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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined personal (socio-emotional, linguistic, and cognitive aspects) and cultural characteristics of 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school, their educational experiences, and their home, school, and community environments. Case study research methods, including ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and document review, were employed to gather and analyze data. An in-depth description of each high ability, Hispanic, bilingual student provided a better understanding of his or her affective needs, interests, and abilities, as well as the school and home factors that supported academic achievement, talent development, and bilingualism. The home and school environments of the participants played essential roles in their socio-emotional and cognitive development. Due to the young age of the participants, parents', teachers', and significant others' attitudes, behaviors, and decisions, rather than willingness or personal motivation, appeared to determine the participants' development of talents and bilingualism. The home factors identified as influencing participants' cognitive and linguistic development were emotional support and family values emphasizing respect, education, and personal growth. Three major school factors supported academic achievement and talent development: safe school environment, flexible grouping, and English support. (Contains over 100 references.) (Author/CR)

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# Socio-Cultural Contexts for Talent Development: A Qualitative Study on High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students

Valentina I. Kloosterman
University of Connecticut
Storrs, Connecticut

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# Socio-Cultural Contexts for Talent Development: A Qualitative Study on High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students

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Storrs, Connecticut

September 1999
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# THE NATIONAL RESEARCH CENTER ON THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

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## Dedication

I wish to dedicate this research monograph to Dr. A. Harry Passow (1921-1996) for being my mentor and the first person to introduce me to the "gifted world." It was a great honor to know and share my thoughts with such a remarkable scholar and a great human being.



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I fondly thank the children who participated in this study and their families for sharing their lives, their cultures, and values. I also want to thank the contributions of their teachers and administrators for the time and information they provided. *"Muchas gracias-Thank you."*

# Socio-Cultural Contexts for Talent Development: A Qualitative Study on High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students

Valentina I. Kloosterman

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## ABSTRACT

The Hispanic population is one of the largest culturally and linguistically diverse groups in the United States and is classified as a "minority group." Officially, the United States government utilizes "Hispanic" as the ethnic designator of people of Latin American and Spanish descent living in the United States. It is necessary to recognize, however, that this term comprises persons of different ethnicities, cultures, languages, and countries of origin. According to the 1990 census, approximately 4.2 million United States youngsters aged 5 to 17 who speak a non-English language at home speak Spanish (Waggoner, 1995). A major concern for the public school system of the United States has been to serve students with different linguistic backgrounds in various types of bilingual/ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. In the last few decades, another concern to researchers and educators has been the significant underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in gifted and talented programs. The absence of knowledge or understanding about the cultural, linguistic, and cognitive skills of CLD students results in limited educational policies, school programs, or other educational services that address the unique needs of this population.

This qualitative study examined personal (socio-emotional, linguistic, and cognitive aspects) and cultural characteristics of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school, their educational experiences, and their home, school, and community environments. Case study research methods, including ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and document review were employed to gather and analyze data. The analysis of data generated themes and patterns that enabled the researcher to compare and contrast the cases. An in-depth description of each high ability, Hispanic, bilingual student provided a better understanding of his/her affective needs, interests, and abilities, as well as the school and home factors that supported academic achievement, talent development, and bilingualism.

The home and school environments of the participants played essential roles in their socio-emotional and cognitive development. Due to the young age of the participants, parents', teachers', and significant others' attitudes, behaviors, and decisions, rather than willingness or personal motivation, appeared to determine the participants' development of talents and bilingualism. The home factors identified as influencing participants' cognitive and linguistic development were emotional support, family values such as respect or "respeto," "be good," "family first," "education," "see the world," and "be someone." Other factors included strong maternal role, Hispanic legacy, and maintenance of the Spanish language. Three major school factors appeared to support academic achievement and talent development in the 12 Hispanic, bilingual students: safe school environment, flexible grouping, and English support for those students who needed language development. A series of conflicting issues related to the characteristics, values, and perspectives of the school and home cultures emerged.

# Socio-Cultural Contexts for Talent Development: A Qualitative Study on High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students

Valentina I. Kloosterman

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to the growing multicultural student population, educators in the United States are facing the challenge of providing a meaningful education for all types of students. Teachers are becoming aware of the unquestionable need to become knowledgeable about culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and to include multicultural instruction in their classrooms. One of the largest culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups in the United States is the Hispanic population, and is classified as a "minority group." Among Hispanics a variety of subcultures and linguistic groups can be defined. There are monolingual Spanish speakers, monolingual English speakers, and bilingual Spanish-English speakers. According to the 1990 census, approximately 4.2 million United States youngsters aged 5 to 17 who speak a non-English language at home speak Spanish (Waggoner, 1995).

In the United States, an increasing awareness of the extremely limited number of appropriate identification procedures and programs for CLD gifted students has emerged in gifted and talented programs. Aspects such as culture, ethnicity, bilingualism, and socio-emotional characteristics have been gradually addressed in theoretical and operational definitions in gifted education during the last three decades. Few studies and educational practices have focused on the dynamic of culture, bilingualism, and talent development in Hispanic students; thus insufficient information exists to describe the socio-emotional and cognitive characteristics of this target population (Castellano, 1995; Cohen, 1988; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Frasier & Passow, 1994; Kitano & Espinosa, 1995).

This qualitative study addressed three major areas: language, culture, and talent development of 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school. These three interrelated aspects were explored and described in three socio-cultural contexts, the participants' homes, school, and community. This study also examined participants' educational experiences in these settings. This study provides an in-depth description of each high ability Hispanic bilingual student and offers valuable information to better understand the factors affecting academic achievement, talent development, and bilingualism. Case study research methods, including ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and document review were employed to gather and analyze data.

The home and school environments of the participants played essential roles in their socio-emotional and cognitive development. The home factors identified as influencing participants' cognitive and linguistic development were emotional support, family values such as respect or "respeto," "be good," "family first," "education," "see the world," and "be someone." Other factors included strong maternal role, Hispanic legacy, and maintenance of the Spanish language. Three major school factors appeared to support academic achievement and talent development in the 12 Hispanic, bilingual students: safe school environment, flexible grouping, and English support for those students who needed language development.

A series of conflicting issues related to the characteristics, values, and perspectives of the school and home cultures emerged. One conflict related to the description of a student and his or her family as part of a specific ethnic or cultural group such as Hispanic, Puerto Rican, Dominican, or Colombian-American. Another home and school difference was related to bilingualism and bilingual education. Family involvement in school was another issue of conflict between the school and home cultures. Conflicting points of view between parents and teachers were specifically noted in relation to the school and the development of the curriculum. Parents were, in many cases, dissatisfied with the academic standards of the school, and they perceived that the school did not sufficiently challenge their children, especially in the content areas in which their children excelled. The development of the curriculum was also an issue of disagreement between the home and school. Teachers were excited about the multi-aged grouping that the school used as a instructional procedure in the teaching and learning process. Parents were dissatisfied and disagreed with it.

For the majority of the participants, Spanish was the first language they listened to and spoke at home until the age of 3 or 4. Mothers mentioned Spanish as the language they used to sing lullabies, read children's books, and talk to their children. All the grandmothers spoke to the participants in Spanish when they were babies and toddlers, and they were still doing it. Some of the participants made a slow transition to English when they began school at the age of 5 or 6. Most of them had simultaneous bilingual development. The participants' parents were also fluent bilingual speakers, and only a few had difficulty reading and writing in English, although it was the second language for most parents. In some families, the extended family, especially grandparents, aunts, and uncles, also had different levels of bilingual proficiency, with Spanish as the dominant language.

Classrooms in this school appeared to provide a caring educational environment for the social and cognitive development of the 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students. However, as mentioned previously, conflicting factors interfered with the appreciation and encouragement of students' bilingualism, cultural and linguistic identity, and talent development. One important aspect to be considered in the analysis of the possible factors influencing these adverse situations was the teachers' knowledge, training, and practice in special education areas. For example, the majority of the teachers, did not know or were "not sure" about the language or languages usually spoken by the families and the students at home. Teachers only had information of the level of English proficiency, although students were simultaneously bilingual speakers, and some were biliterate.

An interesting finding emerged about the teachers' appreciation and knowledge about their students' bilingualism. Because most of the teachers were not aware of the CLD students' language development other than English, they appeared to believe that, if the student was not in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, consequently he or she was not bilingual. Also, it became evident that multiculturalism was critical in this school because of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population, which was almost half of the population of the school. Yet, the school personnel demonstrated confusion and were unacquainted with the meaning of, and the practices related to this important issue.

The main relationships identified by the participants as encouraging their bilingualism, academic performance, and talent development were indicated within the family or "la familia." Major role models for most of the participants were the parents and some significant family members, such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Another important factor, in addition to the family, was the visitations that the participants made to other countries, usually to their parents' homelands. These journeys had positive influences on

many aspects of the participants' lives. One of the main impacts was in the development of their languages, especially Spanish.

The main experiences which challenged the interests and abilities in the 12 Hispanic, bilingual students were primarily provided by the home environment and partly by the school environment. Positive enrichment opportunities, such as the Schools of Talent (Renzulli & Reis, 1997) and special classes, arts, instrumental music, and dance were some of the organized activities that encouraged the development of interests and potential talents in the participants.

Although most of the students displayed above average ability, significant skills, interests, and task commitment in specific academic areas, teachers did not provide individual differentiated curriculum or activities for them. Overall, the 12 participants displayed average or above average performance in school. Interests, abilities, and high academic performance were displayed in subject areas like mathematics, language arts, music, dance, and drama. In language arts, for example, all the participants were strong readers in English, and some of them were also avid readers in Spanish. Their writing and creative skills were among the most salient characteristics in this subject area. Artistic talent was present in most of the 12 participants. They showed quality work as well as innovative ideas, and manual abilities. Manual skills were demonstrated in construction with clays, blocks and toys, and drawings. Most participants showed interest, abilities, and commitment in areas like music and performing arts. Many participants were described by their teachers and parents as quick thinkers and problem solvers. Some participants also had other interests and high abilities in science, social studies, and technology. They were not sufficiently exposed to activities and materials in these subject areas, so interests and abilities may exist in these areas which were not stimulated.

Specific personality and socio-emotional characteristics were commonly identified in the 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students such as politeness, respect, humor, task commitment, eagerness to please, and curiosity were present in most participants. Participants also showed strong communication and social skills, good manners, appropriate behavior, and amusement with humor and smiles. Students were recognized as good friends, and many participated in several social events in and out of school. Participants' families were also very social and friendly. The 12 male and female students were very expressive, and demonstrated their affection openly by hugging, kissing, and holding hands. Other major personal characteristics of the Hispanic, bilingual students included cooperation with their classmates, attention to school work, and curiosity.

## Implications

The following educational implications emerged from this study:

- The cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional characteristics of Hispanic students should be measured by standards reflecting the students' ethnic and cultural background, and validated by an ethnolinguistic approach. The design, implementation, and evaluation of new assessment procedures are critical for the identification and development of learning styles and high academic abilities in Hispanic students.

- Educators must identify and assist Hispanic students in their academic and social difficulties as well as with their cognitive strengths and talents in school.

- Educators should inform Hispanic parents about the academic progress of their children. Also, educators need to open various channels of communication suitable for different Hispanic families. A more direct and personal approach is recommended with Hispanic families. Families should be welcomed to the school by having teachers appreciate and consider their values, traditions, and thoughts. In addition, Hispanic parents need to be encouraged and informed about gifted education identification and program services as well as activities that will enable them to assist their high ability children at home.

- Professional development should be used to promote an understanding of teachers, specialists, and administrators working with Hispanic students of the awareness and knowledge of the learning and cognitive style preferences of Hispanic students. Also, school personnel have to become familiar with the cultural and linguistic characteristics and needs of Hispanic students. Information and inservice training sessions on topics related to the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students, such as bilingualism, ESOL practices, gifted education, and multiculturalism are essential for the whole staff, especially classroom teachers.

- Classroom teachers should have access to information regarding the assessment, programming, and evaluation of gifted and talented programs appropriate for Hispanic students. Also, teachers should be aware of the goals and objectives of the gifted program. The same situation should exist relative to the goals for ESOL programs or bilingual programs in the school. Classroom teachers have to monitor the ESOL students' evolution in English, and ask Hispanic parents about the family's home language if different from English.

- Teachers should be encouraged to appreciate and promote the expression of diversity in their classrooms. Teachers need to have a positive attitude towards the academic performance and personal characteristics of all students, in particular culturally and linguistically diverse students. High expectations and a challenging curriculum are essential contributors to the creation of a positive educational atmosphere in which Hispanic students can explore potential talents, and develop interests and abilities in any academic area.

- An interdisciplinary approach should be implemented in schools in which culturally and linguistically diverse students are present, and ESOL, bilingual, and gifted programs should be integrated into the total educational experience. Teachers and professionals in different areas can be informed and trained in basic aspects of these education fields by their colleagues. This approach would not only benefit culturally and linguistically diverse students, but also teachers' pedagogical practices.

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# Table of Contents


**ABSTRACT** ix

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** xi

**CHAPTER 1: Introduction** 1
- Statement of the Problem 1
- Rationale 1
- Research Questions 2
- Methods and Procedures 3
  - Data Collection 3
- Limitations 4
- Definition of Terms 5
- Organization of the Research Monograph 5

**CHAPTER 2: Related Literature** 7
- Underrepresentation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Gifted and Talented Programs 7
  - Policy, Legislation, and Statistics on CLD Students 7
  - Assessment of CLD Gifted Students 8
  - Programs and Practices for CLD Gifted Students 9
- Ethnic and Cultural Characteristics of the Hispanic Community 10
  - Policy, Legislation, and Statistics on Hispanics 10
  - Critical Issues in the Hispanic Community 10
- Bilingualism and Bilingual Education for Hispanic Students 11
  - Bilingualism 12
  - Contributors to Bilingualism 13
  - Bilingual Proficiency 13
  - Aspects of Bilingualism 13
  - Bilingualism and Cognitive Development 14
  - Bilingualism and Giftedness 15
  - Bilingualism and Motivation 15
  - Bilingualism and Social Factors 16
  - Critical Issues in Bilingual Education 16
- Multiculturalism in the United States 17
- High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students 17

**CHAPTER 3: Methods and Procedures** 19
- Naturalistic Inquiry 19
- Case Study Research 19
- Participants 20
- Data Collection and Analysis 21
  - Participant Observation 21
  - Interviewing 22
  - Document Review 23
  - Supplemental Data Gathering Techniques 23
- Integrative Diagram 24
- The Development of Grounded Theory 26
- Summary 26

## Table of Contents (continued)


**CHAPTER 4: Profiles** 27
- Town and School Profiles 27
  - ESOL (English for Students of Other Languages) Program 29
  - Gifted Program 30
- Case Studies of Four Participants 30
  - Juan Colina 30
  - Kristian Navarro 31
  - María Chaviano 32
  - Carmen Gutierrez 33

**CHAPTER 5: Results and Core Categories** 35
- Research Question #1 35
  - Home Factors 35
    - Emotional Support 35
    - Family Values 36
    - Strong Maternal Role 38
    - Hispanic Legacy 38
    - Spanish Maintenance 39
  - School Factors 39
- Research Question #2 40
- Research Question #3 41
- Research Question #4 43
- Research Question #5 45
- Research Question #6 46

**CHAPTER 6: Grounded Theory, Discussion, and Implications** 49
- Grounded Theory 49
- Discussion 51
- Implications 51

**CHAPTER 7: Recommendations** 53
- What Should Educators Know About High Ability, Hispanic Students and Their Families? 53
- What Should Hispanic Parents Know and Ask About Services for Gifted and Talented Students? 54
- What Should Researchers and Practitioners Consider for Future Projects About Gifted, Hispanic Students? 54

**References** 57

**Appendices**
- Appendix A: Parent/Guardian Survey (Bilingual English/Spanish Version) 67
- Appendix B: Students' Interview Protocol 71
- Appendix C: Teacher Survey 75
- Appendix D: Parents' Interview Protocol 79

# List of Tables


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Table 1. | Statistical Information on Bilingual Issues in the United States | 12 |
| Table 2. | Student Demographics for Sex, Age, Date of Birth, Place of Birth, Hispanic Subgroup, Grade Level, and ESOL Level | 21 |
| Table 3. | Family and Parental Demographics | 22 |
| Table 4. | Facts and Demographics of Eccleston School—1995-96 | 28 |
| Table 5. | Case-Ordered Descriptive Meta Matrix: Family Characteristics and Student Impact | 36 |
| Table 6. | Descriptive Meta Matrix: Teachers' Knowledge, Training, and Practice in Special Education Areas | 43 |
| Table 7. | Comparison Between Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of Family and Student Language Skills | 44 |
| Table 8. | Case-Ordered Descriptive Meta Matrix: High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students' Characteristics | 47 |

# List of Figures

Figure 1. Holistic Perspective of the Phenomenological Object of Study 25



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# Socio-Cultural Contexts for Talent Development: A Qualitative Study on High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students

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## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

This study examined the personal and cultural characteristics of 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school, their educational experiences, and their school, home, and community environments. Pseudonyms are used to preserve the anonymity of the students, the school, and the community. The study provides an in-depth description of each high ability, Hispanic, bilingual student and offers valuable information to better understand the factors affecting academic achievement, talent development, and bilingualism.

## Statement of the Problem

It is clear from the extremely limited number of studies and educational practices that have focused on the dynamic of culture, bilingualism, and talent development in Hispanic students that insufficient information exists to describe the socio-emotional and cognitive characteristics of this target population (Castellano, 1995; Cohen, 1988; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Frasier & Passow, 1994; Kitano & Espinosa, 1995).

The problem addressed is the need to examine the often unrecognized and therefore undeveloped personal (socio-emotional, linguistic, and cognitive aspects) and cultural characteristics of high potential, high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students. If these characteristics are considered in future studies, more comprehensive research can be conducted about the socio-cultural, linguistic, and cognitive strengths of children in this population. Also, the results of this research may promote and encourage the Hispanic family and the school to join together to create experiences and new knowledge to develop an affective and educational atmosphere in which talents, culture, and languages can be recognized and nurtured in Hispanic, bilingual youngsters. Using this study, educators may become more knowledgeable about the potential and strengths of Hispanic students. This would result in the development of a sensitive and challenging curriculum of instruction that can meet the needs of this target population.

## Rationale

In the past few decades, a major concern of researchers and educators in gifted education has been the significant underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in gifted and talented programs. The primary reason cited in the most recent studies conducted on this topic is the absence of adequate assessment procedures and appropriate programs for gifted minority students (Baldwin, 1987; Bernal, 1989; Castellano, 1995; Cohen, 1988; Frasier, Garcia, & Passow, 1995; Frasier & Passow 1994; Kitano & Espinosa, 1995; Masten, 1985; Mills & Tissot, 1995; Rhodes, 1992; Smith, LeRose, & Clasen, 1991). The absence of knowledge or understanding about the cultural,

linguistic, and cognitive skills of CLD students results in limited educational policies and school programs or other educational services that fail to address the unique needs of these increasing minority, student populations. Within these populations, the Hispanic or Latino population is one of the largest culturally and linguistically diverse groups in the United States and is classified as a "minority group."

Officially, the United States government utilizes the term "Hispanic" as the ethnic designator of people of Latin American and Spanish descent living in the United States. However, the terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" refer to persons of different ethnicities, cultures, languages, and countries of origin. Oboler (1995) explains that

> Regardless of their own birthplace or the time or way that their parents' respective national-origin groups were incorporated in this society, those born after 1970 represent the first generation born and raised in this country who have specifically designated by mainstream institutions as "Hispanics" in the United States. (p. xix)

According to the 1990 census, approximately 4.2 million United States youngsters aged 5 to 17 who speak a non-English language at home speak Spanish (Waggoner, 1995). The majority of members of the Hispanic or Latino group are Spanish and English bilingual and their native language is usually Spanish. The range of proficiency skills in the two languages can vary widely, from fluent bilingualism to limited communicative skills in either one of the two languages. Hispanic, bilingual children may develop their two languages at different proficiency levels, at different developmental stages, and in different formal and informal settings.

Both bilingualism and talent development are multidimensional phenomena involving cognitive, affective, cultural, environmental, and situational factors. Whether using the terms gifted LEP, CLD gifted, gifted ESL, or gifted bilingual, these official and theoretical terms address the particular characteristics of a child who demonstrates talent potential or outstanding talents while simultaneously developing two languages. Language proficiency depends on the use and meaning of language in context (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994), and in some ways, talent development also depends upon these two factors.

## Research Questions

The main objectives of this study were to examine, explore, and describe personal and cultural characteristics of 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students, in an urban setting, as well as determine whether or not they were able to express and develop their interests and talents in school and at home. The following research questions regarding components of talent identification and development guided data collection; however, as themes and patterns emerged from the data, questions became more specific and other questions were added.

1. What factors in the home and school environment appear to support academic achievement, talent development, and bilingual acquisition in high ability, Hispanic, bilingual children in an urban environment?
2. What types of interaction between the school culture and the home culture manifest the awareness of the emotional, cognitive, and talent development of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban environment?
3. What cognitive traits do high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban school exhibit or display in their use of two languages in their school and home environments?

4. What are teacher perceptions of academic achievement, cognitive ability, and observable talent in high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school?
5. What relationships encourage language proficiency, academic performance, and talent development in high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban environment?
6. What educational experiences do high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban school recognize as challenging their interests and abilities?

## Methods and Procedures

The problem and research questions required a qualitative research approach. Qualitative methodology employing case study research methods was used for the study of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school. "A case study requires the collection of very extensive data in order to produce an in-depth understanding of the entity being studied" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 402). A comparative or "cross-case analysis" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172) was used during data collection. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of each participant of the study was preserved.

### Data Collection

In qualitative research, data are gathered from "a variety of sources, and preferably, in a variety of ways" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 81). Data collection for this study utilized seven sources:

1. *Ethnographic interviews* were conducted to obtain in-depth information about the students' school and home environments, and to obtain a more complete understanding of the socio-emotional and cognitive characteristics of the identified participants, as well as their educational experiences.
2. *Participant observation* enabled the researcher to develop systematic descriptions of participants' behaviors in different settings, their activities, and interactions with others and to record school, family, and community events and artifacts.
3. *Field notes* were kept during participant observations and interviews.
4. *A reflexive journal* helped the researcher to record information about *"self"* with respect to what was happening in the study, and *"method"* with respect to methodological decisions and reasons (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 327).
5. *Formal and informal school and family documentation* added valuable information regarding academic performance and talent and language development of each participant. Additional documentation related to ESOL and gifted education policies, special programming services, curriculum and instruction, and special events was gathered and analyzed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the school setting.
6. *Nonverbal cues* complemented an understanding of situations where "nonverbal behaviors conflict with verbal behaviors" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 276).
7. *Projective techniques* were employed to collect potentially useful information on participants' socio-emotional development. These included: Children's Apperception Test (CAT-A), Draw-A-Family Test, Goodenough-Harris Human Figure Drawing Test, Tree-House-Person Drawing Test, and the Bender Test.

The qualitative data were analyzed using triangulation, the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation

(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Data analysis included three levels of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990): (a) open coding; (b) axial coding; and (c) selective coding. In the first stage, open coding, the data were sorted, to be compared and contrasted to conceptualize and create categories. In the second stage, axial coding, categories were contrasted and weighed against each other in search of descriptive relations among them. The third stage, selective coding, involved "selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). Data collection and analysis took place "hand-in-hand as theories and themes emerge during the study" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 111). This process generated data and findings of inductive and deductive origins that enabled the researcher to compare and contrast the cases, while at the same time contributing to building theory. For the purpose of integrating descriptive data from each case in a standard format, "meta-matrices" were used (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 178). A "case study reporting mode" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 41) describing the multiple realities of this study was also used.

## Limitations

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is the most important criterion for judging the quality of a research study. Trustworthiness is established by demonstrating "its truth value, provid[ing] the basis for applying it, and allow[ing] for external judgments to be made about consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 29). Based on the qualitative paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four constructs to reflect the assumptions and trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

1. *Credibility* relies upon the strength of the accurate identification and in-depth descriptions of the participants, and their home, school, and community environments. Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy materials, and member checking were operational techniques that supported the credibility of this study. Credibility was also addressed by enabling participants to select the language in which the interviews were conducted (either Spanish or English).
2. *Transferability* relates to the external validity of the research. Thick descriptions of the participants, and their home and school settings enabled "observers of other contexts to make tentative judgments about applicability of certain observations for their contexts and to form working hypotheses to guide empirical inquiry in those contexts" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 33).
3. *Dependability* was addressed by documenting and accounting for settings or situations in the study. The bilingualism (Spanish-English) and biculturalism of the researcher in interpreting settings and artifacts also added to the dependability of the study.
4. *Confirmability* stresses the traditional concept of objectivity. Triangulation of data and the keeping of a reflexive journal were useful techniques to establish confirmability of the study. The confirmability audit also examined the process of inquiry and the accuracy of "data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 318) with respect to the possibility of talent identification and development of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they apply to this investigation:

*Gifted student*—children and youth with outstanding talent [who] perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. (United States Department of Education, 1993)

*Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) Student*—student who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in our society due to one or more of the following reasons:

- born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant;
- Native American or Alaskan native or who is a native resident of the outlying areas and comes from an environment where a language other than English has had significant impact on each individual's level of English language proficiency; or
- migratory and whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant (sec. 7501). (Public Law 103-382 as cited in Anstrom, 1996, pp. 2-3)

*Bilingualism*—[ability] to function in two (or more) languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the socio-cultural demands made on an individual's communicative and cognitive competence by these communities and by the individual his or her, at the same level as native speakers, and who is able positively to identify with both (or all) language groups (and cultures) or parts of them. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995, p. 46)

*Hispanic*—person coming from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or Central or South America, or of Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (federal definition).

*Multiculturalism*—to gain an insight into one's self and others through historical and cultural understanding, while at the same time developing an insight into history and culture through subjective self. (Weil, 1993)

## Organization of the Research Monograph

This research monograph is presented in seven chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the research study. In Chapter Two, existing research and literature on the subject of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students are reviewed. The methods and procedures used are discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four presents a description of the urban elementary school and town environment. Four of the 12 case studies are also described in this chapter. Chapter Five presents the results of the research questions and

the core categories of data analysis from the perspective of the students, families, and school personnel. The grounded theory that emerged from this study, a discussion of the results, the implications of this research are presented in Chapter Six. Finally, in Chapter Seven, recommendations for researchers, practitioners, and Hispanic parents about the education of high ability, Hispanic students are provided.



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# CHAPTER 2: Related Literature

The review of literature presented in this chapter focuses on five interrelated areas that provide a theoretical rationale for this study. In the first section, the actual status of gifted and talented education in the United States is described. The critical situation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in gifted programs is also discussed. In section two, a comprehensive description of the Hispanic population regarding its cultural, linguistic, educational, and sociopolitical situation is analyzed. In the third section, bilingualism and bilingual education are thoroughly described. In the fourth section, the importance of multiculturalism in a pluralist society such as the United States is explored, and in the fifth section, the significance of research and modifications in practices used to address the needs of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students are presented.

## Underrepresentation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Gifted and Talented Programs

During the last few years, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers in this field of gifted education have increasingly turned their attention to the underrepresentation of CLD gifted students in programs for the gifted.

On the one hand, a considerable amount of research in gifted education has reported the underrepresentation of CLD students in programs for the gifted and talented. On the other hand, researchers and practitioners in special education have reported an over-representation of CLD students in special programs mainly due to mislabeling students rather than to deficiencies in these students (Cegelka, 1988; Cummins, 1984; Fradd, n.d.; Meier & Stewart, Jr., 1991; Voltz, 1995; Wald, 1996). Because students are inappropriately referred for special education, they experience detrimental consequences in their cognitive and socio-emotional development. Among these mislabeled minority groups, Hispanic students comprise the second largest group most frequently labeled as learning disabled, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, or "uneducable" (Rodríguez, 1996). These statistics may describe an educational system in which it is common to identify and nominate CLD students for special education rather than for programs for gifted and talented students.

Due to an increasing awareness of the absence of appropriate identification procedures and of the lack of programs for culturally and linguistically diverse students in the United States, aspects such as culture, ethnicity, language, and socio-emotional characteristics have emerged and been addressed in theoretical and operational definitions in gifted education during the last three decades.

### Policy, Legislation, and Statistics on CLD Students

Culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students have been targeted by federal and state policies. For example, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act of 1988 established that "outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor" (United States Department of Education, 1993, p. 26). This federal program has a priority to provide programs for gifted and talented students who are economically disadvantaged, speak limited English, or have disabilities. Seventy-one percent of 48 states/territories responding to a survey by the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (1996, pp. 52-55) indicated receiving support by the Javits Act from 1992 to 1996.

Recently, federal and state organizations have released the following statistical information regarding the education of CLD gifted and talented children:

> Of 48 responding states/territories, the three main needs identified in gifted education were professional training in gifted education for regular teachers (56%), funding (46%), and inclusion of minority students (20%). (Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 1996, pp. 52-55)

> [Culturally and linguistically diverse students] are underrepresented in 30 to 70 percent of gifted and talented programs across the United States, United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. (Richert, 1987, as cited in Hadaway & Marek-Schoer, 1992, p. 73)

Demographic data that describe statistics about teachers in our education system have been reported by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (1994). The majority of teachers in all educational settings in the United States are divided by race/ethnicity as follows: Whites (86%), Blacks (9.2%), Hispanics (3.1%), and Asians (1%). These percentages do not match the expanding multicultural, multilingual society of the United States. Extensive research refers to the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers and the over-representation of White, European American, middle class, monolingual teachers as one of difficulties in reaching the educational and socio-cultural needs of CLD students (Banks, 1993; Boone & Ruhl, 1995; Hill, Carjuzaa, Aramburo, & Baca, 1993; Orum, 1990; Weil, 1993).

## Assessment of CLD Gifted Students

Each society or culture values and encourages the development of certain talents or "intelligences" (Gardner, 1993) in its youngsters, while simultaneously overlooking or dismissing others (De Leon, 1983; Tannenbaum, 1986). For example, culturally and linguistically diverse students come from homes in which special talents are traditionally valued but which may not be recognized by the majority culture (Arroyo & Sternberg, 1993; Bermúdez, Rakow, Márquez, Sawyer, & Ryan, 1991; Cohen, 1988). In this regard, theorists, researchers, and practitioners in gifted and talented education in the United States have delivered little information on the socio-emotional and intellectual characteristics involved in talent potential and development in CLD students.

Very few procedures exist in the field to accurately identify CLD students for gifted and talented programs. Traditional psychometric tests and other standardized procedures have been proven to be biased for screening CLD populations (Alvino, McDonnell, & Richert, 1981; Bernal, 1974; Cummins, 1980). Differences within CLD student population have shown that effective assessment procedures for one subgroup can be unreliable for another. Even within the same CLD subgroup, research findings have demonstrated significant differences in students' responses and performance. Some of the major difficulties in gifted education for the nomination of CLD students are explained by Frasier and Passow (1994):

> . . . the low expectations educational professionals have for culturally and linguistically diverse students, their low levels of awareness of cultural and linguistic behaviors of potentially gifted minority students, their insensitivity to the differences within and among groups, and their inability to recognize "gifted behaviors" that minority students exhibit. (p. 4)

Many studies have recommended the development of new assessment procedures to enhance the quality and validity of those already in practice to identify talented CLD

students (Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992; Mitchell, 1988; Passow & Frasier, 1996; Reyes, Fletcher, & Paez, 1996). Oakland (1980), however, explained that potential bias and errors exist in any step of assessment, programming, and evaluation.

Limited research information exists regarding CLD students' learning-style preferences (Griggs & Dunn, 1996). Most of the studies on this subject in Hispanics have been conducted with the Mexican American subgroup, which should not be generalized to all Hispanics. Lack of information and misconceptions about learning and cognitive style preferences among CLD students have also been mentioned (Baecher, 1982; De Leon, 1983). Addressing the latter, Hartley (1987) explains, "many cultural groups value listening and learning and encourage considered thought before speaking. What appears to be slowness may only be what a student knows as correct behavior" (p. 6).

For example, Chesterfield and Pérez (1981) discussed the importance of considering language preference of young bilingual children, as a fundamental component of dual language acquisition either in "simultaneous bilingualism" or "continuous bilingualism." Many studies in early bilingual intervention have mentioned the benefit of starting a second language as early as possible (Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979). This is also supported by studies that found that some linguistic sounds that are not acquired in one of the two languages during the babbling stage tend to disappear, and pronunciation in young second language learners develops closer to the native-speaker accent (Hakes, 1965; Oyama, 1976).

## Programs and Practices for CLD Gifted Students

Few educational models or programs have been specifically designed to identify and develop talents in culturally and linguistically diverse students. Programs that exist promote primary and second language development as well as cultural expression in different academic areas. Model Rocketry and the Space Sciences for the Gifted (Cary, 1990) and Project EXCEL developed in San Diego Unified School District (Hermanson & Pérez, 1993), and the Full-time Gifted, Bilingual Program at Coral Way Elementary School in Miami, Florida are examples of three such programs.

Research evidence exists that the implementation of Two-Way Bilingual Education programs benefits students by enhancing their bilingualism and academic performance (Thomas & Collier, 1995). Although these types of enrichment programs have been described as very effective in promoting oral bilingualism and biliteracy (Cummins, 1992; Fishman, 1982; Krashen, 1991; Wong Fillmore & Valadez, 1985) as well as positive cognitive and socio-emotional development (Genesee, 1987), there are very few programs in place.

While some researchers in gifted education advocate new paradigms for identifying talent potential in culturally diverse populations (Frasier & Passow, 1994), researchers in bilingual education are working toward developing new paradigms by studying bilingualism, intelligence, and cognitive processes (Náqez, Padilla, & López-Máez, 1992). Practitioners in bilingual education and gifted education are uniting to face the challenge of developing assessment, programming and evaluation procedures, as well as addressing the unique needs, characteristics and strengths of high ability, Hispanic students. At the same time, they hope to respect and encourage the expression of bilingual students cultures and values.

## Ethnic and Cultural Characteristics of the Hispanic Community

The Hispanic population can be considered one of the first immigrant groups that settled in the United States. In 1598 the first Hispanic group settled in the present-day New Mexico region. However, it is also one of the youngest and most diverse communities in the United States. As a minority group, Hispanics have overcome many difficulties throughout the years. A large portion of first, second, third, and in some cases even fourth-generation Hispanic immigrants still lag economically behind.

Based on the federal definition, a Hispanic person is one coming from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or Central or South America, or of Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. The Hispanic population is identified within this so-called minority group. Many researchers and practitioners have described several negative connotations implied in the term "minority." A classification by race and ethnicity has ambivalent implications. For example, the Hispanic or Latino community has also been addressed using the following terms: Mexican, Cuban, Mexican American, Cuban-American, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Mejicano, South American, Dominican-American, Iberoamerican, and Caribbean. This variety of classifications denotes the unclear and controversial use of these terms in describing the Hispanic population of the United States. The terms, however, are often used in political, educational, governmental, and statistical oral and written reports.

Although diversity is an essential characteristic of the Hispanic community in the United States, common traits can be identified among the different Hispanic subgroups such as close family relationships, a hierarchical family order, a duty to care for family members, spirituality, dignity and respect or, "respeto," for authority figures and elders.

### Policy, Legislation, and Statistics on Hispanics

Among the minority groups in the United States, the Hispanic population is the second-largest group and the second-fastest growing population. In the March 1993 Current Population Survey (CPS), the estimate of the Hispanic-origin population in the United States was 22.8 million or 8.9 percent of the total population. Nearly 2 of every 3 Hispanics is of Mexican origin (as cited in del Pinal, 1997).

### Critical Issues in the Hispanic Community

In general, Hispanics in the United States maintain social and economic ties with their countries of origin. They sustain indirect (phone, mail, etc.) and direct communication with relatives living outside the United States. Either they travel to their homelands or their relatives visit them from abroad. In most families, special occasions and circumstances such as holidays, vacations, weddings, birthdays, funerals, and serious health problems cause Hispanics to come and go from their native countries to be with their family. Furthermore, the decision to immigrate to the United States, usually influenced either by socio-political or economic situations, is tied to the personal expectations and hopes for a better future that characterize all immigrants.

Hispanic children throughout the nation are considered one of the student populations at the highest risk for school retention, dropout, and poor academic performance. In comparison to Whites and other minority groups, Hispanic children have less chance to be nominated to gifted programs. Actually, "an Anglo student is three to four times more likely to be placed in gifted classes than is an Hispanic student" (Meier & Stewart, Jr., 1991, p. 203). On the other hand, children with Hispanic background are highly represented in special education and in remedial and compensatory courses (Orum,

1990). "An Hispanic student is approximately 50 percent more likely to be assigned to a class for the educable mentally retarded than is an Anglo student" (Meier & Stewart, Jr., 1991, p. 203).

One of the reasons for the dramatic educational situation of Hispanics is due to the type of schools that students often attend. Orum (1990) describes these institutions as "underachieving schools." "Either through lack of will, training, or resources (or some combination thereof), these schools have not succeeded well in providing an equitable and excellence education for their Hispanic students" (p. 90). Moreover, Passow and Frasier (1996) point out the difficulty CLD students have showing their potential talents or high academic skills in educational institutions that are often "with fewer challenging curricula, fewer instructional resources, and environments that provide limited educational opportunities" (p. 201).

## Bilingualism and Bilingual Education for Hispanic Students

Among Hispanics a variety of linguistic groups can be defined. There are monolingual Spanish speakers, monolingual English speakers, and bilingual Spanish-English speakers. Both languages have different shades identified by the region, country of origin, cultural background, generation, length of residence in the United States, language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and degree of language proficiency of the person.

The significance of using and having knowledge of Spanish and English varies widely among the different Hispanic subgroups. For example, on the one hand, a large portion of the Puerto Rican community has maintained Spanish, especially as the main home language. On the other hand, Mexican Americans have been reported to be more proficient in English than in Spanish (Solé, 1985). Crawford (1992) pointed out that differences in historical experiences among the Hispanic subgroups coming to the United States have had an impact in many aspects of life, such as Spanish maintenance, education, and sociopolitical opportunities. Overall, as Dolson (1985) pointed out:

> Unless Hispanic families retain Spanish as the main home language, it is unlikely that Hispanic students will become fully bilingual. . . . Spanish-speaking youngsters in the United States tend to lose proficiency in their mother tongue rapidly if it is not reinforced by the school and the home. (p. 150)

The main socio-political force sustaining bilingual education has always been the Hispanic group, in particular Mexican Americans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans. Bilingual education started as a social demand of Cubans in Florida who wanted their children to become fluent not only in English but also what was in many cases their first language, Spanish (Stavans, 1995). In some ways, bilingual education has always been an opportunity for Hispanics (but also for other cultural groups) to preserve their culture and mother tongue language. Yet, for the small proportion of Hispanic teachers and professors in all educational and academic areas, an absence of Hispanic colleges and universities exists (Meier & Stewart, Jr., 1991; Orum, 1990).

In the United States, bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for culturally and linguistically diverse students have primarily been created to respond to the needs of the non-English or limited English speaking immigrants who are continuously arriving to this country (Baker, 1988; Crawford, 1991; Keller & Van Hooft, 1982). In general, United States bilingual and ESL programs are transitional in nature, and the

bilingual student or limited English proficient (LEP) student is moved as quickly as possible into monolingual English instruction without maintaining the native language. Of the 2.3 million LEP students attending public schools in the United States, approximately 80% are Hispanics (Trueba, 1989). As Baker (1993) pointed out, there is a clear difference between "a classroom where formal instruction is to foster bilingualism and a classroom where bilingual children are present, but bilingualism is not fostered in the curriculum" (p. 151).

## Bilingualism

Skutnabb-Kangas (1984) defines a bilingual person as one

> . . . who is able to function in two (or more) languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the socio-cultural demands made on an individual's communicative and cognitive competence by these communities and by the individual herself, at the same level as native speakers, and who is able positively to identify with both (or all) language groups (and cultures) or parts of them. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995, p. 46)

Bilingual persons have the linguistic ability to communicate in two languages. The levels of competence in both languages differ, as do other forms of communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and reasoning. Linguists and educators have been debating the distinction between first language (L1) or mother tongue, and second language (L2). For Skutnabb-Kangas (1995), "the mother tongue is the language one has learned first and identifies with" (p. 45). Furthermore, the author argued that educators often establish a false relationship between the mother tongue of a CLD student and high level of proficiency in that language. "A poor proficiency in the original mother tongue is a result of not having been offered the opportunity to use and learn the original mother tongue well enough" (1995, p. 44) in socioeducational settings apart from the home. Hence, CLD students are compelled to learn and use L2.

Some meaningful statistical information related to bilingualism in the United States is included in Table 1.

Table 1

Statistical Information on Bilingual Issues in the United States

| Statistical Information | Source |
|---|---|
| State Educational Agency Database, the five first states and territories with the largest numbers of LEP students were: California (1,152,000), Texas (345,000), New York (195,000), Puerto Rico (150,000), and Florida (131,000). | Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, 1995 |
| In the United States there are approximately 30 million people coming from a minority group, 40 million by the year 2000. | Trueba, 1989 |
| It is expected that by the year 2000, 32 percent of the total school population will come from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. | Cegelka, 1988 |

## Contributors to Bilingualism

Many studies have addressed the crucial role of family with respect to bilingual development. The family is the first emotional and cognitive context in which a child can develop his or her potential bilingualism. During the first years of human development, language growth and meaning are tied to cognitive development and socio-emotional interaction. Bilingual families may encourage or withdraw from bilingualism in the new generations for different reasons. One of the reasons is the lack of information and assistance available to bilingual parents regarding the advantages of raising their young children bilingually (Arnberg, 1984; Dolson, 1985; Olmedo, 1981). Further, several studies have reported that the success of culturally and linguistically diverse parents' involvement in the school is associated with the use of home language (a language other than English).

## Bilingual Proficiency

Different theorists in the literature have tried to explain the relationship among bilingualism, cognition, and learning. One of the most salient theories in this respect is called "The Thresholds Theory" (Cummins, 1976; Baker, 1993). The main idea is that bilingualism can have different effects on cognitive development, depending on the level of proficiency acquired in both languages (Baker, 1993). This theory can be described in three linguistic competence levels. In the first level, children show insufficient competence or inadequate development (compared with same age group) in two languages. At this level, detrimental cognitive effects are usually found. In the second level, bilingual children demonstrate age-appropriate competence in one of their two languages, deriving neither in positive or negative cognitive effects. Finally, bilingual children reaching the third level, express a "balancing" competence in two or more languages. To some extent, balanced bilingual children "demonstrate age-appropriate abilities in both languages" (Díaz & Klingler, 1991, p. 169). Positive cognitive outcomes are related to fluency in two languages.

With respect to the development of biliteracy skills, researchers have reported benefits to fostering reading skills in children's first and second languages (Cummins, 1992; Mortensen, 1984). Krashen (1996) explains that "it is extremely efficient to develop literacy first in the child's first language; the transfer to English is rapid, even when the alphabets used are very different" (p. 1).

## Aspects of Bilingualism

Researchers in linguistics and bilingualism have tried to discriminate and conceptualize structures, processes, and functions in language use. Additionally, researchers have focused their attention in determining whether these components differ from monolinguals to bilinguals, and explain how and why this occurs. Many linguists discern among different languages abilities of bilingual persons. Some of them are the following:

- *Mixing* is expected to be used mostly by children but also frequently occurs in adult conversations. Genesee (1989) explained:

> . . . mixing might occur because the language system in use at the moment is incomplete and does not include the grammatical device needed to express certain meaning. If a device from the other language system that serves the same purposes were available, it might be used at the moment. In the other case, the grammatical device required to express the intended meaning is available in the language currently in use, but it is more complex than the

corresponding device in the other language system and its use strains the child's current ability. (p. 168)

- *Translation* can be defined as "a transference of semantic referent [meaning] from one language to the other, which can occur at any boundary" (Lindholm & Padilla, 1978b, p. 24). Other researchers have also distinguished the differences between interpretation and translation. "Interpreting refers to spoken communication, while translating refers to written language" (McCardle, Kim, Grube & Randall, 1995, p. 67). By translating correctly, bilingual children are putting in practice cognitive abilities as well as manifesting their knowledge of words, concepts, and grammatical structures of two different languages. In sum, translation has been found to enhance linguistic awareness and bilingualism.

- *Metalinguistic awareness* is viewed as a set of abilities to perform and resolve different cognitive tasks rather than a unique ability. It refers to the ability to objectively analyze linguistic output" (Hakuta, 1987, p. 1375). In other words, it is a "conscious awareness and knowledge of language construction and use" (García, 1991, p. 102). This set of linguistic abilities involves metalinguistic tasks such as the detection and correction of syntactical violations, sensitivity to language structure and detail, and arbitrariness of word-referent relations (Díaz & Klingler, 1991, p. 173). Current research findings have described metalinguistic awareness as a positive and cognitive advantage ability in bilingual children (Bialystok, 1986; Galambos & Hakuta, 1988).

- *Communicative Sensitivity.* Considerable evidence exists on the communicative sensitivity of bilingual children (Genesee, 1989; Ianco-Worrall, 1972). In some cases, young bilingual children may test the interlocutor to learn whether he or she is either bilingual or monolingual (Lindholm & Padilla, 1978a). Most of the time, they recognize their interlocutor's language and they switch to the language the first one is using. Some children may identify difficulties or a lower level of language proficiency of the interlocutor, so they change to his or her interlocutor best language (Ginishi, 1981). The language is switched even sooner if the bilingual person realizes that the listener is monolingual. Research findings suggest that bilingual children may be more sensitive to social communication than monolingual children due to the demands of appropriate linguistic use of two languages in different contexts (Baker, 1993). García (1991) points out that bilingual children develop discourse rules. For example, one discourse rule used by bilingual children is to make the listener aware that he or she can listen and speak in any of the two languages (Zentella, 1981, as cited in García, 1991, p. 105).

## Bilingualism and Cognitive Development

The most recent studies in bilingualism are consistent with the hypothesis that the development of two or more languages has positive effects on cognitive, linguistic, and even on socio-emotional skills (Cummins & Swain, 1986; Feldman & Shen, 1971; Hakuta, 1987; Hakuta & Gould, 1987; Hudelson, 1987; Krashen, 1996; Malakoff, 1988; Peal & Lambert, 1962; Troike, 1978). In addition, Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) explained that "bilingual speakers have two linguistic systems for expressing their thoughts" (p. 10).

Two cognitive mechanisms are particularly developed in bilingual children, the *switching* between their two languages, and *transferring* information from one language to the other. Switching or code-switching is defined by Lindholm and Padilla (1978b) as "an interaction in which there is no transference of a semantic referent, and which occurs at the sentence boundary" (p. 24). Research evidence of code-switching describes this mechanism as being used in specific communication situations. For example, the child does not know "the corresponding word in the appropriate language" or does not remember the word at that moment (Lindholm & Padilla, 1978b, p. 35). Poplack (1980) explains that "code-switches will tend to occur at points in discourse where juxtaposition of L1 and L2 elements does not violate a syntactic rule of either language" (p. 586). In a study of Puerto Ricans (Spanish-English speakers), research findings "provide evidence that code-switching is a verbal skill requiring a large degree of linguistic competence in more than one language, rather than a defect arising from insufficient knowledge of one or the other" (Poplack, 1980, p. 613).

These two mechanisms (switching and transferring) favor the development of what is called *"cognitive flexibility."* The term is defined by Malakoff as "the superior performance by balanced bilinguals on different verbal and nonverbal tasks evaluating intelligence" (1988, p. 18). Research has related cognitive flexibility with the enhancement of cognitive tasks in balanced bilinguals such as, categorization, creativity, verbal signal discrimination, superior concept formation, and second language learning (Ben-Zeev, 1977; Feldman & Shen, 1971; Leopold, 1939; Peal & Lambert, 1962).

## Bilingualism and Giftedness

According to Bialystok and Hakuta (1994), learning a second language is a cognitive task in itself. Considering the existence of many levels of language proficiency among CLD students, Cohen (1988) points out that some gifted limited English or CLD students are unable to express themselves well in English, and subsequently their talents are unknown because of their language limitations and not because of their lack of talents. One of the main reasons for the underrepresentation of bilingual students in gifted and talented programs is that the assessment tools and procedures commonly used in these programs rely upon measures and techniques that are primarily dependent on English oral and written language (Hartley, 1987).

Recent studies suggest that flexible criteria using multiple sources to assess talents in culturally and linguistically diverse students are needed to identify and nurture students' outstanding abilities (Castellano, 1995; Cohen, 1988; Kitano & Espinosa, 1995). Not only bilingual, but all children benefit when multidimensional assessment procedures are used to explore their interests, abilities, and learning styles.

## Bilingualism and Motivation

Motivation toward learning a second language has been studied in relation to the socio-cultural settings in which learning occurs. Studies on this particular topic have focused the attention on positive and negative settings. Positive socio-cultural environments are usually characterized as those in which learners of a second language can develop meaningful connections with their own cultural and linguistic experiences. Culturally and linguistically diverse students will be more motivated to learn a second language if the teaching-learning process is configured in a positive and challenging atmosphere, in which students' cultural background and personal characteristics are protected and valued.

## Bilingualism and Social Factors

Bilingualism cannot be completely studied without considering the social aspect. This means that language is always used and developed in context. The specific context determines which of the two languages the bilingual will use. At early ages, bilingual children need to differentiate linguistic contexts to be able to communicate.

The mainstream population, and especially the academic elite, have often identified ethnic mother tongues (including indigenous languages) and cultures as low in status, prestige, and even "culturally deprived" (Cole & Bruner, 1971; García, 1991; Milon, 1996; Stephens, 1994). Fortunately, this view has slowly started to change over the past 20 years, and sociological changes have allowed a more positive attitude from the "majority" population to the "minority" one (Fishman, 1965a).

Two major categories describe bilingualism in context, additive and subtractive (Lambert, 1975). In an additive bilingual context, bilingualism carries prestige, second language acquisition develops in a positive atmosphere, and cognitive abilities related to the development of two languages are enhanced. For example, "students who are empowered by their school experiences develop the ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed academically" (Cummins, 1995, p. 106). On the other hand, in a subtractive bilingual context, bilingualism has low prestige and negative consequences.

A study of Puerto Rican bilingual students in New Haven, Connecticut presented two different social contexts for language development: a community being subtractive, whereas the bilingual program was described as an additive context for children to develop their bilingual skills (Hakuta, 1987).

Umbel and Oller (1994) described the city of Miami as a unique additive area in the United States; where "the Miami Hispanic child appears to learn English additively, maintaining a strong command of Spanish to pass on to yet another generation" (p. 228). In addition, researchers described specific characteristics of the Hispanics in this area, which allowed and enabled them to succeed and enhance the bilingual community, including: a wide socioeconomic range, a diversify spectrum of Hispanic cultures, a competitive attitude in the professional and business market, involvement in government decisions, and development of a powerful Spanish media.

## Critical Issues in Bilingual Education

Over the last two decades, the United States has changed its policy about bilingual and foreign language education, and on related topics such as English as the official language of the country. Policies have been driven by governmental, educational, and societal forces.

Supporters of bilingual education have a closer relationship with more liberal ideas. At the other end of the spectrum, more conservative policies go hand in hand with opponents of any kind of educational service provided other than in English. Some of the movements sustaining the latter are "English Only," "English First," and "United States English." These movements try to legislate English as the official language. From the other point of view, "English Plus," and "La Raza Unida" are entities that protect language rights and policies, attack discrimination (especially of minority groups), believe in diversity, provide linguistic assistance to those who are limited-English-proficient, and are openly in favor of bilingual education.

There are two states that officially recognize bilingualism in the United States. One of these states is Hawaii, where both English and Hawaian are the state constitutional languages. New Mexico is the other state, where two languages (English and Spanish) are officially used in many governmental and educational activities (Dicker, 1996). The linguistic status in Puerto Rico is more complex due to its unclear political status with respect to the United States (in 1952, Puerto Rico was incorporated as an United States commonwealth). In 1991, Spanish was the official language of the island but in 1993, the governor replaced the law making both English and Spanish official languages (Dicker, 1996).

It is important to highlight the fact that among the several programs for bilingual or limited-English-proficient students in the United States, the goal is mostly to shift the student from the home, minority first language to the dominant, majority second language (Baker, 1993; Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Crawford, 1991). In short, with respect to bilingualism and bilingual education in the United Stated, as Fishman stated " . . . we cannot hope to really understand bilingualism in the United States unless we fully recognize the diversity of bilingual settings within our own country and throughout the world" (1965b, p. 228).

## Multiculturalism in the United States

To date it is unquestionable that the United States is a diverse and pluralistic society. Its citizens differ in many ways including culture, ethnicity, language(s), and religious preferences. These differences have influenced the expression of values, norms, and customs of the different immigrant groups since the foundation of the United States. At the beginning of the 1960s, the United States had approximately 1,800 ethnic cultural organizations (Fishman, 1965a).

Due to the growing multicultural student population, educators in the United States are facing the challenge of providing a meaningful education for all types of students. Teachers are becoming aware of the unquestionable need to become knowledgeable about culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and to include multicultural instruction in their classrooms. The few studies developed on multicultural education have indicated the importance of celebrating, enhancing, developing, investigating, and discussing multiculturalism through the regular curriculum (Adger, Wolfram, & Detwyler, 1993; Banks, 1993; Dean, Salend, & Taylor, 1993; Diamond & Moore, 1995). García and Malkin (1993) believe that "in order to truly understand how culture mediates school experiences, it is important to go beyond the 'tourist' curriculum," (p. 53) also called the "minority of the month" (Weil, 1993), in which only superficial topics such as food, music, geographical insights, and holidays are exhibited and discussed.

## High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students

An absence of theoretical research and practical information can be found regarding high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students. Few research studies have addressed the specific cognitive, socio-emotional, and cultural characteristics of gifted Hispanic children. Further, almost no significant studies in connection with bilingualism have been developed in gifted education among the different Hispanic subgroups.

Meier and Stewart, Jr. (1991) conducted a study on the Hispanic educational situation from 1976 to 1986. The authors proposed a theoretical explanation of the

unrecognition of talents among Hispanic students by gifted programs in the United States. This explanation is based on their "Model of Second-Generation Discrimination." According to this model, "by 1986, bilingual classes have a strong negative relationship on Hispanic assignments to gifted classes, and EMR [Educable Mentally Retarded] classes have a modest negative relationship" (Meier & Stewart, Jr., 1991, p. 170). Furthermore,

> bilingual education is highly valued by the Hispanic community and is a much larger program than EMR classes. A discriminatory school system might, therefore, have seen bilingual education as an easy way to create an Hispanic track and still retain support from the Hispanic community. Because such options are not available for Black students, the relationship between Black EMR assignments and Black gifted class enrollments remains, even when it disappears for Hispanic students. (pp. 170-171)

The second-generation discrimination study reported that "the relationship between bilingual class assignments and lack of access to gifted classes increased in strength over the ten years studied [1976-1986]" (Meier & Stewart, Jr., 1991, p. 207).

In bilingual education, Cummins (1992) described the importance of the *Ramírez Report.* This report shows that " . . . Latino students who received sustained L1 [first language] instruction throughout elementary school have better academic prospects than those who received most or all of their instruction through English" (Cummins, 1992, p. 91). The study also indicates the nonexistence of a "direct relationship between the instructional time spent through the medium of a majority language and academic achievement in that language" (p. 99).

Some studies in gifted education have described specific characteristics in the largest Hispanic subgroup, the Mexican Americans. According to Ewing and Lan Yong (1992), some of the learning style preferences and cognitive characteristics of gifted Mexican American students in middle grades are responsibility, high motivation, and kinesthetic modality. For Udall (1989), gifted Hispanic children in general have a heightened sensitivity to the world. This causes them to be "affected strongly by discrimination, racist attitudes, and conflicting values at home and school" (Udall, 1989, p. 47). Reis, Hébert, Díaz, Maxfield, and Ratley (1995) studied 35 high ability students who achieved and underachieved in an urban high school over a three year span and reported the traits of Puerto Rican high ability achievers. The traits that characterized this group were: belief in self, involvement in extracurricular activities and summer enrichment programs, and supportive adults at their high school.

In summary, the insufficient information regarding the personal and socioeducational needs of gifted, Hispanic students challenges the actual paradigms in gifted and bilingual education, and forces a new generation of researchers and practitioners in this country to focus their attention on this unrecognized student population.

# CHAPTER 3: Methods and Procedures

To conduct this study, a naturalistic and qualitative research perspective was selected. Multiple case studies were intentionally used to respond to the research questions about Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school. Although building theory from a holistic description and analysis of the sample was the main purpose of this investigation, the uniqueness of each participant was always maintained. In this chapter, the naturalistic process (sampling procedures, data collection, coding and analysis, and other procedures) is explained.

## Naturalistic Inquiry

The aim of naturalistic inquiry is "to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of working hypotheses that describe the individual case" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 38). The aim was to describe the personal and social characteristics influencing potential talents or talents and linguistic development in two languages of Hispanic elementary-aged children. In a naturalistic and qualitative case study, of particular importance is the construction of "a comprehensive, holistic portrayal of the social and cultural dimensions of a particular context" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 85).

Considering the young ages of the participants, a holistic portrayal of the phenomenon being studied was described by the students' experiences and perceptions as well as by parents' and teachers' realities. Naturalistic or qualitative research is sustained on a naturalistic paradigm. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that the naturalistic paradigm is based on the assumption of five naturalistic axioms. These axioms are:

1. Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic.
2. Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.
3. Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses are possible.
4. All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
5. Inquiry is value-bound. (p. 37)

## Case Study Research

As Borg and Gall (1989) explained:

> Most case studies are based on the premise that a case can be located that is typical of many other cases, that is, the case is viewed as an example of a class of events or a group of individuals. Once such a case has been located, it follows that in-depth observations and collection of other data about the single case can provide insights into the class of events from which the case has been drawn. (p. 402)

Multiple case studies were used to examine questions related to bilingualism and talent identification and development in an urban elementary school. The collection of extensive data produced an in-depth understanding of the phenomenological object of study. For documentation purposes: interviews, participant observation, field notes, a reflexive journal, formal and informal documentation, nonverbal cues, and projective techniques were used.

Permission to conduct the study was requested from, and granted by, an urban elementary public school. To preserve the anonymity of the locations and key informants of this investigation, pseudonyms were always used. The site for this research was an urban elementary school in the northeastern section of the United States. This school, identified by the pseudonym of Eccleston School, served a student population of 295 in grades K-5, and provided an ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) program and a gifted program. Of the total student population, 56% of the students were from a majority group (White), and approximately 44% were minorities (Hispanic being the largest culturally and linguistically diverse group, approximately 20%). Eccleston School was one of 11 elementary schools in the town that served nearly 8,400 students in grades PK-12. Approval for the study was granted by the principal of the elementary school and the district superintendent. Parent or guardian consent forms, as well as other mailings to the students' home, were sent in the adults' language of preference (English or Spanish).

## Participants

Twelve participants (six males and six females), Hispanic, bilingual students attending Eccleston School in grades 1-5 were involved in the study. Due to the nature of this study, purposeful sampling was employed to select individuals from the target population.

A high ability student was defined as one who had shown above average potential as measured by a standardized intelligence or achievement test (above the 85th percentile using local norms) during his/her school career or who had demonstrated superior performance in one or more academic areas. Additionally, the following criteria were examined to select high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students for this study:

1. the student was enrolled in a gifted program, or
2. the student evidenced superior level academic achievement by grades, teacher observation, awards or honors, or
3. the student had developed a particular talent or interest in special or extra-curricular events such as enrichment activities.

Although this study focused on the oral or communicative aspects, bilingual proficiency literacy skills were also considered. The developmental stage of each student was taken into account to determine the appropriate level of language competence. Those students eligible for the study as Spanish/English bilingual met 1 of the following 3 criteria:

1. the student had developed an intermediate or fluent Spanish/English speaking ability, or
2. the student was presently enrolled in the ESOL program in levels III, IV or V (as defined by the local public school district), or
3. the student completed the ESOL program.

A sample of eligible students was initially recommended by the ESOL teacher, regular teachers, or parents. An initial pool of 20 potential participants seemed to meet the criteria previously established. Restrictive information with respect to students' bilingualism and high abilities was given by the school. The researcher maintained brief dialogues with the students to assess their communicative language competence. Formal and informal evidence including student academic records, test information, products, teachers' evaluation logs, and a parent questionnaire (see Appendix A) were gathered and analyzed to document high ability and bilingualism. After several subsequent classifications, 12 Hispanic students

became the selected participants of this study. A total of nine families were studied since three of the students in the study were siblings of three others. Demographic information about the participants is included in Table 2. Family and parental demographic information is presented in Table 3.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was carried out by multiple qualitative research methods, strategies, and techniques, including participant observation, interviewing, and document review. In addition, supplemental gathering techniques were implemented such as: field notes and tape recording, non-verbal cues, projective techniques, photography and artifacts, questionnaires, and bilingual books, games and toys.

### Participant Observation

Participant observation was systematically reported using two tools, a purposefully designed observation form and a tape-recorder. Observations were held in school, home, and community settings. During the investigation, the researcher collected observational data from the following sites: inside and outside school facilities (especially the students' classrooms and interview settings with students, teachers, and specialists), and students' homes and neighborhoods. Parallel to the interviews, observations were conducted in the participants' classrooms to gather information of students interacting with peers and teachers. Data were collected by describing students' learning style preferences, interests, language use, and classroom participation. Persistent observations were also conducted during recess (on the playground) and lunch time, ESOL instruction, arts class, and outdoor activities.

Table 2

Student Demographics for Sex, Age, Date of Birth, Place of Birth, Hispanic Subgroup, Grade Level, and ESOL Level

| Student | Sex | Age | Date of Birth | Place of Birth | Hispanic Subgroup | Grade Level | ESOL Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adrian Escobar | M | 5 | 12/14/90 | USA | Peruvian | 1 | 3 |
| Emilio Colina | M | 6 | 07/26/90 | USA | Puerto Rican | 1 | N* |
| Juan Colina | M | 7 | 09/05/88 | USA | Puerto Rican | 3 | 4 |
| Daniel Orozco | M | 8 | 08/04/88 | USA | Puerto Rican | 3 | N |
| Julian Navarro | M | 9 | 03/11/87 | USA | Puerto Rican | 4 | 4 |
| Kristian Navarro | M | 10 | 03/13/86 | USA | Puerto Rican | 5 | N |
| Sonia Corral | F | 6 | 04/10/90 | USA | Puerto Rican | 1 | 3 |
| Nilda Orozco | F | 6 | 04/10/90 | USA | Puerto Rican | 1 | N |
| Mercedes Romero | F | 8 | 12/23/87 | USA | Puerto Rican | 4 | N |
| María Chaviano | F | 9 | 05/06/87 | USA | Dominican | 4 | N |
| Jennifer Fernández | F | 9 | 08/25/87 | USA | Puerto Rican | 4 | N |
| Carmen Gutierrez | F | 10 | 02/17/86 | USA | Colombian | 5 | N |

*N= not in program

Table 3

Family and Parental Demographics

| Student | Parents' Marital Status | Parents' Birth Place | Parents' Education | Parents' Occupation Attained | Students' Siblings | Parents' Involvement in Student's Life |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adrian | Married | M: Peru<br>F: Peru | M: High School<br>F: High School | M: Housewife<br>F: Self-employed | 1 younger M | M: Yes<br>F: Yes |
| Emilio | Not-Married | M: Puerto Rico<br>F: Puerto Rico | M: Less than H.S.<br>F: Less than H.S. | M: Paraprof.<br>F: Unemployed | 2 older M | M: Yes<br>F: Yes |
| Juan | Not-Married | M: Puerto Rico<br>F: Puerto Rico | M: Less than H.S.<br>F: Less than H.S. | M: Paraprof.<br>F: Unemployed | 1 younger M<br>1 older M | M: Yes<br>F: Yes |
| Daniel | Married | M: Puerto Rico<br>F: Puerto Rico | M: College<br>F: High School | M: Bank coord.<br>F: Maintenance supervisor | 1 younger F | M: Yes<br>F: Yes |
| Julian | Aunt (Not-Married)<br>M: Deceased<br>F: Deceased | A Puerto Rico<br>M: Puerto Rico<br>F: Puerto Rico | A: High School | A: Unemployed | 1 older M | A: Yes |
| Kristian | Aunt (Not-Married)<br>M: Deceased<br>F: Deceased | A Puerto Rico<br>M: Puerto Rico<br>F: Puerto Rico | A: High School | A: Unemployed | 1 younger M | A: Yes |
| Sonia | Not-Married | M: USA<br>F: USA | M: High School | M: College student | 1 younger M | M: Yes<br>F: No |
| Nilda | Married | M: Puerto Rico<br>F: Puerto Rico | M: College<br>F: High School | M: Bank coord.<br>F: Maintenance supervisor | 1 older M | M: Yes<br>F: No |
| Mercedes | Married | M: Puerto Rico<br>F: Puerto Rico | M: High School<br>F: Less than H.S. | M: Secretary<br>F: Roofer | 1 younger M | M: Yes<br>F: Yes |
| María | Married | M: Dominican Rep.<br>F: Dominican Rep. | M: High School<br>F: Less than H.S. | M: Housewife<br>F: Parking employee | 1 younger M | M: Yes<br>F: Yes |
| Jennifer | Married | M: Puerto Rico<br>F: Puerto Rico | M: High School<br>F: Less than H.S. | M: Employee<br>F: A/C Car installer | 1 younger M | M: Yes<br>F: Yes |
| Carmen | Divorced | M: Colombia<br>F: Colombia | M: High School<br>F: Less than H.S. | M: U.S. Postal clerk<br>F: Assembly worker | Only child | M: Yes<br>F: No |

## Interviewing

The researcher developed an interview protocol for the students (see Appendix B), an interview protocol for parents or tutors, and an interview protocol with specific questions for the regular teachers, the ESOL teacher, the school district gifted coordinator and teacher, the specialists, and the principal. Although the protocols were written in English, interviews were also conducted in Spanish. The researcher's bilingualism (Spanish/English) enabled the interviews to be conducted in either of the two languages. At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked their preference of language. Almost all parents preferred Spanish (sometimes one parent spoke in Spanish and the other in English or they switched languages during the interview). Preferences among students varied widely between each session but the majority were inclined to select Spanish. Of all the school personnel,



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English was the language chosen. Only one classroom teacher was Spanish-English bilingual (in this case the interview was held using both languages).

The researcher conducted several interviews with each participant to obtain a more complete understanding of the experiences of Hispanic students in an urban elementary school. Initially, general questions centered around knowledge about themselves, their families, their languages, and their interests. The students were encouraged to express themselves freely either by talking about a topic of interest or by playing with materials in *"a special box."* This box was purposefully prepared by the researcher and contained some toys and materials (clay, markers, crayons, papers, colored pencils, glue, scissors, colored papers, blocks, little toys) that the researcher presented to the students. This particular approach was very effective in making young students more comfortable with the interview process. As the study progressed, general questions enabled the development of more specific questions.

Throughout the interviews, participants' responses, as well as parents' and school personnel's responses, continually provided rich information that enabled the construction of possible categories, and instilled in the researcher a deeper understanding of the 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students.

## Document Review

Several types of official and unofficial documents (including school brochures, memos, meeting agendas, notes from students, teachers, and parents, speeches and presentation announcements, statistical output, demographic reports, school district brochures, students' school records, tests, students' work) were collected, systematically catalogued, and analyzed.

## Supplemental Data Gathering Techniques

The implementation of multiple alternative techniques enhanced the accuracy of the collection, interpretation and trustworthiness of this qualitative research.

- *Field Notes and Tape Recording:* field notes consisted primarily of data collected daily from interviews, observations, conversations, and descriptions of the participants and events. To record field notes, a written account of observations was made and events were systematically tape recorded. A small micro-cassette tape recorder was utilized to tape interviews with the participants, families, and school staff.

- *Non-Verbal Cues:* The researcher used non-verbal communication techniques such as proxemics and kinesics to acquire information through nonlinguistic signs. For example, both proxemics and kinesics were used to note that differences existed in the greeting of many participants, which were culturally conditioned by the adults. With teachers, the appropriate, way to greet was to shake hands. With parents and other family members, hugs and kisses were the usual modality (Hispanic characteristic). Many participants adopted the Hispanic modality to greet the researcher when they recognized that she was also from this cultural group.

- *Projective Techniques:* A battery of tests was administered to the participants. Instructions were given in English and Spanish to avoid participants' misunderstanding or anxiety; and they were allowed to respond

in their language of preference. The analysis of the results of this battery of tests helped the researcher to have a better understanding of each student's personality, psychological developmental age-appropriateness, and socio-emotional configuration.

- *Photography and Artifacts:* Photographs were used to document and study specific situations and settings that required more than a single viewing, such as the school building and facilities, the school and students' neighborhoods, and artifacts in the school. The researcher also kept records of the students' description of artifacts.

- *Questionnaires:* The participants' classroom teachers (from the current school year and the prior school year) completed a questionnaire developed by the researcher (see Appendix C). This questionnaire was composed of six general items. A bilingual parents questionnaire was also created. This questionnaire included four items. Both questionnaires asked respondents about their knowledge of students' interests, talents, and bilingualism. Results are summarized in Chapter Five, Table 7.

- *Bilingual Books, Games, and Toys:* A selection of literacy material such as books and cards, as well as games and toys, were carefully employed for this study. Most of the materials were used to explore students' cognitive and linguistic competencies. Selected material was age-appropriate, attractive, and varied. With the books, participants were asked different tasks: read, describe, explain, translate, and solve problems.

The core category is the "central phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). The following criteria, suggested by Strauss (1987), were used in this investigation to verify the use of a particular category as a core category:

- It was a central core related to most other categories more than any other category.
- It appeared frequently in the data.
- It related easily to other categories.
- It has clear implications for a more general theory.
- As the details of the core category emerge through analysis, the theory advances.
- The core category enables the researcher to build maximum variation to the analysis as the researcher uses the coding paradigm.

## Integrative Diagrams

According to Strauss (1987), integrative diagrams serve several functions including the integration of what is known, contributing to analytic security, stimulating the researcher to follow through on the implications of the diagram, clarifying what is not known and finally, acting as a touchstone, allowing the researcher to relate new advances to previous analysis. In this research, the holistic perspective of the phenomenon being studied is depicted in a diagram shown in Figure 1. This integrative diagram emerged after numerous working drafts, peer debriefing, and throughout various phases of the study.

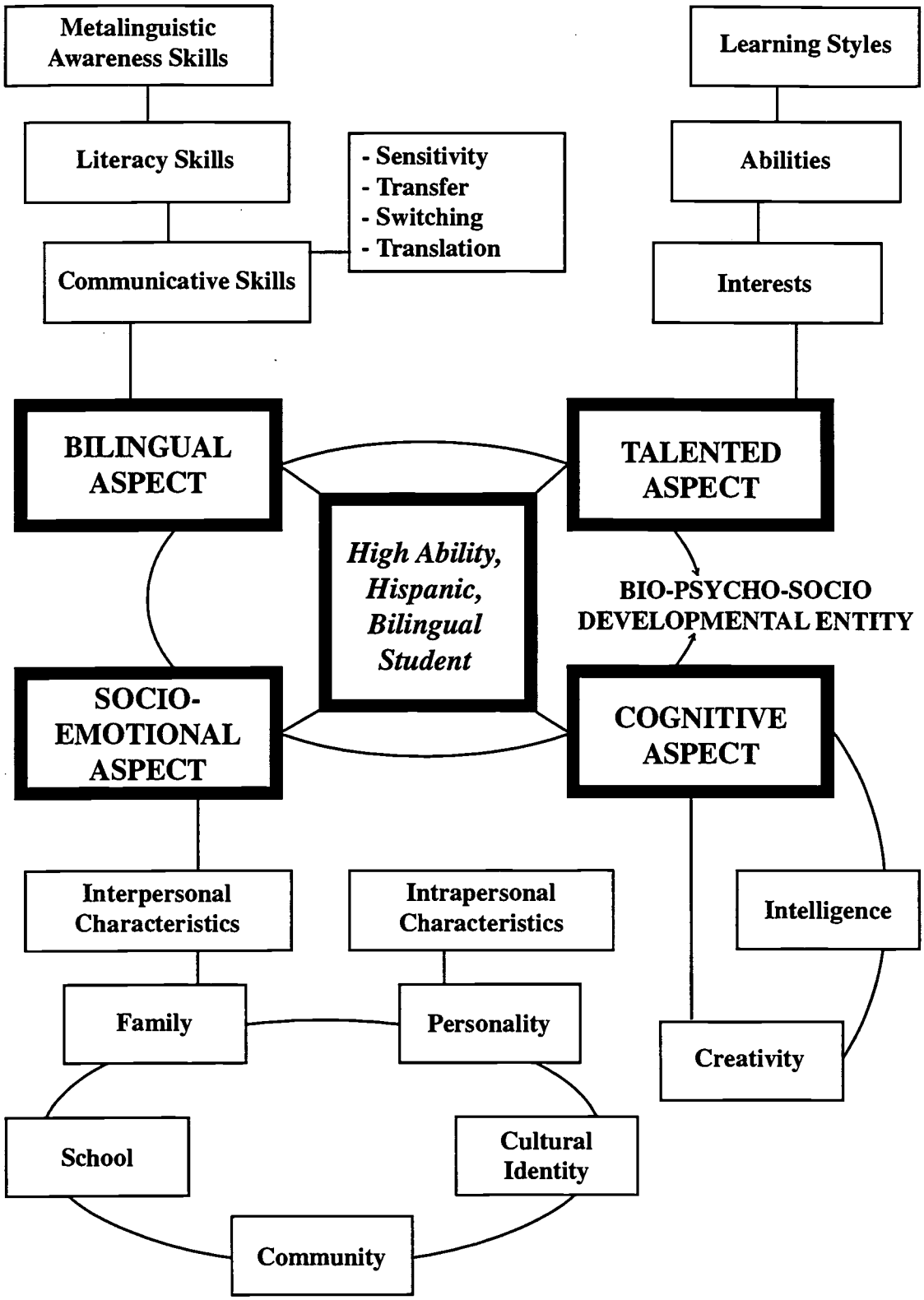


Figure 1. Holistic perspective of the phenomenological object of study.

## The Development of Grounded Theory

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained, in the naturalistic paradigm, theory emerges from (is grounded in) the data gathering "because no a priori theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered" (p. 41). This scientific paradigm is purposefully designed to construct reality from data and illuminate the area under study; in this case, the manifestation of intellectual and linguistic abilities of elementary-aged, Hispanic, bilingual children. Accordingly, all of the steps in the collection, coding, and analysis described in this chapter were involved in the organization of the ideas emerging from data analyses into complex and integrated "grounded hypotheses" (Borg & Gall, 1989). Considering the scattered literature in gifted and bilingual education with respect to high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students, the formulation of grounded hypotheses may build theory in these particular fields and eventually be applied to other contexts. The grounded theory is presented in Chapter Six.

## Summary

Qualitative methods were used to examine the complex traits involved in talent development, bilingualism, and culture among high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban setting. The inability to recognize personal and socio-cultural characteristics among high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students was analyzed. Also, as promoters of language and skill competencies, essential information was collected and analyzed from school and home environments. The naturalistic paradigm bases its holistic assumption on the description and understanding of multiple realities: "There is not a single objective reality but multiple realities of which the researcher must be aware. Extended research leads to a rich awareness of divergent realities rather than to convergence on a single reality" (Erlandson et al., 1993, pp. 11-12). Data collection and analysis moved simultaneously, and explanations were developing and being verified.

# CHAPTER 4: Profiles

The following chapter provides a description of the town, school, and community. The particular features and characteristics of these physical and socio-cultural settings provide essential information regarding the environments in which the participants interact. Also, this chapter includes descriptive case studies of two male and two female Hispanic students of the 12 participants. Information about the participants' personal and cultural characteristics, as well as their school and home experiences is included.

## Town and School Profiles

The town of Westview is located in the central part of one of the smallest states in the United States. Although the state is only 5,009 square miles (less than 60 miles north to south, and approximately 100 miles across), its diverse shapes and forms are expressed in its landscape as well as the people. As one of the 13 original colonies, the town of Westview was incorporated in the late 16th century by a group of Anglican settlers. In those days the town was mainly rural (approximately 22.2 sq. miles). But in the last few centuries, the town quickly became one of the largest and most highly populated in the state. Today, the town of Westview is considered an attractive suburban area to live in for people working in the capital and the nearby towns. It is also distinguished by an active commercial and industrial area. Although the town is characterized by its preservation of traditions and customs from the first settlers in this part of the nation, the arrival of newcomers from all over the world, including French, Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Poles, and people from Hispanic origin groups permanently enriched and transformed this region.

The education system in Westview was comprised of 15 public schools (11 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 2 high schools), and 15 non-public schools. The public school district served nearly 87% of the total school population in the 1995-96 school year. The Westview school district profile for the 1995-96 school year showed that of the total district staff personnel (including teachers, administrators, and other professionals), only 1.4% were from a minority group. Of the 11 elementary schools, 6 of them had no culturally and linguistically diverse staff personnel, even though about 23% of the total student population in the district came from CLD homes.

Eccleston School was located in the southeast section of Westview. The surrounding residential area was safe enough for children to walk to school or play on the playground (always with adult supervision). Although the building was built in 1931, walls, floors, ceilings, and furniture were in very good condition, and its many rooms were wide with high ceilings. The school's appearance was very neat, clean, and well-organized on the inside and outside.

Most classrooms were flexibly arranged with desks usually forming small groups of four students, a board at the front, and a space for gathering on the floor when the whole class was grouped. Also, the classrooms had specific areas where interest-centers were located. Additionally, small tables and chairs were used in many occasions for students' group projects, ESOL instruction, and special education sessions.

In general, the tone of the classrooms was of excitement and joy but in control and not too loud. During the study, incidents of aggression, violence, or rebellion did not occur. Teachers occasionally raised their voices (most often disruptions developed in the cafeteria), but conflict resolution techniques were usually utilized. These classroom management

techniques allowed for a positive school environment, and appeared to be beneficial for teaching-learning experiences.

Eccleston School personnel included 15 certified classroom teachers, 1 principal, and approximately 22 additional professional and staff personnel. The school had an enrollment of 294 students in K-5 grade levels for the 1995-96 school year. The student population by race or ethnicity was as followed: 56.1% Whites, 19.7% Hispanics, 12.2% Asian Americans, 11.9% Blacks. Other important demographic data concerning Eccleston School are described in Table 4.

A test called, the State Mastery Test (SMT) measures students' proficiency in three fundamental academic areas: reading, writing, and mathematics. The test is given statewide to students in fourth, sixth, and eighth grades. Three assessment levels were established: performance at a level indicating a need for remediation, proficiency level, and the state goal: excellence. Very often, schools prepare students for taking the tests by practicing and reviewing the skills and concepts on the test before the testing date, and asking parents to help students at home.

Table 4

Facts and Demographics of Eccleston School—1995-96

| Facts and Demographics |
| --- |
| Approximately 33.3% of the student population received free/reduced-priced meals (the highest percentage in the school district). |
| Eccleston had the lowest student enrollment (294 students) from K-5 in the district. The school lost approximately 73 students during the 1994-95 school year. |
| Of the total school population, 44% of the students came from a CLD group. |
| Eccleston had the highest percentage of Hispanic students in the 11 elementary schools in the district. It shared the highest percentage of Asian Americans students in the district with another school. |
| Only two staff members represented a CLD group (in 1996 the school had two Hispanics: one school teacher and one art teacher). |
| The school had one school teacher which was bilingual (Spanish-English). |

In each of the three academic areas on the 1996 SMT, Eccleston scores were the lowest in the school district. The figures for previous years (for which data are available), vary slightly, but show the same type of discrepancy among fourth graders SMT scores at Eccleston School and those at other schools in the district. This situation was very frustrating for the school personnel, and the principal was looking forward to increasing these scores in the 1997 SMT by emphasizing the test skills throughout the curriculum and implementing a training process for students taking the test. From the school staff's perspective, the characteristics of the student population at Eccleston School such as low socioeconomic level, large number of culturally and linguistically diverse students, dysfunctional families, and ESOL students were some of the variables causing these low scores. Of the 15 certified teachers interviewed, only two teachers reflected on their own teaching as something to be reevaluated. The main objectives for the following school year were: (a) to increase students' academic achievement, and (b) to achieve higher scores in the SMT.

Eccleston School used a multi-disciplinary team approach to make decisions on educational strategies, curriculum development, activities and events coordination, as well as students' academic performance and special needs. Teams were formed depending on the task involved. For educational purposes, the principal, the curriculum specialist, the classroom teachers, and the ESOL and gifted teachers met regularly. Other special and support services personnel (School Psychologist, Speech Pathologist, Basic Skills and Early Intervention teachers, Media Specialist, and a School Nurse) were regularly consulted and assisted in specific cases. The school was organized in "school families." Students were grouped by appropriate age/grade level. However, the structure of three K-2 families and two 3-5 families allowed for multi-aged learning activities and flexible grouping. Students were multi-aged for morning meetings, choice centers, journal writing, and science, social studies, and health units. Language Arts and Math were usually aged-group activities. Students remained in their school families for three years, then in third grade they were reassigned to one of the two 3-5 families up to graduation. Class sizes ranged from 17 to 20 at the K-2 level and 18 to 24 at the 3-5 level. Classroom teachers at each grade level worked collaboratively in their school family. Each school family staff designed its curriculum and decided the modalities in which it was going to be implemented in the classroom.

## ESOL (English for Students of Other Languages) Program

At Eccleston School, although 35 students were officially identified as needing assistance in English as a Second Language, the ESOL teacher served 38 students. The ESOL teacher was a certified teacher and had a Master's in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). She was a kind and friendly person, and was always willing to assist students and colleagues.

The ESOL students in the school, divided by race/ethnicity, were as follows: 4 Whites, 2 African Americans, 13 Hispanics, 15 Asian Americans, 2 Indians, and 2 Persians. Students were from all grade levels but mostly fourth grade (10 students), and were performing at different ESOL levels: 4 students in level 5, 16 students in level 4, 15 students in level 3, 2 students in level 2, and 1 student in level 1.

The ESOL teacher developed her instruction based on the multi-disciplinary teachers' curriculum and daily plan of activities. It was an "inclusion" program in which students were serviced within the regular classroom. Usually, the ESOL lessons took between 30 to 45 minutes, and the teacher met with her students between three to five times per week. If the students were at a high ESOL level, the teacher tried to relate her lessons to units and lessons that were taking place in the classroom. Most of the work was developed

in the classrooms or in hallways and in small groups. Eccleston ESOL program did not use ESOL workbooks. An ESOL report card was sent to the ESOL students' homes twice a year.

### Gifted Program

Although the state did not mandate programs for gifted and talented students, the school district of Westview provided gifted education in each elementary school. There were no state funds allocated specifically for gifted services. The 4 year old gifted program in the town started with no financial support from the state. Also, the state did not require special training or endorsement for teachers working with gifted students, but the Westview school district had a curriculum specialist in the area who supervised the general gifted program of the schools and developed in-service training for the gifted teachers. The school district gave gifted education services to 13 schools in the town. In 1996, the gifted program identified 395 students. The total number of gifted students for the school district by race/ethnicity was: 369 Whites, 16 Asian Americans, 6 Hispanics, 3 African Americans and 1 Native American.

The gifted program served students that demonstrated high academic achievement. For the 1995-96 school year, 18 students were officially identified and served in the gifted and talented program at Eccleston School. Of these 18 students, 12 students were coming from a mainstream family, and 6 students were from minority families. At the beginning of the study, no Hispanic students were identified for the gifted program.

There was a nomination process involving different criteria, but the main two criteria were teacher nomination and gifted teacher nomination. The group of identified high ability students formed the "Talent Pool." Students were pulled out from their regular classrooms, and they developed activities and projects in their strength areas or interest topics. Finishing the school year, the students served by the gifted program presented their "Type III" projects (independent or small group investigations) to the school. The gifted program, based on the Schoolwide Enrichment Program (Renzulli & Reis, 1985; 1997) focused on students' interests and abilities by creating a challenging and exciting learning environment. Children were exposed to: (a) interest topics and subject areas; (b) visits of knowledgeable and expert people from the community; and (c) critical and creative thinking and problem solving training. In addition, Eccleston school provided enrichment opportunities and advanced skills development activities for all students in what the school called, "Schools of Talent."

## Case Studies of Four Participants

### Juan Colina

Juan was an adorable third grade student, with beautiful dark eyes and a lovely smile that welcomed the researcher to every session. He always displayed humor, and showed enthusiasm in new activities and remembering past conversations. Juan never forgot interview days or times. He looked disappointed if the session needed to be rescheduled for any reason. He was very charming and seemed to enjoy pleasing others.

Although economic difficulties existed, Juan's parents managed to provide what their children needed. They wanted better opportunities for their children. Both parents agreed that a good education, a safe environment, and an affective family were essential for their children's development. Also, they considered it to be very important to keep their children

in touch with their family in Puerto Rico. Every two years, the family visited their relatives on the island, and family members from the island came to the United States every year. During the year, they maintained the relationship by phone calls. The children talked with their cousins and aunts, and they loved to spent their vacations in Puerto Rico.

During the study, Juan displayed his fluency in speaking and reading in Spanish and English. He had good pronunciation, rich vocabulary, and adequate grammar. He enjoyed speaking in Spanish, but he did not hesitate to change to English. Juan understood and maintained a fluent and meaningful conversation in either of the two languages. In his first year at Eccleston school, he was tested for ESOL services at the beginning of 3rd grade. The ESOL teacher reported that although he scored as a "fluent English speaker," he needed reading and writing support. The ESOL teacher kept him in the ESOL program and helped him with these linguistic areas during the entire school year. The last ESOL report evaluated him in the "advanced level."

Juan was an avid reader in both languages. For example, after reading several stories in Spanish, he was able to comment on each of them, demonstrating not only his reading abilities but also his knowledge and understanding ("Anita y los tres osos," "El tesoro escodindo del capital Tifón," and "Veo-veo. Un libro de adivinanzas ilustradas"). In interviews, Juan showed particular interest in the "Ready to read activity box" (identification of words and objects in Spanish), two books with pictures and riddles, and a game ("¿Dónde está Wally? El magnífico libro poster").

Juan did his kindergarten, first, and second grades in an urban school, and his reading records from K-2 showed very high scores in every reading skill, especially on decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension (above the grade level). He had "excellent" development in all academic areas, mastering skills with high scores. His attendance at school during his 2nd grade was perfect. He had outstanding achievement in spelling, art, and physical education. His teachers reported that Juan was an easy going student, always eager to please.

Juan showed an avid need for new experiences. He chose "Invention Convention" as the school of talent that he seemed to enjoy. He loved to read and write, and his hand writing was very neat and well-organized. He liked to read poems and also to write them. He read some of his favorite poems during sessions. Juan had the desire to write, but he needed support to turn that potential into a productive ability. He had not yet been taught the skills, given the time to explore and practice, or been exposed to good literature to be able to develop a quality and creative product.

### Kristian Navarro

Kristian was the last student to be chosen for the study. Nobody in the school seemed to be able to give a complete description of Kristian's academic and social development, and could not even indicate if he was bilingual. His school file indicated that in 1994 Kristian was nominated to participate in a gifted program. He was identified as a gifted student by his regular teacher. Kristian was the only child in the study that had been identified as gifted in elementary school. At that time, Kristian was attending school in the midwest at a multilingual-multicultural school. Teachers' reports from this school were written in English and Spanish, such as the following report written by his 3rd grade teacher in Spanish to Kristian's mother. It said:

> I would like to refer Kristian to the program for academically talented students. If he is accepted, he will do his 3rd grade at Wallace school. I need to talk to you in order to have your permission, and explain the program. Kristian needs to be placed

in a program that could challenge and accelerate him. Very soon, he will start reading the first book given in 3rd grade. I need to refer him now so please call the school. (Translation)

Kristian completed 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade at the multilingual school, where he was considered an above average student in most academic areas. He did language arts in his native language, Spanish, and excelled in mathematics, science, social studies, as well as music and computer. For example, his music teacher described him as "an enthusiastic music student." Kristian also had ESOL instruction that was rated "satisfactory" from 1st to 3rd grade. When he was in 2nd grade, he learned to read in English and Spanish. Unfortunately, the same year he was progressing so well in school and was nominated for participation in the gifted program, his mother died of cancer. By 1995, he moved to the east coast and finished his 4th grade at Westview. He also started to misbehave in class and his academic performance decreased. Kristian's teacher said he, "needs improvement" in assuming responsibilities. Yet, this objective was not achieved by the adults surrounding him, either. Kristian and Julian, his young brother, shared a dramatic childhood experience that affected both children very much. Teachers indicated no awareness of their family situation, and death of their mother (even though some information could be found in their school file). Kristian and Julian were not provided counseling, psychological assistance, or tutoring in any of the schools they attended. Their move to live with their aunt made them change schools again. During the study, Kristian was in 5th grade at Eccleston, and had adjusted to the new teachers and peers. His school life was very busy with regular and extracurricular activities.

Kristian had a native speaker's comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar in both languages. He switched and translated between the two languages naturally. Although he did not have a language preference, he often spoke in Spanish during sessions. His bilingualism was evaluated by using different games and books as well as switching languages for conversation purposes.

Among Kristian's interests and abilities, were sports, especially soccer although he had recently hurt one of his legs. He also participated in the orchestra, playing the trombone and he was very excited about it. His music teacher was delighted with Kristian's music performance. Kristian once expressed to his teacher that he liked salsa, and he wanted to know how to play that "type" of music. In addition, he was taking art and folk dance classes after school. Kristian was an avid reader who checked an average of 10 books out of the library per month. He was an above average student in all academic areas, especially in mathematics. Kristian's activities both in and out of school displayed his interests and abilities. His participation in extracurricular activities also provided him with opportunities for enjoyment and challenge.

### María Chaviano

María was a charming girl with lots of dreams for her life. She was very verbal and loved to talk during the interviews. She was also very affectionate. She spontaneously came running to hug, kiss, and smile at people she loved. Because of her outgoing personality, she easily adjusted to new situations. She was trustworthy, compassionate, and sensitive. María was a good friend and cooperated well with her classmates. Her teachers and her mother described María as a hard worker, task committed, energetic, and eager to learn new things. She was also a good listener and participated in school activities. María was humorous and her social skills were among her personal strengths.

María was born in 1987 in the United States, and lived with her parents and a younger, three year old brother. María's parents were born in Dominican Republic. María's

father had two jobs, one as a parking lot attendent and another in a company. Her mother was unemployed. The family was of the middle socioeconomic class. The family had a close relationship with relatives in the Dominican Republic, as they called every week and they visited them every year. María enjoyed going to the Dominican Republic, where she found new and interesting things to do there on vacation. She loved the weather, the music, and food. She expressed her desire to live in the Dominican Republic sometime. When she was five months old, her mother took her to the Dominican Republic and left María with her grandparents. They raised her until she was one. María's family was living on the east coast. They moved from a big city to Westview looking for a peaceful place to live.

María learned to speak at that time, Spanish first, but when she entered a daycare, she began to learn English and Spanish simultaneously. María and her family spoke both languages at home, but they preferred to speak Spanish. María demonstrated her bilingual fluency not only in the oral but also in the reading domain. She switched languages naturally, and she translated material, too. She had a broad vocabulary, excellent pronunciation, and complete comprehension in both languages. Of the bilingual material implemented during the study, María played the "Ready to read activity box," and she was able to read and identify all objects in Spanish. She played two games with pictures and riddles. María also perfectly read a story in English and Spanish, "Somos un Arcoiris/We are a Rainbow." She showed not only her reading skills in both languages but also her understanding of the story. She also related her story to her own life.

The battery of tests characterized María as a child with potential on the socio-emotional and cognitive areas. Her drawings and scores in the Bender test were above the expectations for a child her age. During the tests, she was confident, concentrated and in control, and had good use of materials and fine motor skills. María's drawings were complex, with many details and very creative. She displayed beauty and harmony. Overall, María was a young girl with normal physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive development.

Although María was considered an average student by her teacher, she made great efforts to improve herself. The teacher said, "María is a hardworking student who is kind and considerate of others. She has a good understanding of the concepts taught." By the end of 3rd grade, she was described as an average student with excellent performance in vocal music, physical education, and art. María's art teacher commented, "She has strong skills and loves to create. María has great potential to be very successful in art."

Among María's interests and talents was music, and she started flute lessons at school. Her father bought her the flute with economic sacrifice. She expressed a feeling of responsibility to do well in music so as not to disappoint her parents after they had made such a great sacrifice to get her the flute. María once expressed her interest in becoming an actress (she sometimes looked and behaved as one). She was always smiling, with good humor, and liked to played with her friends. Her teacher remarked, "During cooperative activities María is a natural team player." In art, María continued to produce superior work. Her art teacher indicated: "María is a talented artist. She takes great care and pride in her work. She consistently gives 100% and has a nice unique style." In music, her teacher reported that María was an excellent student, very enthusiastic and hard working. She had music talent, a beautiful singing voice, and was regarded as a delight to teach. Teachers and her mother described her also as very verbal, with very good communication skills that allowed her to interact easily with people and be socially accepted among her peers.

**Carmen Gutierrez**

In the process of selecting students for this study, a 4th grade teacher was asked for information about possible candidates in her classroom. After explaining to the teacher that

the children needed to be not only Hispanics but bilinguals, she was uncertain whether any of her 13 Hispanic students also spoke Spanish. Carmen was one of her brightest students in the classroom, and she was Hispanic. But when the teacher was questioned about Carmen's bilingualism, she said very confidently: "Oh, no. I don't think she is bilingual, her English is perfect!" Finally, the teacher asked the student, "Carmen, do you speak Spanish at home?" Carmen's response was affirmative. Carmen not only was bilingual, but she was a native speaker in English and Spanish. Her Spanish was outstanding with a Colombian pronunciation and style. Her family came from Cali, Colombia. Carmen enjoyed communicating in Spanish. She had excellent pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. The primary language spoken at home was Spanish. Spanish was also the first language Carmen learned how to speak, and she was a fluent speaker and reader in both languages. She switched languages, transferred knowledge, and translated material. Her mother and aunt came to the United States knowing very little English, and although they preferred to speak Spanish, they spoke only English at work. Carmen's mother took English classes to learn the language when she first arrived in the United States. The family watched TV in both languages, but the adults usually read in Spanish.

Carmen started to learn how to write in Spanish with the help of her mother and aunt. She was really motivated to learn how to write in Spanish. She already knew how to write in English. During the sessions, Carmen demonstrated her reading skills in the two languages. She read and commented on a bilingual story, "Hairs-Pelitos." She also shared her own compositions written in English.

Carmen had personal and cognitive characteristics that made her in a sense "very special." She was very mature for her age, respectful, sensitive, and caring. She had a strong bond with her mother and aunt. Carmen had an excellent sense of humor, a positive attitude, and was cheerful. Her teachers and mother portrayed Carmen as a hard worker, task committed, and always willing to do her best. She took pride in doing her best work at school as well as being a good daughter. Among her peers, she was considered a good friend and assumed a leadership role. She loved to work in groups and to socialize. Carmen was very cooperative and an eager learner. Her 4th grade teacher said, "She is very intelligent. She is a great role model and leader for young children."

In 4th grade, she was transferred to Eccleston school (1995-96). She took the SMT that school year, and did above the statewide goal in mathematics and reading. Carmen was still excelling as an above average student in almost all academic areas. Also, Carmen had a positive attitude towards school. This attitude gave her strength to succeed in her cognitive and social development. In the classroom, she was doing more higher level problem solving in mathematics. In the arts, she displayed quality work and creative ideas, and had excellent performance in vocal and instrumental music.

Carmen was multifaceted with respect to her interests and talents. Academically, she had displayed above average academic performance in math and language arts since first grade. She started reading and writing in kindergarten. Carmen also enjoyed sports. Basketball and ice hockey were her favorite sports (she watched games on TV and knew the players' names). She was fluently bilingual in Spanish and English, and she had a personal interest in learning how to write in Spanish. For her enrichment Schools of Talent activity (1995-96), she chose to attend "Publishing Firm," and was able to develop creative activities and projects as well as her writing skills. The following school year, Carmen attended the same school of talent to continue her work on that topic. Carmen's mother cared very much about her daughter's education and future career, and she was not happy about the school. She thought the school program did not challenge Carmen's interests and abilities, and in a way, that was also Carmen's perception of school.

# CHAPTER 5: Results and Core Categories

This study examined the personal characteristics and the home, school, and community environments of 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual elementary students. In addition, there was an attempt to describe how the participants' family and school experiences influenced the identification and development of talents and bilingualism in each participant. This chapter presents the analysis of the information gathered during this study and includes six sections that correspond to the research questions guiding this investigation.

## Research Question 1

*What factors in the home and school environment appear to support academic achievement, talent development and bilingual acquisition in high ability, Hispanic, bilingual children in an urban environment?*

The home and school environments of the participants played essential roles in their socio-emotional and cognitive development. Due to the young age of the participants, parents', teachers', and significant others' attitudes, behaviors, and decisions, rather than willingness or personal motivation, appeared to determine the participants' development of talents and bilingualism.

### Home Factors

The factors identified as influencing participants' cognitive and linguistic development were emotional support, family values, strong maternal role, Hispanic legacy, and maintenance of the Spanish language. It should be noted that regardless of gender, age, or Hispanic subcultural group (Puerto Rican, Colombian, Peruvian, or Dominican), these factors were identified as contributing to the participants' socio-linguistic and intellectual development; however, the factors differed in importance for each participant. The main family characteristics are divided into subcategories, and the manner in which they affected each of the 12 participants are depicted in Table 5.

#### Emotional Support

The participants received emotional support from three main sources: parents, siblings, and extended family members, especially grandparents and aunts. For many participants, a close relationship with some family members was sustained even if these family members were not living in the United States. Meaningful experiences were recounted and positive memories were described by most of these young children with respect to the caring and affection demonstrated by their grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. It is often assumed when talking about "a family," that the description refers to the immediate family and the roles of the parents and children. However, for some of the Hispanic families, this might not necessarily be the case. For example, when asked to draw their "families," four participants of Puerto Rican descent ended up by drawing between 9 to 13 family members, giving their names, explaining where they were living and their relationship to the participant.

Table 5

Case-Ordered Descriptive Meta Matrix: Family Characteristics and Student Impact

| Student Name | Adrian | Emilio and Juan | Daniel and Nilda | Julian and Kristian | Sonia | María | Mercedes | Jennifer | Carmen |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional Support | | | | | | | | | |
| Mother | ● | ● | ● | ○* | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Father | ● | ✹ | ● | ○ | ○ | ● | ✹ | ● | ✳ |
| Siblings | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | N/A |
| Extended Family | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● |
| Family Values | | | | | | | | | |
| Respect | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| "Be Good" | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| "Family First" | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ✹ | ● | ✹ | ✹ | ● |
| Education | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| "See the World" | ● | ● | ● | ✳ | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● |
| "Be Someone" | ● | ✹ | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Strong Maternal Role | ● | ● | ● | ●* | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Hispanic Legacy | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ✹ | ● |
| Spanish Maintenance | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ✳ | ✳ | ● |

● Strongly present
✹ Partially present
✳ Weakly present
○ Absent
N/A Not applicable

Aunt role (mother deceased)*

The 9 Hispanic families manifested their emotional support of the participants by physical contact, such as kissing, holding hands, and hugging. However, these affectionate behaviors were only carried out between family members, friends, and people known well by the families, usually from the Hispanic community.

## Family Values

The following family characteristics were identified in the 9 Hispanic families.

- *Respect, or "Respeto"* (in Spanish): has to do with being considerate of authority. Respect could be best described in decision-making circumstances in which a child praises the decisions and beliefs of adults, especially his or her parents. Of particular importance for parents was that their children respect elderly people, and in the 9 families great importance was placed on respecting one's grandparents.

- *"Be Good" or "Ser Bueno":* is a concept that could be described as the caring, sharing, and humanitarian attitude of one human being toward another. For the Hispanic families in the study, "to be good" went beyond this conception, and it was intimately related with a more spiritual aspect, meaning to be a good person "in heart and soul." Parents in the study were proud of their children's accomplishments, but nothing was more valuable for these parents than to be able to say things like, "my child is a good one," "my child has a good heart and he is a nice kid" ("mi hijo es un buen niño, tiene buen corazón y es muy lindo"), "my daughter has very good principles, she is growing very nice, clean" or "my child is a good boy, he has a good heart."

- *"Family First":* a strong belief that the family comes "first" before any other personal or social considerations. The parents consistently advocated for the preservation and development of the cultural and linguistic characteristics of their families. Every member of the family was considered a valuable and an indispensable feature who behaved and thought for him or herself, but who also existed in a family unit, respecting family expectations and rules.

- *Education:* is one of the most powerful forces in human development, recognized and valued by most cultures and societies. For the 9 Hispanic families, education was a valuable and highly regarded priority. Parents acknowledged that a good education would result in better career and job opportunities for their children in the future. For most of the parents, the education provided at school was part of an extended education provided by the family, the community, and other significant persons influencing their children's lives.

- *"See the World":* All the participants had visited their parents' countries of origin at least once. The participants either traveled with their parents and siblings or a relative, such as an aunt or uncle. Also, these 9 families had extended families in Central and South America, including grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. On average, the participants had already taken between three to five trips from the United States to visit relatives. According to the parents in the study, these trips were essential for the fluent communication within the family, the appreciation of their culture and ethnic background, and the maintenance of their Spanish language skills. Parents also believed the children gained a wider world view by directly experiencing new places, people, and customs.

- *"Be Someone":* A relevant factor identified as a family value for the families was to "be someone" in this life. Several parents reflected on their own histories, sacrifices and dreams, which had now been transmitted to their children. Overall, the socioeconomic situation of each family had gradually improved from one generation to the next. The strong belief in "being someone" and the effort to pursue goals in the United States were identified by first and second generation of Hispanic immigrants. Some parents were nostalgic about their countries of origin, and thought of what they were missing by living in the United States. A few parents expressed a desire to return to their homelands one day. Criticisms about both the United States and their countries of origin were also expressed.

## Strong Maternal Role

A strong maternal presence was evident in all the Hispanic families. A number of common personal characteristics were demonstrated by the participants' mothers, regardless of age, socioeconomic background, subcultural Hispanic identity or educational level: affection, protection, perseverance, commitment, hard work, optimism, acceptance, and transference of rules, values, and traditions. These personal characteristics, among others, contributed to each family's preservation and influenced the emotional and cognitive development of the participants. Most of the mothers had good childhood experiences living in the United States or abroad. According to some of the mothers, their own parents were immigrants to the United States, and were not very well educated. Spanish was their native language, and their socioeconomic conditions were very limited.

The majority of the participants' mothers described their own mothers as being decisive, protective, and hard working. In general, parents agreed that their own mothers were the ones who had encouraged them to maintain their cultural and linguistic identity in the United States. As Hispanics and bilinguals, parents transmitted these family values to their own children.

Although most of the participants' mothers claimed that their lives were very busy and that sometimes they felt exhausted, they expressed no regrets about being in charge of the house and children. As indicated in the "Family First" section, for the Hispanic women their priorities, dedication, and pride were firmly placed in the family. Carmen's mother explained:

> As a Hispanic person, . . . I consider the time I dedicate to my daughter very important. I teach her how to cook. In the future, she will see herself as a woman, as a Hispanic woman. Hispanic women are more dedicated to their families. They work, study, or do things out of the house, but they never forget to do their job at home. I've always liked to keep and preserve the family's values. (Translation)

Fathers were also present in some, but not all, of the participants' lives. All the participants who had fathers described the relationship as close, open, and affectionate. The father figure was frequently connected to work and family economy. But the fathers also played an important role in: (a) the education of their children; (b) the development of Spanish language skills; (c) the transmission of their Hispanic heritage; and (d) the relationship with relatives abroad.

## Hispanic Legacy

Cultural and linguistic factors characterize people's identities and create a legacy passed from one generation to another. All the participants were United States citizens, but while some were third-generation United States-resident Hispanics, the majority were first-generation, with parents born outside the United States. When parents were asked, what it meant for them to be Hispanics, they all expressed pride in their cultural and linguistic background. An aunt said:

> I am proud to be Hispanic. We have some problems for being Hispanics but I don't let that to bother me. I think one should know herself, and fight for her rights. I don't care what other people think about me, it is their problem, not mine. For me, to be Hispanic is to have my language, Spanish. Spanish is innate in me, as well as being Puerto Rican. (Translation)



ERIC

Historical events, political situations, traditions, customs (food, music, and dances), religions, national celebrations, and Spanish dialects from the parents' homelands were some of the cultural legacies identified in the Hispanic subgroups represented by the families of this study. Although, all the families clearly revealed a spiritual or religious life, usually Catholic or Pentecostal, most of them did not practice it by going to church or following the liturgy. Rather they read the Bible, and celebrated religious holidays at home.

### Spanish Maintenance

As mentioned previously, and indicated in Table 5, Spanish maintenance was strongly present in most of the 12 high ability, Hispanic students. Participants were bilingual in English and Spanish, as their Spanish language was maintained by the decision, effort, and commitment of the participants and their parents. The majority of the Hispanic families considered the maintenance of Spanish to be an indispensable vehicle of communication and relationship between the family members, as well as the transference of the Hispanic legacy.

Data gathering revealed that the parents had no information or assistance either from the school or the community to expose and help their children in the development of their linguistic abilities. All the participants were learning English in a systematic way at school, and informally, at home and in the community. Spanish language instruction, however, lacked consistent methodological approach, and the emphasis was only on oral skills. Very few parents were aware of the importance of reading and writing skills as part of the Spanish maintenance. As a result, very few participants had bilingual or Spanish books, and other materials in the two languages at home. The families who did have literature in Spanish for their children or for themselves, were very committed to teach the participants how to read and write in Spanish.

## School Factors

School is often the second most important setting in which children are able to explore and develop their physical, cognitive, and social skills. Three major school factors appeared to support academic achievement and talent development in the 12 Hispanic, bilingual students.

1. *Safe School Environment:* To some extent, Westview was a relatively quiet and safe area, in which commercial and community enterprises were quickly developing. Eccleston school had a before and after school day care system for all students that was considered extremely important for the parents, since over half of the mothers worked. This type of program was very helpful in controlling and preventing children from being in the streets while their parents were at work. A safe school environment, in which participants were educated and socialized, was considered a relief for most of the parents.

2. *Flexible Grouping:* This type of educational instruction was implemented in a variety of ways in the classrooms. Learning centers, reading and math instructional level grouping, Schools of Talent, and multi-aged grouping were various implementations of flexible grouping. In the Schools of Talent, students were basically grouped by their personal interests, regardless of their academic or grade levels. The participants enjoyed the Schools of Talent, because they had the possibility of exploring and learning new things in specific areas. The Schools of Talent were the most observable enrichment opportunity in which the participants could express their interests, manifest potential talents, and display their high abilities.

3. *English Support for ESOL Students:* English support was identified as a major school factor influencing the academic and linguistic development of the four ESOL students participating. The primary focus of the ESOL program at Eccleston school was to practice inclusion. Westview school district used an ESOL test that examined only the oral fluency of the students.

## Research Question 2

*What types of interaction between the school culture and the home culture manifest the awareness of the emotional, cognitive, and talent development of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban environment?*

The school and the home are two different interactive support systems with similar purposes relating to the adequate emotional and cognitive development of children. A series of conflicting issues related to the characteristics, values, and perspectives of the school and home cultures emerged in the data analysis.

*Conflict #1:* There was a conflict related to the description of a student and his or her family as part of a specific ethnic or cultural group such as Hispanic, Puerto Rican, Dominican, or Colombian-American. Most of these groups are described as Hispanics in the United States. Yet, most of the parents distinguished their Hispanic identity as belonging to a specific subgroup: their countries of origin. For these families, to be described or labeled as Hispanic did not adequately describe their traditions and customs. The school, on the other hand, perceived the families as Hispanic. When asked about the culture of the participants, teachers were unable to provide specific information about their students' country of origin.

*Conflict #2:* Another home and school difference was related to bilingualism and bilingual education. Parents perceived bilingualism as an asset, and worked to maintain Spanish language use at home for both cultural and socioeconomic reasons. For some parents, especially Puerto Ricans, to be bilingual was necessary to maintain their identity as Puerto Ricans, and also to be able to speak the language if they or their children went back to the island. But most of the parents described bilingual education as detrimental in the development of two languages. The major reason indicated by the majority of the parents was that the quality and emphasis of the Spanish being taught in these programs was inferior to English.

The teachers' main reason for opposing bilingual education was related to the development of English, and the academic performance of the students at their grade levels. In general, the perception was that the children needed to learn English as fast as they could to achieve in school. The ESOL service was regarded as an accelerated educational procedure for ESOL students to learn English and to be immersed in the school culture more quickly. The maintenance of a second language was not a concern or an educational priority, even if the students were fluent bilinguals.

*Conflict #3:* Family involvement in school was another issue of conflict between the school and home cultures. School personnel claimed that Hispanic families, in general, did not participate actively in school matters. From the teachers'

point of view, this did not mean that the Hispanic families did not care about the education of their children. The families were aware that their involvement in school was not as active as it should be. Five reasons were reported by the parents to explain this issue: (a) not enough time to go to school; (b) absence of information about the activities and events at school; (c) no invitation to or welcome at the school; (d) no appreciation of their culture; and (e) no inquiry about or acceptance of their opinions and ideas.

*Conflict #4:* Conflicting points of view between parents and teachers were specifically noted in relation to Eccleston school and the development of the curriculum. The conflicts were not often discussed by the two groups. Some criticisms were expressed by parents regarding the quality of the education and the academic expectations of the students. Parents were, in many cases, dissatisfied with the academic standards of the school, and they perceived that the school did not sufficiently challenge their children, especially in the content areas in which their children excelled. From the teachers' point of view, students were being given great opportunities, and an adequate, standard education was provided to all students.

*Conflict #5:* The development of the curriculum was also an issue of disagreement between the home and school. Teachers were excited about the multi-aged grouping that the school used, as an instructional procedure of conducting the teaching and learning process. Parents were dissatisfied and disagreed with the implementation of multi-aged grouping. The majority of the parents considered that children from different grade levels should do different things, and that higher academic skills should be taught progressively from one grade to another. They had a sense that their children were not learning to their potential.

## Research Question 3

*What cognitive traits do high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban school exhibit or display in their use of their two languages in their school and home environments?*

For the majority of the participants, Spanish was the first language they listened to and spoke at home until the age of 3 or 4. Mothers mentioned Spanish as the language they used to sing lullabies, read children's books, and talk to their children. All the grandmothers spoke to the participants in Spanish when they were babies and toddlers; and they were still doing it. Some of the participants made a slow transition to English when they began school at the age of 5 or 6. Most of them had simultaneous bilingual development. The participants' parents were also fluent bilingual speakers, and only a few had difficulty reading and writing in English, although it was the second language for most of the parents. In some families, the extended family, especially grandparents, aunts, and uncles, also had different levels of bilingual proficiency, with Spanish as the dominant language.

Among the most salient communication skills identified were:

1. *Communicative Sensitivity:* Communicative sensitivity was evidenced in most of the participants. For example, at the beginning of the study, some participants asked whether the researcher was bilingual. Some participants asked the researcher to maintain the conversation in Spanish because they

enjoyed speaking it, and they did not have the opportunity to do so in the school. Also, most participants unconsciously switched languages, when the researcher changed languages (this happened in many occasions during the same session).

An interesting finding emerged about the participants' language preference. When the participants were asked what language (English or Spanish) they preferred to speak, very few chose a specific language. Rather, they expressed no difference in speaking either of the two languages. This finding supported the participants' bilingual fluency. Most of the them displayed confidence in their verbal bilingual ability so they had no hesitation in talking, and in some cases, even reading in both languages. According to some participants, the language selection was mainly determined by the environment in which they were and the persons with whom they were interacting.

2. *Switching and Translating:* The 12 Hispanic male and female students demonstrated abilities to switch and translate languages. Switching was clearly evidenced in all participants. In terms of translation, few participants were able to translate reading material presented to them, but in terms of interpreting or translating oral communication, more situations were presented during the interviews with the participants. Both cases involved natural translation, and the participants translated correctly. In this way, they were manifesting their knowledge and understanding of words, concepts, and grammatical structures in their two languages.

3. *Transferring Knowledge:* Participants showed the ability to transfer knowledge from one language to the other. Transferring knowledge occurred when listening to directions and explanations given by the interviewer or paying attention to a story in one language and making comments afterwards in the other language. For example, during a conversation with Kristian, he naturally transferred knowledge between languages, and was comfortable answering in either of the two languages. Two main reasons seemed to support this language ability, he was a fluent bilingual speaker, and he knew that the researcher was able to switch and understand in English and Spanish. Transferring knowledge was also noted in the content of the conversation. Kristian watched the news in English and in Spanish, as well as the Discovery channel, and enjoyed reading in both languages. These activities, among others, provided him rich information in either of the two languages, while at the same time complex cognitive processes were taking place.

4. *Metalinguistic Awareness:* This phase can be described as a set of abilities to perform and resolve different cognitive tasks. Most participants displayed the metalinguistic ability to detect and correct syntactical violations in the two languages. At different levels of complexity, the 12 participants also indicated sensitivity to language construction. For example, participants were able to correct themselves in either of the two languages, when they committed errors in their speech language.



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## Research Question 4

*What are teacher perceptions of academic achievement, cognitive ability, and observable talent in high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school?*

Classrooms at Eccleston school appeared to provide a caring and stimulating educational environment for the social and cognitive development of the 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students. However, as mentioned previously, conflicting factors interfered with the appreciation and encouragement of students' bilingualism, cultural and linguistic identity, and talent development. One important aspect to be considered in the analysis of the possible factors influencing these adverse situations was the teachers' knowledge, training, and practice in special education areas. Due to the significant number of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the school, it was relevant to know the beliefs and thoughts of the teachers as well as their professional background in areas in which CLD students were usually represented, such as ESOL programs, and underrepresented, such as gifted and talented programs. Table 6 displays the level of previous experience of teachers in areas such as bilingual, gifted, and multicultural education at Eccleston.

As shown in Table 6, with respect to bilingualism and ESOL education, teachers had either no/or limited basic information about bilingualism, second language acquisition, or bilingual education. Teachers were not required to implement any bilingual educational practices or strategies in their curriculum, and had not even been exposed to presentations, workshops, meetings or any kind of training that might help them to respond to the needs of their ESOL children, as well as to enrich and encourage their fluent bilingual students.

Two surveys were initially implemented to ask parents and teachers about the participants' bilingualism, interests, and abilities. Table 7 provides results comparing the teachers' and parents' responses regarding the use of languages by the Hispanic families and the participants at home.

Table 6

Descriptive Meta Matrix: Teachers' Knowledge, Training, and Practice in Special Education Areas

| | Knowledge | Training | Practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bilingual Education | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| ESOL Education | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Gifted Education | ✳ | ✳ | ✳ |
| Enrichment | ✹ | ✹ | ✹ |
| Multicultural Education | ○ | ○ | ○ |

● Strongly present
✹ Partially present
✳ Weakly present
○ Absent
N/A Not applicable

Table 7

Comparison Between Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of Family and Student Language Skills

| Student | Parent Response | Question | Teacher Response |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adrian Escobar | Spanish | N# 1 What language does the family usually speak at home? | English/Spanish |
| Emilio Colina | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Juan Colina | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Daniel Orozco | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Julian Navarro | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Kristian Navarro | English/Spanish | | Spanish |
| Sonia Corral | English/Spanish | | Spanish |
| Nilda Orozco | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Mercedes Romero | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| María Chaviano | English/Spanish | | Spanish |
| Jennifer Fernández | Spanish | | English |
| Carmen Gutierrez | Spanish | | English |
| Adrian Escobar | English/Spanish | N# 2 What language does the child usually speak at home? | English |
| Emilio Colina | English | | Not Sure |
| Juan Colina | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Daniel Orozco | English | | Not Sure |
| Julian Navarro | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Kristian Navarro | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Sonia Corral | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Nilda Orozco | English | | English |
| Mercedes Romero | English | | Not Sure |
| María Chaviano | English/Spanish | | Not Sure |
| Jennifer Fernández | English | | Spanish |
| Carmen Gutierrez | Spanish | | English |

As indicated in Table 7, a clear discrepancy between the parents' and teachers' responses is denoted. The majority of the teachers did not know or were "not sure" about the language or languages usually spoken by the families and the students at home. From the teachers' point of view, this was an aspect not relevant enough to ask these CLD families. Not one of the teachers asked parents how their children were developing their home languages (the first, sometimes the second language of a child). Teachers only had information of the level of English proficiency, although students were simultaneously bilingual speakers, and some of them even biliterate.

An interesting finding emerged about the teachers' appreciation and knowledge about their students' bilingualism. Because most of the teachers were not aware of the CLD students' language development other than English, they appeared to believe that, if the student was not in the ESOL program, consequently he or she was not bilingual. Teachers' comments supporting this belief were indicated in expressions such as, "Oh, I don't think

she is bilingual, her English is perfect," or "I have six ESOL students in my classroom. Juan is not ESOL, but do you consider him bilingual?" Juan not only was a fluent speaker in English and Spanish, but he also read in both languages.

It became evident that multiculturalism was critical in this school because of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population, which was almost half of the population of the school. Yet, the school personnel demonstrated confusion and were unacquainted with the meaning of, and the practices related to this important issue. The following teachers' comments summarize, in a representative manner, the problematic situation of multiculturalism not being recognized and discussed by Eccleston school personnel with the multicultural families.

> My classroom is multicultural but at this age it is not an issue, that is the way it is and they accept it. (2nd grade teacher)

> Multiculturalism? I think is very important and that teacher be aware of. I think that it is something that we forget a lot but it should be in our mind constantly. My room is not multicultural. It is easily forgotten, it is like "Oh, yeah" but it is not always focused. (1st grade teacher)

> I don't think my curriculum is multicultural. I have one book about it. I haven't have a chance to do anything about that yet. In terms of teaching and what is in the classroom, no. (4th grade teacher)

Another negative aspect existed about the relationship to the curriculum and the level of academic performance of the students. None of the 12 students were identified to participate in the gifted program. The majority of the parents were dissatisfied with the school, because they believed their children were able to achieve at a higher academic level or participate in the gifted program. The identification procedure for the gifted program was mainly based on teacher nomination and academic performance (they considered the SMT scores as part of the information), and the program had no assessment procedure to evaluate more accurately CLD students' interests and abilities.

## Research Question 5

*What relationships encourage language proficiency, academic performance, and talent development in high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban environment?*

The main relationships identified by the participants as encouraging their bilingualism, academic performance, and talent development were within the family or "la familia" (these relationships were extensively described in question one and two of this chapter). The major role models for most participants were the parents and some significant family members, such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Another important factor, in addition to the family, was the visitations that the participants made to other countries, usually to their parents' homelands. These journeys had positive influences in many aspects of the participants' lives. One main impact was in the development of their languages, especially Spanish.

## Research Question 6

*What educational experiences do high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban school recognize as challenging their interests and abilities?*

The main experiences that challenged the interests and abilities in the 12 Hispanic, bilingual students were primarily provided by the home environment, and partly, by the school environment. Positive enrichment opportunities, such as the Schools of Talent and special classes, arts, instrumental music, and dance were some of the organized activities that encouraged the development of interests and potential talents in the participants.

Although most of the students displayed above average ability, significant skills, interests, and task commitment in specific academic areas, teachers did not provide individual differentiated curriculum or activities. Overall, the 12 participants displayed average or above average performance in school. Some common personality and cognitive characteristics were found in most of the 12 participants, regardless of gender, age, or Hispanic subcultural group. However, the level of performance, degree of knowledge, and personal commitment towards each intellectual or social area varied among participants. Distinctive, diverse, academic and personal characteristics were found in the 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students and are presented in Table 8.

Interests, abilities and high academic performance were displayed in subject areas like mathematics, language arts, music, dance, and drama. In language arts, for example, all the participants were strong readers in English, and some of them were also avid readers in Spanish. Their writing and creative skills were among the most salient characteristics in this subject area. Most of the participants were also recognized as good English speakers (rich vocabulary and complex oral expression) at school, and many of them displayed the same oral skills in Spanish.

Artistic talent was present in most of the 12 participants. They showed quality work as well as innovative ideas, and manual abilities. Participants' manual skills were demonstrated in construction with clay, blocks and toys, and drawings during interview sessions. Most participants showed interest, abilities and commitment in areas like music and performing arts.

Many participants were described by their teachers and parents as quick thinkers and problem solvers. Some participants also had other interests and high abilities in other topics and subjects areas like science, social studies, and technology. In these three areas, the school did not provide a challenging curriculum to match the participants' enthusiasm and inquisitive minds, and activities were rarely observed in the classrooms. Students were not sufficiently exposed to activities and materials in these subject areas, so interests and abilities may exist in these areas that were not stimulated.

Specific personality and socio-emotional characteristics were commonly identified in the 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students. As shown in Table 19, politeness, respect, humor, task commitment, eagerness to please, and curiosity were present in most participants. Participants also showed strong communication and social skills, good manners, correct behavior, and amusement with humor and smiles. The students were recognized as good friends, and many of them participated in several social events in and out of school. Participants' families were also very social and friendly. The 12 male and female students were very expressive, and demonstrated their affection openly by hugging, kissing, and holding hands.

Table 8

Case-Ordered Descriptive Meta Matrix: High Ability, Hispanic, Bilingual Students' Characteristics

| | Adrian | Emilio | Juan | Daniel | Julian | Kristian | Sonia | Nilda | María | Mercedes | Jennifer | Carmen |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic and Ability Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reading | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Writing | ✹ | ✹ | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Mathematics | ✹ | ✹ | ✹ | ● | ✳ | ● | ● | ✹ | ✹ | ● | ● | ● |
| Arts | ✹ | ✹ | ✹ | ✳ | ● | ✳ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Music | ✹ | ✹ | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Dance/Drama | ✳ | ✳ | ✳ | ✳ | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Creativity | ✹ | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ✹ | ✹ | ● | ● | ● |
| Quick Thinking | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ✹ | ● | ● |
| Manual Skills | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Socio-emotional and Personality Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Politeness | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Respect | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Humor | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● |
| Effort | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Task Commitment | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Eagerness to Please | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Curiosity | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Socialization | ● | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Attention | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Cooperation | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Affection | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Inquisitive | ● | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ✹ | ● | ● |

● Strongly present
✹ Partially present
✳ Weakly present
○ Absent

Other major personal characteristics of the Hispanic, bilingual students indicated by their teachers included cooperation with their classmates, attention to school work, and curiosity. In summary, either at school or at home, the 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students demonstrated their willingness to please, know, learn, and enjoy life during this study.



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# CHAPTER 6: Grounded Theory, Discussion, and Implications

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the grounded theory that emerged from this study. In the second section, a discussion is presented about the findings. Finally, the third section discusses several implications for teachers, parents, students, and community leaders. The research findings emerging from this qualitative study of 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual elementary students are discussed in relation to the review of literature presented in Chapter Two.

## Grounded Theory

This study addressed three major areas: language, culture, and talent development of 12 high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban elementary school. These three interrelated aspects were explored and described in three settings, the participants' homes, school, and community.

As indicated in Chapter Two, demographic information revealed that in the United States, Hispanic students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs, and overrepresented in special education programs. Culturally and linguistically diverse teachers are underrepresented in all educational levels, as well. The school characteristics conformed to demographic data reported nationally. In an interview with the speech pathologist of the school, she reaffirmed that classroom teachers referred more culturally and linguistically diverse students to compensatory education programs than other students. With respect to the staff of Westview, only two culturally and linguistically diverse teachers represented the Hispanic community of a total of 38 professionals including teachers, specialists, and administrators.

Teachers' negative attitudes and low expectations towards culturally and linguistically diverse students have been described by some researchers as detrimental to the academic performance and socio-emotional development of this population (Cegelka, 1988; Cummins, 1989; Johnson, 1969; Kofsky, 1992; National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, 1994). Teachers' lack of awareness of the Hispanic culture, the participants' families, and the participants' interests, abilities, and bilingualism clearly demonstrated an absence of any perception of the characteristics and needs of CLD students in this school. Without this knowledge, students' needs were not always recognized, and the necessary educational opportunities were not provided. In a sense, the students are there, that is they are physically present in school, but they are not "really there."

Research by Scott, Perou, Urbano, Hogan, and Gold (1992) indicated that because of the absence of awareness and misinformation related to talent identification and development, few culturally and linguistically diverse parents referred their children for gifted and talented services. This study corroborates these findings. Few parents knew about the existence of the gifted program at Eccleston school, and lacked information about talent development. Although all the parents were able to identify special interests and advanced abilities in their children, and some of them also had questioned the school about raising academic expectations for their children, none of them believed that they had a satisfactory response from the school.

In terms of family and community characteristics, the 9 Hispanic families shared some common cultural and linguistic characteristics such as: the importance of family

values, personal relationships among family members, and strong cultural Hispanic identity. Griggs and Dunn (1996) found similar socio-cultural characteristics in their study of a similar population. Maker and Schiever (1989) made reference to the close family relationships among Hispanics. The findings in this investigation confirmed this characteristic as one of the strongest factors influencing the development of abilities, languages, and cultures in the 12 participants.

Education is regarded as a Hispanic value that goes beyond the education provided by school. High educational expectations of Hispanic parents for their children was also indicated in the literature (Ruiz, 1989). This study confirmed this characteristic as associated with the Hispanic families interviewed.

Stavans (1995) described the relevant role of the mother in the Hispanic family. A strong maternal role supporting the family system was found in all 12 case studies. With respect to bilingualism and Spanish maintenance, Dolson (1985) believed that it is usually a family decision to retain Spanish as the main home language, and for the students to become fully bilingual speakers. The findings seem to somewhat support Dolson's assertion. The 12 Hispanic students maintained and developed Spanish primarily because this language was associated with cultural values and transmission of traditions and customs reflecting the Hispanic heritage. Also, Spanish was the language usually used to preserve the relationship between members in the United States and the parents' homelands in South and Central America or Puerto Rico.

Many researchers have discussed the impact of a negative school environment, often described as having limited human and material resources, unchallenging curriculum, and untrained staff as one of the major causes for culturally and linguistically diverse students' difficulty to show their potential talents and high academic skills (Passow & Frasier, 1996). In the current study, the human and material resources of the school were not a problem, however the unchallenging curriculum and the absence of training in the area of bilingual talent development and education diminished the educational opportunities of the 12 participants in their areas of interest and high performance. Neither the socioeconomic background, the English language ability, nor educational background of the 9 Hispanic families were found as negatively influencing the students' academic, linguistic, and socio-emotional development. The opposite was true. Parents had varied school educational levels, and some had attended college, but most came from low to mid-economic status and were fluent bilingual speakers in both English and Spanish.

Although different bilingual competencies were found in the 12 Hispanic students, none of them experienced a deficit in cognitive outcomes in their development. Participants' verbal abilities in two languages appeared to reinforce their: (a) cognitive flexibility (by transferring information, code-switching languages, and producing ideas in two languages); (b) quick thinking (by processing information in two languages); and (c) socio-cultural skills (by having bicultural experiences using two languages and showing communicative sensitivity). In addition, this study provided support for Cummins (1992), Krashen (1996) and Mortensen (1984) who claimed that the development of biliteracy skills benefit children's first and second languages. Four students showed fluent bilingual skills in reading, and all the participants, including the ESOL students, were avid and fluent readers in English.

The limited research conducted specifically about high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in the elementary schools provided an insufficient basis to compare the cultural and linguistic characteristics of these 12 participants with those in other research. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to compare and contrast the findings of this study with respect to high abilities and personality skills to other studies. The current study was

conducted with participants from different Hispanic subgroups, ages, levels of proficiency, and with a range of high academic performance and ability levels. Even though a comparison of these participants cannot be made to those in previous research, it is hoped that through full descriptions of the participants' academic and ability characteristics, as well as socio-emotional and personality characteristics, a contribution has been made to future researchers who seek to more fully understand this particular student population.

## Discussion

The findings provided in-depth descriptions of the home and school characteristics as well as the socio-cultural, linguistic, and cognitive abilities of the 12 participants. However, due to the teachers' limited awareness and knowledge of these essential factors, it was impossible to determine how these factors influenced the cognitive and emotional development of the participants.

Further research will help to investigate whether these factors are present in other high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students in an urban environment. Recent researchers and theorists in areas such as gifted, bilingual, and multicultural education have begun to question social stereotypes and misconceptions about culturally and linguistically diverse groups. All people, even those who have lived in the mainstream group for generations, should be considered diverse because they are also part of the cultural diversity comprising the population of the United States. For example, new concepts and paradigms about the identification and development of talents, cognitive, and social skills in CLD students will gradually result in a change in definitions, conceptions, and interpretations of academic scholars in gifted education. Meanwhile, schools like Eccleston school have meaningful opportunities to discuss, evaluate, and implement changes with respect to not only the assessment and educational services of the gifted program but more importantly, to a sincere recognition, appreciation, and expression of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the student population of each school.

## Implications

The following educational implications emerged from this study:

- The cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional characteristics of Hispanic students should be measured by standards reflecting the students' ethnic and cultural background, and validated by an ethnolinguistic approach. The design, implementation, and evaluation of new assessment procedures are critical for the identification and development of learning styles and high academic abilities in Hispanic students.

- Educators must identify and assist Hispanic students in their academic and social difficulties as well as with their cognitive strengths and talents in school.

- Educators should inform Hispanic parents about the academic progress of their children. Also, educators need to open various channels of communication suitable for different Hispanic families. A more direct and personal approach is recommended with Hispanic families. Families should be welcomed to the school by having teachers appreciate and consider their values, traditions, and thoughts. In addition, Hispanic parents need to be

encouraged and informed about gifted education identification and program services as well as activities that will enable them to assist their high ability children at home.

- Professional development should be used to promote an understanding of teachers, specialists, and administrators working with Hispanic students of the awareness and knowledge of the learning and cognitive style preferences of Hispanic students. Also, school personnel have to become familiar with the cultural and linguistic characteristics and needs of Hispanic students. Information and inservice training sessions on topics related to the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students, such as bilingualism, ESOL practices, gifted education, and multiculturalism are essential for the whole staff, especially classroom teachers.

- Classroom teachers should have access to information regarding the assessment, programming, and evaluation of gifted and talented programs appropriate for Hispanic students. Also, teachers should be aware of the goals and objectives of the gifted program. The same situation should exist relative to the goals for ESOL programs or bilingual programs in the school. Classroom teachers have to monitor the ESOL students' evolution in English, and ask Hispanic parents about the family's home language if different from English.

- Teachers should be encouraged to appreciate and promote the expression of diversity in their classrooms. Teachers need to have a positive attitude towards the academic performance and personal characteristics of all students, in particular culturally and linguistically diverse students. High expectations and a challenging curriculum are essential contributors to the creation of a positive educational atmosphere in which Hispanic students can explore potential talents, and develop interests and abilities in any academic area.

- An interdisciplinary approach should be implemented in schools in which culturally and linguistically diverse students are present, and ESOL, bilingual, and gifted programs should be integrated into the total educational experience. Teachers and professionals in different areas can be informed and trained in basic aspects of these education fields by their colleagues. This approach would not only benefit culturally and linguistically diverse students, but also teachers' pedagogical practices.



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# CHAPTER 7: Recommendations

In this chapter, a series of questions followed by recommendations are provided as guidance for educators and Hispanic parents to ask about appropriate social and educational interventions for high potential, high ability, Hispanic students. This section also provides researchers and practitioners with questions they could consider for future research projects on this student population.

## What Should Educators Know About High Ability, Hispanic Students and Their Families?

It is essential for educators to have positive attitudes and expectations towards Hispanic students and their families to identify, encourage, and develop potential talents and academic skills of this student population. School personnel are very often unfamiliar with the characteristics and needs of high ability Hispanic students. It would be very beneficial for educators to search for relevant information and participate in inservice training sessions on topics related to bilingualism, ESL instructions and programs, and multiculturalism.

The home and school environments of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students played essential roles in their socio-emotional, cognitive, and bilingual development. Some family characteristics of the Hispanic community could be identified as positively impacting children's development: emotional support from parents and extensive family members such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts, respect or "respeto," emphasis on cooperation, high educational aspirations, strong maternal role, Hispanic legacy, and maintenance of the Spanish language. A series of questions about the family, culture and community characteristics, bilingualism, and socio-emotional and cognitive skills could provide relevant information to educators about high potential, high ability, Hispanic students. Questions such as: What does it mean to be Hispanic? How would you describe the Hispanic community, its values, and traditions? Do you have specific celebrations in your family? What language does your family usually speak at home? What language does your child usually speak at home? Do you encourage your child to be bilingual? Does he/she know how to write in either language? Are you particularly concerned about anything to do with your child's education? How do you like the school? What are your child's strengths? Do you know any particular interest that your child may have? What does your child do in his/her free time? This information could be gathered by using interview protocols with the student or his/her parents, and a Parent/Guardian Bilingual Survey (see Appendices A, B, and D).

Educators in gifted education must try to improve the use of traditional psychometric and projective tests. Adequate assessment procedures specially designed for the Hispanic population need to be created. The uniqueness of each child should be valued, and his or her personal characteristics should be the focus of an assessment of talents, interests, and learning styles. Observations, autobiographies, parent interviews, student interviews, student portfolios and reports, anecdotal logs, interest surveys, student journals, and exploratory enrichment activities are some of the multiple possibilities to assess potential interests and abilities in Hispanic students. Assessment should always take into account the cultural and linguistic background of the child, and be conducted in the student's first language (if the talented child is also bilingual but not fluent in the two languages).

Gifted and talented programs based on an extensive and enriched multicultural curriculum better serves the cultural and socio-emotional needs of all gifted students, and

certainly of high ability, Hispanic students. One of the goals of a sensitive gifted program should be to create an educational environment where not only cognitive skills but also culture and language differences are valued and developed. Assessment, programming, and evaluation with a multicultural perspective should improve the actual inequity experienced by Hispanic students in programs for the gifted and talented. Bilingual material and resources in English and Spanish, as well as materials referring to different ethnic Hispanic subgroups and cultures are highly recommended for use with gifted, Hispanic students.

## What Should Hispanic Parents Know and Ask About Services for Gifted and Talented Students?

Recent findings have suggested that few Hispanic parents refer or nominate their children for gifted and talented education. Some of the major reasons include the lack of awareness and misinformation related to talent identification and development (Scott et al., 1992) and the existence of these types of programs. There are a wide variety of services and programs for gifted and talented students. Comparatively, these services vary in their identification and programming procedures. Some of the most common identification procedures considered in gifted programs are psychometric tests, tests scores, grades, teachers' nominations, and gifted specialist nominations or a combination of one or more of these procedures. Also, parents' nominations, peers nominations, portfolios, and students' products are sometimes considered, but less often. Different service delivery models for gifted programs should also be mentioned. The most frequently used are pull-out program, within class program, enrichment and accelerated activities, separate classroom, or magnet school.

The following questions could be used as a guide by Hispanic parents interested in knowing more about the gifted program in their children's school: What kinds of assessment procedures do you have? Do you use any type of assessment to determine CLD students' interests and talents? What are the major goals and objectives of the gifted program? How is giftedness defined in this program? Could you describe your gifted program (type of educational model, strategies, content areas)? What kind of instruction do you usually implement in your program? How do you grade/evaluate your students? Do you have any bilingual resources in your own classroom? How do you work with the regular teachers? How do parents participate in your program? Do the families participate in your work? How do you include the community in program activities? What do you think about multiculturalism? Do you encourage multiculturalism in your own classroom? How? Do you have students from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds in your classroom? How are the students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds reflected in your gifted program? How does the program respond to the socio-emotional needs of bilingual students?

## What Should Researchers and Practitioners Consider for Future Projects About Gifted, Hispanic Students?

It is clear that additional research is needed on the identification and development of talents in gifted, Hispanic students in all school levels as well in higher education. Future research should focus on the characteristics of the Hispanic community, and the expression of learning and cognitive style preferences, abilities, and academic skills identifiable in Hispanic students. Also, more in-depth investigations should be conducted in the personal and socio-cultural characteristics representing children from different Hispanic subgroups. In addition, efforts should be made between researchers and practitioners in gifted education

and bilingual education to share and develop research. This research should take place concurrently and revolve around how the development of two or more languages influences academic and cognitive skills among culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The present study identified several home and school factors as perceived by students, parents, and school personnel including teachers, specialists, and administrators living in an urban area. Some questions that should be addressed in future research projects on gifted, Hispanic students follow: Are there significant differences among Hispanic parents from diverse subgroups in the promotion and development of bilingualism and cognitive abilities? Are there differences between Hispanic, bilingual children visiting the parents' homelands and others without this experience? How significant is travel to homeland in the development of two languages and the Hispanic identity? Are there specific educational experiences that challenge and stimulate interests, abilities, and academic performance in Hispanic students? What kind of assessment and educational procedures are most appropriate to identify and develop interests, talents, and learning style preferences in Hispanic, bilingual students? What are the main differences between high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students and other CLD students in the manifestation of talents and cognitive abilities? How are environmental and personality factors involved in the development of talents in high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students?

Other areas for research to consider are: How does living in two cultures affect the development of students' personal identity between the Hispanic and the mainstream society? What are the differences in experiences and values of Hispanic students living in a bilingual home and Hispanic students living in a home where bilingualism is not nurtured? How does bilingualism affect students' cognitive and cultural possibilities as well as their relationship with other significant members of the family? What are the intellectual and personality traits of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students identified in this study?

In summary, the limited information regarding the personal and cognitive abilities of high ability, Hispanic, bilingual students forces researchers and practitioners in gifted education to modify existing paradigms (conceptions, definitions, and perspectives). Finally, new assessment, programming, and evaluation procedures that focus on the identification and development of bilingual, high ability, Hispanic students need to be developed.



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# Appendix A

## Parent/Guardian Survey
## (Bilingual English/Spanish Version)



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# PARENT/GUARDIAN SURVEY
# ENCUESTA A LOS PADRES O TUTOR

DATE / /
FECHA

STUDENT NAME: _____ AGE: _____
NOMBRE DEL ALUMNO EDAD

PARENT/TUTOR NAME: _____
NOMBRE DEL PADRE/TUTOR

**Please mark or write your answer in the spaces below.**
**(Por favor marque y escriba sus respuestas en los espacios dados. Sus respuestas pueden ser en español.)**

(1) What language do you usually speak at home?
¿En qué idioma hablan usualmente en el hogar?

_____ English / Inglés
_____ Spanish / Español

(2) What language does your child usually speak at home?
¿En qué idioma habla su hijo usualmente en el hogar?

_____ English / Inglés
_____ Spanish / Español

(3) Name three things your child likes to do at home.
Nombre tres cosas que a su hijo le gusta hacer en el hogar.

_____ (1) _____ (2) _____ (3)

(4) Name three abilities of your child.
Nombre tres habilidades de su hijo.

_____ (1) _____ (2) _____ (3)

**Thank You**
**Muchas Gracias**

# Appendix B

## Students' Interview Protocol



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# Students' Interview Protocol

Code
Name
Place of birth
Date of birth
Nationality
Number of years in the United States

## School

- Number of schools attended
- School experiences
    - grades
    - significant events
    - teacher interaction/involvement
    - experiences with counselor, principal, teachers, peers
    - peer interaction
    - homework
    - activities, favorite/least favorite
    - subject areas, like/dislike
    - interest topics
    - parent interaction/involvement
    - friendships (age, gender, school or out of school)
- Describe a day at school

## Achievement

- Learning style(s) preference
- Interest areas
- Subject areas easy/difficult
- Leadership

## Family and Culture

- Family background
- Residence with family, extended family, or guardians
- Siblings (name, age, gender)
- Significant others
- Father description/relationship
- Mother description/relationship
- Siblings description/relationship
- Significant others' descriptions/relationships
- Family customs/norms/values
- Health issues (serious illnesses, accidents, vision problems)
- Describe a typical day
- Weekend activities
- Parent education
- Parents' occupation
- Employment of parents or extended family members if student lives with someone other than parents
- Travel opportunities and experiences
- Recreation/visits (museum, zoo, theater, cinema, circus)

**Community**

- Area where he/she lives description
- Community activities
- Church attendance
- Celebrations

**Personal**

- Three descriptive words to describe self
- Latest school experiences positive/negative
- Hobbies/sports
- Favorite games/toys
- Activities out of school:
  - watch TV
  - listen music
  - draw or paint
  - use the computer
  - study a language
- Favorite stories/books
- Fears

**Bilingualism**

- Language most frequently used at home:
  - mother's preference
  - father's preference
  - siblings' preference
  - extended family members' preference
- Language most frequently used in the community
- His/her language preferences:
  - to speak
  - to read
  - to write
- Awareness of language used (L1/L2)
- Literacy at home (dominant/non-dominant languages)
- Issues with bilingualism and talent development:
  - School (participation in class, supportive/non-supportive environment, happiness/frustrations, attitude towards school, understanding of content areas, switching/transferring knowledge, opportunities of talent expression, display of products)
  - Family (expression of interests, development of abilities, affective/non-affective environment, appreciation of ability skills)
  - Community (stimulating activities/events, sharing of language/culture)

# Appendix C

## Teacher Survey



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# TEACHER SURVEY

DATE: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____ AGE: _____

**Please mark or write your answer in the spaces below.**

(1) What language does the family of your student usually speak at home?

_____ English _____ Spanish _____ Not sure

(2) What language does the student usually speak at home?

_____ English _____ Spanish _____ Not sure

(3) What are three things your student likes to do at school?

_____ (1) _____ (2) _____ (3)

(4) What are your student's strengths?

_____

(5) Do you think your student has any difficulty?

_____

(6) Please describe his/her personal characteristics.

_____

**Thank You**



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# Appendix D

## Parents' Interview Protocol



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# Parents' Interview Protocol

Date of birth
Place of birth
Nationality/Country of origin
Marital status
Highest level of education (Primary/High school/College/University)
Degree (place of study)
Number of years in the United States (parents/grandparents/great parents)

## Family Characteristics/Culture/Community

- With whom does your child live? (Name-Age-Occupation)
- Do you have other family living in the United States?
- Do you have relatives living outside the USA?
- Do you have contact with your family outside the USA? How?
- Do you have the opportunity to travel? Where? How frequently?
- How long have you been living in the USA?
- What are things that you miss from your country of origin?
- What are some differences between the two countries?
- Do you belong to any club, organizations, or groups? Explain.
- What does it mean for you to be Hispanic?
- How could you describe the Hispanic group?
- Do you have specific celebrations in your family or community?
- Do you maintain some traditions from your country of origin such as food and music?
- How is your child involved in these traditions?
- How would you describe your community?
- What language is usually used in the community?
- Do you like your neighborhood? Explain.
- Do you go to church? Is religion important in the family?
- What is your typical day like?
- What do you do on the weekends?

## Parents Occupation

- What is your occupation? Explain.
- Where do you work? How long have you been working there?
- What are some of the positive and negative issues about your job?

## About Your Child:

- How would you describe your relationship with your child?
- How does the child get along with his/her other parent?
- How does the child get along with his/her siblings?
- Does your child have a close relationship with any other members of the family? Explain.
- Could you tell me three words that describe your child's personality?
- How could you describe your child's health (serious illnesses, accidents, vision problems, etc.)?

## Language Skills

- What language does the family usually speak at home?
- What language does your child usually speak at home?
- How would you describe his/her English proficiency?
- How would you describe his/her Spanish proficiency?
- Do you encourage your child to be bilingual? How?

- Does she/he know how to read in either language?
- Does she/he know how to write in either language?
- Do you think your child understands more than what he/she expresses in the second language? Give an example.
- Do you think your child is aware when someone is speaking Spanish or English? How? Give an example.
- What are the language preferences in speaking, reading, and writing of mother, father, child, siblings, and extended family members?
- Does your child have bilingual materials such as books and cassettes?
- Do you have literature in both languages at home (newspaper/books)?
- How about the TV? Do you watch any Spanish channels?

**Early Childhood**

- When did he/she begin using a pencil/pen?
- Does he/she have any vision problems?
- When did your child say his/her first word? What was it? In what language?
- Does he/she have speech problems?
- Does your child read?
- When did your child start to read? What was it?
- Does your child have difficulties reading?
- At what age did your child start to write?
- Does your child have difficulties in writing?
- Does your child have any difficulties sleeping?
- Does your child have any particular fear?
- When did your child start feeding himself/herself?
- Does your child dress himself/herself?
- Regarding his or her games: What does your child play with? With whom?
- Do you remember any questions your child asked you that caught your attention?

**Schooling**

- At what age did your child first go to school?
- Did your child have difficulties adapting?
- At this moment, does your child tell you about problems or difficulties she/he has at school?
- Does your child participate in activities out of school? Which ones? Where?
- Does your child have friends? How old are they?
- Where are these friends from?
- Do your child's friends speak English/Spanish? Are they bilingual?
- Does your child relate easily to other children?
- Is your child a leader in something?
- Are you particularly concerned about anything to do with your child's education?
- Do you think your child's educational needs are being satisfied?
- How are you involved in the school?
- What kinds of communication do you have with the teachers and principal?
- How do you like the school?
- What is your opinion about the ESL program? (ESL children only)
- What is your opinion about the gifted program?
- What are three things your student likes to do at school?

**Interests and Abilities**

- What does your child do in his/her free time?
- What kind of outings does your child prefer (cinema/theater/park)?
- What do you think your child's abilities and aptitudes that should be developed?
- What have you done to encourage these aptitudes? Explain.

- Do you know any particular interest that your child may have?
- What do you think are your child's strengths?
- What do you think are your child's difficulties?
- What are you child's favorite subject areas/topics?
- Does she/he prefer to work alone or in a group?
- How do you describe her/his general attitude toward school?

Would you like to add anything else?



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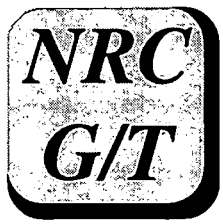


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