This research was designed as a qualitative study as it sought to address Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents’ perceptions of their children’s school experiences based in North Carolina. In this study, 6 Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents who live in the North Carolina Research Triangle Park (RTP) area were interviewed about their perceptions regarding their expectations, motivations, and practices in support of their children’s education and their perceptions of their children’s school. Parents interviews, and school archival documents were examined to analyze the data within the conceptual framework of resiliency theory. The research questions in this study are:

1. What are the experiences of Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents with parental involvement in North Carolina public schools?

2. What are the expectations, motivations, and practices they employ to support their children’s education?

3. What are their perceptions of their children’s public school?

In addition, the following two sub-questions will be explored:

4. How or to what degree do Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents feel that their children are nurtured and supported in the public schools?

5. To what degree are Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents satisfied with the education their children are receiving in the public schools?
The analysis of the collected research data offers emerging themes from parent perceptions, implications for practice, and recommendations from which educators may improve for practice.

Major themes emerging in data analysis include: providing staff development, offering administrative staff support, providing motivational role models and mentors for all Latino students and for educators to actively include Latino parents in the educational discourse, particularly with regard to those Latino parents whose children are experiencing success academically. Additionally, themes related to the need of school leaders needing to provide teachers with professional development to combat existing negative stereotypes and myths about Latino families in the United States. In particular, teachers need to be made more aware of the often-significant differences within Latino cultural groups and how these differences manifest themselves in how Latino students, parents, and families interact with the school system.

The conclusion reached through data analysis is that in this study, Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents who were interviewed for this study viewed their role in parental involvement as one of being aware of their children’s needs, providing the necessary support to the specific needs of their children, and providing an environment that was conducive to learning so that their children could succeed academically.
Puerto Rican Bilingual Professionals Parents: Their Expectations, Motivations, and Practices in Support of their Children’s Education and Their Perceptions of Their Children’s School

by
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership

Raleigh, North Carolina

2010

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my adoring, devoted, and good-looking husband, Roberto Quiñones Ayala. His unconditional support, love, trust, and faith in me made my dream of completing my doctorate come true. It is also dedicated to my children, Carla Margarita, Roberto Saulo, and Gabriela Alfonsina, for putting up with quick meals and occasional absences from their lives and for being my cheerleaders and my greatest supporters. Also, I dedicate this to my mother, María Victoria Escalera García de la Noceda, for her encouragement and pride in me, and to the memory of my father, Paxie José Córdova Márquez. Although he believed that I should be a housewife, he loved me and wanted what he believed was best for me. Lastly, I dedicate this to my God, who sees no gender and who only sees potential. I love you all. This is not just my dissertation; this is our dissertation.
BIOGRAPHY

In 1996 my young family and I relocated to Sanford, North Carolina, where we believed we could succeed professionally, attend graduate school, and provide our children with a good education. Having lived in Puerto Rico, the United States, and France, we wanted to settle in one place and raise our family. After relocating, we found that North Carolina was the destination of an increasing number of Spanish speakers from Mexico and Central America. As Puerto Ricans, we share a language and culture with the other Latinos. Although we were bilingual professionals with the advantages of education and international experience, we share the challenge of thriving in a culture which was different than the one in which we were raised.

As our children enrolled in school, I learned that one of the cultural differences was the school’s expectation that parents play a significant role in their children’s education. While this was at odds with my perception of my role, I attempted to involve myself at the school. My attempts were not welcomed; volunteer opportunities were not offered to me. However, I was determined to help my children succeed in school and understand how American schools operated. I persevered by enrolling in a graduate program in education and seeking employment within my children’s school system. After receiving a master’s degree with a double major in teaching English as a second language and reading education, my challenge was to learn more. I enrolled and completed a masters program in school administration, which led me to the next step.
My doctoral degree fulfills a dream I have to continue learning about education and understanding the experiences of other parents. My dissertation examines the expectations, motivations, and practices of Puerto Rican bilingual professionals parents to support their children’s education and perceptions of their children’s school, including any challenges they may or continue to face. I feel a connection to all Latinos who choose to move to a country where they confront a different culture and language. Often, they leave their families behind as they seek greater economic and professional opportunities. Their courage, resiliency, determination, and commitment to their dreams have motivated me to write this dissertation.

As I researched how Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents (PRBPP) remain resilient in the face of cultural and economic challenges and continue to involve themselves in their children’s education, I see many similarities with my own early experiences in North Carolina. My life experiences influenced the choice of my dissertation topic and have focused my interest in other Puerto Rican parents’ involvement in their children’s education. It is in these connections that my passionate interest lies and why I want to study this topic. I firmly believe that if you trust yourself and follow your inner voice you are able to succeed.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude especially to Dr. Lance Fusarelli, my dissertation Co-Chair. His patience, support, and guidance were crucial to the completion of this my doctoral dissertation. I also would like to express my gratitude to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Paul Bitting, Dr. Kevin Brady, and Dr. Jose Picart for their invaluable cooperation towards the completion of my doctoral degree. Thank you all for your belief in my abilities to complete this study.
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CHAPTER 1

Statement of the Problem

Within the past decade, there has been a renewed interest in the impact of families and homes on children’s education (Epstein, 2001; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Studies have documented that there is a high correlation between parental involvement and the academic performance of children (Epstein, 2001; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Parent involvement is popular among educators and policy makers to such an extent that researchers like Decker and Decker (2003) refer to this behavior as the “vanguard of educational reform” (p. 53). Furthermore, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 includes an expectation for parents to become involved in their children’s school. Espinosa (1995) argues that students from kindergarten to twelfth grade will be more successful in their academic work and have a more positive attitude towards school if their parents are knowledgeable of, encouraging in, and involved with their children’s education. Parents have the opportunity to serve as classroom aides, field trip assistants, and decision makers within their children’s school.

This role is significantly different from the prevalent role of parents at the start of the twentieth century when they were seen as agents of the school, rather than as equal partners with those who educated their children. Such a shift of thinking has increased parent involvement (Sosa, 1997). However, in spite of state and federal mandates Latino parents are rarely included in the schools’ daily operations; they are not active participants in their children’s education possibly due to a language barrier and conflicting cultural perceptions of
the parental role held by parents and school personnel. Scribner and Reyes (1999) indicate that there is limited systematic research that addresses best practices for involving this particular population of parents. Evidently, schools have not been successful including these parents, and there is little research to explain why that is the case. Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents are of special interest with regard to this study because they possess greater English language skills and may feel more comfortable, as educated adults, in participating in their children’s education. Moreover, as former residents of Puerto Rico, a member of the Commonwealth of the United States, they may face fewer cultural differences than other Latinos from nations with whom the U.S. has a different relationship. The involvement of this group, similar to other parental groups, might have a significant impact on their children’s academic achievement, high school completion, dropout rates, and their pursuit towards a college education.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the cultural, linguistic, personal beliefs, and perceptions that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents have to support the formal education of their children. The study will try to identify customs, values, routines, expectations, disciplinary practices, time invested, perceptions, and extra-curricular activities that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents engage in to support their children’s education. Most importantly, this study will identify successful strategies for involvement of Latino parent so that local programs and schools in the state of North Carolina might use them. These strategies could be used to enhance Latino participation in their children’s
formal education, encourage other states with similar populations to involve Latino parents more effectively in schools, and motivate other Latino parents to take a more participatory role in their children’s education. In addition, this study will try to provide schools and communities with a different viewpoint regarding existing negative stereotypes and myths about Latino families in the United States.

**Background Information**

Historically, studies in the United States about Latinos have focused on deficiencies within the community, parental involvement, language limitations, migratory status, and socioeconomic conditions (Perez & Gonzalez, 2000). The identification process of Latino people in the United States has been based on ethnicity approaches, thus their country of precedence is generally not taken into account (Grosfoguel, 1997). For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on professional, bilingual, Puerto Rican parents to examine whether their English language fluency, professional status and ethnicity as Puerto Ricans affects their successful involvement in their children’s education.

Who are Puerto Ricans? How have they been studied? What is their history? And what is their relationship with the United States? In doing any type of study, we need to look at how the area or group has been studied in the past. Major historical events of the group studied can guide us as we seek to understand their perspectives and values. However, they can also trap us as we approach the topic in a particular way and thus blind us to alternative explanations (Baker, 2002).
According to Baker, three particular trends have hindered researchers from accurately understanding the nature of Puerto Ricans as a group. The first trend is that all Latinos often are grouped together for research. This means that the experiences of immigrants and migrants from as many as twenty-three different countries, including Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Ecuadorians, Peruvians, Dominicans, and even Spaniards, are all grouped together. Their different histories and backgrounds are overlooked (Baker, 2000). Many researchers (e.g., Aponte, 1991; Bean & Tienda, 1987; Portes & Truelove, 1991) have been challenging others to recognize the importance of looking at each national group apart from the mix.

The second trend is that studies that have been done on Puerto Ricans usually combine all Puerto Ricans, regardless of where they live in the United States, or they single out New York City as a case study. A few studies have looked at Puerto Ricans in other cities (e.g., Gonzalez & Perez, 2000; Acosta & Santiago, 2006), but there has been a lack of research that looks at the experiences of Puerto Ricans in different areas of the United States, such as in the Southeast.

The third trend is that theories regarding adaptation of immigrants and migrants and poverty have primarily been designed to explain the experiences of either white European ethnic groups at the turn of the century or African Americans. Other non-white groups are “forced” to fit into one mold or the other. This was explicitly stated by Douglas Massey (1979) when he published his first national study on Latino residential segregation. I believe that studying Puerto Ricans, or any other group that is neither white European nor African
American, using models that were not designed for their experiences may result in inaccurate conclusions. Examining Puerto Rican professionals who are bilingual may highlight the importance of the language barrier and potential or realized professional status on the experiences of immigrants and migrants specifically with regards to parental involvement in their children’s education.

**Research Questions**

The following three research questions will be investigated in this study:

6. What are the experiences of Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents with parental involvement in North Carolina public schools?

7. What are the expectations, motivations, and practices they employ to support their children’s education?

8. What are their perceptions of their children’s public school?

In addition, the following two sub-questions will be explored:

9. How or to what degree do Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents feel that their children are nurtured and supported in the public schools?

10. To what degree are Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents satisfied with the education their children are receiving in the public schools?

**Definitions of Terms**

*Puerto Rican*- Puerto Ricans are descended from Spanish colonists, Africans, and Native Americans. Spanish and English are the official languages in Puerto Rico; Spanish is
predominant. Spanish is the medium of instruction, but all students study English as a second language. Roman Catholicism is the main religion.

*Latino/Hispanic* - a native or inhabitant of Latin America or a person of Latin-American origin living in the United States. A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish cultural descent. Of or relating to the people, speech, or culture of Spain or of Spain and Portugal. Of, relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent living in the United States.

*Professional* - For purposes of this study, professional relates to a person who has a college education degree, has manners, and exhibits a courteous behavior towards others. In addition, it will refer to the characteristics of a profession b: engaged in one of the learned professions c (1): characterized by or conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession (2): exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in the workplace (Merriam-Webster On-line Dictionary).

*Bilingual* - having or expressed in two languages, using or able to use two languages especially with equal fluency; for the purpose of this study bilingual means fluency in English and Spanish.

*Culture* - the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic.

*Resilience* - The heightened likelihood of success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences. Resiliency is a construct that describes people who, although exposed to high levels of adversity, possess a
certain quality to avoid the negative pitfalls that most people experiencing the same negative environmental factors manage to “bounce back” and succeed anyway (Henderson & Milstein, 2003; Liquanti, 1992).

*Extrinsic Motivation* - Extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from outside an individual. The motivating factors are external, or outside, rewards such as money or good grades in school. These rewards provide satisfaction and pleasure that the task itself may not provide. Motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end.


*Parental Involvement* - Under No Child Left Behind, parental involvement has been defined as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; and that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child (Parental Involvement: Regulatory Guidance, Title I, Part A, 2000).

*Phenomenology* - An approach that attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these experiences (Grbich, 2007). Essences are objects that do not necessarily exist in time and space like facts
do, but can be known through essential or imaginative intuition involving interaction between researcher and respondents or between researcher and texts (Grbich, 2007).

**Significance of the Study**

Some researchers have conducted studies on Latino parental involvement, most notably Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) who conclude that parent involvement encompasses a multitude of phenomena. They determined that differences in family structure, culture, social class, ethnic background, age, and gender represent some factors that could influence parent involvement.

However, few studies examine the successful practices of Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents that include an examination of their cultural, linguistic, educational, and personal beliefs. The intent of this study is to understand those factors that influence Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents, the connection they have with their children’s education, and their perceptions of their children’s schools. In addition, this investigation may provide avenues for policy makers and school officials to improve parent and school communication and parental access to school services, particularly for Latino parents. More effective communication and more substantive involvement may lead to improved student success for Latino children.

Multiple research studies indicate that parent involvement is a major contributing factor toward improving Latino student success in school (Helge, 1991); Thus, the logic follows that increasing parental involvement in schools across the state is a sound practice for parents, teachers and school leaders. The results of the study may be of interest to educators,
policy makers, politicians, and educational program staff at all levels, from the national level to the school system itself.

**Conceptual Framework**

This section will give a brief overview of the conceptual framework employed in the study, including the components of resiliency theory. Chapter 2 will provide more in-depth information regarding its relationship with the research questions and relevant research.

**Resiliency Theory**

Resilience is a construct that describes the ability to avoid negative pitfalls, “to bounce back,” although one is exposed to high levels of adversity. Educational resilience is the likelihood of school success despite adversities and personal vulnerabilities within experiences and environmental conditions (Wang & Gordon, 1994). Resiliency theoretical frameworks allow parents to discover how and why their children succeed in school, rather than identifying the achievement gap between other groups of students (Schussler, 2002). Schools and parents can develop strategies to create organizational features and identify potential changes to practices and policies that may promote academic resilience (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Schussler, 2002).

Henderson and Milstein (2003) developed a resiliency wheel that contains a six-step intervention strategy containing six quadrants. This wheel includes two sides representing strategies to “develop resiliency in the environment” and strategies to “alleviate risk factors in the environment.” The three quadrants on the right side of the wheel regarding building resiliency consist of: providing support and care, establishing and communicating high
expectations, and offering opportunities for significant involvement. The three quadrants on the left side of the wheel regarding alleviating risk factors are: setting clear and consistent boundaries, increasing pro-social bonding, and teaching life skills.

I have chosen resiliency theory as my theoretical framework for this research question because it provides a more constructive perception on parental participation or what parents are doing to promote fundamental skills and behaviors in their children instead of focusing upon the deficits that exist within the students, their parents, and their culture.

Resiliency theory is relevant to Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents because it helps researchers understand how this unique group of parents may provide their children the necessary “protective” factors to educationally succeed while they overcome the challenges that come from re-establishing and adapting themselves in a life reality, culture, and environment which differs from their native one. Like Rivera-Batiz and Santiago (1994), I too express “awe at the resiliency and adaptability of change of the Puerto Rican population” (p. 121).

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen two elements from the Henderson and Milstein wheel for developing resiliency in the environment: (1) providing care and support and (2) setting and communicating high expectations. The first element was selected for this study because caring and personalization are themes that repeatedly appear in the effective schools literature. The second element was selected because of its relationship to the academic rigor and the parent’s role in their children’s education.
Overview of the Study

Chapter 2 contains a review of the research and lays a foundation for understanding current practices for parental involvement in the United States, including cultural orientations of Latino families, barriers to Latino parent involvement, cultural perspectives of parent involvement, best practices for parent involvement, Puerto Rican educational values, and the context of how Latino and Puerto Rican students are educated in public schools. A brief history of Puerto Rico in the U.S. is included in chapter 2. The last section of the chapter provides an in-depth examination of resiliency theory, the theoretical framework selected for this study.

This study has been designed as a qualitative study and seeks to discover participants’ perspectives about their world. Qualitative research views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, is both descriptive and analytic, and relies on people’s words and observable behavior as the primary data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Chapter 3 presents the research design of the study. The results of the study are presented in chapter 4, followed by a discussion of key findings and implications for research and practice in chapter 5.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

In the early twentieth century, parents were viewed as agents who served the school rather than as equal partners in an educational endeavor with their children’s school, a view commonly held at the end of the twentieth century (Sosa, 1997). Henderson and Mapp (2002) define parental involvement as any interaction between a parent and child that may contribute to the child’s development or direct parent participation with a child’s school in the interest of the child. Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) conclude that parent involvement encompasses a multitude of phenomena. They determined that differences in family structure, culture, social class, ethnic background, age, and gender represent some factors that could influence parent involvement.

The literature discussed within this section gives a brief representation of the evolution of parent involvement; it will also focus on Latino families with special consideration of their cultural orientations to and cultural perspectives of parent involvement. I will look at what research shows with regard to potential barriers for Latino parent involvement, best practices for parental involvement, the history of Puerto Ricans in the United States, and, finally, I will examine John Ogbu’s research on promoting academic success.

Parent Involvement in the United States

Henderson and Mapp (2002) state that when people are asked what parent involvement means, they usually imagine an elementary school and young children. They
think of helping with homework, going to parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom or playground, and attending the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. However, according to DeBord (2003), “Parent Involvement is a combination of being an advocate for one’s child while knowing his or her needs at home and at school. Being involved is more than cutting stencils for the teacher or going to parent-teacher conferences” (p. 2).

The state began to assume responsibility to educate children in the United States in the 1800’s. Public education provided by the state was seen as a means to enhance the public good, improve civility, provide training for citizenship, and socialize or Americanize immigrants. Before the nineteenth century, the goal was to build a common political community through public education (Henry, 1996). Over the next century, educators worked hard to professionalize teaching and improve schooling (Katz, 1975). Reforms were instituted to disconnect schools from their communities, institutionalizing school boards so that professionals were clearly in charge. As state-provided education became established in the United States, parents tended to send children to school and stay away from school themselves (Henry, 1996). The social and moral purposefulness of the nineteenth century schools and their connection with the community contrasts with the twentieth century professionalism of schools (Henry, 1996).

In Barr and Dreeben’s detailed analysis, How Schools Work (1983), parents are placed outside the organizational framework of schools. In contrast, in 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education encouraged parents to participate in schools, but
suggested no strategies, processes, or organizational structures to implement parent participation (Henry, 1996). By 1990, the idea of parental involvement in education was the accepted practice of many state school systems, especially for early childhood education (Henry, 1996).

Many researchers, in particular Joyce Epstein (2001), began advocating strongly for parent involvement in schools. On February 15, 1994, the U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, announced a new “family involvement campaign” to encourage greater family, business, and community partnerships with the schools (Henry, 1996). In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act reauthorized and amended federal education programs that were established under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965.

**Cultural Orientations of Latino Families**

Brown (1994) defines culture as deriving from a given group of people based on their ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools. A culture gives to each individual a plan for personal and social existence. The following section discusses both socio-cultural and cognitive factors. These factors could interfere with PRBPP participating in their children’s education based on their cultural differences with those of the dominant culture in the United States.

According to Samovar and Porter (1997), individualistic cultures encourage individuals to be supra ordinate to the group based on their personal thoughts and achievements. Brown (1994) echoes the view of Samovar and Porter (1997) by adding that within the individualistic culture, the concerns of the individual are focused on their immediate family and themselves. This gives the individualistic culture the appearance of
being loosely integrated. The dominant culture in the United States reflects values that are predominantly individualistic. Condon (1997) supports this by identifying three assumptions about North America’s predominant cultural system. The first assumption is that all people are equal except socially and educationally. The second assumption is that people should be assessed based on their own merits. The third assumption is that those merits in relationship to the person’s character will manifest themselves through their actions. Condon calls this individualism the “American Style.” Contrary to Condor, Samovar and Porter (1997) identify collectivistic cultures as promoting the belief that the group is superior to the individual. Brown (1994) supports Samovar and Porter’s view by explaining that within the collectivistic culture the members belong to an “in-group.” The responsibility of the members is to protect the interests of the group as well as to maintain their loyalty. This expected loyalty assumes that the members are unable to detach themselves from the in-group. The expected loyalty gives the collectivistic culture the appearance of a high level of integration. The Latino culture reflects values that are predominantly collectivistic in contrast to that found in the U.S.

Samovar and Porter (1997) claim that the gender orientation of a culture can have a major impact on many aspects of nonverbal behavior within the culture, such as occupational status, nonverbal aspects of power, the ability to interact with strangers, and the interpersonal relationships between men and women. Overall, this dimension refers to the expected gender roles in a culture and these expectations play a major role in experiences in schooling.
The male and female expectations and roles within the Latino culture are both clear and specific. The overall impact that parents have on their children’s school success may be different for sons and daughters, such as aspects of the cultural values of Latino families may result in parents’ gender-specific attitudes and behaviors towards their offspring (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999). For example, Latino males are generally afforded greater freedom to come and go as they please (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999). However, females are often required to return home after school to help with siblings and/or housework that, in turn, provide females with less time to study (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999).

**Barriers to Latino Parent Involvement**

Making any parent feel welcome, keeping them informed, and giving them a meaningful role can be difficult for educators even when all share the same language and culture. It becomes even more difficult when the parents speak another first language and have cultural beliefs that are considerably different than those of the mainstream culture (Sosa, 1997). As cited by Sosa (1997), Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms cite three outstanding barriers to this involvement: longitudinal, attitudinal, and expectation. Longitudinal barriers to Latino parent involvement include time, money, childcare concerns, safety, and separation of programs. Many Latino families work and, in some instances, may work far from school. While working long hours, parents try to provide the basic needs for their families. In some instances, parents feel that their children’s school activities interfere with their lives. In addition, planning for childcare can be difficult. The logistics of where the
educational programs are located can be a factor in whether or not Latino parents become involved in schools.

Attitudinal barriers to Latino parents’ involvement include uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and communication problems (Sosa, 1997). These parents are uncertain of their role in their children’s schools. In their native land, they hold a high regard towards educators. Their prior educational experiences are used when questioning what is best for their child’s education. Navarrete (1996) points out that Latino parents know the importance of homework but not the academic importance of everyday activities, such as reading and writing for fun. Azmitia, et. al. (1994) note that 25 percent of parents indicated that they were unable to help their children with homework because of their limitations in the English language and limited schooling. Sosa (1997) indicates that when schools communicate with parents, they distance themselves from those parents by using educational jargon. The parents may feel that the school is being run by non-Latino leaders whose authority they have no right to question.

Sosa (1997) cites Villareal and Barnwell in categorizing the third and final barrier to successful Latino parent involvement as expectations of the parents and of the schools. The parents’ perceptions of how others see them with regard to their economic and social status, occupation, native language, and ethnic group can be a cause for their lack of participation. One reason for the lack of participation could be the lack of encouragement from the schools. American schools expect a certain amount of participation from parents without regard to how long they have been in the United States. These parents are trying to find jobs, learn a
new language, secure adequate housing, and secure their immigration status, as well as seeking help for trauma or culture shock.

Cultural Perspectives of Parent Involvement

Most people believe that if they know the language of the country in which they live, communicating will not be a problem. Unfortunately, there is much more to communication than just language (Condon, 1997). Guadalupe Valdés (1996) examined the idea of “multiple cultures” in America. In her study, she designed an ethnographic longitudinal and descriptive study that followed ten newly arrived, Mexican-born immigrant families living in the area bordering between Texas and New Mexico over a three-year period. The study’s purpose was to discover the framework of the family and its influence on the success or failure of the children within their homes, as well as in the community. Throughout the study other topics and issues, which at first seemed unimportant, came to the forefront. In relationship to this study, the importance of parent involvement was well documented by Valdés.

Valdés concludes that traditional parent involvement programs did not take into consideration the cultures and values of families. Furthermore, she concludes that the families she studied did not have a clear understanding of their roles in their children’s education in American schools. Valdés suggests ideas about what parent involvement should look like in order to be helpful to culturally diverse parents. She identifies three possible types of programs to help these parents. First, parent education is important as a way to give parents the information they need in order to raise their children. Next, Valdés identifies
parent involvement programs, the leading trend in schools today, by stressing the importance of parents getting involved in their child’s homework, volunteering at the schools, and attending functions. Valdés believes that there is a difference between parent education and parent involvement and explains that “parent involvement is specifically meant to help children succeed academically, to become better in math, to have better study skills, or to become better readers” (Freeman & Freeman, 2001, p. 254). Finally, the parent or family empowerment programs are the most difficult to define. She explains that parents’ awareness of the structural inequalities within their community must be recognized. Using Freire’s idea of conscientiation (Freire, 1970), Valdés believes that parents can be empowered to become actively involved in their children’s education.

In addition to Valdés research, Lopez and Vázquez (2005) conducted a study in the Midwest that included a total of 20 families which addressed the need to rearticulate the parental involvement discourse and provided a more refined definition of what constitutes “involvement” activity (See also Azmitia, 2002; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Moreover, these researchers indicate that there is a particular need to analyze how parents of color specifically negotiate the terrain of parental involvement (Lopez & Vázquez, 2005). Such a lens allows for the consideration of parental actions alongside the historical/social conditions that foster them. Of importance to Lopez and Vazquez is the need to uncover how parents perceive schools as well as how they perceive their own role in their children’s educational lives in order to better understand the complex ways in which their involvement unfolds.
Lopez and Vazquez (2005) argue that by highlighting multiple types of involvement, particularly involvement practices in households that stand outside traditional or discursive understandings, they hope to challenge a monocular understanding of “parent involvement” while simultaneously critiquing the deficit paradigm which suggests marginalized families are not involved in the educational lives of their children. Their study aimed to highlight how Latina/o families and their extended kin networks were already involved in the lives of children, although they may not be involved in traditionally-sanctioned ways. Lopez and Vazquez aimed to explored alternate conceptualizations of involvement while simultaneously interrogating how the concept of “involvement,” as it is traditionally defined, limits the recognition of these invisible practices. Preliminary results from their study suggest that Latina/o immigrant parents do get “involved” in traditional ways; however, they perceived routine forms of involvement as being somewhat dispensable and non-obligatory. The study found that Latina/o newcomer parents relied on a vast array of home-based practices, including the use of consejos (advises), dichos (proverbs), and other narrative accounts to communicate the importance of schooling to their children.

According to Valdes (1996), consejos function as a type of local knowledge and discursive practice that serve an educative purpose: they are “spontaneous homilies designed to influence behavior and attitudes” (p. 125). In effect, consejos function as “explicit, implicit, and strategically ambiguous teachings” (Villenas & Moreno, 2001,
that are passed on from one generation to the next. These consejos are lessons that were once taught to them by their own predecessors and have become concretized in personal life experience and ways of knowing (Lopez & Vazquez, 2005).

Moreover, this study found that Latina/o parents fully recognized traditional school-based forms of involvement, but saw them as secondary to other types of school- and home-based educational practices (Lopez & Vazquez, 2005). Parents saw even teachers as “second parents” to their children – a belief that engenders different types of responsibilities for school personnel (Lopez & Vazquez, 2005).

When parents were asked in Lopez and Vazquez’s study what “parent involvement” signified, most parents identified the traditional definitions associated with the school (PTA, back-to school nights, etc.) but did not see it necessary or essential to be involved in those particular ways. When asked why this was the case, most parents indicated that school-based activities were too general in nature and not necessarily focused on their particular child. These parents’ perceptions suggest that if teachers, or other school officials, do not explicitly discuss a concern with parents and provide a detailed roadmap for parental intervention, then the parent may take this as a sign that nothing is wrong at school (Lopez & Vazquez, 2005). As a result, parents may see no real need to go to the school and become “involved” in more traditional ways.

**Teachers’ and Schools’ Perspective**

Anglo-American teachers make up ninety-five percent of the staff in public education (Farrell, 1990, cited in Simons & Connelly, 2000). A majority of them are female,
monolingual in English, and display values and beliefs of the mainstream culture. There is a shortage of minority and bilingual teachers (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). As the number of language minority students increases each academic year, the cultural disconnect between teachers and students can become problematic, particularly with respect to parental involvement (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). Educators in the United States frequently believe that parents should intervene in their child’s learning by attending school meetings, volunteering, and helping with homework (McCollum, 1996). In an ethnographic study of a Latino community done by Delgado-Gaitan (2001), 98 percent of teachers viewed parent involvement as very important, but at the same time felt that parents were not doing enough at home to help with their children’s education (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, as cited in Tinkler, 2002).

Bermúdez and Marquez (1996) state that teachers believe the following factors are barriers to effectively communicating with language minority parents such as Latino parents: negative attitudes toward parents, unfamiliar cultures, language barriers, lack of training in working with parents, and lack of administrative support. In the end, the major barrier to all aspects of effective parent involvement between teachers and culturally diverse families is the lack of formal training and staff development in working with these parents.

Successful promotion of parent involvement relies on teachers and administrators who possess the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to work with families. This especially includes the families of limited English proficient students. At the heart of
students’ academic achievement are their parents and teachers. Teachers are committed to building relationships with parents but they may not have the skills and knowledge to do it well. Too often, teachers may not receive adequate training at the college or professional level in dealing with parent involvement.

**Best Practices for Parent Involvement**

Parent involvement comes in a variety of forms including partnerships with educators, schools, families, and communities (Lim, 2003). Whatever its form, parent involvement “has become a major component of almost every plan to restructure schools” (Epstein & Salinas, 2004, p. 53). Furthermore, parental roles are viewed as essential components of the school effectiveness movement (Epstein & Salinas, 2004); a school learning community is one way that a well-organized program of family and community partnerships can benefit schools and students (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

A school learning community is composed of educators, students, parents, and community partners who collaborate for the betterment of the school as well as for the advancement of students’ academic opportunities. In order for this type of community to exist and be effective, there must be a framework that highlights the best practices for parent involvement. For example, Epstein (1986) assessed parental involvement on five levels, ranging from providing an appropriate home environment and basic communication with the child’s school to more committed levels, such as involvement in school-related activities and decision-making roles in the school district. Navarrete (1996) measures ways in which parents participate in their child’s education, such as
acting as communicator, supporter of activities, decision maker, volunteer, advocate, learner, and at-home teacher. Delgado-Gaitan (1992) assesses parental involvement as behavior at school (e.g., volunteering at school and helping with homework), intellectual involvement (e.g., providing information and/or reading to the child), and personal involvement (e.g., being informed about their child’s progress). Hence, as parents can be involved in their offspring’s academics in multiple ways, it is essential for schools to create a framework to identify the variety of ways in which parental involvement can occur.

**Political Implications**

Now, as perhaps never before, the need to strengthen the dialogue between home and school is being felt nationwide. Schools face the challenge of preparing an increasingly diverse generation of young people for a society in which they compete in a global economy, and the ability to solve problems and find answers to questions not yet posed is essential. Families, for their part, must prepare their children for a future in which they can expect to move and change jobs or careers many times. As they become adults, today’s youth must be able to make not only the decisions that affect their own lives, but also make the critical choices about how this country will conduct its affairs, what roles the United States will assume in the international arena, and how we will survive in a changing world of competing interests and limited resources.

Clearly, the challenges of education cannot be met by schools or families alone; they must support each other. When families and schools cooperate, the children reap the benefits.
Students learn more, enjoy school and the learning process, and experience a consistent sense of commitment and support from the important adults in their lives (Epstein, 1986).

Over the next decade there will be considerable changes in the demographics of the population in the United States. In the last thirty years, “the total number of foreign born residents has tripled” (Gibson, 2002, p. 241). Included in this immigrant population, Latinos are the fastest growing group, comprising 47% of the population (Camarota, 2001). Latinos are recruited by U.S. industries seeking low-skilled, low-wage labor (Gibson, 2002). Latinos came seeking a better life, and though they may be able to earn more money in the U.S. than they can at home, almost two-thirds live in poverty (Gibson, 2002), and 33 percent have no health insurance (Camarota, 2001). These changing demographics are of great importance for educators. Within the next twenty years, it is predicted that “the number of Latino children ages five to thirteen will double, and by 2030 Latino students will comprise one-fourth of the total K-12 school population” (Gibson, 2002, p. 243).

Of primary concern are the political implications of this event for U.S. society and the economy. Latino youth in general are the “most under-educated major segment of the U.S. population” (Inger, 1992, p. 1), and are “more than twice as likely to be undereducated as all groups combined” (Chavkin, 1993, p. 1). Latino students in particular have the highest dropout rate in the United States (Gibson, 2002). Several potential risks of not promoting Latino parental involvement and ignoring these facts could potentially lead to increases in the number of school gangs, delinquency, and teen pregnancy. Ultimately, federal and state
governments will be faced with these facts and will have to provide solutions to them, which in due course will have an impact on the economy and on national security.

If parents are provided with information and practical strategies for developing dialogue with schools and become familiar with their new surroundings and communities, they might be able to assist in keeping their children at school, which will have an impact in decreasing the drop-out rate and will help increase the percentage of high school graduates.

In addition, parental involvement is an integral part of all Title I programs, including migrant and minority students, as well as limited English proficient students. Therefore, it is important for parents and schools to develop partnerships and build ongoing dialogue to improve student achievement (Pedroza, 1999). Title I supports parental involvement by enlisting individual parents to help their children do well in school (Preliminary Guidance for Migrant Education Program, 2003). This statute proposes that in order to receive MEP funds, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must implement programs, activities, and procedures that effectively involve parents. An LEA must: 1) develop its comprehensive local plan in consultation with parents; 2) consult with parent advisory councils (PACs) regarding programs that are one year in duration; and 3) plan and operate a Title I program in a manner that provides for the same parental involvement as required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB is designed to impact all federally funded programs throughout the nation. This provision requires that LEAs involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, and include them in the planning, review, and improvement of the program. Failure to comply with this federal mandate will result in loss of program funding.
Overall, the changes in cultural and linguistic heritage, family structure, and economic conditions witnessed at the local school level are reflective of broader national trends. These changes, in turn, have profound implications regarding schools’ expectations for home-school cooperation.

**Puerto Ricans in the United States**

This section responds to the need for a comprehensive source on the history of Puerto Ricans in the United States since the participants in this research study are Puerto Ricans who live in the United States. The Puerto Rican population in the U.S. has reached 3.4 million, according to the 2000 census, a figure rapidly approaching that of the island of Puerto Rico’s 3.8 million inhabitants (Sanchez, 2007).

According to Acosta-Belen and Santiago (2006), Puerto Rican migration to the United States grew out of specific political and socioeconomic conditions under Spanish colonial rule and later as a member of the U.S. Commonwealth. The current association between the United States and Puerto Rico is the result of a set of economic and political factors that developed throughout the nineteenth century, intensified during the twentieth, and still shapes lives and conditions faced by Puerto Ricans in both Puerto Rico and the United States (Acosta-Belen & Santiago, 2006).

After the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico, a result of the Spanish American War of 1898, contract labor to several islands, including Puerto Rico, became a strategy of the colonial government for dealing with the island’s high rate of poverty and unemployment. In addition, the strategy helped with the expanding industrial and agricultural sector’s need for
low-wage labor (Acosta-Belen & Santiago, 2006). For example, in 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship as a way to recruit soldiers for the U.S. armed forces during the First World War. Presently, Puerto Rico still remains a U.S. Commonwealth nation.

A unique colonial bond shapes the relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S. This relationship has brought forth both positive and negative consequences and changes for Puerto Ricans who live on the main island and in the U.S. This colonial relationship continues to limit Puerto Ricans’ possibilities of envisioning a future that responds to their national needs and self-interests rather than to those of the U.S. (Acosta-Belen & Santiago, 2006). These policies and actions have led to an overwhelming influx of Puerto Ricans to the United States. Puerto Ricans represent over nine percent of the total Latino population in the U.S. according to the 2000 Census.

When describing Puerto Rican migration, scholars have often referred to “a commuter nation” (Rivera-Batiz & Santiago, 1994) or characterized it as a “revolving door” or “circular” migration (Tienda & Diaz, 1987). All these characterizations share the basic notion that not only is Puerto Rican migration a continuous occurrence but also that there is a great deal of back-and-forth movement of Puerto Ricans between the island and the U.S. Many individual Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States to try their luck before deciding to uproot their families. Some returned to the island, but a large number of first-generation Puerto Ricans established permanent residence in the United States (Melendez, 1993). Many keep alive the idea of sooner or later returning to the island; some did and still do. Year after year, Puerto Rican workers in the blue-collar,
professional, and business sectors, students, politicians, and others continue to move with relative ease between Puerto Rico and the United States in pursuit of their respective endeavors (Melendez, 1993). It has been thoroughly documented that the great majority of Puerto Ricans migrate, settle, and carry productive lives in the United States, eventually producing new generations of U.S.-born Puerto Ricans that develop or maintain different kinds of connections to Puerto Rico.

Over the past century, multiple generations of Puerto Ricans have resided in the United States. After Mexicans, Puerto Ricans represent the second largest group of Latinos living in the United States (Acosta-Belen & Santiago, 2006). This same pattern is observed in North Carolina. Historically, the concentration of Puerto Ricans living in the United States has been predominantly on the Eastern seaboard: New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and Florida. In addition, there are large concentrations of Puerto Ricans in Hawaii, Ohio, and California. Most of these have had limited education attainment and low socioeconomic levels up until the 1980’s. The reversal of socioeconomic prospects for Puerto Ricans between 1980 and 1990 has been attributed to a number of factors, including increased educational attainment, particularly at the bachelor’s degree level, and dispersion to other parts of the country where the economy is more robust such in the South. For Puerto Rican workers with less than a bachelor’s degree, wages in the South are the lowest of all regions; wages start going up for college graduates, however, and increase a great deal more for those with graduate and professional degrees. According to Baker (2002), this trend is interesting in part because of the large percentage of
Puerto Ricans in the South who have higher levels of education. Rivera-Batiz and Santiago (1994) expressed “awe at the resiliency and adaptability of change of Puerto Rican population” (p. 121).

The continuing colonial ties between the United States and Puerto Rico have shaped Puerto Rican’s community building in North Carolina. Puerto Ricans’ U.S. citizenship facilitated migration but has not eased settlement and incorporation. While U.S. citizenship, education, and bilingualism has made it easier for employers to attract and recruit Puerto Ricans bilingual professionals into the RTP area, they still are confronted with discrimination in several realms, including police relations, education of their children at school, parental involvement opportunities, politics, cultural and linguistic barriers, religious institutions, access to public spaces, and provisions of social services.

As Puerto Rican numbers of students increase statewide in North Carolina, many public schools systems are still struggling with the challenges of serving these linguistically and culturally different students. Puerto Ricans students comprise the second largest group of Latino students in North Carolina. In spite of the seeming advantages their parents possess, such as citizenship, bilingualism, and professionalism, among others, Puerto Rican students still face with adversity. Similarly to their parents, they are faced with cultural barriers between Latino groups and American culture, lower expectations at school, stereotypes, isolation, issues associated with biculturalism, and identity issues. These adversities negatively impact the educational experience of these students. Some of these issues have to be confronted and dealt with at home. Parents will have to be proactive and
supportive in order to counteract negative influences at school so that their children maybe successful academically.

**Puerto Rico’s Educational System**

Educational attainment is probably the human capital characteristic that affects economic mobility the most (Baker, 2002). Today, education is a matter of high priority in Puerto Rico; it is evident in the island’s overall literacy rate of 90 percent and its budget for education, which is approximately 40 percent. Education is obligatory between six and seventeen years of age. Primary school consists of six grades; the secondary level is divided into two cycles of three years each. The school term begins in August and continues through late May.

According to Rivera (2008), the school system is administered by the Department of Education and has several levels of learning. Although Spanish is spoken in the schools, English is taught from kindergarten to high school as part of the school curriculum. Some private schools provide English programs where all classes are conducted in English except for the Spanish class.

Puerto Rico has more than fifty institutions of higher education. Puerto Rico has achieved one of the highest college education rates in the world, ranked sixth, with 56% of its college-age students attending institutions of higher learning, according to data provided by the World Bank (Rivera, 2008).

Compulsory universal education is enforced in Puerto Rico’s public schools. Some 800,000 students are enrolled in public and private elementary and high schools; 160,000
students are enrolled in universities, colleges, and professional and technical schools. Of Puerto Rican college students, 56% are 20-24 years of age, one of the highest world attendance rates in this age group (Pico, 2006).

Pico (2006) suggests that one must educate people for life in a pluralistic world, teach them how to handle diversity, and how to face doubt as the spark of creativity, rather than a stumbling block. According to Pico (2006), a sound education offers learning to adjust to very different situations, to seek solutions with eagerness for perennial problems, and to consider all possible solutions, not only those that flatter tribal vanities. Researchers such as Pico (2006) and Acosta-Belen and Gonzalez (2000) indicate that while other societies dedicate the greater part of their national budget to sustain armies that are paraded before the public, the people of Puerto Rico are proud of the fact that the greatest recurring item of public expenditure is education.

Strengthening that commitment to education by incorporating the most fundamental values of Puerto Rico’s national character is the challenge for all Puerto Ricans, regardless of political party, class, age, or religion (Pico, 2006). Overall, Puerto Ricans have been characterized as having been perennially dissatisfied with the results of their endeavors; this means that they will never give up (Pico, 2006).

Promoting Academic Engagement

Despite the positive trends for Puerto Ricans discussed in the section above, achievement gaps in the U.S. remain. Research on academic engagement and achievement attempts to explain the underperformance of minority students, despite some apparent
John Ogbu’s (2003) ethnographic study of Black American students in an affluent suburb, Shaker Heights, Ohio, examines the reasons for low school performance in this elite, minority group. He found that Black students were disengaged from their academic studies and sought to discover why this is so. One assumption underlying the study is that two sets of factors affect minority students’ school performance. One set consists of societal and school factors; by society he means national and local mainstream White society (Ogbu, 2003). The second set of factors, which he calls community forces, consists of the beliefs and behaviors within the minority community regarding education that minority students bring to school (Ogbu, 2003). Ogbu examines both but focuses more on community forces for three main reasons.

The second reason why Ogbu doesn’t focus on school factors is that a committee of school personnel and community members had just completed an extensive study of these factors; Ogbu’s team analyzed the report of this study. The third reason for focusing on community forces is the fact that they believe that knowledge of the community forces and their inclusion in the discourse, policies, and practices regarding the academic gap would contribute to closing the gap.

According to Ogbu’s (2003) research, the role of the family in children’s education falls roughly into three categories: (a) studies examine and recommend ways to increase parent involvement in school or improve family-school relationships (see Epstein, 1995), (b) those that focus on the relationship between families and schools (Curtis, 1988; Diaz–Soto, 1997; Shannon & Latimer, 1996) which includes how to empower parents in that
relationship, and (c) those that examine how families manage their children’s education and whether it results in academic success or failure (Clark, 1983; Ford, 1993; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000).

Ogbu’s (2003) study sought to explore what Black parents do about their children’s education at school and at home and their educational strategies, or how they implement their educational aspirations for their children. Ogbu looked for such implementation in terms of what they do at school and at home. Ogbu (2003) found that in Shaker Heights, an elite exclusive suburb of Cleveland, socioeconomic status did not determine the results of the parents’ implementation of their educational strategies. His findings are divided in two parts: (1) educational involvement at school, and (2) educational involvement at home.

Ogbu (2003) concludes that Black parents in Shaker Heights do not participate actively in school organizations nor attend school events and programs designed to enhance their children’s academic engagement and achievement. School administrators claim that the parents do not understand the school system and do not know how to navigate their children through it. Ogbu’s findings show that Black middle-class parents are not more involved than are Black working-class parents. School personnel also agree with this finding. The explanation offered by their children and other community members is that affluent Black parents do not have time because they are struggling to maintain their middle-class or professional status (Ogbu, 2003). Black parents mistrust the school system as a White institution. Their cultural model of school teaching and learning holds the teacher accountable for students’ learning and performance because it is their duty (Ogbu, 2003).
Resiliency Theory

Despite the overall achievement gap between minority groups and Whites, some minority students are successful in the U.S. educational system. One possible explanation for that success may be found in resiliency theory. Resilience is a construct that describes the ability to avoid negative pitfalls, “bounce back,” although one is exposed to high levels of adversity. Educational resilience is the likelihood of school success despite adversities and personal vulnerabilities within experiences and environmental conditions (Wang & Gordon, 1994). Resiliency theoretical frameworks allow educators and parents to discover how and why students succeed in school, rather than identifying the achievement gap between other groups of students (Schussler, 2002). Schools and parents can develop strategies to create organizational features and identify potential changes to practices and policies that may promote academic resilience (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Schussler, 2002).

The resiliency wheel developed by Henderson and Milstein (2003) contains a six-step intervention strategy to develop resiliency contained in six quadrants (See Figure 1 below). The wheel includes two sides representing strategies to “build resiliency in the environment” and strategies to “mitigate risk factors in the environment.” The three quadrants on the left side of the wheel regarding building resiliency include: providing caring and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. The three quadrants on the right side of the wheel regarding mitigating risk factors include: teaching life skills, setting clear and consistent boundaries, and increasing pro-social bonding.
Research specifies four main characteristics among resilient people: social competence, autonomy, problem-solving skills, and sense of purpose and future. Social competence is achieved by developing positive adult and peer relationships. Autonomy is portrayed as the ability to establish certain environmental control and act independently due to a strong sense of personal identity. Problem-solving skills are described as the ability to plan by using resources and seeking help from others and its surroundings. Developing and planning toward established personal goals, future aspirations, and hope are descriptions of the sense of purpose that resilient people possess (Bernard, 1993). Research shows a direct correlation between people’s ability to “bounce back” and the protective factors in that person’s community and family support. Wolin’s (1993) study identified seven internal resiliency characteristics in individuals. These traits which vary in development by age are independence, initiative, relationship, insight, creativity, humor, and morality. Wolin’s (1993) study also concludes that people moving from feelings of fear to feelings of empowerment and pride of competence is the key element for survival and success in life when experiencing high levels of adversity. In spite of former failure and life adversity, resilient people continue to engage in work and activities every day cultivating relationships with others and developing new aptitudes and expertise.

Resiliency is an appropriate conceptual framework for this research study because it offers a more positive perspective on what parents do to promote desirable skills and behaviors in their children’s education. This conceptual framework may be useful as an
explanation for the phenomenon I am studying. The actual extent to which it fits or informs my thinking on the subject will be determined once the study is conducted.

For this proposed study, the researcher chose two components from the Henderson and Milstein wheel for building resiliency in the environment to include in the conceptual framework: (a) providing care and support and (b) setting and communicating high expectations. The first component was chosen for this study because caring and personalization are themes that constantly appear in the research on effective schools (Duffy, 1998). The second component was chosen because of its relationship to the academic rigor and expectations of schools in North Carolina.
Developing Resiliency in the Environment

One of the appealing aspects of resiliency is that intervention can originate from a variety of sources. Parents, as well as teachers, tutors, school administrators, or other significant adults, can provide the intervention necessary to build resiliency within young people. Henderson and Milstein (2003) believe the most important quadrant, providing care and support, is critical to the resiliency developmental process. The lack of this care and
support reduces the likelihood that a person will overcome adversity. Bernard (1991) indicates that the element of setting consistent and high-level expectations ought to be aligned with numerous opportunities to engage in the social environment of the student such as intellectually challenging school experiences and consistent expectations of high performance. Providing opportunities for meaningful participation is represented often by student encouragement to participate in clubs and athletics in order to increase positive self-esteem and critical thinking skills (Garibaldi, 1992; Rak & Patterson, 1996).

**Mitigating Risk Factors in the Environment**

Three main strategies are recommended to decrease the quantity of risk factors that could jeopardize resiliency. Teaching life skills include communication skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, and conflict resolution skills to better cope and enable more positive interactions in one’s daily environment. The development of these skills is critical to the ability of students to maximize their learning potential in the school environment. Parents can set clear and consistent boundaries by communicating clear and fair expectations; when the boundaries are ignored, consequences consistently occur. Increasing pro-social bonding with caring adults who can serve as a role model is a significant strategy to decrease the probability of children engaging in damaging high-risk behaviors. Research indicates that family is often the most significant positive role model in a child’s life; they can inspire their children to engage in meaningful processes and activities (Christle, Harley, Nelson, & Jones, 1991).
Summary

The review of research literature in this chapter identified the components that affect the cultural aspect of Latino students and why cultural factors must be considered when soliciting Latino parents’ involvement in their children’s education. Additionally, the literature reveals that teachers in the U.S. are not adequately trained to work with culturally diverse parents. A comprehensive source on the history of Puerto Ricans in the United States was examined since the participants in this research study are Puerto Ricans who live in the United States. As such, their cultural background and experiences are relevant to the study.

The literature review also revealed that Puerto Rican migration to the United States grew out of specific political and socioeconomic conditions, and that in the last 20 years, Puerto Rican professionals have left the island for the same economic reasons that other Puerto Ricans had when migrating to the U.S. It was illustrated by the literature review that Puerto Ricans take pride in their educational system and in their educational attainment. This cultural heritage is important to our understanding of how Puerto Rican parents interact with schools in the U.S. and for their expectations of their children. Additionally, I examined John Ogbu’s (2003) ethnographic study of Black American students in an affluent suburb, Shaker Heights, Ohio in an attempt to better understand student underperformance within elite, advantaged minority groups. His study examined the reasons for low school performance in this elite minority group.

The conceptual framework of resiliency theory allows the audience of educators to better understand the intervention strategies that can be nurtured in school settings: providing
care and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and enabling students to engage in performance accomplishments and vicarious experiences to achieve greater resiliency and success in school.

After reviewing existing research, a significant gap in the knowledge base exists in my topic, particularly with respect to Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents. In chapter 3, the methodology and research design of the proposed study are explained in detail in an effort to examine this select, elite minority group.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This section addresses the methods and research design used in this study. The first section provides an overview of the purpose of the study. The second section describes the research design and strategies. The third section provides a description of the participants and the process for their selection. The fourth section includes methods for data collection, formulation and rationale of the interview protocol, data interpretation and analysis, and the conceptual framework. The last section describes the role of the researcher and contains a summary of the chapter.

Research Design

In selecting the design of the study, and considering Marshall and Rossman’s (1999) notion of matching a specific genre to overall strategies, I selected qualitative methods as most appropriate for this investigation. American sociologists and cultural anthropologists created the qualitative research paradigm that has been increasingly embraced by educational researchers (Borg & Gall, 1989). In Marshall and Rossman’s matrix of genres and strategies, this study falls under the category of “those focusing on society and culture” (p. 60). What makes this genre so unique is that it requires the researcher to develop a deep understanding of participants’ values, ideas, attitudes, perceptions, and lived experiences. In addition, qualitative research as distinctly presented by Creswell (1998) is exploratory, with a constructivist perspective or participatory/advocacy perspective. The constructivist
perspective allows for multiple meanings of individual experiences with the intent of developing a pattern.

The intent of qualitative research is through investigation to gain greater understanding of an interaction, event, group, role, or social situation to progressively make sense of social phenomenon by comparing and classifying the study objects (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Creswell (1998) indicates that qualitative research approaches allow the researcher to use more researcher-designed frameworks. Essentially, qualitative research is interpretive, requiring the researcher to describe the participants or setting and then develop themes and conclusions based on meanings examined through a theoretical lens, then offering more questions that need to be asked (Wolcott, 1990). In qualitative methods, researchers are interested in how participants make sense of their experiences and lives (Merriam, 1998). Merriam also believes the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, a human instrument.

This research has been designed as an instrumental phenomenological study seeking to discover the perceptions of Puerto Rican professional parents who have children in public schools. The decision to conduct the study as a phenomenological study was influenced by the researcher’s focus on parent’s self-reflection of their perceptions of school structure and culture and the researcher’s concern that quantitative data could not capture adequately the essence of parents’ perceptions and motivations.

The strategy used for this qualitative study is phenomenology, the exploration of a common, lived experience. This type of study describes the meaning of the lived experiences
for several individuals (Creswell, 1998). The researcher explored the phenomenon not as it was theorized, but as it was lived and attempts to explain the aspects of the experience from the perceptions of those closest to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Meaning is constructed between the researcher and the individual and awareness of the lived experience is enhanced (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Grbich (2007) defined phenomenology as an approach that attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these meanings and experiences (Grbich, 2007). Essences are objects that do not necessarily exist in time and space like facts do, but can be known through essential or imaginative intuition involving interaction between researcher and respondents or between researcher and texts (Grbich, 2007).

Clark Moustakas (1994), in his seminal work on the method, argues that, “Phenomenology is the first method of knowledge because it begins with ‘things themselves’” (p. 41). Phenomenology allows the researcher to capture the experiences of participants and it has unique strengths that help document changes in feelings and experiences in depth over time. I was drawn to this methodological approach because it emphasizes the formulation of questions and problems that reflect the interests, perceptions, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher. Phenomenology was a suitable strategy for this study because it acknowledges the subjective interpretations of individuals’ lived experiences.
Sample Selection

Snowball or chain sampling was the research sampling strategy used to identify study participants. This is an approach for locating information – rich, key informants or critical cases (Patton, 1990). The intent of snowball or chain sampling is to help identify cases of interest from people who know what cases are information rich (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). I sampled 6 individual Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents whose children have been successful in school.

As stated in chapter 1, questions explored include: What are the experiences of Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents with parent involvement who have children in the public schools? What are their expectations, motivations, and practices employed to support their children’s education? What are their perceptions of their children’s public school?

In addition, the following two sub-questions were explored: How or to what degree do Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents feel that their children are nurtured and supported in the public schools? To what degree are Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents satisfied with the education their children are receiving in the public schools?

Setting

Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina, is one of the fastest growing areas in the country and centrally located in the state. It has a great economy, top universities, and excellent health care facilities. It also has one of the most well-educated work forces in the nation. The mild climate, diverse work force, and proximity to Research Triangle Park (RTP) combine to make Raleigh a good destination for citizens from abroad. Data from the City of Raleigh,
Municipal Services indicates a total 2008 population of 374,320. The ethnic breakdown of the population is 60.6% White, 28.9% African American, 10.4% Hispanic, 0.8% American Indian, 4.7% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 6.4% other. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, American Community Survey, in 2006, the total population of Hispanics in Raleigh was 36,085 representing a 10.4% of the city population. The identified Puerto Rican population in Raleigh was 2,745 people. The Hispanic/Latino population has grown by an average of 11% per year since 2000. The educational attainment in the city of Raleigh indicated by the 2006 City Report was 88% high school graduate or higher and 45% with a bachelor’s degree or higher. Records did not indicate the educational attainment breakdown by ethnicity.

Data included in the Community Inventory Report (2008) shows that Raleigh household composition is evolving and will influence the type of educational services the county will need in the future. Raleigh is increasingly a city of newcomers and recent movers. Large segments of the population have relocated from various states and countries, and even larger segments have lived in their current homes only for a short time. Most of these newcomers may be less familiar with the school system and may required additional outreach efforts. According to the Community Inventory Report (2008), the largest percent of jobs in the county are in trade, transportation, and utilities (19.2%), professionals and business services (18.5%), and educational and health services (18.2%).
Data Collection

Collection of empirical data involves a multiple approach, from interactive to non-interactive methods (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The in-depth interviews and documents and artifacts reviewed are described in more detail below.

In-depth Interviews

I employed LeCompte and Preissle’s (1993) in-depth interviews of twelve key informants for the parent interviews. Participants provided specialized and relevant information necessary for analyzing and identifying significant findings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In-depth interviews of key informants provided opportunities to gain thoughtful, insightful information from those who were interviewed.

In addition to in-depth interviews, I used Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) technique for conducting responsive interviews. Responsive interviewing has been described as an interactive and dynamic process in qualitative research as opposed to a repeatedly applied “instrument.” Researchers explain the purpose of the interviews, as part of phenomenological studies, to discover what happened, why it occurred, and its broad meanings. The interview is portrayed as a “structured conversation” and is organized by main, follow-up, and probing questions. Rubin and Rubin (2005) view the interviewee as a “conversational partner.” The partner is allowed to play a more active role in guiding the course of the interview and determining the discussion that follows. In addition, the uniqueness of the interviewee, the special interaction with the researcher, and their individual knowledge is also emphasized.
With responsive interviewing, various factors influence the questioning style used, such as the personality of the researcher and the relationship between the conversational partner and the researcher. Even though researchers begin an interview project with a primary topic in mind, this technique allows questions to be modified during the interview to align with the interest and knowledge of the conversational partners. An interview protocol is suggested with this strategy to balance the desire for predictability of the responses with the flexibility to examine unanticipated topics (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Rubin and Rubin indicated that “the guide is described as a free hand map to the conversation, pointing out the general direction but not specifying which nook and crannies will be explored” (p. 150). The intent of the interview questions in the responsive model is to evoke detail, depth, nuances, and vivid descriptions rich with thematic material.

Review of Documents and Artifacts

Parents receive a wealth of documents and artifacts from their children’s schools. Registration forms, school calendars, field trip forms, mission statements, newsletters, school correspondence, lunch forms, progress reports, and artwork are examples of the artifacts that are available. These materials were examined as evidence of the ways in which schools communicate with and involve parents. The review of the artifacts provides an additional data source to enhance the study’s validity.
Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define data analysis as “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others” (p. 157). A plethora of processes exist for accomplishing this task. Due to the descriptive nature of this study, I analyzed the data using the principles of “responsive interviewing” as described in Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

As widely recommended by qualitative researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998; 2002), I engaged in data analysis concurrently with data collection. Listening to participants’ stories allowed me to begin formulating concepts, ideas, and overall themes as they emerged. Thinking through the data in this way helped me to listen critically. I began to analyze the data with the use of commentary field notes and memos (Glesne, 1999). By embedding commentary and field notes within the transcripts of interviews and observations, I was able to begin identifying common themes and topics. Additionally, I identified and extracted meaningful comments made by interviewees to connect the attributes of English Proficiency, Cultural Orientation, and Professionalism to see if the elements of resiliency development and mitigating risk factors emerged.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. For the actual work of the analysis, I employed a data analysis software program, SPSS. This helped me code the interviews,
categorize, and sort them by attributes of English Proficiency, Cultural Orientation, and Professionalism. In addition, I recruited an independent person to help with the interview coding; a Puerto Rican male who is not familiar to the education field but is familiar to the Latino culture. This helped me gain insight as a researcher, to see if my views or perceptions are aligned to those who helped with the coding, and how different phenomenologies might be interpreted. Finally, I looked for any commonalities of themes that surfaced through and among participants.

**Validity and Reliability in Phenomenological Research**

A completely valid study, according to Wolcott (1990), is not necessarily an appropriate goal to seek. He proposes the pursuit of better understanding the described situation. My main objective, like Wolcott’s, was to immerse myself sufficiently into the situation as to “get it right”. As the researcher I am cognizant of possible biases that may arise in the analysis and interpretation of collected data. Credibility, dependability, conformability, reliability, and transferability are the criteria used to establish trustworthiness when conducting qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was verified by providing triangulation and validity checks. Merriam (1998, 2002) asks whether or not study research findings can be replicated if the same process were followed again. Confirmability was established through an audit trail including audio recording, transcripts, field notes, documents, and artifacts. Rich descriptions of the participants’ interviews provided transferability. The use of overlapping methods and triangulation enhanced the study’s validity.
Phenomenology recognizes and accepts that the perspective of the researcher will be present in the research findings (Merriam, 1998, 2002). In addition to the specifics of phenomenology, Merriam (1998, 2002) indicates that the purpose of qualitative research is not to seek to establish laws or create stable truths about human behavior, since it recognizes the human behavior and experience will change over time. Rather, it is to examine how people make meaning of their experience.

In addition, participants’ member checks were used in this study to ensure data reliability (Moustakas, 1994). At the end of data collection the researcher transcribed the audiotaped interviews. Participants were given a copy of the entire transcript of their interview and had the opportunity to clarify and provide additional information to better capture their intent of their responses. However, none of the interviewee provided additional information.

**Triangulation**

Patton’s (1990) concept of triangulation is that it should be used to add breadth and depth to the data. This study includes the notion of triangulation, which prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions, enhances the scope, density, and clarity of the constructs developed during the process of the investigation, and helps to reduce biases from the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The use of triangulation will be documented by the use of multiple data sources such as parent interviews and review of documents and artifacts as stated above.
Subjectivity Statement

My personal and professional background provides an advantage in conducting this research. Since childhood I have been friendly, communicative, expressive, amiable, considerate, trustworthy, and concerned about the well being of those around me. I was raised to be loyal to my family and my friends. In spite of moving away from my native country, Puerto Rico, I have been able to maintain close relationships with my friends, neighbors, and family. I find it easy to relate to people and to adapt to new situations. My personality made it easier to acclimate when I moved to North Carolina. It also helped me establish an extensive group of friends and support, made up of not only people from the United States and Puerto Rico but also of people from all over the world.

I have been happily married for twenty-five years and have been blessed with three wonderful and precious children. My two oldest children are in college and my youngest one is in high school. She, too, plans to attend college upon graduation from high school. As a family we have moved to various states within the U.S., meanwhile trying to foster the connection between our native Puerto Rican and American cultures. Thanks to these efforts we have been able to develop a network of friends from our native country.

I also share the same cultural background and nationality as the participants of my study. This enabled me to communicate with the participants in an environment of trust and understanding that would otherwise not be possible. Adding my personal background further enhanced the accessibility of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) in that it was easier to build rapport and trust (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) with Puerto Rican parents who are
professionals. I was born and raised in Puerto Rico and was raised with Spanish as my first language. I acquired English as my second language in adulthood. I attended the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus, and I earned a Bachelors degree in Hispanic Studies and completed the course work for a Masters in the same field. I continued my graduate studies upon moving to North Carolina. In North Carolina I earned a Master’s degree in Reading Instruction & English as a Second Language (ESL) from UNC-Greensboro. In addition, I earned a Master’s in School Administration from North Carolina State University.

As an educator, I am knowledgeable about and have an informed view about the demands, expectations, and accountability systems in place in the public school system in North Carolina, having directly experienced it both professionally and personally as a mother of children in public schools.

To all extent possible, I guarded myself from any preconceived notions and expectations. I remained open to participants’ opinions that may be different from mine. As much as possible, I looked at the participants’ responses through their eyes, rather than mine. The research methodology that I selected facilitated this process.

**Limitations of the Study**

The present study has several limitations with respect to the study sample, location, theoretical framework, and methods:

1. This study was limited to 6 Puerto Rican parents who are professionals. As such, it only examined one elite subgroup of Latino parents and the results may not be generalizable to other elite groups of minority (and non-minority) parents. This
study examined the experiences of an elite subgroup of minority parents and the results may not be generalizable to the experiences of other PR bilingual parents. In addition, this study did not include a comparison between Puerto Rican parents and another comparable group of parents. As such, generalizations cannot be made. As such, phenomenological studies are limited insofar as they seek only to accurately describe the experiences of a particular group (or subgroup). Small sample sizes are always a concern with qualitative research, but a sample of 6 people is considered appropriate in a phenomenological study.

2. This study relies heavily on self-reported parent perceptions of their experiences with their children’s school. Self-reported data can be inaccurate.

3. This study’s sample size of 6 parents may present difficulties in making significant generalizations pertaining to the findings. It is possible that the 6 PRBPP may not represent the views of all or even most PRBPP. While important, the views and perceptions of the parents in the study may not encapsulate the totality of perceptions of the entire subgroup.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural, linguistic, personal beliefs, and perceptions that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents have to support the formal education of their children. The study intended to identify customs, values, routines, expectations, time invested, perceptions, and extra-curricular activities that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents engaged in to support their children’s education. Most importantly, this study wanted to focus on successful strategies for parental involvement so that local programs and schools in the state of North Carolina might use them to improve home-school connections. These strategies could be used to enhance Latino participation in their children’s formal education, encourage other states with similar populations to involve Latino parents more effectively in schools, and motivate other Latino parents to take a more participatory role in their children’s education.

This research was designed as a qualitative study as it sought to address parents’ perceptions of their children’s school experiences. The participants were chosen by using the selection criteria previously mentioned in this study. From the selection process, six participants were identified as Puerto Rican Bilingual Professional Parents. Of the 6 parents who participated in the study, 4 were female, 2 were male, and all were Puerto Rican Bilingual Professional parents.

Originally, I planned to review documents and artifacts provided by the school system. After reviewing these documents I was able to see that they were merely
translations. Based upon the reviews of these documents there was nothing that would contribute to the data sources and analysis of this study.

This chapter includes 3 sections. The first section begins with a quote from the participant interview and a “demographic snapshot” of the participant’s responses from questions asked during the interview, including number of years living in the United States, number of children, academic attainment, and current job. This is followed by a data presentation of participants’ responses to the research questions. Additionally, evidence found within the participant interview data regarding the existence of resiliency attributes included within the theoretical framework is presented. The second section provides excerpts of participants’ interview responses, illustrating the cultural, linguistic, personal beliefs, and perceptions that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents have to support the formal education of their children. The narrative is organized by providing data relating to the guiding research questions, which are systematically addressed here and serve as a vehicle for gathering and reporting the research findings. Additionally, the narrative is structured by providing data relating to the components of the conceptual framework of resiliency building interventions communicated and provided to their children. The resiliency components include care and support and high expectations as attributes this group of parents utilize to build resiliency within their children.

The third and final section of this chapter provides data from participants’ interviews regarding the customs, values, routines, expectations, examples of disciplinary practices, time invested, perceptions, and extra-curricular activities that Puerto Rican bilingual
professional parents engaged in to support their children’s education as it relates to the research questions and existing research found in the literature review such as educational success factors, predictors of college success, and predictors of dropout decisions. This section ends with a table summary of the attributes as they relate to resiliency of each parent participant.

“To go as high as he could! Because that is the only thing that makes a person useful, productive, and independent in society.”

**Table 1: Demographic Snapshot**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Academic Attainment</th>
<th>Current Job</th>
<th>Years in the U.S.</th>
<th>Number of Children in school, University/ or graduated from College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angelita</td>
<td>Ph.D. in Chemistry</td>
<td>University Professor</td>
<td>28 Since 1981</td>
<td>1 Already graduated from graduate school from a state university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Angelita’s Summary**

Angelita came to the United States in 1981 after completing her bachelor’s degree in chemistry at the University of Puerto Rico. She moved in order to pursue a master’s degree in chemistry and to join in matrimony her fiancé. After working in the field for several years she decided to pursue a Ph.D. in chemistry. She currently works as a college professor at a state university. She has one son who has completed a law degree at a state university and works for a private firm in North Carolina. Additionally, during her spare time, she helps
raise funds for the multiple sclerosis foundation in North Carolina by running in their bicycle marathons.

**Angelita’s Voice**

When Angelita and her family moved to the U.S. and her son was in second grade he did not speak English; he only spoke Spanish. When asked about her experiences with parental involvement she shared her initial experiences when her son was assigned to a school where they:

“Assigned him to a teacher that was outstanding. She was a very old teacher, she had Latin in her studies, and she could recognize that what the kid was trying to do was phonetically putting on paper what he was listening”.

Angelita commented about her experiences with her son’s school. “We were not part of the school, but this teacher was amazing. One anecdote was that one time one of those, I mean, if maybe two months into the semester and still his papers will come with all of these red ink, because he would write things the way that would sound it to him in Spanish. And so I went, Oh my god, oh my goodness the kid is going to flunk ok, and she said, you take a pill and you chill out, this kid is doing amazing, look, and so she pointed out at the teacher perspective what were the things that he was really doing well”.

Angelita shared another anecdote with regard to her experiences with parental involvement while living in New Jersey. She accounts:

“Now, let me point out that when we were going to move to this area, this is back in New Jersey, we went to a private school were the director told us that what we had to do was
to forget Spanish during the entire month of summer. Speak to the kid in English so that he could have a background when he comes in September to the school.

I immediately say, this is not the right school for him; I have never heard that you have to take one language out to put another one in. Ok, so that’s the reason why he went to a public school. This was the place where they had the diversity, and I think that they had the know how on how to approach a kid that had the language barrier”. She also mentioned: “There were general invitations to attend, but I think that is true about everywhere. You get involved in the things that you can or want get involved and in my case actually, I couldn’t, I took a back seat there, during his high school years, because I was starting a tenure track job and I was working very, very hard you know”.

When Angelita was asked how she was involved in her son’s education, she stated:

“Like I mentioned, specially with the language, I saw that that was not part of the school system, at least not at the level that we could bring. We took an active role in that, I mean, we were the teachers until his freshman year in high school when he took AP Spanish and he passed it.”

Amgelita continues:

“We were always asking, what homework do you have? Are you going to do it? One rule that we had at home was that from Monday through Thursday, he was involved in a lot of activities, he was a swimmer, and so forth, but Monday through Thursday during elementary school he could not go out and play. There was no time to go out and play, so if
he finished homework, he was going to stay at home. He had, pretty soon they were going to realize, if I have homework, I might as well and do it.”

Angelita commented that she participated in her son’s activities while he was in elementary school. She stressed the fact that she was there all the time, that she followed the bulk of the activities. She added that although she was more involved during her son’s elementary school, when her son attended high school:

“I took a step back, I didn’t get involved in committees or you know, involved in fundraising or anything of that sort we used to do. We would attend the activities, we were not the doers in high school”.

Angelita also shared that while her son was in elementary school they had in place a weekly routine to support his studies in which he was not able to play outside his house in order to focus on his homework and so that he had an opportunity to focus on completing it correctly with no outside distractions. When asked about how she communicated her expectations to her son she stated:

“Well, it was in a daily basis, right, I mean, again, those rules that we put on the table, you know”.

For Angelita, expectations were a matter of having them communicated to her son in a consistent way and making sure that the environment was structured and conducive to learning. An example of this can be noted when she stated: “He had to do the best that he could and we knew that he could do well. So let’s say that he brought a grade that was a B, and we didn’t, and I mean that is a perfectly good grade, but if we knew that maybe he was
doing other things rather than studying or he did not put his bigger effort, we would scold him”.

She also added about her expectations that her son needed: “To go as high as he could. Because that is the only thing that would made a person a useful, productive, you know in society, independent, you know. But education you get it for yourself.”

Regarding her perceptions of her son’s public school she shared that she was pleased with it. With respect to how she felt or to what degree she felt that her son was nurtured and supported in the public schools, she stated that:

“I think that we were very fortunate, like I say, that public institution was, that teacher was amazing, and actually in December, on that first, when he was a second grader, they had to be tested for the gifted and talented, and she noticed that he was a few points below, so she requested on her own that he be re-tested in February. And he was re-tested and then he was part of that program in third grade”.

When asked about to what degree she was satisfied with the education that her son received in the public schools, she stated again:

“Actually, we were very fortunate.” She mentioned again the initial experience that they had with her son’s first teacher in second grade.
Pilar

“Yo creo que una de las cosas más importantes es el ejemplo, que ellos nos miren a nosotros, les estamos dando expectativas que nosotros mismos nos ponemos a nosotros.” “I believe that one of the most important things is the example, that they see us, we have the same expectations of them as we have for ourselves.”

Table 2: Demographic Snapshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Academic Attainment</th>
<th>Current Job</th>
<th>Years in the US</th>
<th>Number of Children in school, University/ or graduated from College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilar</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Physician Assistant</td>
<td>Since 1978</td>
<td>3 Already graduated from college with a master’s degree, 1 in middle school, and 1 a senior in college at a state university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pilar’s Summary

Pilar originally came to the United States in 1978 because her parents thought that it would be better for her education. She completed her bachelor’s degree and wanted to pursue a masters’ degree, but at that time she was already married and had other commitments. She and her husband decided to move to North Carolina since the universities offered them both opportunities which they wanted to pursued. Pilar completed a bachelor’s degree in science at the University of Dayton. Recently she completed a master’s degree in health science and is licensed as a physician’s assistant. She currently works at Duke Hospital as a physician’s assistant in the surgical department. Pilar has three children. She commented that her oldest
daughter already had completed a master’s degree and is planning to further her education by becoming a nurse. Her second daughter is a senior at a state university pursuing a bachelor’s degree in education. She also shared that her youngest son is in middle school and is already making plans for when he gets to the university. Pilar is very proud of her children’s academic accomplishments and she continues to support and encourage them to succeed in their endeavors.

**Pilar’s Voice**

Pilar talked about her experiences with parental involvement from a very distinctive way. She preferred to conduct the interview in Spanish. Occasionally, words or phrases get altered somewhat (i.e., lost in translation), so the following quotes are reported in both Spanish and English to enable readers fluent in Spanish to discern the verbatim quote. Pilar shares primarily from the experiences she has recently had at her son’s school. She stated that:

“Si, es como una invitacion abierta, no es nada directo como decir, ustedes tienen una experiencia especifica que se quisieran unir, por cita, pero la maestra no estaba presente. Con nuestro hijo, por primera vez que ahora esta en la escuela intermedia, eh.. esta en sexto grado, y por primera vez la conferencia de maestro y padre no fue una conferencia entre maestro y padre, fue una conferencia de estudiante a padre. O sea, el se sento conmigo de una hora, de un tiempo designado, por cita no, con la maestra presente, pero la maestra no estaba envuelta en la conversacion, y el me presento por asignatura, todos sus trabajos, luego de presentarme en cada asignatura yo tuve que firmar un papel, y
discutir con el, que es lo que tu crees que estas, que necesitas mas ayuda, que cosas te
sientes mas comodo haciendo, como podemos seguir adelante.

Pero fue totalmente entre el y yo la maestra no estuvo envuelta. Y al final de la
entrevista entre los dos, habia un papel que decia si luego de esta, este tiempo, si quisiera
una entrevista con la maestra, firme aqui. Que me parecio un cambio bien grande, En
parte me parece positivo porque me parece que envuelve mas directamente al estudiante.

Pero por otro lado, me parece un poco impersonal porque las maestras estan con ellos
todo el dia, que la maestra no tenga la iniciativa de buscar al padre, no se, no se si un
poco impersonal es la palabra correcta,

Tambien pienso que por el tiempo no querran envolver a estudiantes que estan
haciendo bien, y que asumen y que los padres no van a querer reunirse con los maestros
son los que tienen problemas. Pero yo creo que, en el caso del estudiante que esta
sobresaliente en la escuela esa oportunidad se debe de tomar y preguntarle a los padres
que ellos estan haciendo para que este niño sean tan, este en clases avanzadas, que su
conducta sea tan buena. O sea, me da tristeza que no buscan los recursos de los padres
que tienen niños que sobresalen en la escuela. Yo creo que eso debe ser, yo creo que eso
es un recurso que no estan explotando.”

“Is like an open invitation, it is not something direct, like saying, you have a very
specific experience, like if you wanted to join, by an appointment, but the teacher was not
present. With our son, for the first time now that he is in middle school, eh, he is in sixth
grade, and for the first time the parent teacher conference was not a parent-teacher
conference, it was a parent-student conference. I mean, he sat with me for an hour, there was a designated time, by appointment, the teacher was present, but she was not involved in the conversation. He presented all of his work by class, after showing me all of his work, I had to sign a paper, and discuss with him what was it that he thought that he needed my help with, which were the areas in which he felt more comfortable doing, and how could we could move on. But this was totally he and I. The teacher was not involved. At the end of the interview, the teacher said, sign here. I think this was a big change. In a way, I think this was positive because I think it directly involves the student. On the other side, I think it was a little bit impersonal since the teacher spent most of the time with them that the teacher does not have the initiative to look for the parent. I am not sure if a little bit impersonal is the correct word.

I also think that for the time, that they do not want to involve students who are doing well, and they assume and that the parents that would like to meet are those whose children are having problems. But I think that in the case of the student who is smart that school should take that opportunity and ask to the parents what is it that they are doing in order for their children to be… to be in advanced classes, and to know why is it that their conduct is so good. I mean, I am very sad, because they are not looking for the resources of the parents whose children are doing well at school. I believe that this should be, I believe that this is a resource that has not been used”. 
Pilar added that:

“Es que nosotros, una cosa que yo creo que es importante, a ambos nos encanta leer. Leemos todo clase de material, desde ciencia, historia, arte, y ficción, y los libros que nosotros leemos que sean apropiados para ellos, siempre los tratamos de compartir con ellos y una de las alegrías más grandes es que leemos un libro y ellos lo leen y entonces lo compartimos, o sea, yo diría, que una de las cosas es esas, enfatizarles la lectura.”

“Is that we, one thing that I believe is important, to both, we love to read. We read all type of material, from science, history, art, fiction, and books that we read that are appropriate for them. We always try to share with them and one of the greatest joy is when we read a book and they read it and then we share, I mean, one of the things is to re-enforce reading.”

Lastly, Pilar accounted about her experiences regarding parental involvement that:

“Te voy a decir sinceramente, yo no he sido ese tipo de madre que ha estado, porque no he tenido tiempo. No he sido ese tipo de madre que está con el PTA en una escuela todo el tiempo, o sea, mi participación ha sido de verdad mínima. Yo creo que la de mi esposo también. En cosas así que han requerido mi participación de actividades de concierto, o la presentación, siempre hemos ido. Como a veces tienen una presentación para los padres, siempre hemos estado ahí.

Pero en cuestión de apoyar la escuela con actividades como semanales, nunca hemos tenido el lujo de tener el presupuesto..., esa clase de tiempo para poder hacer eso. Sinceramente.”
“Sincerely, I will tell you, that I have not been the type of mother that has been... because I do not have time. I have not been the type of mother that is in the PTA at school at all times. I mean, my participation honestly has been minimal. I believe that my husband’s too. In things that they have required my participation in activities like concerns, or a presentation, we have always attended. Like there are times when they have presentations for the parents, we have always been there. But in regard to support the school in weekly activities, we have never had the luxury of having the budget, or that type of time in order to do so. Sincerely”.

Pilar communicated that one of the most important ways to setting expectations, motivations, and practice was by:

“El ejemplo, que ellos nos miren a nosotros, o sea no es que y que no les estamos dando expectativas que nosotros mismos no nos ponemos a nosotros individualmente pero personalmente”.

“Setting the example, for them to see us, in other words, is not that we are not expecting something from them that we ourselves do not expect from us individually, but personally”.

Pilar shared several anecdotes that show how she modeled her belief to her children:

“Yo creo que de perspectiva de mama, te podras identificar tambien, ha sido una lucha diferente a la de ser padre, que para nosotras especialmente como madres Latinas tenemos unas expectativas bien grandes de lo que se ser mama. Pero a veces convinir, ser profesional con ser madre, lo que se llama en el ambiente Latino ser madre es algo bien
dificil. Pero yo siempre a las nenas desde pequeña les compraba libros que fomentaban el feminismo. Por ejemplo uno de los libros que se acuerdan mas se llama The Paper Bag Princess que no es la típica princesa que está esperando por el príncipe. Al revés, la princesa en ese cuento salva al príncipe.

O sea, yo siempre como mujeres les he inculcado que ellas pueden ser todo. Y que no hay – y mi experiencia ha sido yo he estado en casa, sin trabajar fuera del hogar por un tiempo, he estado en la escuela cuando ellas eran pequeñas, he estado en la escuela cuando ya son adultas.

He trabajado en unas posiciones ejecutivas. O sea ellas siempre me han visto que he podido poner diferentes sombreros, y no necesariamente no es que sea perfecto en todos los aspectos, pero han visto que se puede hacer, y que no hay limitaciones. Yo nunca les he aceptado decir, oh, pero si hago esto no puedo hacer. Yo les digo, No, Puedes encontrar un balance si en realidad lo quieres hacer, Hay un balance, pero no hay una contestacion perfecta. Cuando ellas han traído sus inquietudes Oh lo mejor seria quedarse en casa, oh lo mejor seria.. Cada mujer es diferente, no hay una contestacion perfecta para. Esa pregunta, tu puedes ser madre, puedes ser una profesional sin abandonar una cosa ni la otra”.

“I think that from a mother’s perspective, I think you can identify too, has been one different than being a father. For us, especially like Latina mothers, have higher expectations of what it means to be a mother, what is called in the Latino environment is very difficult. But, I always bought books that promoted feminism to my girls since they were little. For
example, one of the books was named *The Paper Bag Princess*; this was not about the typical princess who was waiting for her prince.

On the contrary, the princess in this story saved the prince. In other words, as a woman I have always taught them that they can do it all. That there are not, and my experience has been that I have stayed at home and not working for a while. I have gone to school while they were little. I have been at school while they were adults. I have held executive positions. In other words, they have always seen me wearing different hats, and not necessarily all things are perfect, but they have seen that things can be done, that there are no limitations.

I have never accepted them to tell me that they cannot do it. I tell them, no, you can find a balance, that there is no a perfect answer. Whenever they bring their concerns, like saying, Oh, the best is to stay at home, or maybe it would be better if… Every woman is different, there is no a perfect answer to for that question. You can be a mother; you can be a professional without giving up one or the other”.

When talking about the perceptions of her children’s schools, Pilar commented that:

“Yo creo esta escuela es bastante buena. Nunca hemos puesto los niños en Magnet school. Porque pensamos que es importante.. ella fue a South East Raleigh High School de ciencias y matematicas. Pero tambien nosotros hemos complementado. No hemos tenido problemas, hemos sido bendecidos de verdad en ese sentido”.

“I think that this school is pretty good. We have never enrolled our children in magnet schools, because we thought it was very important.”
Referring to her oldest daughter she mentioned, “She went to South East Raleigh High School, school of science and math. We have not have any problems. We have truly been blessed in that sense”.

Pilar has mixed feelings when it comes to her perceptions about the support that her children have received at school. On one hand she feels that they have been very fortunate, but on the other, she feels that teachers have not taken advantage of parents whose children are talented. They differed with respect to new practices of sponsoring parent student conferences and failed to conference with the parents. As evident by her comments during the interview, Pilar expressed that she was satisfied with her daughter’s schools. However she expressed different views regarding her son’s school:

“Yo creo lo que acabo de decir, pero seria un cambio yo creo que muy bueno, que podria ser como un foro una vez al semestre por ejemplo de los padres, identificar que padres son de los niños que estan sobresaliendo, pero con un tono de discusion para que los padres puedan enriquecer sus experiencias de como ayudar a los niños de mejor manera.

Creo que tambien, dado el numero de niños en los salones de clases no hay suficiente actividades se enriquecimiento para cierta clase de niños. De niños que estan sobresaliendo, yo creo que son los que reciben menos, comparados con los niños que salen peor. Que siempre hay mas recursos para los niños que estan saliendo peor. Pero los niños que podrian seguir avanzando con otras atividades de enriquecimiento, yo creo que no hay suficiente en una escuela, en una escuela no X, no una escuela magnet school, pero una escuela normal, tradicional”.
“I believe in what I just mentioned, but I think that it would be a very good change, it could be like a forum once a semester for example for parents, identifying the parents of the children who are excelling in school, but with a tone of discussion so that parents can enrich their experiences of how to help the children in a better way. I also believe, given the number of children in the classrooms that there are not enough enrichment activities for certain types of children.

For children that are excelling, I think that they are the ones that receive the least amount of resources, compared to children who perform poorly, that there are always more resources for those that are performing poorly. But that children that could keep advancing with other enrichment activities, I think that there are not enough in a school, in a school not X, not a magnet school, but a normal school, traditional.”

Victoria

“So they can be a productive independent adult and happy, hopefully!”

Table 3: Demographic Snapshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Academic Attainment</th>
<th>Current Job</th>
<th>Years in the U.S.</th>
<th>Number of Children in school, University/ or graduated from College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Victoria  | Ph.D. and post doc  | Neuroscientist        | 56                | 3
|           |                     |                      |                   | One in college, majoring in psychology, 1 a senior in high school already been admitted to mechanical engineering at a state university |
Victoria’s Summary

Victoria’s parents were Puerto Rican immigrants that moved to the United States during the depression in hopes of creating a better life for their family. She was born and raised in the Bronx, New York. Her parents influenced her by immersing her in the Puerto Rican culture and traditions, raising her to speak Spanish and value her heritage. Victoria completed a bachelor’s degree in science and a doctorate and a post doc in neurobiology. She currently works as a neuroscientist at Duke University.

She has three children: her oldest son lives in New York and her daughter is majoring in psychology at a private university in New York City. Her youngest son is a high school senior and has already been admitted to pursue a mechanical engineering degree at North Carolina State University. Victoria relocated to North Carolina after being offered a position at Duke University. Additionally, Victoria teaches Puerto Rican folkloric dances, including Bomba and Plena, throughout the state and is proud of and actively promotes her Puerto Rican heritage and culture.

Victoria’s Voice

Victoria spoke about her experiences with parental involvement in a very unique manner. Initially, she geared her discussion primarily on how her children’s school communicated with her rather than how she communicated with them. This is evident in the following remarks:

“Usually they sent papers home or if you go to their meetings they have general assemblies or am… You know the…They communicate with me through e-mails or through
newsletters that the kids bring and sometimes they have recorded messages”. When asked if she had been invited to be part of different programs or committees, she commented: “They do but I usually don’t have the time”. She commented that she did not experience any difficulties in getting involved in her children’s schools but her busy work schedule often made extensive participation difficult: “Lately very little but at the beginning a lot because in the beginning they use to always have open school night. I will always do that. They will try to get us to go on trips but I could never do that. I would take time out to watch them during the performances and would talk to their teachers. Now I talk to their teachers if they are not doing well”.

After reflecting about her experiences with parental involvement at her children’s school, she added that she has been able to support her children’s education by:

“Sometimes I tutor them myself and sometimes if they need it I get private tutors. I try to attend whenever they are performing and whenever they have games. I try to be there for that. I contribute to their bake sales and things of that nature, basically in that way”.

When asked how she communicated or transmitted her expectations, motivations, and practices to her children she responded:

“I expect them to graduate from college and do the best they can in whatever they want to do. They already know that they don’t have a choice. So they can be a productive independent adults and happy hopefully.”

Victoria shared what her father used to tell her about education: “It has always being important to me because my father used to say that if I do nothing else in life that I should at
least get some kind of profession in the United States. The way it helps you in life, it will help you to take care of yourself.

You be able to buy what you need to buy. You are able to maintain a home. Education provides a better economic future; better than I have or even my grandparents had”. Victoria added that she constantly reminds her children about these words and the impact that they had in her life.

When talking about her expectations for oldest daughter, she commented:

“I expect her to graduate because that is part of the whole deal here. We are paying a lot of money. I even expect her to go into graduate school. It would be good if she gets the BA but I expect her to go to graduate school because I did.”

Lastly she added:

“I talk to them periodically and tell them this is what they should do. They do not necessarily do what am doing but whatever they do it should be what they need to do”.

Victoria’s perception of her children’s schools are best captured in the following statements:

“Here in North Carolina so far so good. I mean they have being doing a lot better or even the education system in this part of North Carolina was even better that the one I was in New York.”

When asked how different it has been, she responded:

“I think they challenge the kids a lot. At first it was a little bit overwhelming for them but they seem to be able to handle it.”
Victoria offered some clarifying remarks as to why she thought her children could handle it:

“Well, because they have to. My son is a little young for his class so he was considered behind and they always used to say that he was behind because he was young and he should be back in a grade. But whenever I used to tell him that, all of the sudden he will catch up because he never wanted to be left back because he wanted to stay with friends”.

With regard to how she felt or to what degree she felt that her son was nurtured and supported in the public schools, she re-stated that:

“At first I did not want to come to North Carolina because I thought maybe they did not have my cultural needs because I need to dance Latin music and we need to be in contact with my cultural heritage. Even though I was not born in Puerto Rico I was raised as one”.

Victoria feels that her son’s cultural needs are not being met. She thinks that school officials believe that they are supporting children by means of maintaining communication with parents. This can be observed in the following comments: “They usually sent papers home or if you go to their meetings they have general assemblies. They communicate with me through e-mails or through newsletters that the kids bring and sometimes they have recorded messages”.

She did not feel that they were offering any additional support or nurturance to her son other than the fact that they were offering information about school events, but this information was not something specific to her son’s academic achievement.

When asked about to what degree she was satisfied with the education that her children received in the public schools, she went on to state:
“Schools need to be a little more understanding about different Latin American countries. I think they group everyone together as Hispanic and there are really many differences”.

As to why she felt this was important she commented:

“Because they lump everyone together. I think it will be very important to them to know that there is difference in cultures even though they speak the same language and what might apply to one people might not apply to other.” She also commented: “I experienced a sense of alienation at the beginning. I thought I was the only Puerto Rican in North Carolina and I thought even my kids in school said there may be two more families like them (mixed Puerto Rican and blacks). There are other Hispanic groups but they seem to make their own clicks. Later on, I found out there were other people so later it has been better”.

Felicitia

“We talk a lot to them, we communicate with them. Our expectations are for them to have good grades, to work, for them to graduate, and to move on in life.”
Table 4: Demographic Snapshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Academic Attainment</th>
<th>Current Job</th>
<th>Years in the US</th>
<th>Number of Children in school, University/ or graduated from College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felicita</td>
<td>bachelors degree</td>
<td>medical technology</td>
<td>Since 2004</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>One pursuing an architecture degree at a state university, one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a sophomore in high school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Felicita’s Summary

Felicita moved to North Carolina in 2004 along with their two children following her husband who had been relocated by his company. Felicita completed a bachelor’s degree in medical technology in Puerto Rico and currently works for Duke Hospital as a medical technologist. She has two children; her oldest daughter is pursuing an architectural degree at North Carolina State University and her son is a sophomore in a Wake County high school. Felicita is an active dancer for a Puerto Rican folkloric group; she represents her country with pride and likes to share her culture with mainstream Americans.

Felicita’s Voice

Like Pilar, Felicita preferred to conduct the interview in Spanish. For the reasons stated earlier, the data is presented in a similar manner.
About Felicita’s experiences with parental involvement in her children public schools, she stated:

“Las escuelas invitan mucho a que los padres sean voluntarios en las escuelas y esten preocupados por la educacion de sus hijos. Bueno, pudes ir a las actividades del PTA y si quieres puedes ser miembro del board de los miembros y asi puedes participar activamente si estas interesado. Por la internet, cartas y comunicados casi siempre por internet.

Este rara vez, a veces para decirnos si hay actividades si, se comunican por telefono pero mas bien como una grabadora que tiene el recorder este. Es un recorder que dice va a ver estas actividades, la escuela sale temprano hoy, hoy no va haber clases”.

“Schools invite parents a lot to become school volunteers and they are concerned with the education of our children. Well, you can go to the PTA activities and if you want you can become a member and in that way you can actively participate if you are interested. By internet, letters, and we most often times communicate via email.

It is very rarely but to tell us if there are activities, yes they communicate by phone but most likely like a tape-recorder. It is a recorder that tells about the activities that will be taken place, if there is an early school dismissal, or if there is not going to be classes”.

“Si es una cita con un maestro primero tienes que enviarles un e-mail y tienes que sacar una cita. No te puedes aparerer en cualquier momento porque ellos tienen su calendario, su agenda. Sacas una cita y entonces el maestro te dice si mira ven a tal hora y entonces se comunican hablan con los padres”.
“If it is an appointment with a teacher, first you have to send them an email and you have to make an appointment. You cannot show up at any time at school because they have a calendar and their agenda. You make an appointment and then the teacher will tell you, ok, you can come at this time, and then they talk with the parents”.

“Casi siempre, pues nosotros tratamos de aconsejarlos de decirle mira si tienes problemas ven a la casa darles ayuda si necesita ayuda externa este si hay que ir a la escuela alguna actividad se va a la escuela si hay alguna reunion, open house, conocer el maestro pues participamos en todo eso.

Bueno casi siempre extracurriculares pues se puede decir deportes. Si estas en grupos de futbol o lo que sea. Ahora mi hijo tiene que practicar hasta las ocho de la noche todos los dias. Ayer llegamos a las doce de la noche por que estaba en Fayetteville jugando futbol o sea todo eso pues le quita tiempo pero tambien el equipo de futbol es bien furte proque si ellos bajan las notas pues lo sacan del equipo o sea que tienen que tener responsabilidad para estar en el equipo mas manterner notas”.

“Most of the times, because we try to counsel and tell them look if you have problems come home, help them, if they need external help, if we need to go to the school to an activity, then we go if there is a meeting, open house, meeting a teacher, so we participate in all of that. Yesterday we came home at midnight because we were in Fayetteville playing football. In other words this too takes time away, but the football team is very hard, because if they lower their grades they are kicked out from the team so they have the pressure to do well at school”.
When I asked Felicita about her expectations, motivations, and practices employed to support her children’s education she commented that she expected her children to:

“Que estudien y que trabajen y que terminen su grado universitario”.

“For them to study and work and for them to complete a university degree”.

She added: “Bueno nosotros lo que tratamos de decirle a ellos que estudien, trabajen fuerte, este traten de dar lo mejor de si, si tienen algun problema en la escuela se comuniquen con la maestra o con nosotros y tratar de ayudarlos lo mas que se pueda”.

“Well, we try to tell them to study, to work hard, to try to give the best of them. If they have a problem at school for them to communicate with the teacher or with us, and to try to help them in the best way we can”.

Felicita went on to provide some examples of how she provided additional support to her son when he needed it with schoolwork:

“For example, if the boy is having a problem in mathematics or in any other special course, we talk to the teacher and we try to make an appointment with them, and we try to
find out if they have time to offer tutoring, and if that does not work, then we look for a
private tutor to help him, but primarily, we first go to the teacher, the teacher has a period to
help the student, he first goes to her so that she knows that he is interested in making
progress”.

Regarding her expectations with regard to her childrens’ school attainment she stated:

“Esperamos que por lo menos terminen grado universitario despues de ahi en adelante
pues ellos decidiran”.

“We expect that at least they complete a university degree, after that, then they will
decide”.

When asked about her perceptions of her childrens’ schools Felicita commented:

“Que son buenas escuelas y tratan de ayudar al estudiante, este por ejemplo si el niño
no esta haciendo el trabajo que se supone que haga la maestra casi siempre se pone en
contacto con los padres o si los padres tienen una preocupacion de que el niño no esta
sacando o puede mejorar notas el padre se pone en contacto con la maestro y tratan de llevar
un plan de como el niño puede progresar en la escuela”.

“Si, para mi es positiva, si eso quieren ayudar de que el estudiante salga mejor en las
clases y siga adelante”.

“That they are good schools and they try to help the students, for example, if the child
is not doing well the school work they most often times the teacher gets in contact with the
parents, or if the parents have a concern that their child is not making good grades or they
can get better grades, the parent gets in touch with the teacher and they try to develop a plan of how the child can make progress at school”.

When asked what type of experiences she had with regard of her childrens’ schools Felicita shared:

“Yes, my experience has been positive, yes, they want to help so that the student can do better in the classes and can progress”.

Felicita went on to discuss her experiences with her oldest daughter who currently is pursuing higher education at a state university:

“Mi hija nada porque ya esta en Universidad y no hay ningun tipo de contacto con maestros. Ya ellos son jovenes adultos. Con mi hijo si, como esta en escuela superior todavia hay mas contacto con maestros y se manda e-mail de parte y parte, pero ya el esta grado superior y ya los padres tienden a dejar los niños un poco mas independientes en escuela superior que obviamente escuela elemental o intermedia. Pero si tratamos de estar pendiente a algo que el necesite. Si los maestros Mandan alguna notificacion.

“Nothing with my daughter because she is in the university and there is no type of contact with her professors. They are already young adults.”

Felicita then proceeded to comment about her son’s experience:

“With my son yes, he is still in high school and there is more contact with his teachers and they send emails, from both parts, but he is in high school and parents have a tendency to give more independence to their children in high school that in elementary and middle
school. But we do try to be aware if he needs something and if the teachers send a note to make sure to respond to them”.

When asked to what degree she was satisfied with the education that her son has received in the public schools, she commented:

“Si, para mi es positiva. Si eso quieren ayudar de que el estudiante salga mejor en las clases y siga adelante”.

“Yes, for me is positive. Yes, they want to help the student to do well in their classes and for them to make progress”.

**Ulises**

“Education, the only legacy we can give him!”

### Table 5 : Demographic Snapshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<th>Years in the U.S.</th>
<th>Number of Children in school, University/ or graduated from College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ulises</td>
<td>Engineer/ master’s degree</td>
<td>Engineer at EPA</td>
<td>33 (since 1977)</td>
<td>1 - already graduated as an attorney</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ulises’s Summary**

Ulises was one of only two men (fathers) who participated in the study. He first came to the United States in 1977 to attend a military academy. He finished a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering and later completed a master’s degree in environmental engineering. He currently works as an engineer for the Environmental Protection Agency in the RTP area. When asked what made him stay in the U.S. he stated,
“You go where the opportunities are and the opportunities were here. And I came to school pursuing a military career and this is where we are, here”. Additionally, Ulises is the proud father of a son who already completed graduate school and works for a private firm in the state. Ulises has been happily married to his wife who also has completed graduate school in the U.S. He communicated that they both share the same vision about education.

**Ulises’ Voice**

Ulises thought through his experiences about parental involvement and commented that he felt they were:

“Open activities for parents” and described teachers as “not having any initiative to recruit them into any kind of participation”.

He went on to explain that they [he and his wife] were always aware of what his son had to do for homework and for school. He also stated that they knew very well his son’s high school teachers.

Ulises considers education to be the only legacy he could leave his son. He believed that “money could be gone, property could be gone, but not education.” He also shared that he expected his son to go as far as he could get with education and that: “He always thought my goal for him to go to college all the time. Having gone to college ourselves we knew and we wanted for him to get a college degree”.

He added: “We could see, leading by example, we ourselves had advanced degrees. We ourselves were pretty much, he saw Mom studying or teaching, he saw me studying and
going for night school and doing professional development, so part of the education was he was seeing the role models in the parents to keep doing what he should do which was going to college, doing the best, and continuing on his…on a path of higher education”.

This was evident by the support Ulises provided to his son throughout his school years. Ulises made sure to provide an environment conducive to education at his home for his son by establishing daily routines and opportunities in order for him to succeed academically. An example of this support can be seeing when he talked about his son’s homework: “No rush to finish homework, spend the time to do it right, rather than rushing through”.

He went on to cite another example:

“I think he is fully bilingual and part of the success being bilingual because we identify as Spanish speaking at home and there was no intent to promote English here so that he can develop himself in both languages”. Evidently, it was very important for Ulises that his son become fully bilingual in both languages, English and Spanish.

Ulises’ perception about his son’s school is best described in his own words:

“I think we were very fortunate in elementary and in grammar school we had a very...we moved in the school was brand new, the physical plant was brand new, it was well rated in New Jersey. He went to high school in Delaware, a very well known prep school. And then we came here again we were fortunate that they were moving to a new facility and that the ratings of the standards were very very high”.
Based on Ulises’ comments regarding whether his son’s schools provided a nurturing and supported environment, it became apparent that he had mixed feelings. When talking about his son’s elementary school experience he felt that they were very fortunate as illustrated in his comments:

“I think we were very fortunate in elementary and in grammar school”. He focused his attention on the physical facilities that the school system had to offer. However, when talking about his son’s high school years, he commented that his experience was limited to attending “open activities for parents, there was no initiative to recruit us into any kind of participation.”

**Paxie**

“Well, let’s start saying that in our family we have always valued education. We both have college degrees, postgraduate degrees, and in our home there has always been an environment were education has been promoted. We discuss the latest trends in science, literature, and music. Our children have always been exposed to an open environment in all of aspects”.

**Table 6: Demographic Snapshot**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paxie</td>
<td>Ph.D. and post doc</td>
<td>Global Vice President of a biotechnology company</td>
<td>31 years - (since 1979)</td>
<td>3 1 in college, one already with a master’s degree, and 1 in middle school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paxie’s Summary

Paxie came to the United States in 1979 following his girlfriend’s footsteps in order to complete his undergraduate education. His academic attainment includes a bachelor’s degree in science, a master’s degree in organic chemistry from the University of Dayton, a doctorate in biochemistry and toxicology from North Carolina State University, and a post doc in chemical engineering from NCSU.

He is in charge of the Department of Quality Control for a large biotechnology company in the Research Triangle Park area. Paxie has three children, two girls and one boy. His oldest daughter completed a master’s degree; his second daughter will be completing her bachelor’s degree in 2010, she is majoring in elementary education and already has an ESL endorsement. His third child is eleven years old and is in the sixth grade. Paxie is an active member at his church; one of his greatest prides is his family commitment to their mission work in Honduras during the summer.

Paxie’s Voice

Like Pilar and Felicita, Paxie preferred to conduct the interview in Spanish. Paxie thought through the experiences he has had through the years with the schools of his three children about parental involvement and commented that he felt they were:

“Hemos tenido oportunidad de participar en, por ejemplo, siempre en el aspecto de ciencia hemos llevado pequeñas charlas acerca de diferentes aspectos de ciencia lo mismo mi esposa como yo. Y nos comunicamos a través de los mensajes telefónicos que son pre-grabados, pero también las maestras a veces nos mandan notificaciones escritas, Cada
semana hay un portafolio donde viene el trabajo de nuestro hijo por ejemplo, ahora mismo, y hacian tambien con las niñas, y entonces luego de revisar los trabajos y firmalos teniamos que aprobar una pagina donde decia que habiamos leido todo y que estabamos al tanto de lo que habia sido comunicado”.

“We have had the opportunity to participate in, for example, in the science aspect. We have given short talks about the different aspects of science. We communicate through telephone messages that are pre-recorded, but also the teachers sometimes send us written notices. Every week there is a portfolio where they send my son’s schoolwork, for example, like now, they did the same with our girls, and then, after reviewing his work and signing a page where we stated that we had reviewed his work and read everything and that we acknowledge everything that was communicated to us”.

Paxie clarified the differences in communication that he had while his daughters were in school by mentioning:

“Cabe mencionar una diferencia entre ese tipo de comunicacion con nuestras hijas y ahora en nuestro hijo, por el tiempo, es que, hay mucha mas comunicacion por los medios electronicos, de lo electronico a la pagina web de al escuela.

Yo noto que esta creciendo nucho mas en importancia este tipo de comunicacion y obviamente para los muchachos en como se estan educando en termino de las tareas, terminos del dia a dia, eso esta influyendo mucho”.
“It is worth mentioning a difference between that type of communication of our daughters and now our son, due to time, is that, there is much more communication through the electronic media, or the electronic, or the school web page.

I note that it is increasing that type of communication and obviously for the youth in the way they are being educated regarding their homework, about the day by day, that it is influencing a lot”.

Paxie shared that he and his wife supported his children’s education by providing additional opportunities for learning, as indicated in the following comment:

“Hemos complementado, de lo que estan expuestos, de los programas, hemos comprado muchos programas de computadora, para suplementar lo que estan aprendiendo o enfatizarlo. Pero en si yo, los maestros que yo he tenido, estado en contacto, no puedo decir que tengo”.

“We have complemented the things they have been exposed to, from the programs, we have purchased a lot of software programs to supplement or emphasize what they have been learning. But in reality I, the teachers which I have been in contact, I cannot say I had a communication”.

When asked how he communicated his expectations, motivations, and practices to support his children’s education he responded in English and commented:

“Well, let’s start saying that in our family we have always valued education, we both have college degrees, postgraduate degrees, and in our home there has always been an environment were education has been promoted. We discuss the latest trends in science,
literature, and music. Our children have always been exposed to an open environment and passive in all aspects. We have explored; we have always allowed our children to explore different conflicts as an open forum, obviously, provided clarity to our principles and as how we understand the world and the universe, what really matters. Our children know that they can ask questions that no question is going to be received with any prejudice, or that is not going to be an open discussion.”

Paxie added in English other ways in which he had invested time and effort to help support his children’s education:

“They have required, they have always invested an effort to get to places where… I mean, for their grades that they have received in order to achieve academically, they have had motivation, and the motivation, I think, like I mentioned before, they have been exposed to some expectations and without having to state them implicitly, simply by observing our attitude, our thought and our position regarding the importance about certain things, they, by themselves, had adopted them, the importance of certain things, like, like, being exposed to knowledge, reading, the value for music, the value for art, have been things I have seen they have seen and acquired bases in the importance that we have placed on it”.

Paxie expressed his desire and views for his children to be able to select the career of their preference:

“No se, pero lo mismo, mi deseo para ellos es que continuamente, cualquier carrera que ellos inviertan sus , sus vidas, mantengan un foco que sea siempre fuera de ellos, y que puedan utilizar todos los talentos que han tenido para hacer una diferencia donde puedan
hacer un cambio fundamental en su, en las vidas de, de otros, en la sociedad, en su país, en traer, que sus vidas hagan una marca para el bien”.

“I do not know, but the same, my desire for them is continuous, any career that they will invest their lives, maintain a focus that would be aside from them, and that they could used these talents that they had to make a difference where they can make a fundamental change in their lives, and others, in society, in their country, in bringing, that their lives make a mark for the good”.

Paxie talked about how important it is for him that his children choose a field of study that would make them happy. He provided some insights to it:

“Yo puedo hablar por mi parte, pues para mi no le tengo mucho enfasis en tratar en que mis hijos hagan bien en un campo que sea mi preferencia, o que me gustaria que fuese en una direccion u otra, pero si me ha interesado que en cualquier campo donde ellos han decidido y que les atrae y que les agrada, que lo hagan en una forma, con cierto nivel de ambicion, que utilizen todas las capacidades que ellos tienen”.

“I can speak for myself. I do not place much emphasis in trying to get my children to do well in a field of my choice or would like for them to go in one direction or the other, but what interests me is that they do well in any field of their choice, of a field that appeals to them, that they do it with a level of ambition, and that they use all of the abilities that they possess”.

Paxie went on to praise and recognize his childrens’ intellectual abilities: “Que no se lleguen un momento de no seguir adelante, creyendo que algo esta fuera de su alcanze, lo
quiero decir es que, tratar siempre de estimularlos a que lleguen a utilizar el máximo de sus capacidades. Que no se rindan, a un nivel menos del que tienen capacidad para alcanzar. Que a veces aun ni ellos mismos no reconocen la capacidades que ellos pueden llegar, simplemente buscan lo que es alcanzable y nosotros yo creo que hemos enfatizado que no pueden tener esas trabas, limitaciones, autolimitaciones”.

“That they don’t reach a moment of standstill, believing that something is out of their reach, what I mean is, to always try to motivate them to use their capacities to the maximum. That they do not give up, at a level lower than that which they are capable of achieving. That sometimes they themselves cannot recognize the capabilities they can reach, they simply look for what is attainable and we have, I believe, emphasized that they cannot have those obstacles, limitations, self limitations”.

Paxie talked about the importance of him recognizing his childrens’ accomplishments: “La importancia que yo considero como padre al ver eso, nosotros vamos luego y enfatizamos ese comportamiento es digno de alabanza, ese comportamiento es correcto. Nosotros lo enfatizamos no solamente lo observamos. La diferencia es que si no se promueve los ciertos, los comportamientos que nosotros queremos promover, entonces va a ser distintos. Otros padres, no digo que sean malos, es cuestion de enfasis y de perspectivas. Otros padres pueden decir tienes que estar pendiente de tu equipo, y tu equipo es lo principal, recogiendo a este, invirtiendo tu tiempo recogiendo a ese muchacho estas dejando a tu equipo perder.”
He went on to clarify his perspective: “No estoy diciendo que una perspectiva sea mala u otra buena, pero obviamente, como padre enfatizamos, pues obviamente eso es con lo que el va a crecer con el en la vida. Y eso tiene un aspecto bueno y malo, enfatizar esa característica quiere decir que tal vez se abra a que en el futuro las decisiones que el tome lo pongan en una posición que alguien hasta pueda tomar ventaja de él. Yo pienso que en el balance de las cosas, ese es un precio que vale la pena pagar. Enfatizar un carácter de integridad y de misericordia y de caridad

Ellos saben esas historias y las hemos relatado las hemos contado, hemos bromeado de las cosas que han ocurrido otra vez. Pero ellos han visto que nosotros las decisiones que tomamos le poníamos valor a ciertas cosas. Para mí el verlo eso en nuestras vidas tiene mucho más impacto que cualquier cosa que nosotros podamos estar predicandole a ellas a cerca de lo que es bueno de lo que es malo”.

“The importance I consider as a parent is once you see this, we go after the fact and emphasize that behavior is worthy of praise, that behavior is correct. We emphasize it, not only observe it. The difference is that if you do not promote the certain behavior, the behavior that we want to promote, then will be different. Other parents, I’m not saying they are bad, it’s a matter of emphasis and perspective. Other parents can say you have to be attentive to your team, your team is the most important, picking up this one, investing your time picking up this kid and you’re neglecting your team.

I’m not saying that one perspective is bad and one is good, but obviously, as parents we emphasize, obviously that is what he is going to grow up with in life. And that has a
good aspect and bad, emphasizing that characteristic perhaps means that they are opened up for someone to take advantage of them in future decisions. I think that in the balance of things, this is a price that is worth paying. Emphasizing a character of integrity, and of mercy and of charity.

They know those stories, and we have related them and told them, and we have joked about the things that happened again. But they have seen that in the decisions that we have made we have put value on certain things. For me seeing it in our lives has much more impact than anything else that we could be preaching to them about what is good and what is bad.”

Paxie continued recognizing how fortunate he has been with his children by sharing:

“Con todo lo que han dicho, la experiencia de nosotros ha sido muy buena. Tal vez sea que hemos sido bendecidos con muchachos que tienen un gran grado de motivacion interna y que entonces han apropiado de su educacion y han tomado ventaja de las oportunidades. A lo mejor hubiera sido distinto si hubieran necesitado mas ayuda, atencion. Pero, en verdad nosotros, en terminos de enseñanza, lo que se les estaba enseñando el material, lo que yo he visto en terminos de contenido ha sido siempre bastante impresionante”.

“With all that have been said, our experience has been a very good one. Maybe, we have been blessed with children that have an internal motivation.”

He goes on to account: “Hemos tenido oportunidad de participar en, por ejemplo, siempre en el aspecto de ciencia hemos llevado pequenas charlas acerca de diferentes
aspectos de ciencia lo mismo mi esposa como yo. Y nos comunicamos a través de los mensajes telefónicos que son pre-grabados, pero también las maestras a veces nos mandan notificaciones escritas.”

“We have had the opportunity to participate in, for example, always in the science aspect we have offered small talks about the different science aspects. We communicate through telephone messages that are pre-recorded, but also the teachers sometimes send us some written notifications. Every week there is a portfolio that includes our son’s work.”

When talking about whether he felt his children were nurtured and supported at school he commented:

“Bueno, en el pasado digo yo, hemos tenido muchas invitaciones para participar en el PTA, Parent Teacher’s Association. Es general, son oportunidades generales para uno los padres de los estudiantes. Y la escuela, eso es lo que nosotros hemos encontrado, y entonces obviamente, han habido, no tan frecuentemente, pero en ocasiones específicas han habido citas para reunirse con los maestros para ver el progreso de los niños.

“Well, in the past I said, we have received a lot of invitations to participate in the PTA, Parent’s Teacher’s Association. In general, they are general opportunities for us, the student’s parents, and the school, that is what we have found, and then obviously, there has been, not so frequently, but in some specific occasions there had been appointments to meet with the teachers in order to see the children’s progress”.

Paxie expressed his view regarding the satisfaction with the education his children are receiving in the public school:
“No, in some instances it has been an artificial barrier. With everything that they have said, our experience has been very good. Maybe, it is because we have been blessed with children that have a level of internal motivation and that they have taken ownership of their education and have taken advantage of their opportunities. Maybe it would it been different if that have needed more help and attention. But, really, we, in terms of instruction, what was being taught, the material, in terms of content it has been very impressive”.

Having presented the relevant data from the interviews, I now explicitly connect the responses to the research questions. The findings are reported in connection to the questions guiding this study. The following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the experiences of Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents with parental involvement who have children in public schools?

2. What are their expectations, motivations, and practices employed to support their children’s education?

3. What are their perceptions of their children’s public school?
In addition, the following two sub-questions were explored:

4. How or to what degree do Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents feel that their children are nurtured and supported in the public schools?

5. To what degree are Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents satisfied with the education their children are receiving in the public schools?

**Summary of Participants’ Results**

Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents’ (PRBPP) experiences with parental involvement in their children’s public schools overall were positive. All participants stressed the importance of the role of education in their personal lives and in the expectations they hold for their children. When describing their individual experiences with parental involvement all participants shared several points. They all had limited experiences in schools in terms of what the schools requested. They all attended parent teacher conferences when they were scheduled and offered support with homework and any additional resources their children might need. They also all made the observation that they were much more actively involved in their children’s schooling while their children were in elementary school than in middle school or in high school.

As their children grew up and entered middle and high school they took a “back seat”, and would only go to activities for which they were directly invited to attend. As their children grew up their involvement became increasingly focused on providing support at home. Another point they all shared is that none participated in the PTA, and that school communications were primarily very general statements that generally had little to do with
their children’s specific academic achievements. The communications were primarily about
general information about the school and the school system.

The expectations, motivations, and practices employed by PRBPP to support their
children’s education also were consistent among all participants. They had the same
expectations of their children that their parents had for them while they were growing up.
They came from homes where education was highly regarded and they continued to hold the
same values. They expected their children to “go as far as they can” meaning that not only
were they expected to graduate from high school, but to also pursue post secondary education
and even possibly graduate or professional school. Participants considered education to be
the key to success in their lives, and thus the key to their children’s future. This philosophy
and value system motivated PRBPPs to continue the legacy of education through their
children. There were a variety of practices employed by PRBPPs in the study, but the most
consistent ones were: providing a positive and consistent environment that was conductive to
education at home, providing additional resources, extracurricular activities, positive role
modeling, and exposing them to diverse backgrounds and cultures.

The perceptions PRBPPs held of their children’s public schools were overall
somewhat less positive. Some perceived that school and teachers’ efforts were geared
towards focusing on students who were not academically successful, and that because of this
they were unable to maximize the potential of those students who were academically
successful. They considered this to be very regrettable and unfortunate.
PRBPPs considered that their children were supported and nurtured in schools, but only to a certain degree. They felt that their children were more nurtured while in elementary school and supported during middle and high school. This may be true for all students, not just for children of PRBPPs.

PRBPPs were generally satisfied with the education their children received in the public schools. None stated that they were unsatisfied. They did believe that the schools had room to improve, but that is why they provided enhancements to their children’s educations to compliment what they were receiving in school. The suggestions that parents offered will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Now that I answered the study’s research questions, I want to explore another dimension that was proposed as part of my study, the possible application of resiliency theory to explain respondents’ answers.

I chose resiliency as the conceptual framework for this research study because it offered a more positive perspective on what parents did to promote desirable skills and behaviors in their children’s education, rather than the more commonly used deficit models used to explain minority experiences in public schools. This conceptual framework may be useful as an explanation for the phenomenon I studied.

For this study, I chose three components from the Henderson and Milstein wheel for building resiliency in the environment to include in the theoretical framework: (a) providing care and support and (b) setting and communicating high expectations, (c) teaching life
While each Puerto Rican Bilingual Professional Parent experience was unique, five overarching themes related to resiliency attributes emerged from the interview responses: (a) Setting and communicating high expectations; (b) Providing care and support; (c) Life skills; (d) Mitigating Risk Factors and Pro-Social Bonding; (e) Meaningful Participation; and (f) Setting Boundaries. Three of the attributes appeared to emerge as
most relevant to PRBPP: High Expectations, Caring and Support, and Teaching Life Skills.

The following data provides a tabular representation or accounting of the occurrences of this resiliency attributes by frequency as mentioned participants in the study.

**Table 7 : Demographic Snapshot**

**Resiliency Attributes Occurrences Frequency**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angelita</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>H.E.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>C&amp;S</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>L.SK.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicita</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Pro. Soc. Bond.</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ulises</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Meaning. Part.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paxie</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Sett. Bound.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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This resiliency occurrences shown above could possible be explained by the roles that males and female place in the Latino culture. Samovar and Porter (1997) claim that the gender orientation of a culture can have a major impact on many aspects of nonverbal behavior within the culture, such as occupational status, nonverbal aspects of power, the ability to interact with strangers, and the interpersonal relationships between men and women. Overall, this dimension refers to the expected gender roles in a culture and these expectations play a major role in experiences in schooling. The male and female expectations and roles within the Latino culture are both clear and specific, there is a tendency for females to be more involved with matters of the home and the caring of the children while there is a tendency for males to be the providers and figure of power.

Such behaviors can be observed in participants responses, as illustrated by Paxie, one of the participants: “Our children know that they can ask questions, that no question is going to be received with any prejudice, or that is not going to be an open discussion”.

“They have required, they have always invested an effort to get to places where… I mean, for their grades that they have received in order to achieve academically, they have had motivation, and the motivation, I think, like I mentioned before, they have been exposed to some expectations and without having to state them implicitly, simply by observing our attitude, our thought and our position regarding the importance about certain things, they, by themselves, had adopted them, the importance of certain things, like, like, being exposed to knowledge, reading, the value for music, the value for art, have been things I have seen they have seen and acquired bases in the importance that we have placed on it.”
As stated by Ulises: “We were always aware of what he had to do. There was no time out. No rush to finish homework, spend the time to do it right, rather than rushing through. We always thought our goal for him to go to college all the time. Having gone to college ourselves we knew and we wanted for him to get a college degree.”

Or as stated by Victoria: “I expect them to do their work and I expect then to try hard”.

In a similar vein, Pilar stated: “Setting the example, for them to see us, in other words, is not that we are not expecting something from them that we ourselves do not expect from us individually, but personally”.

In addition to High Expectations, Caring and Support attributes, Teaching Life Skills also seemed to play a significant role in the academic success of participant children. This could be observed through the various examples in the interviews. Parents tried to teach self-discipline, responsibility, manners, consideration, and professional skills to their children with the belief that this would complement their academics. Parent wanted to impart these skills on their children not only to ensure their children’s academic success, but also for their future professional and personal success. An example of this was evident by the support Ulises provided to his son throughout his school years. Ulises made sure to provide an environment conducive to education at his home for his son by establishing daily routines and opportunities to instill self-discipline to his son.

As previously stated, the purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the cultural, linguistic, personal beliefs, and perceptions that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents have to support the formal education of their children.
The data was examined through the lenses of resiliency theory and resiliency theory was used as an instrument to organized the data collected. Resilience is a construct that describes the ability to avoid negative pitfall, “bounce back,” although one is exposed to high levels of adversity. The resiliency conceptual framework in this study focused on three intervention strategies for building resiliency in the environment based on Henderson and Milstein’s (2003) intervention wheel: providing care and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and teaching life skills.

Based on evidence found within PRBPP interviews, their cultural, linguistic, personal beliefs and perceptions were impacted by resiliency. The next chapter will further explore these themes and the relationship of the PRBPP perceptions regarding their children’s school and academic success.

**Summary of Chapter**

In chapter four, I presented the textual descriptions of six participants in the study, followed by a quote from the participant interview and a “demographic snapshot” of each participant in the study. This was followed by direct quotations from participants’ responses to the research questions. Additionally, evidence found within the participants’ interview data regarding the existence of resiliency attributes included within the theoretical framework was discussed. In chapter five, I will relate these findings to existing research, discuss implications for practice, and offer recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 5
Summary and Discussion

The final chapter of this dissertation discusses the findings of the study and places them within extent research on the topic. The first section of the chapter contains a review of the study, including a review of the methodology used in the study. The second section relates the study’s findings to the literature review. The third and fourth sections include the implications for practice and recommendations for further research. The fifth and final section includes lessons learned and conclusions.

Review of the Study

As previously stated, the purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the cultural, linguistic, personal beliefs, and perceptions that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents have to support the formal education of their children. The study intended to identify customs, values, routines, expectations, time invested, perceptions, and extra-curricular activities that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents engaged in to support their children’s education. Most importantly, this study wanted to focus on successful strategies for parental involvement so that local programs and schools in the state of North Carolina might use them. These strategies could be used to enhance Latino participation in their children’s formal education, encourage other states with similar populations to involve Latino parents more effectively in schools, and motivate other Latino parents to take a more participatory role in their children’s education. In addition, this study sought to provide
schools and communities with a different viewpoint on the perceptions and experiences with parental involvement of PRBPPs with children in public schools.

This study was designed as a qualitative phenomenological study using the principles of “responsive interviewing” as described in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The study explored the expectations, motivations, and practices to support their children’s education and their perceptions of their children’s school of six Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents. The participants were interviewed about their perceptions, motivations, and experiences with their children’s school system. Parent interview questions were derived from strategies derived from Henderson and Milstein’s (2003) resiliency wheel.

**Discussion of Findings and Relationship to Previous Research**

Parents are their children’s first teachers; however, research shows that Latino parents are perceived by American educators as not having the interest or desire to participate in their children’s education and as not having the ability to teach their children because they are often unable to speak English. Montemayor (1997) indicates that this dilemma, called the “deficit” model, often times limits the ability of parents and teachers to develop collaborative relationships with schools and homes. The notion is that there must be something wrong with the parents and that parents must fit the school’s framework of parental involvement.

This notion was also identified by research by Bermúdez and Marquez (1996) who found that teachers believed several factors were barriers to effectively communicating with
language minority parents such as Latino parents: negative attitudes toward parents, unfamiliar cultures, language barriers, lack of training in working with parents, and lack of administrative support. In the end, the major barrier to all aspects of effective parental involvement between teachers and culturally diverse families is the lack of formal training and staff development in working with these parents.

However, aside from this notion, some researchers like DeBord (2003) present an alternate view of parental involvement: “Parent Involvement is a combination of being an advocate for one’s child while knowing his or her needs at home and at school. Being involved is more than cutting stencils for the teacher or going to parent-teacher conferences” (p. 2).

In this study, Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents who were interviewed for this study viewed their role in parental involvement as one of being aware of their children’s needs, providing the necessary support to the specific needs of their children, and providing an environment that was conducive to learning. They did not believe that attending school meetings to discuss generic issues that were not relevant to their child was going to contribute in any way to the academic achievement of their children.

The second question examined in this study sought to discover PRBPP’s expectations, motivations, and practices employed to support their children’s education. Brown (1994) defined culture as deriving from a given group of people based on their ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools. A culture gives each individual a plan for personal and social existence. Samovar and Porter (1997) claimed that the gender orientation of a culture could
have a major impact on many aspects of nonverbal behavior within the culture, such as occupational status, nonverbal aspects of power, the ability to interact with strangers, and the interpersonal relationships between men and women. Overall, this dimension refers to the expected gender roles in a culture and these expectations play a major role in experiences in schooling.

Male and female expectations and roles within Latino culture are both clear and specific. The overall impact that parents have on their children’s school success may be different for sons and daughters, such as aspects of the cultural values of Latino families may result in parents’ gender-specific attitudes and behaviors towards their offspring (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999). For example, Latino males are generally afforded greater freedom to come and go as they please (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999). However, females are often required to return home after school to help with siblings and/or housework that, in turn, provide females with less time to study (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999).

However, despite wanting their children to embrace elements of Latino culture and heritage, Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents interviewed in this study seem to hold both males and females to the same high standards. They made no distinctions due to their gender. Their attitudes and behaviors towards their offspring were the same; they held them to the same high expectations with regard to their education. As a matter of fact, female participants in this study did not want their daughters to feel that they could not do as well as their male counterparts. They cited their own example as a motivational factor to show to their daughters that they too could and would be successful. They believed in finding a
balance in life; they believed that a woman could wear several hats at the same time, such as a wife, mother, student, and professional. These same standards and expectations were applied to their male children. They did not exhibit any preference towards their children in any way or shape. This may be a cultural or most likely a socioeconomic class difference between this elite minority group and other Latino groups. However, often the dominant White school staff, both teachers and school leaders, lumps together all Latino students, missing some important and significant differences among these groups.

Another aspect to this theme is that of the practices that PRBPPs employed to support their children’s education. A study conducted by Lopez and Vazquez (2005) explored alternate conceptualizations of involvement while simultaneously interrogating how the concept of “involvement,” as it is traditionally defined, limits the recognition of these invisible practices. Preliminary results from their study suggested that Latina/o immigrant parents do get “involved” in traditional ways; however, they perceived routine forms of involvement as being somewhat dispensable and non-obligatory. The study found that Latina/o newcomer parents relied on a vast array of home-based practices, including the use of consejos (advises), dichos (proverbs), and other narrative accounts to communicate the importance of schooling to their children. Their findings are consistent with the findings of this study. Not only did women in this study offer advice and used highly consistent narrative stories as a way to support and motivate their children, but males participants relied on this practice as a major strategy to motivate their children. They believed this to be an invaluable aid, since it presented them with an avenue to transmit their views and family values to their
children, and at the same time provide them with a forum to keep open the lines of communication with their children and a way to strengthen their family ties.

The third question explored in this study sought to discover PRBPP’s perceptions of their children’s public school. Of importance to this study is Lopez and Vazquez’s (2005) research which set out to uncover how parents perceived schools as well as how they perceived their own role in their children’s educational lives in order to better understand the complex ways in which their involvement unfolded. Lopez and Vazquez (2005) argued that by highlighting multiple types of involvement, particularly involvement practices in households that stand outside traditional or discursive understandings, they hoped to challenge a monocular understanding of “parent involvement” while simultaneously critiquing the deficit paradigm which suggests marginalized families are not involved in the educational lives of their children.

In regard to the present study, it was evident that although PRBPP’s may have not be involved in traditionally-sanctioned ways in their children’s school, they were involved in the lives of their children and had a vested interest in seeing them succeed academically. They provided resources and support, both academic and non-academic (social), but did not feel the need to show up at every event.

These parents also had an expectation for their children to be able to pursue higher education. PRBPP’s did not believe that their children’s school held the same expectations for their children. They attributed this to the lack of diversity and limited understanding of their culture. As noted above, with some school personnel who may be unfamiliar with the
complex variety of Latino cultural groups, there is a tendency lump all Spanish-speaking or bilingual students together and rely on inappropriate stereotypes of behavior and student performance, which may lead to lower expectations for such students.

This view is consistent with Valdés (1996) study, which indicated that traditional parent involvement programs did not take into consideration the cultures and values of families. Furthermore, her study concluded that the families she studied did not have a clear understanding of their roles in their children’s education in American schools.

Another study by Sosa (1997) cited three outstanding barriers to this involvement: longitudinal, attitudinal, and expectation. Longitudinal barriers to Latino parent involvement included time, money, childcare concerns, safety, and separation of programs. This study claimed that many Latino families worked and, in some instances, worked far from school. While working long hours, parents tried to provide the basic needs for their families. In some instances, parents felt that their children’s school activities interfered with their lives. In the present study, while PRBPP’s were extremely busy working professionals, they possessed the fiscal resources, knowledge, and willingness to help their children to a greater degree (and consequently faced less significant barriers) than do many other Latino parents.

Contrary to research by Valdés (1996), PRBPP’s did possess a clear understanding of their roles in their children’s education in American schools. This is evident by the type of support and resources that they provided to their children. PRBPPs cited personal reasons for not being able to be physically engaged at their children’s schools. Most of the reasons cited were related to the lack of time due to their work/school and personal commitments.
They never felt nor believed that their children’s school activities interfered with their lives. On the contrary, they all indicated that they would attend to all of the activities to which they were invited. In most instances they attributed the lack of active participation to the pre-conceived and condescending notions that school officials held about Latino parents which in some instances alienated them from mainstream parents.

The fourth and fifth questions sought to explore how or to what degree Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents feel that their children are nurtured and supported in the public schools, and to what degree Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents are satisfied with the education their children are receiving in the public schools. Several studies relate to these two themes. Sosa (1997) cited attitudinal barriers, uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and communication problems as the main root for parent’s dissatisfaction with the education that their children receive in the public schools. However, all of the interviewees in this study stated that they were not dissatisfied with the education that their children were receiving in the public schools but that they saw potential avenues for improvement. One example of this was a recommendation made by one of the participants which suggested schools take advantage of the parents whose children are doing well at school and for school officials to develop programs so that other parents could benefit from the strategies they used to support their children’s education.

Navarrete (1996) points out that Latino parents know the importance of homework but not the academic importance of everyday activities, such as reading and writing for fun. Azmitia, et. al. (1994) note that 25 percent of parents indicated that they were unable to help
their children with homework because of their limitations in the English language and limited schooling.

Again, contrary to what these researchers found, Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents do know the importance of everyday activities such as the ones listed above. As a matter of fact, most of these parents actively practice and re-enforce these strategies at home with their children. They read with them and for them, not only in English but also in Spanish, which is their native language, in an effort to promote their language and cultural heritage with their children, practices that they indicated were discouraged and not valued from various teachers in their children’s schools.

**Implications for Practice**

While this study involved six Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents, the following section includes implications for practice that school personnel, including principals and teachers, can adopt with regard to Latino parental involvement to better support the academic achievement of students from this elite minority group.

1. Local, state, and national school leaders should adopt practices and behavioral models that take into account the successful practices that Latino parents use to support their children’s education. They should provide opportunities for Latino parents to contribute to the majority culture by applying their cultural background and knowledge in specific situations in schools.

2. School systems should focus on various strategies to help facilitate the development of positive Latino parental involvement: Providing staff
development, offering administrative staff support, providing motivational role
models and mentors for all Latino students and for educators to actively include
Latino parents in the educational discourse, particularly with regard to those
Latino parents whose children are experiencing success academically.
Additionally, School leaders need to provide teachers with professional
development to combat existing negative stereotypes and myths about Latino
families in the United States. In particular, teachers need to be made more aware
of the often-significant differences within Latino cultural groups and how these
differences manifest themselves in how Latino students, parents, and families
interact with the school system.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The examination of the cultural, linguistic, personal beliefs, and perceptions that
Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents have to support the formal education of their
children was the focus of this investigation. While this study only represents a very small
portion of the educational experiences of Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents, it is the
hope of the researcher that it contributes to the literature concerning the impact of parental
involvement on Latino students’ academic achievement and motivation for educational
success.
The following two recommendations are proposed by this researcher for further study:

1. A study involving student perception of the expectations from parents, schools, and peers would be a valuable companion study the one conducted here. It would shine a light in to the factors that most influence the behavior of successful students. A study including these perceptions of the expectations of the participants’ children could expand the understanding and impact of the identified customs, values, routines, expectations, time invested, perceptions and extra-curricular activities that Puerto Rican bilingual professional parents engaged in to support their children’s education, and what role their parents played in companionship with all of the other influencing factors to their success. This may help provide more insight into student perceptions of the impact of their parent’s influence on their school experiences, life skills, and academic achievement. This study is significant because it will be able to identify the perceived role parenting plays in the academic success of their children.

2. A replication of this investigation to other Latino parent groups, including other elite groups as well as non-elite or less advantaged groups, would provide a springboard to a broader understanding of the impact of Latino parents on their children’s academic achievement. The expectations and experiences of other elite Latino groups in public schools would make for a useful comparison to assess
whether differences among groups have any significant impact on differences in expectations and experiences with schooling in the U.S.

Lessons Learned and Conclusion

The process of completing my doctoral program has taken the work, dedication and sacrifice of many years. As I approach the culmination of my doctoral dissertation, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect upon two lessons that intrigue me. The first of these is the difference in the quality of responses of interviews. The second is the disparity between the number of doctoral students and the actual completion rate.

In my study I solicited the participation of six Puerto Rican Bilingual Professional Parents, four of which were women and two were men. They were all happy to participate in the study. All of the participants were asked the same questions and one of the things I observed was that within the six participants, three of them preferred to answer in English even though their native language was Spanish. This was simply their personal preference and not a requirement I imposed. What intrigued me in particular was that two of the participants that preferred to answer in Spanish speak English to their children. This caught my attention and surprised me. The tendency to speak English with their children was especially marked with their youngest children. I have observed a similar, though not identical, trend in my own household. When I asked them about it, the response was that when they initially came to this country they went through a process of acculturation, and that it was not about negating their culture. All of their children speak Spanish, but they communicate in English with one another. They described how in the first years of living in
the U.S. mainland they spoke Spanish all of the time while at home, but that through the years it was replaced by English.

Surprisingly, this made me reflect on the type of communication I have with my own children. I speak Spanish at my home at all times and I have purposely and consciously taught Spanish to my children in an effort to promote our native language and culture. In spite of this, I still am able to recognize a similarity between the manner in which my participants communicate with their children and the way I do with mine. I have three children ages twenty-four, twenty-one, and eighteen. Although I always speak Spanish while at home, my children display different levels of fluency with the language. My eldest daughter is most fluent in both oral and written aspects of the language, followed by my son, the middle child who is fluent in the oral aspect of the language, but not as fluent in the written. My youngest daughter, however, can understand when she is spoken to in Spanish, but struggles with response. Oftentimes, I will speak to her in Spanish and she will respond in English. In addition, she is the one who most struggles with the written language. While speaking to my participants I could relate to this aspect of their child raising experience.

Another aspect of the differences in interview responses was the length of the responses. There were three participants that provided clear and straightforward answers, but did not elaborate on these even with additional prompting questions. This was in marked contrast with the other three participants’ responses, which were extremely elaborate and provided multiple life experience examples to support their responses to the questions. Responses appeared to be associated with the personality and natural preferences of
respondent. Short, direct responses were provided by those with science and engineering professions. These individuals exhibit characteristics consistent with introversion, such as reserved, quiet and thoughtful. In contrast, those participants that provided more elaborated responses, tended to be employed in education and health fields. These individuals used expressive language, freely displayed non-verbal expressive queues and were warm, social responsive personalities. Second, something that I have observed with my former doctoral classmates is that all of them have consistently completed their program coursework, but a high percentage of them do not go on to complete their doctoral program. I have had the opportunity to speak with several of my classmates that are in this situation; they cited the dissertation process as the main reason for non-completion of their doctoral program. They all have the desire to complete the program, however, finding the time, resources, and support becomes an insurmountable challenge. This has caused me to reflect on what has driven me to complete my doctoral program. My motivation to complete my doctorate is rooted in personal reasons as opposed to professional ones. The challenges of language and culture have served as motivation for me as obstacles to overcome and rise above. At one point in my life I held the belief that someone of my background, in other words someone whose first language is not English and is from a different culture, would not be capable of completing the ultimate degree of a doctorate. This was something that “other” people did, but not me. Adding to this preconceived belief was a professor in the doctoral program that directly stated to me that I would not be able to complete the program due to my language limitations. Evidently neither of us was correct in our assumptions. My desire, passion, and
resilience have driven my success in completing my doctoral program. I arrive at this defining moment of my life feeling as if I have finally arrived to the place I was meant to reach. This is what I was always meant to do personally and academically. I learned that I have to listen to my inner voice and not to anyone else’s preconceived notions or ideas. This doctorate was not to prove anything to anyone else; it served as a personal quest. To know that I can, and that I did.
REFERENCES


Extrinsic Motivation. http://giftedkids.about.com/od/glossary/g/extrinsic.htm


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Parent Interview Guide

1. How many children do you have?
2. Are they enrolled in public schools in the U.S.?
3. What are your practices, beliefs, and attitudes regarding education?
4. What is your educational attainment?
5. What do you do for living?
6. Why did you move from Puerto Rico to the U.S.A.? How does your children’s school communicate with you? How are you invited to participate?
7. Are there any changes that you would like to see happen in your children’s school?
8. What are your expectations for your children?
9. What are your internal motivations and educational expectations of your children?
10. How are you involved in your children’s education?
11. What is your perception of your children’s public school?
12. How are you setting and communicating expectations to your children?
13. How long have you been in the U.S.A.?
14. What have been the main challenges faced by you and your children since living in the U.S.A.?
15. In which ways have you participated in school activities?
16. Have you experienced any difficulties being involved in your children’s school?
17. How much involvement do you have with your son/daughter’s school and teacher?
18. What makes you stay in the U.S.A.?

19. Is there anything else you would like to add?