

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Benigno R Parra-Avila

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## Biography

I was born in Ciudad Bolívar, a small city aside the Orinoco River in *Venezuela*. I am one of three children of Benigno Parra, a truck driver, and Nellys Avila, a secretary at the Universidad de Oriente, in Venezuela. My parents had two sons and one daughter; I am the younger boy. I grew up in Ciudad Bolívar, where I completed my basic schooling, and got after the high school a *Bachiller en Humanidades* diploma. Around my high school years, I discovered my strong interest in mathematics and I decided to pursue university studies in mathematics, with the intention of having a career in teaching. Next, I entered the Ciudad Bolívar campus of Universidad de Oriente (UDO) and began my university level studies in mathematics. One year later, I transferred to the main campus of the same university in Cumana City. Finally I completed my studies and earned the degree of *Licenciado en Matemática*. While at UDO, I took courses in *Abstract Algebra*, and wrote a thesis on the theory of *Commutative Rings and Fields*.

After the completion of my undergraduate degree, I went back to Ciudad Bolívar and spent one year teaching mathematics in high school as well as physics for the Universidad de Oriente. My thirst for mathematical knowledge had not been quenched, though, and I opted to pursue graduate studies at the Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas in Caracas, Venezuela. During my graduate time, I furthered my training in Algebra and wrote a thesis on *Commutative Algebra*. Among other topics, my thesis dealt with Hopf algebra, Schur functors and Schur Complexes and their duals. While working of my Master's thesis, I returned to my home-town for one year to work at *Universidad Nacional Abierta* (UNA), the Venezuelan pioneer on remote learning. Throughout my stay at UNA, I completed the thesis and received the degree of *Master in Mathematics*. Upon completion of my Master's degree, I worked at UDO campus in Puerto Ordaz City for a couple of years. Then I returned to UNA in Ciudad Bolívar where I have been teaching various levels of *Calculus, Abstract and Linear Algebra, Probability and Statistics, Mechanics for Mathematicians, and Affine*

*Geometry*. I enjoy my job at Universidad Nacional Abierta. Remote learning is a powerful force in education today and is opening the doors of higher learning to large groups of people who otherwise could not have access to further education. This is even more important, I think, in developing countries such as Venezuela.

## Interests and Goals

However, I am at a point in my life when I need to further my studies and that is why I have decided to pursue a Ph.D. in mathematics. Ohio University seems like a very good choice, as I am interested in working on tackling a research topic concerning algebra and/or its applications. I am starting my dissertation project by looking around a possible extension of some *cyclic convolutional codes in several variables*. Also I am planning to commit to UNA a work about *First Proving Techniques in Mathematics*, around February 2007. Furthermore I would like to submit there other work about *Commutative Rings*, around the middle of 2007. Finally one of my main goals for improving my mathematical knowledge is to write some books of Mathematics for long distance learners, like in UNA has. But that proposal is a project for holding after my Ph.D. degree.

## Participation in this Project

Since I am a college instructor in my home-country, I am currently interested in making my teaching better. Since Ou's Math. Department (OUMD) installed nice equipment in each classroom a few quarters ago, I quickly got involved in using technology in my lectures. Those devices allow us to post any written material, to surf through internet, and to handle appropriate software in classroom, like the recently installed SmartView, among other features. Also when I was studying bounds of certain codes, I realized that I needed software like Maple or MathLab in order to build programs capable of computing those kind of parameters. Finally, but not least, my dissertation must be typeset on  $\text{\LaTeX}$ . So these motivations were boiling and I am glad that Dr. Mohlenkamp assembled this project where my participation can help his goals and let me to be more exposed to programming, and I think much more...

## My learning style

After a VARK test I found that I have a *Multimodal* learning way. My score was the following, Visual: 3, Aural: 5, Read/Write: 7, and Kinesthetic: 2. Thus my preference looks like strongly Read/Write and Aural, and less Visual and Kinesthetic.

Then I read some comments and suggestions about each of these styles, for future strategies for learning and studying.

## **Other Interests**

I like to read elementary facts from the Theory of Relativity (and some historical events concerning Albert Einstein and his epoch), Physics in general, Physical Anthropology (which is the study of Human evolution), Astronomy, and History of Mathematics and of Mathematicians. Sometimes knowing a little about those subjects has helped me a lot in making a better speech, because of the motivational frame that they can provide. Also I have use that kind of information for catching prospective students of mathematics in my home-country.