person's slip of the tongue might become generalized to the entire university environment, in essence, doing little to stymie the storm of complaints arriving to them concerning personal issues. In the end, bad experiences could be defined and created by the negligence of individual departments and/or a larger academic structure that allows complaints and problems to remain unresolved thus perpetuating a cycle of failure and neglect.

Understanding Success in Graduate School for Latino's

A succinct and feasible way to think about what educators need to provide Latinos to set them up for success upon entering academic life has not been provided. The different experiences of students for example, due to gender, class rank and social class will create varying experiences and unique needs. This project's findings from interviews with male and female Latinos who attained their doctorates over a span of 30 years highlights detailed good and bad experiences that pushed them on to graduate in spite of some huge setbacks. These are clearly explicated in this study. As Hurtado (1997), Padilla (1995) and Ramirez (1999) surmise from research with resilient minorities, the best way to capture the trust and faith of Minorities, is to employ a researcher capable of asking the right questions, within a common cultural context using appropriate examples. In this case, the researcher and the interviewees are culturally, economically, and linguistically in sync. Also, instead of a negative focus on why students fail out, this project understands the general experiences of graduate students and those factors, big and small that motivated them and pushed them to succeed.

Research Question Guiding this Project

What experiences/factors in graduate school do Latino/Chicano/Hispanics with doctoral degrees perceive as contributing most to their success in graduate school?

Participants and Setting

The project was undertaken at a mid-sized university in northern California. As of January 2002, the enrollment was 13,147 students of which 12,202 were undergraduates and 1,145 were graduate students. Fifty-six percent of the all students were women and 44 percent were men. There were approximately 425 faculty members. The faculty was comprised of 75.5% White, 11.1 percent Asian, 8 percent Chicano/Latino, 4 percent African American, and 1.4 percent American Indian. Approximately 45 percent of the faculty was male, and 55 percent were female. The focus of this research project was on males and females self-identified as Hispanic/Latino/Chicano. For this study a purposeful sampling technique was utilized to increase representativeness among the population under study. It is a strategy that is utilized when one wants to learn something about select cases without needing to generalize to all such cases, and also when it is not possible to get detailed information from a sufficiently large sample size to make large generalizations (Patton, 1980). Likewise to maximize the variation in participants, stratification among age was incorporated. There are an equal number of males and females in the study. All attained their degrees between 1978 and 1993. This method is unlike a convenience sampling technique, where cases can be studied most easily. This project researched a specific phenomenon that required representatives of the population of interest. The interviewees in this case were identified as people who were directly affected by these issues. It was necessary so that the likelihood of detailed and specific information about a phenomenon could truthfully be extrapolated to only about that population of interest.

The Interviewees

The participants in this investigation were Latino/Chicano/Hispanics with PhDs working at a mid-sized Central Californian University. They shared a similar ethnic and educational background and all received their doctorates from American institutions between 1978 and 1993. They received their doctorates from Berkeley, the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Texas at Austin, Yale, and from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Six interviewees were interviewed three times. A total of eighteen interviews were cumulated. Two of the interviewees stated they were first generation Latinos, 3 were second generation Mexican-Americans, and one was third generation American born. Three of the interviewees identified themselves as Spanish speakers; the other three did not discuss their Spanish speaking abilities. Of the six, one identified herself as from a professional class; four stated they were from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and one was from a middle economic class.

The Questions Asked

The questions asked sought to extract those experiences throughout the interviewees' graduate school years, which were most important to them as they proceeded through school, all the way to the attainment of their Ph.D. There were six general topics covered. They were 1) demographics, 2) positive experiences, 3) family influences, 4) student and institutional influences, 5) issues of financing, and 6) if and how graduate school came together. The questions asked elicited information

that was complex. Most times, the responses were long and covered multiple domains.

Thematic Findings: C.H.I.L.E.

A thematic analysis of all the interviews revealed five main overarching themes. The main themes are universal in that they characterize the experiences of all the participants in the study. The acronym C.H.I.L.E. describes these five themes succinctly. The main themes are: a) critical masses, b) a heck of a lot of personal advising, c) intellectual advising, c) lots of time and d) enough financial/monetary support.

Theme One: (C) Critical Masses

This theme relates to the necessity of developing social capital. Forging relationships with people who share common intellectual interests, who share similar life goals, and who are similarly, pursuing careers in academe buffered feelings of departmental neglect, family despair and loneliness. The participants stated that developing and nurturing friendships with ethnically similar others, finding mentors, and participating and creating peer and cultural organizations were fundamental experiences in graduate school because it was within them, where many intellectual agendas were forged, where ideas were shared and developed, and where professional relationships were nurtured and maintained. Likewise, input from other Latinos was necessary so that resource-exchanges could take place and served as a springboard for the crafting of many intellectual ideas. Similarly, all of the interviewees, albeit in different contexts, relayed how important it was to depend on their peers, family, and role models in times of personal conflict. Because the extended family also feels the emotional and spiritual angst of an absent member who is entering a vastly different intellectual environment, critical masses provided relevant feedback for the individual in regards to the personal and mental negotiations necessary for them to continue to succeed in school. Mostly, they remind the student why they chose a particular vocation in the first place. Listening to the struggles and very often unfair and sad life stories of family and friends seems to justify the time and sacrifice the student is spending in school and away from the family. Seeking ethnic knowledge and truth, and building stores of emotional and physical strength and motivation, students depend on one another for common bonding. Critical masses is predicated on having access to people who can serve as trusted partners, who become life long friends, as people whose advice is necessary and honest, and as people who lend support, in whatever way it manifests itself, throughout their graduate school years. Generally, finding people along the path who are supportive and nurturing and understanding and helpful are seen as absolutely crucial to success in graduate school. More than anything else, these people are going through or have gone through similar circumstances, have similar life goals and objectives, are empathetic, and provide emotional support, honest advice, and whose insight is coveted.

Themes Two and Three: (H) Heck of a Personal Advisor and (I) Intellectual Advising

This two-dimensional theme vests itself within the development of academic and personal professionalism, where professors and formal advisers offer proper advice that is separate from but still influenced by intellectual advice. The first

dimension is personal. The second dimension is intellectual. Together, they influence and construct the process, both personally and intellectually, that influences the growth and development a person needs to survive in graduate school. These mentors and advisors have a particular kinship with the student and are only trusted if they are viewed by the students as being similar to them on many levels, and in step with their personal and intellectual predilections, their preferences and life goals. Unlike the first theme, where students and peers play a pivotal role in the relationship formation and creation of groups that forge cohorts, this theme focuses on the exclusivity of information that the formal advising process plays, which is at once, both personal and intellectual.

Personal advising was clearly consonant with a successful path throughout graduate school. This suggests that people in positions to formally give advice, need to offer it to students. It is entirely necessary because it allows students to understand how to negotiate the rigors of the graduate school process. Discussing life objectives, family plans, personal interests, and career goals within a cultural-based framework that is similar between the advisor and the student and then forging a professional agenda from these discussions is how students learned to negotiate the formal endemic processes of moving successfully through graduate school. People who can relay the truth about how the system may impede or augment movement in graduate school is one key to understanding how students succeeded. Many obstacles can be avoided by steady advice, and knowledge about program or institutional strengths and weaknesses can be imparted to guide students along. Similarly, avoiding classes or people within the institution who make graduate school unnecessarily difficult is important. All of the interviewees stated they needed to avoid, and all together, maintain a very superficial relationship with certain people directly related to their academic objectives because their personal philosophy about education was vastly different than the student. They were told to interact with these professionals only if it was absolutely necessary. On occasion, certain professors had to be approached, but students were warned to do so only when crucial information about coursework, grant and scholarship information departmental procedures and policies, or questions about the process of getting through the program arose. Personal feelings and intellectual interests were not discussed with these professionals. Thus, with the guidance of proper personal advising, maintaining a distance from certain people saved time, energy, and emotional stress was kept low. Finally, making the necessary social connections to people within the school system who can offer insight in to the next stage of graduate work is absolutely necessary. Personal advising at this point guided the student to others who can move the student along on their path. This occurred after the first two years, when the student has become familiar with the personal processes of avoiding intellectual confrontation with some and negotiation of personal needs with others. This becomes less necessary as the student progresses, because they have learned to maneuver through the challenges. At this point, intellectual guidance becomes crucial and between the second and third year of graduate study is when proper intellectual guidance becomes more necessary and the point at which the second domain of this theme overrides the first.

A broad type of intellectual development is the second dimension of this theme. It is predicated on finding someone who can help craft the type of intellectualism students need to move forward to graduation. The intellectual component to this theme includes helping students shape, inform and hone their

intellectual interests while simultaneously, teaching students to understand that schools and universities have biases and issues of their own, that make them limited institutions in their own right. The key to understanding how students find appropriate intellectual advising squarely lies in an intellectual match between student and professor where their relationship is not merely personal and familial, but intensely academic and respectful, where the professor doles out cultural insights and criticisms of current research openly while remaining critically aware of the potential miscues of the students and of their expanding and future aspirations. These intellectual guides point the student to appropriate books, journals; internet databases, people, and critical historical moments that increase the student's knowledge and power of themselves and of the genuine events that exist that define the student within many interpretation of histories, personal and American, that gives them a sense of place, pride, culture, and sense of worth. It allows them to deeply understand their ethnicity in rich juxtaposition to the formation of other ethnicities that abound in the world. At this point, if the student comprehends the information, it mixes with an existing Eurocentric foundation and morphs in to novel formulations of pedagogy. In this way, new knowledge can take hold and the student begins to understand the misinformation of ethnic facts and ideology and its dissemination that has the student confused about themselves and why their existing pedagogy must be modified. Properly done, intellectual guidance can result in astounding realizations about the past, the present and can then drive and motivate students to ask questions about themselves and others which results in the development of research agendas and new forms of intellectualism. Now that the student is entrenched in graduate school life and knows how to manoeuvre through the muck, the interviewees stated that after absorption of these intellectual processes, what they then considered as necessary and important factors in the broadening of their intellectualism was to travel. They travelled to Mexico and Europe for advanced study, spent summers with faculty and peers in Central America teaching, attended intensive dissertation and writing workshops in other states, and worked alongside Latino faculty developing ethnically oriented classroom curriculum. These experiences had not been considered prior to their entrance to doctoral study. It seems that reading and evaluating ethnic pedagogy changed the way these students viewed themselves in relation to their personal goals and certainly forged the intellectual direction that many eventually followed.

Theme Four: (L) Lots of Time

The time dimension cannot be overstated. In graduate school time was described as being comprised of personal and professional balance. Time to accomplish goals and objectives was especially necessary. The interviewees detail multifarious experiences within many domains. Certainly, there exist genuine differences in the types of programs and schools they attended and in their personality and intellectual styles. But, what cannot be ignored are the typical experiences they had. Even though all of the interviewees completed their major coursework within the traditionally allotted 3-4 year time span, and had arrived at an ABD (all but dissertation) status within five years. Four of the 6 interviewee's spent 8 years completing their doctorate. What is crucial is why in most cases, it took so many additional years to complete the doctorate. Furthermore, while the women interviewees required an average of 8.5 years to complete their doctorates the men finished on average in 7 years. The interviewees stated they had participated in many things besides their academic work. Some of these included traveling for political

and intellectual reasons, vacationing to their countries of ethnic origin, teaching at schools and community colleges, visiting other universities to seek intellectual advising, and many became heavily involved with local politics and acted as agents of social change.

Precisely because the interviewees had many unfamiliar, unexpected and unencumbered situations they required more time to complete their degrees. Finding direction and purpose in graduate school takes time. Understanding how advanced graduate study operates and why it is so became an epiphany for some. It took them many more years to realize their intellectual gifts, or their place within the ubiquitous world of academe. Underlying the reasons it took so long include, the time it took to find Latino mentors and peers, time to find a topic of interest in which to do ethnic dissertation research, time necessary to forge cultural and ethnic understanding, and the time that was necessary to pool intellectual resources together in which to carve out a niche for themselves that was for the most part not readily accepted by the programs in which they were immersed. Forging cultural organizations from scratch, developing social relations with similar others, finding like minded peers and mentors, learning two types of intellectualism--one ethnic and the other Euro-centric, and crafting an interesting research agenda are processes that most other students will not transverse. For most students, these intellectual connections to other people in varied departments or within the community had been created for them through prior research by previous students, so they don't spend inordinate amounts of time looking for research sites, social connections, or creating them from scratch. For Latinos, particular ways of thinking and existing are inextricably related to the type of research one chooses, so the proposed research clientele, must first be respected and understood. This suggests they will have to forage on their own to succeed in understanding how they think and act in two worlds, one ethnic and personal in relation to the research, and the other institutional and impersonal in relation to how research protocols are accomplished. How they proceed engaging in their own brand of research, and then developing an acceptable intellectual agenda following strict protocols are difficult to justify, and not simply understood. Once this was accomplished, finding faculty support guiding the student through the task of data collection, analyzation, and writing up the dissertation posed complicated intellectual obstacles. At this point, students encountered barriers from faculty supporting the intellectual relevance of their findings and interpretations of the data. This suggests that ethnic knowledge bases are still not accepted or understood within many institutions. In most cases, professionals across academic disciplines had to be approached and then relationships had to be forged with them so as to build the intellectual alliances required to include them in final research committees.

Latinos must meet two sets of requirements in most domains whereas other students usually do not. This is why it took more time than average for the interviewees to graduate. They have to learn and learn to act according to the protocols of the mainstream organization and then learn how their cultural existence influences them to the degree that it impacts on the type of experiences they have in graduate school. For the most part on their own time and dime, Latinos must read and understand various intellectual paradigms, convince others of its relevance, forge alliances with and then ferret out many professionals so they can find people to work with, and generally craft personally rewarding and intellectually fulfilling and

meaningful experiences from a prefabricated rubric that is not set up for Latinos to experience success.

Theme Five: (E) Enough Finances

Securing enough financing during graduate school to accomplish both personal and professional objectives was a common theme among the interviewees. The expense of financing school coupled with the particular interests of the student as it is influenced by their intellectual quest, is costly in both time and money. Properly elucidating an intellectual niche within an underdeveloped field creates a lot of expenses. Things like traveling abroad for research purposes, purchasing specialized cultural literature, attending ethnic conferences, producing ones' own brand of knowledge, and maintaining the expense of married family life for two of the interviewees while still in school without the aid of extended family support were significant expenditures that were incurred. Purchasing specialized books and surveys and hiring Spanish language professionals to assist with data collection is expensive. These items and experts serve as resources that most libraries or departments contain within their institution. Since these students' interests were atypical, their programs and departmental libraries viewed these resources as being only tangentially related to most students' program requirements and did not own them. Students paid for them out of their own pockets. These expenses are significant. On the contrary, mainstream students whose research agenda is not ethnic; do not have to be concerned with finding the tools and resources necessary to engage in their type of intellectualism. Libraries are full of these other types of resources. Latino students usually arrive to graduate school from lower economic backgrounds and the help they receive from their families is minimal. The cost of daily living and of graduate school itself, coupled with these intellectual costs suggests they will need more resources than most other students to succeed in graduate school. Depending on the institution certain types of financing were readily available. Things like teaching assistantships, fellowships, scholarships and financial aide certainly helped but did not cover the full range of their intellectual quests as it did for other students.

Implications of This Project

The major implications from this research highlight two things that are inextricably related. The first is a greater understanding of what Latino's are doing with their time in graduate school. It seems they are creating their own meaningful experiences within a system that is not set up to allow this to occur easily, and educator's need to be aware that in doing so, Latino graduate students may take more time than average to complete their doctorates. The other beckons to academics to understand that many Latino's need to structure a different way to think about the graduate school process. Mentally challenging themselves by re-scripting their thinking and their behavior is a time consuming and stressful process. Academics need to develop a greater tolerance for student's who arrive at their door, simultaneously trying to undermine the effects of colonialism while adhering to its doctrine. The third implication asks that educators reevaluate how long students spend in graduate school. The reasons underlying why most of these interviewees took so much time to graduate was shrouded in forging their own meaningful experiences. Learning how to do that, took many of them many years. Combining this learning

process with an understanding of the negotiation process, the give and take of personal and intellectual fulfillment, takes a lot of time. What to give up personally and intellectually and alternatively, what then to put in its place influences the time it takes to graduate. Learning what previously held knowledge to supplant, and remaining simultaneously, in alignment with academic culture, suggests that while they are learning to relieve themselves of stereotypes and falsities of themselves and of their inculcation, they are at the same time, putting themselves in a precarious situation, because they are internalizing different ways of thinking, and new ways of being.

Throughout these findings, ethnicity and culture dictated how the graduate school process was negotiated. Some things in the interviewee's personal life had to be given up and likewise, had to be re-considered. How things were suppose to happen did not always occur. How culture had to be mediated, was in large part a function of the demands of the graduate school process. Family and other personal responsibilities that were once priorities were neglected altogether and what replaced them seem to be academic contemplation, angst and loneliness, finding friends, and trying to forge a niche. Realizing how friends and peers in similar circumstances and how they serve as bridge builders to the new understanding will alleviate problems. Without the creation of those relationships, receiving a doctorate degree will seem impossible. A more long range policy implication benefiting student's in education is the need to create policy that is meticulously scripted where Latinos benefit from arriving to school with their cultural perspective. It needs to be further emphasized that Latinos in many regards be viewed as being Meso-American. This suggests that their cultural orientation to the formal educative process will be different. We will arrive with a different approach to negotiating our educational endeavors and how we approach understanding them. This perhaps can be understood when we clash with mainstream students and faculty members whose pedagogical base has rarely been challenged. Meso-American thinking to some degree is predicated on undermining the effects of colonialism and western ways of thinking and acting, and their notions of time. The way Latinos approach researching and producing knowledge will then, be different and probably more inclusive of a critical perspective of western methodologies. Our attraction to other ways of creating knowledge is based in this ideology. Considering this perspective, it is understandable why we need more time and different resources to make it through graduate school. The people who can guide Latinos toward these paths need to then be included within academic organizations. This will have a direct impact on how we might feel about ourselves and within the organization. Ultimately, this can influence our success rates. This is directly linked to how educators can then view how to better adjust to our needs. The length of time the interviewees spent in graduate school was not determined by the length of their program plan. Many unforeseen issues along the path to degree attainment circumvented the initial plan. Things like, monetary constraints, doctoral program changes, the loss or outright denial of appropriate mentors and advisors, marriage and extended family priorities, traveling, and the time associated with finding relevant research interests, were implicated in increasing the amount of time it took to degree completion. How these issues worked out, the process that unfolded as students worked through to resolve these problems is what caused them to spend more time than average completing their degrees. Considering the speed of change within society in general in conjunction with the speed of change of educational institutions and what the interviewees had to transverse, one is left to wonder if current day

Latino graduate students are grappling with the same issues that students dealt with long ago. If they are, then this project along with others like it, have demonstrated that a major reason why Latinos don't succeed in graduate school is associated with the slow nature of change in institutional climates. It seems they are not keeping pace with societal change, or have not truly internalized a genuine commitment to push all of their students to graduate. These findings support this proposition. Universities are still not devoted to understanding how to offer Latinos a fair level of educational opportunities. More than anything else this requires an understanding that for Latinos, their time in doctoral school will be spent engaged in a negotiation process, where the individual for the most part is left on their own the majority of time, to ferret out a comfortable and relevant existence, where they can find an ethnically oriented research niche, searching out who they can trust to personally guide them through these confusing and neglectful times, and where to go to forge the all important professional friendships. These findings suggest that these processes did not and still do not exist to a large degree. The interviewees also revealed they had to engage in intellectually re-scripting their personalities to some degree, where other students did not. Even though they are forced to accommodate new ways of thinking and behaving, they will learn to do so, even though many times it is in direct contrast to how their culture has taught them to view the world. Adjusting to different mind sets with scant formal guidance is time consuming, expensive, and mentally exhausting. Universities that understand and support the idea that Latinos must craft various types of peer and intellectual cohorts to survive, that are unlike institutionally anointed organizations and commit to assisting them in forging relevant experiences are best suited to attract and graduate Latino students from many walks of life.

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Coffee Cups, Frogs, and Lived Experience*

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Abstract

Stories are how we make sense of experiences, thus providing the historical sense of life. To paraphrase Dewey, extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience enables us to do the same for our pasts. The continual reconstruction of the past in the light of the present is integral to full engagement with the present time. When we tell stories over a cup of coffee, we participate in the wholeness of language, which is itself a means of enacting the wholeness of life.

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Coffee Cups

Things are not objects. In fact, things are precisely the opposite of objects. When we are focused on things, we are actually also focused on ourselves. When I am focusing on the attachment of this coffee cup, I am actually getting back to myself quite fast, as well as to the entire history of Italian coffee-making, the people who are harvesting the coffee, etc. This cup of coffee is an assembly. (Latour interview, Prieto & Youn, 2004)

Jeanne Connell has been secretary/treasurer of the John Dewey Society as well as an active scholar of the work of Dewey and Louise Rosenblatt (Connell, 1996, 2005). She recently found a previously unpublished photo of Dewey in the archives of the John Dewey Center and had it printed on coffee cups (actually more of a mug). She then gave these to fellow officers of the society. Somewhat later, while we having coffee together, I was very pleased when she gave me a Dewey cup as well. As she did, she hesitated slightly, and laughed, wondering aloud what Dewey might think of his image moving into the realm of "crass commercialism."

I was of course pleased with the gift, and said that I thought he'd be pleased, that he wouldn't mind at all being associated with such a basic tool of ordinary life. I couldn't have known then how much was about to flow from that simple cup. As I poured the coffee I was drinking at that time into the cup, I reflected on Dewey's call to value the ordinary in human experience, in fact to see it as the core of all we think and do. We talked about that notion a bit, and then things began to take off.

As Latour says, when we focus on a thing, like a coffee cup, we actually focus on ourselves, and the organic wholes in which we participate. For me, there is no better symbol of conversation than a coffee cup. I know people who say "let's have coffee" meaning that they want to talk, but would be perfectly content to have the coffee turn into an ice cream cone, a glass of wine, or just a time to be together. That thought led to quickly to what Dewey supposedly said when asked to sum up his vast life's work in one sentence. To that impossible task, he replied "democracy is conversation." Was there a more appropriate object for his image? If there were to be a wrong place to place him, wouldn't it be inside a thick academic book instead?

A few minutes after our coffee, I walked by an undergraduate class, in which they happened to be discussing a paper I had written on the need for dialectical reading of the web. The professor, a colleague and friend, called out to me to stop and introduce myself to the class. After I recovered from the shock, seeking frantically to recall what I had actually said in that paper, I was able to get into a conversation with the students. We made connections between ways of interpreting the web, interpretations in other media, dialectical reading, and conversation. Someone then asked about the cup I was still carrying.

I asked if anyone recognized the picture, which was not the same as any published photograph, and I feared would be a somewhat obscure subject in any case. But several students knew it was Dewey, and contributed helpful accounts of pragmatism and Dewey's work. I, of course, couldn't resist talking about Dewey's view of ordinary life and conversation, which I felt was occurring in its best sense at that very moment.

As I continued to experience life with the cup, my story grew, which in turn enabled it to grow further, exactly what Dewey means when he says that making sense of experience prepares us for enlarged experiences in the future:

The ideal of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shuts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for his future. We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything. (Dewey, 1938, p. 51)

I then recalled a conversation with another colleague, Betsy Hearne. We were talking with a doctoral student who was having trouble focusing her research. We asked her to say one word that felt most central to her way of thinking. But she was too clever for us and asked each of us to do the same. After some hesitation, Betsy said "story" and I said "inquiry." Two different words, but as we tried to elaborate, we realized that for us story and inquiry meant the same thing. Later, I read Betsy's own story about frogs, in which she concluded that "every frog is different" and "dead frogs are considerably less appealing than live ones" (Hearne, 1990, p. 41).

Stories are how we make sense of experiences, thus providing the historical sense of life. To paraphrase Dewey, extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience enables us to do the same for our pasts. The continual reconstruction of the past in the light of the present is integral to full engagement with the present time. When we tell stories over a cup of coffee, we participate in the wholeness of language, which is itself a means of enacting the wholeness of life.

Dewey's Theory of Inquiry

As Louis Menand (2001) shows, the pragmatist movement of the late-nineteenth century was in part a response to the massive destruction of lives during the US Civil War, and the inability of people to find ways to move forward without violence. Even worse, that violence was a pyrrhic victory. While it accomplished the end of legal slavery and maintained the formal structure of the nation, near-slavery conditions persisted for years, the nation stayed divided, and the problems of racism and injustice remained unresolved (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The violence of the war exacerbated rather than solved the problems, just as violence does in the present:

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate.... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Martin Luther King Jr. (1967)

John Dewey was born in 1859, just before the war. Throughout his writings we can see his insistence on a moral dimension to life and learning. Moral growth is to be achieved through reflection on experience and on dialogue with others, something we do when we "have coffee."

The year 1859 was also the year that Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* was published. Those are not entirely coincidental occurrences. While acutely aware of the moral challenges of racism and industrialization, pragmatists saw a promise in the developing sciences, especially in biology and statistics, and later, physics. Dewey in particular was deeply influenced by Darwin and what later fully emerged as the grand evolutionary synthesis. He saw the phenomenon of life as crucial to his theory of inquiry, and especially his theory of education: "The primary ineluctable facts of the birth and death of each one of the constituent members in a social group determine the necessity of education." He also saw that life implies growth, thus "education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself." These ideas became central in the development of the whole language movement and other progressive pedagogy (Y. Goodman, 1989).

Becoming a Unified Whole

For many people, notably those in universities, the value of learning is to allow us to rise above our baser instincts, to elevate thinking above feeling, theory above practice, abstraction over concreteness. Many others, perhaps most people, do the opposite, placing "what works" above ideas and frameworks. Dewey and his colleagues rejected both of these views. They saw instead that the problems with both intellectual life and the practical world lay in the breakdown of connections between the two, the severing of mind from body:

Thus the question of integration of mind-body in action is the most practical of all questions we can ask of our civilization. It is not just a speculative question, it is a demand--a demand that the labor of multitudes now too predominantly physical in character to be inspirited by purpose and emotion and informed by knowledge and understanding. It is a demand that what now pass for highly intellectual and spiritual functions shall be integrated with the ultimate conditions and means of all achievement, namely the physical, and thereby accomplish something beyond themselves. Until this integration is effected in the only place where it can be carried out, in action itself, we shall continue to live in a society in which a soulless and heartless materialism is compensated for by soulful but futile idealism and spiritualism. (Dewey)

I see the coffee cup as manifesting the coming together in action of the physical and the mental. It is an ordinary thing, which may be hot or cold, and provide sensual pleasure. But it also marks a coming together of minds. For Dewey, it was exactly in the ordinary experiences of life that we would find the core of our intellectual, moral, and social being. As McDermott says, "he believed that ordinary experience is seeded with possibilities for surprises and possibilities for enhancement if we but allow it to bathe over us in its own terms" (1973/1981, p. x).

Humans are living organisms, but human life adds a dimension not present in the lives of other living things. Or, do other creatures pause to reflect on their lives over their own version of a cup of coffee? At least in principle, we can learn from others, communicating our experiences across space and time:

Society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger. Without this communication of ideals, hopes, expectations, standards, opinions, from those

members of society who are passing out of the group life to those who are coming into it, social life could not survive. (Dewey)

Dewey's educational theory elaborates on this idea, going far beyond what is often meant today by hands-on learning or learning by doing. He sees the learner as a unified whole, in which the hands are as much an organ of thought as the brain. Moreover, he sees society as an organic union of individuals. Sharing life over a cup of coffee is one way in which we seek that unified whole.

Frogs

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. (Darwin, 1859, p. 489)

Many years ago, on a beautiful fall day, I found myself, as a high-school student, walking across the Rice University campus with one of Rice's best-loved professors. He had the lanky frame of Bertrand Russell, completed with a shock of longish, white hair. His field was biology, which was not on my list of possible major areas to study. But instead of discussing his field, or the intricacies of college application, we began to talk about internationalism and world government.

This was heady stuff, especially for me, coming as I did from a family with conservative political views. Professor Joseph Illott Davies and I engaged in genuine conversation. Although he shared his passion and deeply-held beliefs, he also wanted to know what I thought and why, and cared about my questions. I may not have asked, though I did wonder, about how a biologist came to care so much about democracy, and to see it as an idea to discuss so intently with one of the many high school and college students he must see. How was it central to his life? This question arose all the more so, given what I had learned in school about putting things into simple categories. Shouldn't we discuss plants and animals in biology class, democracy in government class?

I learned later that Davies had come to Rice in 1914 to serve as Julian Huxley's lab assistant. At that time, he had essentially a working-class occupation, cleaning lab equipment and preparing animals for dissection. But Huxley, who was chair of biology at Rice, and who interacted with Nobel prize winners and international scholars in many fields, became a mentor for him. At one point, Davies wrote a "poignant six-page letter acknowledging Huxley's mentoring." He says Huxley has "made twice the man of me and has put thoughts in my head that I had never dreamed of before; would it surprise you if I thought of trying for a degree at Rice!!!" (Boothe, 1997, p. 5).

While working full time, Davies enrolled as a student at Rice, receiving his BA, Masters, and PhD degrees there. Some time later, he took over both the classroom teaching and the lab for the introductory course [Biology 100]. In that role, he became renowned for his captivating teaching style. (Meredith, 1966).

It's worth noting that Huxley himself was an ardent internationalist, after his experiences in Germany leading up to WWI. Huxley's role as a caring mentor

undoubtedly played a role in Davies's thinking, but I believe now that his internationalist views were much deeper and more integrated with both his biology and his teaching than I had understood on that fine fall day.

Frogs, Alive and Dead

The first lecture in Biology 100 was a memorable one. Professor Davies entered the large auditorium and greeted the 200 or so students, all of whom he would soon come to know by name. He then asked,-

What is this course about? It's about you. You are many things, and you are each different from one another, but one inescapable fact is that you are all alive. You move, you breathe, you talk. But what does it mean to be alive? How is life possible?

Davies then brought out a large bucket. He reached in and pulled out a living frog:

Look at this beautiful creature. It, too, is alive, but it is so different from each of you. And there is a vast diversity of life you may only dimly understand. How can there be this incredible diversity? What accounts for the common features of life? What accounts for the variations?

Davies then placed the frog on the lab table in front of him:

Look at how the frog hops. That's one characteristic of its being alive. In this class we will dissect animals and plants to study their systems and organization. But whenever possible, we will study living, breathing organisms, because our goal is to learn more about life, not the parts of life..

He then picked up the frog and tossed it into the seating area. There were predictable screams, followed by more screams and laughter, as one student would toss it towards another. Then he pulled out a second frog and tossed it, then a third, and so on, each time asking his questions about life.

Finally he pulled out the last frog, and along with it a knife. With students watching intently, he chopped through the frog's neck with a single, quick blow. He then released the frog, and it too began to hop, without its head.

Look at this. You saw me kill the frog. We all know that it's dead and that nothing can revive it. Yet, it too will hop for a short while. Clearly, hopping alone is not what makes something alive, even though most living things do move. As I said earlier, we usually won't kill organisms, but in order to understand life, we will also seek to understand death.

Whatever else one might say about Davies's teaching approach or whether such a performance would be possible or even desirable today, it must be granted that he had engaged the students' attention. Students who thought they couldn't or didn't want to learn science found themselves asking questions and engaging in ways they didn't expect.

Davies showed in many ways how much he cared for both biology and the living organisms who were his students. Although he was an ardent proponent of biology and a scientific view of the world, his humanism stood out as part of, not in opposition to his understanding of the physical and biological world. That was reflected in the way his lectures ranged across art, literature, history, and philosophy. It was also shown in the way he talked about and exemplified a concern for moral

values, which he, just like the pragmatists before him, saw as integral to his view of life. His teaching prefigured Noddings's (1998) care theory:

We do not have to construct elaborate rationales to explain why human beings ought to treat one another as positively as our situation permits. Ethical life is not separate from and alien to the physical world. Because we human beings are in the world, not mere spectators watching from outside it, our social instincts and the reflective evaluation of them are also in the world. Pragmatists and care theorists agree on this. The ought – better, the “I ought” – arises directly in lived experience. “Oughtness,” one might say, is part of our “isness.”

I don't know whether Davies described himself as a pragmatist, and given his time, he would not have encountered care theory per se, but he exemplified the idea that “ethical life is not separate from and alien to the physical world.” His work was a search for the wholeness that connected these realms and entailed life for the frogs and the students he loved.

Three Grand Questions for Living Organisms

The most important impact of that initial lecture was not to convey a set of ideas, but rather to raise one of the grand questions of biology. It fits well with Dewey's theory of inquiry, which rests on the transformation of problematic situations: *How do the various systems of an organism come together into a unified whole to produce life?*

Much of the course then explored the diversity of living organisms and the different ways their systems integrated to produce successful life, for with all their variation and different ways of being in the world, every living organism represents a successful adaptation. Toward the end of the course, Davies focused more and more on other large questions, including what biology had to say about religion, the human soul, and moral codes. His manner of addressing them drew as much from poetry and art as it did from biological theory. He even quotes Cardinal Newman in an admiring way in his *Lecture on [Human] Evolution*.

A key theme in the course was the interdependence of living things. Frogs need ponds; we cannot understand one organism without an understanding of the ecology in which it participates. That ecology includes much more than simple competition for resources, but complex and varied means of association. As Margulis & Sagan (1997) were to say much later, “Life did not take over the globe by combat but by networking.” Processes of symbiosis, cooperation, and mutual construction of the environment may be more important than competition for limited resources.

Along these lines, a second grand question became more central as the course neared its end: *How does an individual organism relate to other organisms, and to its physical environment?* In *The Triple Helix*, Richard Lewontin (2000) explores this question, noting that environments do not exist independently of living organisms. The features that change a physical space into an environment are often constructed by organisms, the most obvious case being the creation of an oxygen-rich atmosphere by plants. Even more fundamentally, what *counts* as significant cannot be disentangled from the needs and activities of the organism. Instead, a view of organic evolution as a constructive process is called for: “the actual process of evolution seems best captured by the process of construction. Just as there can be no organism

without an environment, so there can be no environment without an organism” (Lewontin, p. 48).

The idea of the continuity of life points to a third grand question: *How does an individual organism relate to its history?* Histories are individual, as we see in the processes of development and aging. But they are also properties of the community and the population. Every living thing is a product of its parents and those who went before. Moreover, it shapes those who are to come. Vertical (or what Dewey calls, *longitudinal*) relations through time complement horizontal (or *lateral*) relations of organisms to the physical world and to that of other organisms. This idea was reflected in the course through investigations of the histories of organisms.

Together these grand questions about the wholeness of individuals, the ecology, and continuity opened up a complex inquiry into the variety and processes of life, Darwin (1859) had presented these ideas a century earlier, seeing through them the beauty and wonder of life:

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved. (p. 490)

Professor Davies at the End

Two years after I first met him, Davies announced his retirement. In May of 1966 he delivered the last lecture for Biology 100 that year, and what was to be his last lecture after a lifetime of learning and teaching biology. Former students, colleagues, and people from all over could not stay away. It's difficult to say how many people attended. I'm certain that there was double the approved capacity of the already large auditorium, and that many were disappointed not to get inside.

Davies spoke with his familiar passion for learning and exhibited his continual caring for students. Although he had aged, he seemed to stride across the stage and speak with more energy than ever before. At the end there was a thunderous, standing ovation for a man who had risen from lab assistant to professor and had devoted his life to learning and community. There was only one question: What will you do now? Davies paused, then replied that he didn't know, perhaps he would travel some.

A short time later, Davies died while grading final exams. During his life he had diverse interests, including photography, literature, architecture, and philosophy. But he was devoted to biology and to helping his students grow. Thinking about what made his life a unified whole, about its ecology and its history, I can't help but feel that the end of teaching meant that his life was severed, and that he had lost some of the essential wholeness of life. Some small solace may be found in the George Eliot quote he shared during his *Lecture on Evolution*:

Oh, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence;

Davies interpreted this opening of "The Choir Invisible" as follows:

To me, these are grand thoughts, They take some of the sting out of death by recognizing nobility of character during the life of the individual, They lessen

the void of death by accentuating and perpetuating through new lives those virtues for which the individual was revered while he lived. (Davies)

Davies definitely influenced me, and I'd like to think that my mind was "made better" by his presence. In part, because of his course, I chose to major in biology, even though it meant (in the beautiful logic of universities) that I had to drop it because it was for non-majors, and to take chemistry and physics instead. Later, I chose not to go past the BA in biology, because I missed the holistic understanding that he offered and that had appealed to me in the first place about the field. Most of all I didn't like to chop off the heads of frogs. Nevertheless, I still continue to work with biology education projects. Perhaps more surprisingly, continuing to think about biology accentuates and enriches my understanding of education, democracy, and lived experience.

Connecting Coffee Cups and Frogs

These ideas, particularly Lewontin's characterization of environment, are remarkably similar to Dewey's notion of *situation*. Both emphasize a crucial entanglement of each individual with both the physical and biological world around it.

Experience does not go on simply inside a person. It does go on there, for it influences the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose. But this is not the whole of the story. Every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had. (Dewey)

In *Experience and Education*, Dewey lays out what he calls the *criteria of experience*, continuity and interaction. It is striking to see how similar these are to the grand principles of evolution. He describes *continuity* as the longitudinal aspect of experience and *interaction* as the lateral aspect. Late in his life Dewey began to talk about ecology, which was just becoming more current in the discourse of the 1940's. In *Knowing and the Known*, he moves away from "interaction" to "transaction," which was later elaborated by Louise Rosenblatt (1978). But I believe that if he were writing today, he might choose a term such as "ecology," which does appear a couple of times in *Knowing and the Known*. That would foreground his view of society as an organic union (cf. Latour's assembly), not simply a system of interacting parts.

The grand questions of biology are relevant for people as living organisms. But humans also have special reflective and communicative capacities. To do justice to the full range of human experience, we need to reformulate the biology questions:

Unified whole: How does an individual grow as a unified whole?

Ecology/Community: How does an individual participate with the physical, biological, and social world?

Continuity: How does an individual participate with the history of lived experiences?

Lived Experience

Conversation is a good name for what is needed at those points where people employing different final vocabularies reach a momentary impasse. . . . The political discourse of a pluralistic democracy, as it turns out, needs to be a mixture of normal discourse and conversational improvisation. In the discussion of some issues, straightforward argument on the basis of commonly

held standards carries us only so far. Beyond that, we must be either silent or conversational. (Stout, 2004)

Wholeness is essential to life in the relatively constrained arenas of the coffee shop or the biology lab, but what happens in the larger world? In the context of a pluralistic democracy, how do we achieve that wholeness? What and how can we learn when the commonly-held standards are themselves in question? This last section explores one place in which those questions are central to community life.

The neighborhood around Humboldt Park in Chicago has a rich and varied history. Once it was a home for Jewish immigrants, including Saul Bellow's Augie March and Elaine Soloway's Division Street princess. Later it was home to Polish Catholics. Many other immigrant groups, religions, languages, and ethnicities have been represented over the years, and today it is home to Asian-, Mexican-, African-, and European-Americans. It is best known for Paseo Boricua, a half-mile stretch of Division Street, demarcated by two 59-foot-tall steel Puerto Rican flags. The neighborhood contains many Puerto Rican stores and restaurants, and is currently adding iron balconies and streetlights in the style of old San Juan, along with mosaics representing the 78 municipalities of Puerto Rico. As the community works to promote a safer and more vibrant neighborhood, it actively resists the gentrification that had forced it out to West Town, Wicker Park, and Ukrainian Village.

In a context of urban poverty and discrimination, with issues of gang violence, drug abuse, school dropouts, unhealthy lifestyles, and other urban social ills, Paseo Boricua has taken action to build a strong community. Community building there goes beyond familiar remedies such as economic enterprise zones or dropout prevention programs, to include active transformation of the lived environment. Moreover, that transformation has begun and continues to be defined by participation and ownership by community members. Puerto Rican identity is affirmed and renegotiated in relation to that of other members of a quite diverse neighborhood, to that of Puerto Rico, and to a variety of others, including university partners. The process exemplifies Maxine Greene's call for both opening and transforming public spaces:

it is not only a matter of admission and inclusion in predefined public spaces; it is...a matter of transformation of our institutions and public spaces...We need to make audible and visible the diverse ways in which identity is negotiated in our country and the manner in which it is affected by fairness, equity opportunities for free expression, and by the existence or the nonexistence of democracy. (Greene, 1998, p. 19)

Residents of Paseo Boricua have engaged in that transformative process themselves, building upon community funds of knowledge, but also upon community self-empowerment. Initially, much of the discourse focused on resistance. The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) website www.prcc-chgo.org/pachs.htm quotes Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Nahn's call for a community of resistance:

...resistance, at root, must mean more than resistance against war. It is resistance against all kinds of things that are like war... so perhaps, resistance means opposition to being invaded, occupied, assaulted and destroyed by the system. The purpose of resistance, here, is to seek the healing of yourself in order to be able to see clearly... I think that communities of resistance should

be places where people can return to themselves more easily, where the conditions are such that they can heal themselves and recover their wholeness.

Increasingly, the discourse has moved from community resistance to community building. Among many community organizations (see Ocasio, 2006) are the following:

Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center

La Voz de Paseo Boricua, a community newspaper

Consuelo Lee Corretjer Day Care

Lolita Lebrón Family Learning Center

Andrés Figueroa Cordero Library and Community Information and Technology Center

Community Organizing for Obesity Prevention in Humboldt Park, a healthy lifestyles program

La Casita de Don Pedro, a community museum

Vida/SIDA AIDS Education & Prevention Program, a health center and programs

Café Teatro Batey Urbano, a club/study center for young people and a venue for social action, where they present poetry with a purpose, hip hop, and other cultural expressions

development of economic and commercial projects including a Puerto Rican-focused restaurant district

Many of these activities are designed and run by young people in the community and all are conceived as sites for learning for community members of all ages and visitors. The activities build on ideas of Paolo Freire, who spent time there, and in many ways represent a modern version of the work of Hull House (Addams, 1910). Throughout, there is an emphasis on the wholeness of both individuals and community (the frog) and dialogue across differences (the coffee cup).

The Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS)

After realizing that only one in four of their young people were completing high school, Paseo Boricua established an alternative high school called Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS), which is housed within the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. Although community leaders would speak of Puerto Rican independence, community resistance against violence, and solidarity with Puerto Ricans and other oppressed people, they realized that the young people above all need a nurturing environment for learning. In an ethnographic study, Rene Antrop-González (2003) found that teachers are very aware of these multiple goals:

Our students don't come here because they are consciously seeking a liberating education or because they support Puerto Rican independence. They come here because they know that this school will work hard not to neglect them and because they'll find out who they are. Hopefully, they will want to come back and continue their work in the community. –Iván, a teacher and principal of the high school.

The results at PACHS have been impressive. Today, three out of four students complete high school, some have gone on the college, and some have now entered our Masters program in Library and Information Science. There is also a successful

Family Learning Center for young mothers and their children. Both programs build instruction around students' lives and experiences, thus moving from a deficit model to an assets model.

There are many other factors in their success, including dedicated teachers and a curriculum relevant to students' lives. Most of all is the sense of a school community connected to a neighborhood community, with an opportunity to grow in socially-meaningful ways:

That's why I'm always at this school. This school is my sanctuary. I know this because once I step outside these doors my problems come back. They're just waiting outside the doors to smack me in my face and start all over again. I stay at this school because I don't have to worry about my problems. I got my mind set on other things. It's hard to describe but it's like a load is taken off me when I'm here. —Damien, a PACHS student (quoted in Antrop-González, 2003)

The success of the program has attracted non-Puerto Rican students. In some other circumstances, the diversity of backgrounds might be considered as a problem. One might predict even more of a problem in Paseo Boricua, given the emphasis on strengthening Puerto Rican identity and community. But PACHS seems to thrive on diverse interests.

Although the high school was initially founded as a site of Puerto Rican pedagogical resistance, it has now also come to fulfill the affective and cultural needs of the Puerto Rican, Mexican, and African-American students that call it their school. (Antrop-González, 2003)

PACHS encourages students to think critically about their learning experiences and to participate actively in their communities. In an unconventional setting, it is the comprehensive high school vision (Goodman, 2006). The curriculum is articulated on the PRCC website in terms of three major curricular areas. The first involves “the development of cognitive skills in the areas of Natural and Social Science, Mathematics, Communications, and the Arts.” In a sense, this is the goal of any high school, but there is an emphasis at PACHS on a unified whole, both across disciplines and between the school and the students. Literacy at PACHS means learning to read the word and to read the world (Freire, 1970/1993; Freire & Macedo, 1987). It means actively participating in that world as both critic and creator. This philosophy positions each student and each teacher as whole, living beings. One never hears talk of deficits, but rather of strengths and potentials for growth (Johnson, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999).

The second area focuses on “the development of self-identity and self-worth by analyzing the Puerto Rican and Latino reality.” Students learn how to act responsibly in the world, by first understanding themselves and their Latino heritage. This area ensures that the continuity of lived experiences is a present reality for students, that their daily challenges can be conceived in relation to the larger world and the experiences of others.

“The third area is designed to provide students with hands-on experience. Classes included are video, bomba y plena, typing, dance, guitar and journalism.” Students learn how to transform the world, to give back to their community. Recently, for example, students have been making podcasts about their school and community. Across disciplines of history, biology, English, mathematics, and others, students

learn about themselves as participants in physical, biological, and sociocultural ecologies. It is an example of the social justice youth development model, in which self, social, and global awareness guide growth (Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammorota, 2006).

The activities at PACHS are based on the premise that students need to use language to solve problems that are meaningful their daily lives in order to take charge of their own learning (cf. Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman, 1987). They write and share reflections about work in the community as a way of learning language, but also as a way of learning how to participate actively in community building.

It is commonplace nowadays to think of the classroom or the school as a learning community, even if that is more often achieved in name than in fact. Some have argued for extending to the community beyond, bringing neighborhood experiences into the classroom, as with funds of knowledge approaches (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992), or taking classroom learning out into the neighborhood, as with service learning. All of these ideas have merit, and may be considerably better than what we see in many schools oppressed by the No Child Left Behind regime today. But the Paseo Boricua learning goes a step further. Rather than seeing the community as simply a resource, or as an application area for learning, it puts community first. In this approach, *the community is the curriculum*. The mutual constitution of community life and education is thus evident in everything the community undertakes. And all of those activities build upon genuine conversation.

Connecting the University and the Community

Recently, in collaboration with the Paseo Boricua community, my department has inaugurated a new Masters program in Library and Information Science. The aim of the program, known as the *Community Informatics Corps* (<http://www.lis.uiuc.edu/programs/ms/cic.html>),- is to recruit and mentor a cohort of Latina/o, African-American, and other students who are interested in a career enabling them to contribute to communities especially of groups underserved in society. Students focus their coursework on social entrepreneurship and community library and information services, so that they are prepared to apply what they've learned to the creation of innovative information services implemented within and across a range of community-based and public interest organizations.

The curriculum combines Saturday and summer courses offered at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago, online courses, and summer courses at the Urbana-Champaign campus. Students have a blended experience that emphasizes service learning in Chicago neighborhoods yet offers them experience with online learning and integrates them with the on-campus program. Campus-based students have an opportunity to experience and learn from neighborhood life. One hope is that we can learn from Paseo Boricua and help make the university itself a place for wholeness, a healthy ecology, and continuity. A characterization, which is at one and the same time modest and daunting, is that we seek to establish a conversation between a large, elite, and increasingly remote university and the communities around it.

The model for my own Fall 2006 course on *Inquiry-Based Learning* (www.uiuc.edu/goto/ibo) originated to accommodate students in the CI Corps, and to benefit from the resources offered by Paseo Boricua, and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. Students worked with community members on projects such as a Puerto Rican

Digital Archive, a literacy program for the high school, a hydroponics garden, violence reduction, and a community wellness program. The aim was to see how our developing understandings of learning, research, literacy, community, technology, and social justice could be integrated through action in the community. As Migdalia Jimenez, a student in the course said:

I've always been passionate about literacy and social justice. I also have always loved libraries. I just didn't know that those seemingly disparate interests could be joined. Growing up in inner-city Chicago as a child of immigrants, I spent most of my time at my neighborhood public library. Although my mother only made it to 6th grade in her native land of Mexico, she imbued us with a love for books. Reading opened up so many possibilities in my life because it provides access to information. For me it has meant the end of ignorance and the beginning of independent thinking.

There is no neat conclusion to this process, no simple formula for replication. We have encountered many challenges in working across divides of geography, language, institutions, and perhaps most importantly, the mundane realities of everyone's over-scheduled lives. Nevertheless, nearly everyone involved would find it difficult to go back to a curriculum in which the parts are dismembered like Davies's frog.

Conclusion

When I think about frogs, a disturbing thought comes to mind, one more frightening than Professor Davies's demonstration. Frogs have become one of the best quality of environment indicators. As human activity continues to damage the world around us, we can measure the destruction of our living world by the extinction of frog and toad species and by the appearance of malformations:

Malformed amphibians are now documented in 44 states, in 38 species of frogs and 19 species of toads, with estimates of deformities as high as 60 percent in some local populations. Scientists now agree that current numbers of reported malformations significantly exceed the normal statistical variation. (U. S. Geological Survey, 2002)

The wholeness of individual frogs is dependent upon the wholeness of their environments, and those environments are being chopped up as surely as the poor frog was by Professor Davies. We need to understand how the wholeness of the individual is inextricable from the wholeness of community and environment. And none of that can be understood without understanding the continuity of life. That lesson has not been learned on the larger scale of life on earth; we see the consequences not just in the loss of frogs, but in the destruction of young people.

Paseo Boricua seeks to maintain a wholeness of its environment, because community members realize that it is essential for the growth of each community member, and in turn for the continued vitality of the community. Recently, the community produced a brochure about its many activities (Ocasio, 2006). On the inside cover there is a quote about the Coquí, a tree frog, which is the unofficial symbol of Puerto Rico:

Dicen que el Coquí no puede cantar ni vivir fuera de la isla. Aquí, el Coquí canta a su isla con amor, sobreviviendo a la ciudad de los vientos aun en temperaturas bajo cero.- (Luis Padial Doble)

The page continues with thanks to contributors, then ends with this appreciation:

La taza de café puertorriqueña- that kept us going through the process.

Can we dream of an environment in which frogs sing, and people learn together over a cup of café? It's clear that the process forward at Paseo Boricua will not be trouble-free. But what provides hope for community members and visitors is an understanding of *learning integrated in life*. The life of the community and the individuals within depends upon a shared commitment to the wholeness of each individual, to that of the community, and to the continuity of their experiences.

As Professor Davies had shown, the frog is more than the sum of its parts; it survives because of its wholeness, and the wholeness of its environment. This brings us back to Dewey, who saw that neither democracy nor education could be reduced to procedures and piecemeal steps:

Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society. (Dewey 1920, p. 186).

Unfortunately, most political institutions and industrial arrangements in our modern world do not fare well on Dewey's supreme test. Rather than fostering growth for each member of society, they operate as if dissecting those members is what we need to do, and will tell us all we need to know about life, growth, community, and moral commitment. Fortunately, there are alternative visions of wholeness to give us hope.

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¹ The four quotes from Davies to follow are not exact, but instead are reconstructions intended to communicate the sense of of dialogue he conveyed, albeit in a lecture format._

² Community informatics (CI) is the field of study and practice devoted to understanding how information processes and technologies are used to help communities achieve their goals. CI is an option within the masters program offered by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Ann Bishop has been the lead person in making this program come into being, with active participation from Alejandro Luis Molina and others in Paseo Boricua. _

³ They say that the Coquí can neither sing nor live away from the island. Here, the Coquí sings to its island with love, surviving in the Windy City in temperatures below zero._

⁴ The cup of Puerto Rican coffee..._

Investigating the Underachievement of University Students in Turkey: Exploring Subscales

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Abstract

This study extends the work of Baslanti and McCoach (2006), which aimed to identify the characteristics of gifted underachievers at the university level and the reasons for their underachievement using the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R). In this study, underachievement refers to a discrepancy between outstanding achievement shown on a standardized test and low performance in school-related tasks compared to students of the same age (Clark, 1997). The present study was conducted with 30 underachievers using a semi-structured interview with 44 questions. The interview questions addressed five factors of underachievement: academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation. Data were analyzed using content analysis and frequencies were obtained for all items. Results from the interviews indicated that the findings paralleled those obtained in the original study.

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Investigating the Underachievement of University Students

The processes of defining underachievement, identifying underachieving gifted students, and explaining the reasons for this underachievement continue to stir controversy among practitioners, researchers and clinicians (Reis & McCoach, 2000). The characteristic behaviors of underachieving gifted students have been studied extensively since 1950s (Clark, 1997). Some researchers (e.g. Butler-Por, 1993; Clark, 1997) concentrated primarily on three factors associated with underachievement among the gifted: home and parental variables, personality characteristics, and school related factors. This study focuses on factors such as academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward teachers and school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation.

Review of Literature

Rimm (1997) stated that procrastination, incomplete assignments, disorganization, and careless work became typical symptoms that initiated underachievement syndrome. According to Davis and Rimm (1998) poor study habits, peer acceptance problems, poor school concentration and home and school discipline problems supported the pattern of underachievement. It is also evident that if a child does not see a relationship between efforts and outcomes, s/he is not likely to make an effort to achieve (Davis & Rimm, 1998).

Ultimately, underachievement is closely tied to self-concept development. Children who see themselves in terms of failure eventually begin to place self-imposed limits of what is possible (Delisle & Berger, 1990). Butler-Por (1993) also added locus of control, fear of failure, need affiliation, and fear of success to self-concept factors related to underachievement.

Perfectionism is also a crucial attribute of some of the gifted underachievers. Adderholt-Elliot (1989) named five characteristics of perfectionistic students that contribute to underachievement: procrastination, fear of failure, an all-or-nothing mindset, paralyzed perfectionism (if there is a risk of failure, do nothing) and workaholicism (which leads to burnout, depression, and a loss balance among school, family and friends). A related and similar trait in underachievement is low self-esteem. Davis and Rimm (1998) purported these students do not believe they are capable of accomplishing what their family or teachers expect of them or what they should expect of themselves.

Another contributing factor to underachievement among gifted students is competition. The classroom where competition and comparative evaluation are heavily stressed is a serious problem for underachievers (Davis & Rimm, 1998). Rimm (1997) stated that when the curriculum becomes more complex or when students enter the upper grades where peer populations are more intellectually competitive, gifted children may feel as though they are not as intelligent as they believed they were. Davis and Rimm (1998) also noted the underachievement of gifted students may appear even at the college level if students have not learned to function in competition.

Another source of underachievement is the actual school situation (Clark, 1997). Butler-Por (1993) noted that the literature suggests that three factors within the school situation are conducive to the onset of underachievement in gifted students: curriculum and teaching methods, attitudinal factors, and teacher variables. Students who fail to find stimulation in school may opt out of the learning situation, develop anti-school attitudes, and prefer to stay at home (Butler-Por, 1993). Butler-Por (1993) reported two main points from the literature. First, underachievers generally express negative attitudes toward school. Second, teachers may convey values and expectations that antagonize and alienate gifted students and contribute to the underachievement problem (Butler-Por, 1993).

Reis and McCoach (2000) listed general traits that contribute to underachievement among the gifted:

- Low self-esteem, low self-concept, low self-efficacy,
- Alienation or withdrawn; distrustful, or pessimistic,
- Depression,
- Dependent, less resilient than high achievers,
- Fear of failure; gifted underachievers may avoid competition or challenging situations to protect their self-image or their ability,
- Fear of success,
- Negative attitude toward school,
- Perform less well on tasks that require detail-oriented or convergent thinking skills than their achieving counterparts,
- Lack goal-directed behavior; fail to set realistic goals for themselves,
- Possess poor self-regulation strategies, low tolerance for frustration, lack perseverance, lack self-control.

Unfortunately, there is scant literature on gifted underachievers in post-secondary educational settings and those who do not stay in college (Peterson, 2000). Davis (1998) reported from Borow (1946) that predicting achievement of college students had more to do with time management, study habits, extracurricular activities, employment, and health than intelligence. Davis (1998) summarized Diener's (1960) study, which compared seventy-four achieving and sixty-four underachieving students on grade point average (GPA), aptitude, reading skill, verbal expression, high school GPA, age, weekly study hours, attendance, and residential accommodations. In this study Diener found that overachievers, in comparison to underachievers, reported better study habits and organization.

McCoach and Siegle's (2003) study examined the differences between gifted high achievers and underachievers in terms of their general academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, motivation and self-regulation, and goal-valuation using the *SAAS-R*. The results indicated that gifted achievers and gifted underachievers differed in their attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, motivation/self-regulation, and goal valuation, but not their academic self-perceptions. In addition, over 44% of the sample could be correctly classified as either gifted achievers or gifted underachievers using their scores on two subscales: motivation/self-regulation and goal valuation.

The results of the antecedent study (Baslanti & McCoach, 2006) using the SAAS-R also indicated that underachievers had lower scores on the SAAS-R than did the comparison students. There were moderate to large differences between the means of comparison students and the means of the underachievers on each of the five subscales of the SAAS-R. Among the five sub-scales, the motivation/self-regulation subscale was the best predictor of underachievement. However, the study also showed underachieving students exhibited high scores on the academic self-perception subscale in contrast to the findings from McCoach and Siegle (2003). Hence, the concept of self-perception needs further study in gifted underachievers.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether gifted underachievers' responses to interview questions yielded similar results in terms of academic self-perception, attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers and classes, motivation/self-regulation, and goal valuation when compared to findings obtained from the antecedent study (Baslanti & McCoach, 2006). This research study extends that study by conducting interviews with underachievers after the administration of the SAAS-R instrument to identify the characteristics of underachieving gifted students and the reasons for their underachievement.

Methods

Participants

Thirty underachievers from Bogazici University were contacted to participate in an interview. All 30 students also participated in the previous study (Baslanti & McCoach, 2006), in which 91 students were administered the SAAS-R instrument. Bogazici University usually accepts students among the top-ranking high school graduates (upper 5%) who are selected through a nationwide external entrance examination called the Student Selection and Placement Examination (OSYS). The OSYS exam is taken by nearly 1.5 million students each year. Because students at Bogazici University represent the top students in Turkey, for the purposes of the study they will be defined as academically gifted (Baslanti & McCoach, 2006).

The participants for this study are selected according to the following criteria: all underachievers entered the university at the 95th percentile or above on the OSYS exam in their year of entry, completed at least four complete semesters at the university, had GPAs below 2.0 out of 4.0 for both of the preceding two semesters, and had at least one failing grade (F) on their transcripts. A total of 614 students fell into this category of underachievers, and 91 of those students participated in the previous study (Baslanti & McCoach, 2006). The researcher contacted these students to participate in an interview. Thirty students (33%) agreed to participate.

Interview

Interviews were conducted in a seminar room at Bogazici University and were audio-taped. In addition to the audiotaping, the researcher took notes during the interviews. He also wrote short field notes after each interview in case some points in the responses were not clear. The interview environment was quiet, and participants

seemed very confident. The interview was semi-structured and included 44 questions employing five categories: academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation. Tables 1 through 5 show the interview questions in each of the five categories used in the study. These categories, that were present in the *SAAS-R*, were used in order to triangulate results between the instrument and interviews. Each interview question was derived from the literature and finalized after feedback from an expert in gifted education. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. During the interviews the researcher encouraged students to elaborate their yes/no type of answers to the questions.

Data Analysis and Procedures

Responses were analyzed using a content-analytic procedure (Weber, 1990) that allowed frequencies to be generated. Interviews were transcribed verbatim the same day to prevent forgetting important details that might be helpful to analyze participants' responses to interview questions. The researcher read all of the transcripts several times to gain insight into students' responses.

Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text (Weber, 1990, p.8), including open-ended responses to a question in a survey and comments from in-depth interviews (List, 2005). Content analysis is used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts; to quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of such words and concepts; and to make inferences about the messages within the texts (Busch, et al., 2005). In content analysis, data are usually coded to report existence or frequency. In this study, students' responses to each item produced large volumes of data, and content analysis helped the researcher break down the content of responses into meaningful and pertinent units of information. The purpose of the analysis was to narrow students' comments down to meaningful units. Words, sentences, and paragraphs were all considered the units of analysis. These units, then, were coded into meaningful categories. Because of the sheer volume of data generated, content analysis was conducted for each individual question. The content-analytic procedure used in the study was exploratory in nature for two reasons. First, it employed a priori coding strategy, in which the categories were established prior to the analysis based upon theory. Second, students' responses to each particular item guided the categorization of inferences made. For instance, students' responses (words and/or sentences) to whether they had fear of failure or not were categorized into two sets of responses: having fear of failure or not having a fear of failure. Because the literature indicates that gifted underachievers exhibit fear of failure, the researcher' purpose was to investigate the distribution of the participants of the study between the two. For example, 60.7% of underachievers stated that they had fear of failure, whereas 39.3% stated that they did not have fear of failure. Another example of utilizing students' responses to form some categories, is in regard to the question whether or not they displayed failure in certain subjects or an overall failure. For this question, students' responses yielded these categories: mathematics, physics, social sciences, and courses in which using presentation skills are important. This dual approach to analysis was helpful in the sense that it resulted in some findings that were not evident in the existing literature and in the previous study where the *SAAS-R* instrument was used.

As with all quantitative and qualitative studies, there are validity and reliability issues in content analysis. A content analysis variable is valid to the extent that it measures the construct the investigator intends to measure (Weber, 1990, p.15). In this study, the researcher attempted to address validity issue by using a semi-structured interview instead of an in-depth interview that yields more open-ended, diverse sets of categories. Codes and their classifications, the content analysis variables in the present study, were structured in a way as to answer each particular question derived from the literature. This strategy helped reduce the ambiguity of the responses that leads to validity and reliability problems. Such problems, according to Weber (1990, p.15), grow out of the ambiguity of word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules.

Other strategies to enhance the validity of the study were also used. The researcher used verbatim language of the participants for the analysis and mechanically recorded data, and used field notes as a method of triangulation. Such strategies are reported to increase validity of qualitative studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.324). The data and codes were also validated by another expert in the field for consistency to increase the reliability of the study. The researcher and the expert agreed on all interpretations and categorizations. The researcher did not, however, use any quantitative inter-rater or intra-rater reliability measures, such as Cohen's Kappa, to report reliability.

Results were expressed in terms of categories and their respective frequencies to identify the characteristics of gifted underachievers at the university level and the reasons for their underachievement. The findings were compared with those obtained from the previous quantitative study, which employed the *SAAS-R* instrument. Results from the content analysis follow. The total number of answers may exceed or fall below 30, due to students' multiple responses to an item or non-responses to an item.

Results

Academic Self-Perceptions

The interview employed 10 questions for the academic self-perceptions category (see Table 1). The questions examined underachievers' self-perceptions in terms of fear of failure, dependency, competition, and intelligence. Frequency reports in this category indicated that students felt alone (45%); withdrawn and invaluable (15%); and unhappy, depressed, isolated, argumentative, and lazy (5%). Some (35%) felt bored and described lessons as not being interesting enough to attract their attention. The majority of students (70%) could manage to learn and do the required tasks on their own, while 23.3% expressed dependency on their friends. Two students stated that their dependency depended on the situation.

Table 1
Questions from the Semi-Structured Interview Related to Academic Self-Perception Category

Item no	Questions
1	What feelings do you have for yourself during classes/at school?
2	Are you dependent on your friends' help in order to understand your lessons, assignments, etc. or can you manage to learn and do the required tasks on your own?
3	Do you have fear of failure?
4	Do you withdraw from a course if you feel that you will fail or you take the course anyway?
5	Do you think your friends/teachers/social environment appreciate your skills?
6	Do you escape from competitive environments? How do you interpret the University environment in terms of competition?
7	Do you display failure on certain subjects or do experience an overall failure?
8	Do you think you get what you deserve based on your hard work and efforts?
9	How are your examination results in general? What does getting A's mean to you?
10	Do you describe yourself as intelligent as your friends at this university?

Results showed 60.7% of students had fear of failure. Their responses produced varying answers to the fourth item, which collected evidence of perfectionist and non-perfectionist attitudes toward selecting a course. Some of the students (14.8%) emphasized the importance of getting the most out of a course rather than getting a passing grade. Eighteen percent expressed non-perfectionist attitudes toward selecting a course. For instance, one student stated, "if my GPA were good, I could act as perfectionist in selecting a course, but now a passing grade is enough for me. This is what I can do for the time being." More than half of the underachievers (53.6%) thought getting an A was difficult. However, 46.4% thought getting a passing grade rather than an A was enough for them. These were students who had just a few A's in their transcripts and usually got low scores such as D, C, and C+.

The respondents provided diverse opinions about competitive learning. Twenty-two students (73%) complained about the extreme competitive environment whereas 17% had positive feelings about the school's competitive atmosphere. Some students described competition in the university as "excessive", "unnecessary", "annoying", and "destroying friendships."

Results indicated that the majority of the students (67%) failed certain subjects: mathematics (35%), physics (30%), social sciences (30%), and courses

where using presentation skills were important (5%). The rest (33%) of the students exhibited failure on all subject areas. On the other hand, 13% of students rejected the idea that they were underachievers. They noted that failure occurred when they do not enjoy the course content.

Most of the students (83%) stated they deserved a low grade because they did not put enough effort into courses. The rest (17%), however, believed they did not deserve many of the low grades they obtained. These students blamed teachers' grading practices. The majority of the underachievers (83%) described themselves as intelligent as their classmates while 17% did not. Some of the comments about their perceptions of their intelligence included:

In terms of social skills and analytical reasoning I feel better than most of my friends, but especially in mathematics lessons at this university I feel stupid when compared to others.

I thought I was very clever, but I have doubt for the time being when I look at my grades.

I used to consider myself very intelligent, but after attending to this university I met the ones who are better than me.

My current situation at this university gave me the impression that I am not intelligent.

Everyone around me say that I am very intelligent, but I do not think so when I look at others at this school.

Attitudes Toward Teachers

Attitudes toward teachers were the thrust of 12 questions (see Table 2). The questions examined what underachievers thought of their teachers and the teachers' grading practices, teachers' strengths and weaknesses, and expectations of their students. Frequency reports in this category indicated 60% of the students had negative feelings about their teachers and 13% had similar feelings toward lessons. The latter group found the course content boring and uninteresting.

Table 2
Questions from the Semi-Structured Interview Related to Attitudes Toward Teachers Category

Item no	Questions
11	How is your attitude toward your teachers and lessons?
12	How do you evaluate your teachers' attitudes toward you?
13	What do you think of teachers' grading practices and course passing regulations at the University?
14	How much do you enjoy the way the courses are taught?

- 15 How do you evaluate your teachers whose courses you failed in?
 - 16 How are your relations with your teachers?
 - 17 What do you think your teachers' expectations from you are?
 - 18 How is your interaction with your department and advisor?
 - 19 What kinds of strengths or weaknesses do you think your instructors possess?
 - 20 Do you believe that your teachers differ in terms of their expectations from you as a student?
 - 21 How do you evaluate the difficulty level of the lessons that you fail?
 - 22 Do you believe that your teachers are aware of your capacity?
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About half of the underachievers (43%) thought teachers' attitudes toward them were positive, but 57% thought otherwise. All of the students in the latter group commented they did not have a healthy communication with their teachers. Some of them believed their teachers did not care about their presence, especially in mass courses (41%); just came to class to lecture and then go out (24%); and could not stand underachieving students (6%). The majority of the students (70%) asserted their teachers were never aware of their potential and did not have any attempt to see it. Three students complained that mathematics instructors, in particular, did not want to communicate with students. One of the interviewees noted that although he was considered to be an intelligent student by his mathematics teachers, his failure in mathematics astonished them. He also thought he could have passed those courses if his teachers had not relied on his examination results to assess his performance in mathematics.

Regarding teachers' expectations from students, 55.6% of the students believed teachers did not have any expectations from students with respect to learning and did not care whether the students would pass the course or not. Some students (44.4%), however, cited "to pass the course," "to spend more effort," "to get a high grade," and "attendance" as teachers' expectations of students.

Moreover, 21% of the underachievers criticized the curve system within the university. They believed such a system created a highly competitive environment and this, in turn, destroyed friendships among students; made them selfish. One of these students stated, "for me to pass a course, it is not necessary for some others to get Fs (failure). Everyone should have an equal chance to get an A score." Another student thought such a competitive atmosphere was his motivation and was giving him the impression he is not capable of competing with others. Another underachiever believed no matter how intelligent students were and how well they performed in the nationwide university entrance examination, the students at this university failed because of teachers' being proud of giving low scores to students.

Seventy percent of the underachievers did not enjoy the way courses were taught and 55% found the failed lessons very difficult. These students stated instruction was based on memorization. Other students commented about teachers' strengths and weaknesses. They noted their teachers lacked pedagogical skills (45%),

could not attract students' attention (15%), did not keep current in their content area (13.8%), just copy the book on the board while they lectured (10.3%), could not go beyond content knowledge (6.9%), and did not know the subject matter well (3.4%).

Attitudes Toward the University

The attitudes-toward-school category employed 8 questions (see Table 3). The questions examined what underachievers thought of their school, the academic and social experiences they were going through, and the impact of any school-wide policy on their underachievement. Frequency reports in this category indicated 70% of the students had positive attitudes toward the university. The seven percent who expressed negative feelings pointed out that this was the best school in the country they could attend. Twenty-three percent, on the other hand, believed they could not reach their potential at this university.

Table 3
Questions from the Semi-Structured Interview Related to Attitudes Toward School Category

Item no	Questions
23	How about your attitudes toward school?
24	Do the students have an equal opportunity to contribute to the lessons?
25	What opportunities do you think the University provides you with?
26	Do you think that you learn new academic and social skills at this university?
27	Is your underachievement realized by anybody in the school?
28	<i>Do you face with different school-wide policies? If yes, how does it affect you?</i>
29	Do you think that this school has an established philosophical stance?
30	Can you easily take risk while selecting a course? What kind of courses do you choose? (by means of required and unrestricted elective courses), what is important for you in selecting a course?

The majority of the underachievers (76.7%) found the courses taught at the university very teacher oriented/controlled. Two students, for example, drew a highly authoritarian teacher profile of their teachers. One student expressed his idea that it was the students who determine "the quality of instruction" at the university, not teachers, because the university attracted the best students in the country. Regarding the flexibility in selecting a course, 24.1% of the students criticized not having much of a choice while selecting courses at the university. Almost half of the underachievers (48.3%) stated they do not take risks in selecting their unrestricted elective courses. They prefer the ones believed to be easy to pass and to require less effort in order to increase their GPAs. Only 18.7% reported they take risks because they want to take courses which they will enjoy and learn new things.

Regarding the opportunities provided by the university, 79% of the respondents described the opportunities and facilities as adequate. The ones who mentioned inadequate resources (21%) cited shortage of instructors, crowded classes, old-fashioned computer labs, and little opportunity to receive scholarships. Half of the

students (50%) expressed concerns about the university for having unfair scholarship policies and discrimination within some departments against students from other program areas. Thirty-five percent, on the other hand, complained that all instructors at this university followed their own rules and policies, which enabled them to ignore some students. In terms of the school's philosophical stance, students expressed varying opinions. One third of the students (33.3%) stated the school's main philosophy was liberalism. However, 14.3% thought its aim was to encourage individualism and competition among students. One student noted (and three others expressed a similar opinion), "If you are a hardworking student, school appreciates you. If not, then discrimination starts. Nobody cares about underachieving students and the ones who left behind." Moreover, 70% of the respondents asserted that only their friends were aware of their underachievement at this university. Only 7% thought their advisors realized their underachievement. Fourteen percent, however, believed nobody recognized their underachievement.

Goal Valuation

The goal-valuation category employed 5 questions (see Table 4). This section questioned students' future plans and career direction, their understanding of being an underachiever at the university, and their perceptions of being successful both academically and socially. Results indicated that 28.6% of the respondents wanted to join the work force and earn money, 21.4% wanted to go abroad to study and work, and another 21.4% wanted to work on interest areas other than their majors. However, 29.6% stated they did not have any future plans.

Table 4

Questions from the Semi-Structured Interview Related to Goal Valuation Category

Item no	Questions
31	What are your future plans and career direction?
32	What do you think about "being an underachiever" at this University? What does it mean to you and how it is evaluated within the University?
33	Do you believe that you will increase your GPA? If yes, to what extend?
34	Do you believe that you can be successful? (Academically and socially)
35	How would you describe your aims regarding getting high grades or just passing grades?

All of the students (100%) reported that being an underachiever means getting low grades and obtaining a low GPA to the school community. However, with one exception, they all pointed out that this does not mean they were underachieving. They mentioned personality development and social development (74%) and what is learned at school (26%) as important issues for them. Many of the underachievers (80.8%) believed they could increase their GPAs. Only 7.7% believed they could not increase their GPAs. However, 11.5% stated they did not attempt to increase their GPAs. When asked for their goals related to getting high grades or passing grades, 57% stated they were aiming at getting a passing grade.

Seven percent of the respondents did not think they would be successful graduating from the university. The rest of the students, on the other hand, believed

they would be successful (63%) both academically and socially while 37% believed they would be successful socially, but not academically.

Motivation and Self-Regulation

The final category, which employed 9 questions, was motivation/self-regulation (see Table 5). The questions examined underachievers’ motivation levels, concentration problems, desire to study, and ability to be well organized and planned. Frequency reports in this category showed 67% of the students had low motivation to study for a course/exam. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents said they have problems in concentrating on their schoolwork. Sixty-four percent had problems related to being planned and well organized. Eleven percent, on the other hand, noted they were planned, but disorganized. Seventy-one percent of the participants had poor attendance at the university and their courses. Some students (11%) reported they never attended courses.

Table 5
Questions from the Semi-Structured Interview Related to Motivation/Self-Regulation Category

Item no	Questions
36	Are you motivated to study for your courses or examinations?
37	Do you have any problem in concentrating on your school-related tasks?
38	Do you have any problems related to being planned and well organized?
39	<i>Do you attend your courses regularly?</i>
40	Do you believe that you spend the necessary effort to become successful?
41	How is your persistence and desire to study?
42	Do you do your written assignments to learn or just to pass the course?
43	Do you do your assignments by yourself or tend to get help from your friends?
44	Do you have regular study habits?

Many of the respondents (87.5%) thought they did not spend the necessary effort to become successful. Sixty percent of the students displayed no desire and persistence to study. However, 20% stated they had the desire and persistence to study if they enjoyed the course. Ten percent of the underachievers reported they never did their assignments. Among the remaining 90%, some (53.3%) did their assignments just to pass the course without any intention to learn new things, some (13.3%) did their assignment to learn, and some (23.3%) did their assignments if they enjoyed the course content and the teacher. Students’ responses also indicated that 37.5% of the underachievers did their assignments themselves. Another 37.5% stated they did their assignments if they liked the course and received assistance from their friends if they did not like the course or had little time to submit the assignment. Sixteen point seven percent noted they always received help from their friends to do their assignments.

Not surprisingly, 90% of the underachievers reported they did not have regular study habits. Interestingly, 25 out of 30 students asserted they had such study habits before coming to this university. Some students, on the other hand, commented they had regular study habits once the exam date was near.

Discussion

The goal of the study was to identify characteristics of gifted underachievers at the university level and to explore potential factors contributing to underachievement by interviewing gifted underachievers using a semi-structured interview. The results of the study pointed out motivational factors as the most evident factor of underachievement. This result supported related findings on motivational factors in the literature (McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Peterson, 2000; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Rimm, 1997) that underscore low motivation as one of the reasons for underachievement among gifted students. The previous study (Baslanti & McCoach, 2006) in which 72.5 percent of underachievers fell in this category, also showed similar results.

Interestingly, in addition to the results in the interview, even though not solicited, all of the students stated they were very successful in their primary, secondary and high school years. Underachievement problems were encountered after attending the university. Three of these students noted they participated in National Science and Mathematics Olympiads during their high school years.

Generally speaking, according to the frequency analysis of the students' responses to 44 interview questions, it was evident that the 30 underachievers who participated in the interview had characteristics such as feeling alone, withdrawn, bored in the lessons, unhappy, and not valuable. They also had fear of failure, problems with the highly competitive environment within the university, and negative feelings about their teachers and their grading practices. The underachievers also mentioned having communication problems with their teachers and believed their teachers were not aware of their capacities. Many of these underachievers described themselves as being as intelligent as their friends at the university and did not accept that they were underachieving in regard to the importance attributed to earning a high GPA within the university. They also believed they would be able to increase their GPAs to a certain extent and would be successful both academically and socially. These results supported those of the previous study (Baslanti & McCoach, 2006). Interestingly, the participants in that study also expressed positive attitudes toward the university. Moreover, the participants of the study stated they had very low motivation to study, did not display persistence and desire to study, did not have regular study habits, and had problems related to being planned and well organized.

It is important to note that during the interview sessions with the 30 underachievers the researcher observed that each underachiever displayed varied and unique characteristics and indicating various reasons for their underachievement. This observation is parallel to the statements of Butler-Por (1993), who stated that one cannot expect all underachievers to have the same characteristics.

The results from the interview also seem to support these explanations on the impact of low motivation to the underachievement of gifted students at Bogazici University. Namely, students' responses to the interview questions indicated that most of the 30 underachievers perceived themselves as feeling alone, withdrawn, and bored in the classes. They felt depressed, isolated, unhappy, shy, felt argumentative, and lazy. These factors were also noted by Clark (1997), Peterson (2000), and Reis and McCoach (2000), as possible reasons for underachievement of gifted students. These

students also perceived themselves to have a fear of failure. This factor was also considered important in underachievement by an extensive literature base (Butler-Por, 1993; Addlerholt-Elliot, 1998 in Davis & Rimm, 1998; Reis & McCoach, 2000). On the other hand, these students had serious problems with the highly competitive environment within the University. This is another reason that contributed to underachievement (Davis & Rimm, 1998).

The majority of the 30 underachievers explained that their aim was to get a passing grade in their courses. They have very low motivation to study, which has been suggested as an important contributing factor for underachievement in the literature (Rimm, 1997; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Peterson, 2000). They also stated they have problems in being planned and well organized (a conclusion that is in line with Reis & McCoach, 2000) and have low attendance to their courses. They believe they do not spend the required effort to become successful nor display a persistence and desire to study. They do their written assignments just to pass the course. Moreover, they perceive themselves to have no regular study habits, which is another source of underachievement stated in the literature by Rimm (1997), Borow (1946 in Davis, 1998) and Diener (1960 in Davis, 1998). As also noted by Reis and McCoach (2000), another reason of underachievement is that underachievers may feel anxious in social situations such as social relationships and examinations. The underachievers' responses indicated they were sometimes aggressive and nervous, which is another characteristic of underachievers as also addressed in the literature by Reis and McCoach (2000).

Although the underachievers expressed positive attitudes toward the university, their attitudes toward instructors at Bogazici University were relatively low when considering results from the SAAS-R instrument. This tendency can be seen more closely in their responses to interview questions. The majority of the students expressed negative feelings about their instructors and criticized their teaching. They were also critical of their teachers' grading practices, and course passing regulations at the University. They also stated that they did not enjoy the way courses were taught. This is also noted as a contributing factor to underachievement in the literature by Butler-Por (1993) and Boyce (1998). The underachievers also said they had communication problems with their teachers and had no interaction with their departments, especially with their advisors. They also taught their instructors had no expectations from them and their instructors were not aware of their capacities. As also pointed out by Butler-Por (1993), one of the reasons of underachievement is the teachers' being unaware of underachievers' capacities. In addition, the underachievers taught that lessons were teacher-oriented and they found lessons failed difficult. They believed their teachers had weaknesses in certain teaching skills, which Butler-Por (1993) suggested as an important source of underachievement. All of these perceptions might indicate that the interviewed underachievers at Bogazici University had negative attitudes toward their instructors and this might be one of the factors that contribute to their low motivation.

Limitations

The current study has certain limitations. The participants of the study were not randomly selected, and data were obtained from university-level students. The interviews were conducted with only 30 students and therefore cannot be generalized

to all underachievers at the university. Another limitation is the diverse characteristics exhibited by gifted underachievers. Gifted underachievers are comprising a diverse group, and each might have different needs and might demonstrate different personality traits. Especially within a university system, this diversification increases and thus each underachiever should be treated individually because all underachievers may not exhibit the same characteristics (Butler-Por, 1993). This study indicates that some underachievers might have psychological problems, some might have adaptation problems, and some might have problems only with their teachers and suffer from school-related factors. Therefore, in our attempts to help gifted underachievers in a highly dynamic university environment, these individual differences should be taken into consideration. As the literature indicates, the identification of giftedness (Cline, 1999) and underachievement (Reis & McCoach, 2000) is somewhat problematic and controversial (Butler-Por, 1993; Reis & McCoach, 2000). Therefore, this sample may not match other researchers' definitions or identification criteria for gifted underachievement. In addition, the interview questions were limited to five factors related to underachievement as in the *SAAS-R* instrument. Surely there are many other unexamined factors that are related to underachievement.

Implications

Very little research has focused specifically on the study of underachievement among the gifted students at the university level (Peterson, 2000). This study contributes to these few studies by demonstrating that underachievers may exhibit problems in academic self-concept, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation. Hence, more research on the underachievement of gifted students is needed. More in-depth interviews, which include more factors, such as family-related factors, personality traits such as low self-esteem, self-regulation strategies, procrastination, perfectionism, and critical thinking ability, should be developed.

It appears in this study that many of the gifted underachievers have low motivation and poor self-regulation to study and concentrate on their schoolwork. They also have low class attendance because they feel bored and do not enjoy the way courses are taught. Some find their classes difficult. Many of them hold negative feelings toward their teachers. Given these findings, the results of this may be utilized for possible interventions to overcome underachievement among these students. First off the university and its counselling center should address these issues to reach out to underachievers. Teacher training to increase awareness about the existence and needs of gifted underachievers within the university is critical to helping underachievers. Each department is supposed to assign an advisor to students at the university; however, many of the underachievers that participated in this study mentioned they did not have any communication with their advisors. Given the fact that these students felt alone and withdrawn at the university, the role of advisors emerges as a critical one in the academic life of these students. The results of the present study pinpoint the need to train teachers not only to be aware of the existence and needs of gifted students at the university, but also to improve their teaching styles to better serve a gifted population. Many of the underachievers in the study seemed to have low motivation to study and low interest in coursework due to teacher's poor teaching strategies (based on underachievers' perception). This is an important issue that needs

to be addressed by the university to handle the underachievement problem with efficiency and integrity.

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Miscellany

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