Choosing To Learn In Two Languages: Why Non-Latino, English-Speaking Families Select Spanish/english Dual Language Bilingual Programs

Kathryn Louise Carpenter
Graduate Center, City University of New York

Recommended Citation
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CHOOSING TO LEARN IN TWO LANGUAGES: WHY NON-LATINO, ENGLISH-SPEAKING FAMILIES SELECT SPANISH/ENGLISH DUAL LANGUAGE BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

by

Kathryn L. Carpenter

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2015
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Kate Menken
Chair of Examining Committee

Date
Signature

Anthony Picciano
Executive Officer

Date
Signature

Kate Menken

Ofelia García

Stephan Brumberg
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

CHOOSING TO LEARN IN TWO LANGUAGES: WHY NON-LATINO, ENGLISH-SPEAKING FAMILIES SELECT SPANISH/ENGLISH DUAL LANGUAGE BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

by

Kathryn Carpenter

Advisor: Professor Kate Menken

Interest in bilingualism for majority language speakers is an emerging trend in the US. In many parts of the country, English monolingual families are able to place their children in dual language bilingual education (“DLBE”) programs in order for them to learn another language. Because of availability and demand, the majority of these programs use Spanish and English in instruction and exist at the elementary school level. Traditionally meant to serve students whose home language is Spanish and whose English skills are emerging, these programs have now become popular among a different population: non-Latinos whose home language is primarily or only English (described in this research as non-Latino English-speakers, or “NLES”). As a result, the demographics of many DLBE programs are shifting.

This qualitative research study describes reasons NLES families select and remain committed to Spanish/English DLBE programs, as well as factors that lead to program attrition for this population. Data is principally based on in-depth interviews of mothers whose children are in varying phases of participation in a DLBE program, including some whose children have left DLBE programs. The research setting is New York City, and research was conducted among families with children at one of three public schools.
in the same school district in the borough of Queens. The research sought to understand not only why NLES families might select Spanish/English DLBE programs for their children, but also what influences their commitment to these programs in the long term.

Findings from this dissertation research are timely given the new school chancellor’s focus on the expansion of bilingual education programs in New York State as well as a well-documented uptick in interest in bilingual education among English monolinguals. The families interviewed in the current study considered learning Spanish, receiving academic enrichment, and staying in local public schools among their primary motivating factors for enrolling their children in DLBE programs. The families most likely to have children who left DLBE programs were those whose children had insufficient academic support (particularly with second language development), or who were given a different academic opportunity. Those whose children were most successful in DLBE programs were the families who had some connection to Spanish and the ability or willingness to support the language at home.

What these findings indicate is that while interest in bilingual programs among NLES families is increasing, interest is not enough: these families must commit to them long term in order for their children to become bilingual and the programs to remain sustainable. Notwithstanding, I believe that the choices of families like those who participated in this study are indicative of a broader national trend. How schools harness the energy of this new interest and work to retain NLES families while still meeting the needs of the emergent bilingual population these programs have long served will affect the sustainability of DLBE programs. Schools that can effectively integrate and educate both populations equitably could transform traditional language education in the US.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father, Armand Fangsrud. I am pretty sure you have been calling me “doctor” since I was a baby. Thank you for always believing in me, and for the “dad scholarship” that started off my college education.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all of my mentors and colleagues both past and present who supported me as I worked toward completing my degree. I would not have been able to do it without your inspiration, encouragement, and assistance.

To begin, I would like to thank those who started me on this journey: my professor Dr. Clary Loisel, a constant source of inspiration since my undergraduate days, and Dr. Yvonne DeGaetano, my professor in graduate school who encouraged me to pursue a doctoral degree. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Dolores Beckham and Mr. Iván Rodríguez: when you recruited me teach in a dual language bilingual program, my interest in this topic began. Thank you all for supporting my educational goals and encouraging me professionally.

Most importantly, this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my amazing committee, Dr. Kate Menken, Dr. Ofelia García, and Dr. Stephan Brumberg. As professors and colleagues, I have consistently felt supported by all of you. I especially thank Kate and Ofelia, who mentored my dissertation – Ofelia, you helped me get the ideas rolling, and Kate, your support in seeing this project through to the end has been invaluable. Thank you both for the way you never stopped pushing me to think about and do more with my work.

I also cannot forget to thank my family. My experiences supporting the emergent bilingualism of my two children, which now include having my son attend a local, public, dual language bilingual kindergarten program, gave me first-hand understanding of the topic of my research. And to my husband Steven, thank you for being the sounding board for so many of my ideas, and the tech genius behind my coding spreadsheets.
Thank you as well to my amazing colleagues on the CUNY-NYS Initiative for Emergent Bilinguals. Many of you are cited in this dissertation, an indication of the influence your work, and our conversations around emergent bilinguals and education, has had on my thinking over the last three years.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the families who gave so freely of their time in order to help me. A number of you have since become friends, providing much needed encouragement and additional information along the way. Many, many thanks.
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Bilingual education**: An educational approach where two languages are used in instruction with the same group of students (Baker and Prys-Jones, 1998).

**Dual Language Bilingual Education (“DLBE”)**: A form of bilingual education in which two languages are used in instruction for a linguistically diverse group of students. Both language majority and language minority students are integrated in the classroom with the goal of bilingualism and biliteracy in both instructional languages (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). In this study, the DLBE programs attempt a 50/50 model in terms of both language and students – half the students are identified as English speakers, the other half as Spanish-speakers, and half the instruction takes place in English while the other half takes place in Spanish.

**Emergent Bilingual (“EBL”)**: A student who is learning a second language but whose home language practices include a language other than the additional language (O. García, 2009a; p. 60). In the US, this additional language is generally English, so the term EBL replaces the term used in federal legislation, “Limited English Proficient” (LEP), and in the New York school system, “English Language Learner” (ELL).

**Latino Spanish-speaking parent (“LSS”)**: Defined for the purposes of this dissertation as an individual who identifies as Hispanic/Latino and as a Spanish-speaker, and who speaks Spanish only or Spanish and a language other than Spanish (including

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1 This definition of DLBE is specific to New York City (NYC), the site of this research study; elsewhere, it is defined differently. Most of the programs in NYC called “dual language” have traditionally been what elsewhere would be called “heritage maintenance” programs, as the population of the programs has typically been mainly Latino emergent bilingual until very recently.
English) at home. The children of this individual might be identified as “ELL” by the school system or not, depending on the children’s degree of bilingualism.

Non-Latino English-Speaking parent (“NLES”): Defined for the purposes of this dissertation as an individual who identifies as non-Latino and as an English-speaker, and who speaks English only or English and a LOTE at home, which may include Spanish (as a learned language). The children of this individual would not be identified as “ELL” by the school system.
CHAPTER ONE:  
INTRODUCTION

Headlines in recent editions of widely read national newspapers declare the “benefits of bilingualism” (Bhattacharjee, 2012; from The New York Times) and the “gaining popularity” of dual language bilingual education programs (Watanbe, 2011; from The Los Angeles Times). Such headlines point out a current trend in this country: increasing numbers of these programs are opening nationwide, and they are becoming more popular with parents. The growing popularity of dual language bilingual education (DLBE) programs among a certain group of parents – English-speakers who want their children to learn an additional language – is the subject of this dissertation.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Since the mid-twentieth century, most bilingual education programs have been reserved to teach English to those who speak languages other than English (LOTEs) and are developing English. These programs, known as either transitional bilingual education (short term education in two languages until the student in deemed ready for an all-English setting) or developmental bilingual education (an education in two languages that allows for bilingual development of language and content), only included speakers of minoritized languages. Today, however, English-monolingual families are also looking for ways to give their children the opportunity to become bilingual. While these families have traditionally had access only to foreign language programs, where language is taught as a subject typically for a single class period per day, they are increasingly able to enroll in bilingual education programs, where two languages are used in instruction throughout the school day. These programs, which include speakers of English and
speakers of an additional language who learn together in both languages, are known as Dual Language (here referred to as Dual Language Bilingual Education, or “DLBE”). Many refer to this type of education as “Dual Language” or “Two Way,” eliminating the word “bilingual.” I purposefully name it dual language bilingual education to respect the fact that students are learning in two language and are, themselves, bilingual speakers. Because of availability and demand, the majority of US DLBE programs use Spanish and English in instruction. These programs exist mainly at the elementary school level (grades Kindergarten to 5), with those few that exist at the middle and high school level typically open only to students who have been schooled bilingually in earlier grades or have recently arrived to the US from other countries and have high levels of academic proficiency in their home language.

Research points to numerous reasons why parents of many demographic backgrounds choose to place their children in Spanish/English DLBE programs. However, the question of what motivates parents who are not Latino and who have limited cultural or linguistic connection to Spanish to make this choice has not been sufficiently investigated, particularly when it comes to choosing to stay in the program in the upper elementary grades. Due to the importance of Spanish in the US, and the importance of long-term commitment to bilingual education for optimal language learning to take place, further investigation into this matter is critical. Thus, the central research questions this study seeks to answer are:

1) What factors operate in Non-Latino English Speaking (NLES) families’ choice of Spanish/English DLBE programs for their children (selection)?

2) What factors operate in why NLES families keep their children in
Spanish/English DLBE programs over time or not (commitment)?

Forming a broader picture of the NLES families who opt into these programs will provide insight into a number of critical issues in bilingual education today.

1.2. Context

Opportunities to participate in DLBE programs are expanding nationally. Many DLBE programs across the US register with The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), which has been keeping record of the number of DLBE programs since 1962, when there was only one registered program. Most recently archived data indicates there are 415 registered DLBE programs (CAL, 2011), while CAL’s searchable database of DLBE programs turn up 465 results (CAL, 2015). Other accounts claim a tenfold increase in the past decade, with 2000 DLBE programs nationally and 300 in New York City alone (McKay Wilson, 2011). The disparity in reporting may be due to the fact that CAL reports only on the programs that register with the organization; regardless, trends indicate that opportunities to participate in DLBE programs are expanding. In New York City (“NYC”), the setting of this study, a 62% increase in these programs has occurred citywide just in the past 5 years (OELLs, 2010 and 2014). Changes in New York State (“NYS”) law have also led to an increased push to open new bilingual programs, with 29 new “dual language” programs opened in September of 2014 in NYC alone, and 40 more slated to open or expand city-wide in subsequent school years (Schneider, 2013; Zimmer, 2015). While these programs do use languages such as French, Korean, Chinese, or Polish alongside English, the majority of the programs in NYC – 83% – use Spanish and English (OELLs, 2014; Schneider, 2013). This is similar nationwide, as 92% of DLBE

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2 In the spring of 2015, the name of the NYC DOE Office of English Language Learners (“OELLs”) was changed to the Department of English Language Learners and Student Support (“DELLSS”). In citations, it is identified by the name it had at the time the referenced document was created.
programs are Spanish/English (CAL, 2013). In sum, opportunities for participation in DLBE programs are expanding nationally and locally, mainly in Spanish and English.

Non-Latino English-speakers (NLES), defined in this research as individuals who identify as non-Latino and speak English only or English and a LOTE at home, and whose children are not identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) by the school system, are increasingly taking advantage of these expanding opportunities to enroll their children in Spanish/English DLBE programs. While data on when NLES families first began using DLBE programs is scarce, the trend of increased enrollment of NLES children seems relatively recent. There are those who even indicate the increased popularity of DLBE programs in the past decade has to do with demand on the part of English-speaking parents (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Doherty, 2008; McKay-Wilson, 2011). When NLES children participate in DLBE programs, their classmates are mainly the children of Latino Spanish-speakers (LSS), defined in this research as families who identify as Latino and speak only Spanish or Spanish and a language other than Spanish in the home. Some of those children may be identified in the school system as “ELLs,” but I refer to them as Latino emergent bilinguals, to privilege their bilingualism and honor the fact they are not merely learning English but rather adding it to the other language or languages that make up their home language practices.

1.3. Purpose

It is the purpose of this research to offer an understanding of why parents who are primarily English-speaking and especially those who are not Latino (individuals defined in this research as “non-Latino English-speakers” or “NLES”) would select a Spanish/English DLBE program for their children. In so doing, this study seeks to
contextualize the selection of a bilingual program within a larger framework of parental choice to determine what influences parents when they make decisions about their children’s schooling. The study also seeks to identify factors that increase parents’ willingness to commit to DLBE programs, given that the project of becoming bilingual requires a long-term investment of time.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Academic studies that have looked at NLES in DLBE programs are few, and those that do look at parents mainly focus on their perceptions of the programs. Going beyond this to understand why NLES parents choose and keep their children in DLBE programs is critical for many reasons. We find ourselves now poised on the brink of a massive policy and ideological shift regarding bilingualism and bilingual education. Where once restrictive language policies (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010) were leading to the closure of bilingual programs, a national movement has begun to the contrary. Both at the national and local levels, language policies have become more inclusive, the stress being placed on multilingualism for global competitiveness and educational advantage (Duncan & Gil, 2014). In New York State specifically, bilingual education is being expanded at a rapid rate: “Our mission is bilingual for everyone,” states Angélica Infante-Green, associate chancellor of the NY State Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Study (Weiner, 2014). The conversation is shifting, but voices for advocacy are still needed. Howard, et al. (2007) point out that English-monolingual families who want their children to learn other languages through immersion play an important role in keeping bilingual programs intact when they are threatened with closure, and in lobbying for the creation of new programs. Therefore, while the national
conversation on bilingual education has taken a more supportive turn, opposition still remains and the counter-voice of advocacy provided by parents who believe in bilingual education can be crucial if these programs are to continue increasing in popularity. Exploring retention rates for NLES in DLBE programs will also aid in understanding the role of these families in DLBE programs. When NLES parents pull their children out of bilingual classes, they place the programs – and their children’s bilingualism – in jeopardy. If NLES families are to truly be instrumental in the sustainability of bilingual education, they need to stay with the programs at least through grade 5; otherwise, schools may struggle to fill bilingual classes and reduce their program offerings. A reduction in bilingual programming is especially problematic for emergent bilingual (EBL) children, who need spaces in the classroom where they can use all their linguistic resources to really excel at school (O. García, 2011a). Thus, if NLES families participate in DLBE programs and help to bolster their good image, this holds the potential to benefit EBL students as well.

Asking why families make the choice to place their children in DLBE programs also contextualizes this issue within a broader framework of school choice. When parents can select any number of public school, quasi-public (charter) school, private school, and homeschool options, their choice of DLBE sheds light on how highly they regard it. This will also allow a better understanding of the value of Spanish and bilingual education among English monolinguals and for the US in general. This study hopes to contribute to understandings of what attracts NLES families to DLBE and what influences program retention rates for these families, thereby broadening the conversation on how bilingual programs can remain sustainable for generations to come.
Finally, the increased participation of NLES in DLBE programs leads, in many cases, to demographic shifts within the programs and school buildings. Jay Parkes, et al. (2009) identified program demographics as one of the urgent research agendas for dual language bilingual education. In particular, the researchers identified the need to determine how demographics impact program implementation, design/instruction, and student outcomes. This dissertation also addresses critical questions about how demographic shifts have the potential to affect the population traditionally served by bilingual programs – Latino emergent bilinguals.
CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature reviewed here is divided into four sections: (1) Choosing educational programs for children; (2) Choosing bilingual education; (3) Bilingual education options for non-Latino English-speakers; and (4) Non-Latino English-speakers in bilingual classrooms. The first section provides an overview of the school choice movement as it applies to parents’ selection of, involvement in, and commitment to educational programs that differ from the ‘mainstream.’ The section describes bilingual education in its historical and contemporary context, as well as offers an understanding of how different families might select bilingual education. The third section describes the specific options in bilingual education available to the population described in this research as NLES. The final section summarizes research on educational, social, and cultural outcomes for NLES children who participate in DLBE programs with attention given to the particular challenges of including this population in these types of programs.

2.1. Choosing Educational Programs for Children

Many parents view the local public school and its standard offerings as an insufficient option for their children. These parents want more selective options, where both they and their children have more voice in what schools teach and how they teach it. The ability of parents to choose where and how to school their children is an important context to explore when asking why and how NLES choose DLBE programs.
2.1.1. The School Choice Movement

‘School choice’ is not only the rallying cry of political action committees across the nation, it is foremost in the thoughts of many parents once their children reach school age. Children can attend their local public schools, or their parents can opt to place them in a private or religious school, homeschool them, or apply to get them into a charter or magnet school. Families whose children qualify can also choose from specialized programs such as gifted and talented or dual language bilingual education, which exist as strands within some public schools. As Apple (2000) points out, these diverse offerings have turned the school system into “quasi-markets,” where families are treated as “consumers” (60). Just as one might peruse a menu at a restaurant, eventually selecting for dinner the most appealing or most recommended dish, parents are now able to select the most ‘appealing’ school option of many diverse offerings. Wilson (2010) argues that, “Choice is often said to be ‘redefining’ public education” (18). In recent years, more attention than ever before has been given to the idea that families need choices in the education of their children. In fact, one important provision of the federal No Child Left Behind act was to provide new education options for families such as charter schools, magnet schools, and supplemental educational services within the child’s traditional public school (No Child Left Behind, 2008). Since this act was signed into law in 2001, it has become increasingly common for parents to place their children in programs or schools considered different from the ‘mainstream.’ In NYC in particular, school choices abound, from private, to alternative, to progressive, to exam-based gifted programs in school districts and citywide, to multiple options within one’s own public school district.
Perhaps because so many choices exist, parents are increasingly exploring their options before placing their children into schools.

Ulpindo (2008) points out that both alternatives to traditional public school options and parents’ interest in them are increasing as the school choice movement gains momentum. What guides parents’ decisions when they take advantage of alternative schooling choices is different for each family. The following sections detail some of the reasons families might choose non-mainstream schooling opportunities for their children, and what can occur once their decision is made.

2.1.2. Opting out of the ‘Mainstream’

Citing Public Agenda reports, Carr (2007) finds that public polls show a decline in confidence in US public schools and strong support for school reform. She also suggests that “[m]iddle-class families worry that public education is so focused on ‘teaching to the test’ and meeting the needs of at-risk learners that their children will be left behind” (Carr, 2007, p. 36). Certainly parents who feel dissatisfied with the schools their children attend or believe these schools don’t appropriately meet their children’s educational needs are likely to opt out of the mainstream if given the chance (Mansbridge, 1990).

Once parents make the choice to opt out of mainstream public school programs, they look for alternatives that meet certain requirements. They look for the best fit for their children, especially in terms of academics, safety, and organization (Plank, 2006). Parents look for a richer school experience for their children, with more home/school connection (Hassan, 1999; López, 2008). Because they increasingly view schooling as a means to an end, or a commodity, parents realize “the urgent need for their children to
have the skills necessary for a worldwide economy,” and select schools that “will prepare their children to be critical thinkers as well as preparing them for a career or for college” (Ulpindo, 2008, p. 3-4). Essentially, parents look for specialized experiences that will best meet their children’s current and future academic needs.

Some parents base their choices on factors outside of academics. Studies show, for example, that parents sometimes use the race or socioeconomic status of a student population within a school to determine its desirability. Wells and Crain (1992) found, for instance, that middle class parents are more likely to opt out of mainstream options if the schools contain high concentrations of minority and low-income students. Parents are also often influenced by what others in their community, whether a neighborhood community or a social network, decide regarding their children’s education (Schneider, Teske, & Marshall, 2000). This seems to indicate parents look for a ‘like factor’: they select schools where the other students look like their children and come from similar backgrounds. This connection is established in research indicating that if parents ‘like them’ recommend a school, families are more likely to trust it (Posey, 2009, p. 73).

It is also critical to note that those who opt out of traditional public schooling are mainly middle- to upper-class families with more formal education and more English fluency. As a recent New York Times article points out, these are the families with both the financial means to choose options one might need to pay for (like private school) and the savvy to “work the system,” navigating the often confusing array of school choices meant to empower parents but which can also serve to lock lower income families out of better options because they are simply less adept at finding them, or lack the time or English language abilities to do so (Tyre, 2011). In fact, because most of the literature on
school choice focuses on middle class families, the majority of the references in this section of the literature review describe – when discussing school choice – what and how middle class families choose.

Overall, when parents do opt out of more traditional options, their choice is based on many criteria, and makes a strong statement. Wilson (2010) suggests that the very act of choice – being ‘forced,’ in a sense, to choose – compels parents to consider the moral, ethical, and political landscape of schooling. … In many cases, parents are forced to negotiate competing moral goods: diversity against cultural accommodation, for instance, or access to more academically challenging curriculum against individualized attention. (225-226)

When parents opt out of the mainstream, they opt into other schools or other programs, such as DLBE classes, within their traditional public schools. This choice can have many effects for these families and their children.

2.1.3. Opting into Educational Programs

In the past, middle class families who opted out of mainstream public schools selected private schools or charter schools. Now, some of these parents are being drawn back into the public schools. As Posey (2009) reveals, “[p]arents living in urban centers who may have ‘opted out’ before may consider the local public schools given the high financial burden of city living and the costs of private school tuition” (10). In NYC, for instance, families are rethinking the steep cost of private school tuition and are now “scrambling” to get their children into the most desirable public schools (Rogers, 2009). Yet even when parents opt back into public schools, they often want more than the
traditional offerings of these schools; they tend to choose schools with programs or strands that provide a more specialized or challenging educational experience.

That is, another important piece parents look for when opting out of the mainstream and into a special program is uniqueness. Wilson (2010) believes that special programs “reflect distinctive communities. While technically open to all, these schools, in practice, have become exclusive spaces...[that have] a fairly narrow appeal” (231). The exclusivity of these programs appeals to parents who view them as a way to give their children a competitive edge in the future. English monolingual parents requesting DLBE programs in their public schools, for instance, may want to give their children an opportunity to be exposed to and learn a language other than English (LOTE) at an early age, thus providing them a specialized skill to leverage future educational and economic opportunity (Doherty 2008). Another example would be parents choosing schools with a “college preparatory” track or classes, with the thought that this will provide their child the best shot at getting into a top college (Carr, 2007; Ulpindo, 2008). In summary, if parents perceive programs as unique, academically challenging, and desirable within their peer community, they are more likely to select them over mainstream options.

2.1.4. Parental Involvement in and Commitment to Educational Programs

Studies linking increased parental involvement in children’s education to improved academic outcomes proliferate (see for example Domina, 2005; Muller and Kerbow, 1996; Posey, 2009). Parental involvement is also linked to the outcomes of special programs within schools (see for example Cucciara & Horvat, 2009; McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999) and even to their very existence (Plank, 2006, argues that parental demand often guides school programming). Additionally, parents must be convinced to
select special programs (like DLBE) over other options – and keep their children involved – if the programs are to enjoy ongoing success.

Once parents find programs desirable, it is comparatively easier to get them to enroll their children, particularly in light of what parents perceive as the dearth of other more high-quality public schooling options available (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). However, when those who opt into special programs come from a privileged economic, social, and/or racial group, many researchers worry this can exacerbate systematic inequalities within the public sphere. Posey (2009) points out that middle and upper middle-class parents, particularly those who are white, often “play a highly influential role in public education given that their choices, networks, and actions are valued by dominant institutions” (51). Some worry that middle class parents use this political clout to gain advantages only for their children: “[u]pper-middle-class parents are seen as resisting progressive school reforms that may extend opportunities to other families’ children, expose their own children to those of lower social status, or redistribute educational resources more equitably” (McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999, p. 606). Scanlan and Palmer (2009) describe how this can be problematic in a DLBE setting: in the urban school they studied, the DLBE program caters to white and high performing Latino students, excluding virtually all African Americans, who make up nearly 50% of the school’s mainstream population, and low performing Latinos.

On the other hand, many argue that the increased economic integration that occurs when middle class families join lower-income families in public schools creates multiple positive social and cultural outcomes (Kahlenberg, 2001). L. Freeman (2005) argues that attracting and retaining middle-class families in public schools helps revitalize urban
spaces, ameliorate poverty, and connect low-income residents to social and economic resources and opportunities. It has also been said that special programs like DLBE halt “white flight” from struggling school districts, keeping middle class resources in the community (de Jong, 2002). Whether the participation of middle class families in special programs in public schools is good or bad, families are increasingly enrolling their children in these programs.

When parents become deeply involved in their children’s education, their interests begin to change the way instruction occurs, and the outcomes of all students who participate in the class. It is the job of schools, teachers, and the parents themselves to make sure these outcomes are good for all students and not just those who come from more privileged homes.

2.2. Choosing Bilingual Education

Nowadays, when parents select their child’s school, they often face a dizzying array of choices in programs, settings, and educational philosophies. Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE), particularly for Non-Latino English-speakers (NLES), is one of these choices. Numerous studies have shown that parents who choose bilingual education overwhelmingly believe in the benefits of bilingualism and, by extension, biculturalism and biliteracy (Craig, 1996; Doherty, 2008; Flynn, 2006; Gerena, 2010; Parkes, 2008; Ramos, 2007; Shannon & Milian, 2002; Silver, 2011; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011). This dissertation addresses how the potential for bilingualism, among other factors, attracts NLESs to DLBE programs. NLES participation in DLBE programs is increasing locally and nationally, and determining how and why these have made this
selection allows us to unpack the prejudices they negotiate in order to do so as well as contextualize their choices within a larger trend.

2.2.1. Bilingual education: Definitions

Bilingual education is an educational approach where two languages are used in instruction for the same group of students. A traditional view of bilingual education is predicated on the theory that building up a student’s “first” language can assist him or her in better learning both the “second” language and required school content (Cummins, 1984, p. 23). While there is merit to this theory, embedded within it is the now antiquated belief that there exists a strict separation between each of a bilingual’s languages. This view reflected the purpose of bilingual education when it was first federally supported in the late 1960s: proponents touted the utility of teaching in the first language to assist language minority students, who often struggled academically and came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to learn English (Ovando & Collier, 2006). It is also reflected to this day in the practices of most DLBE programs, which insist that the two languages of instruction are never used together but rather used one at a time in different classrooms, with different teachers, or at different times.

The current view of bilingual education is more complex, recognizing that using two languages in instruction is a way of providing meaningful and equitable education: “bilingual education programs provide a general education, teach in two or more languages, develop multiple understanding about languages and cultures, and foster appreciation for human diversity” (O. García, 2009a, p. 5). This view allows for the dynamic use of multiple languages in a classroom setting where speakers of many languages study together (i.e. not just minority language speakers).
old model of two separate languages (like two wheels on a bicycle) does not hold; what is needed is a more fluid conceptualization of language and language practices that afford students the opportunity to engage all of themselves in the learning process (much like an all-terrain vehicle would allow one to explore a more vast range of settings)\(^3\). As multilingual capability is increasingly recognized as an important commodity in a global society, and an increasingly diverse population uses bilingual programs, this definition will continue to evolve.

As Baker (2006) points out, the aim of bilingual education ranges from assimilating minority language speakers into English to providing marketable language skills to language majority students (173). Those who participate in bilingual education programs range from those who already speak two or more languages to those who are learning another language for the first time. Perhaps because of this complexity, bilingual education has often been misunderstood and, as we will see, described as ineffective or only for a certain population (not the population studied here). One generally agreed-upon definition is that bilingual education is based on the use of two languages as media of instruction: children learn content through more than one language, developing competency in multiple languages while developing content knowledge at the same time (O. García, 2009a).

2.2.2. A brief history of bilingual education: US Context

The US has a long history as a nation made up of people of many different origins, all of whom have brought with them unique linguistic and cultural practices. Current policies on bilingual education are rooted in the nation’s historical context of immigration as well as its political context, and are related to the nation’s fundamental

\(^3\) I credit Ofelia Garcia for the images of the bicycle versus the all-terrain vehicle.
Ruiz (1984) summarizes these historical shifts and posits that bilingual education policies have been shaped by three basic perspectives about language: language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource (17). All of these orientations have been held by policy makers at different times in US history, and as a result have shaped language policy in many ways.

When European immigrants first arrived to the United States, there were many Native American languages, and there was initially linguistic tolerance for both these languages and the languages Europeans brought with them (Baker, 2006). As an example, Germans and Scandinavians had home language-medium schools as well as bilingual schools from as early as the mid-17th century through the late 19th century, and many missionaries used Native American languages in the teaching of Christianity while the US government employed these languages in treaties with Native tribes (Baker, 2006). German language schools were especially widespread and even protected by law in some states like Ohio, where an 1839 law safeguarded the right to establish German-medium and German/English schools (O. García, 2009a). Well into the 18th and 19th centuries, European LOTEs were generally seen as non-threatening and tolerated within their local settings. However, Native languages did not fare as well: treaties with tribal nations were ended in 1871, and the US government began a policy of educating Native American children in boarding schools in an attempt to eradicate tribal languages (O. García, 2009a).

Beginning in the 20th century, when a dramatic increase in immigration gave rise to fear of foreigners, the US government also began to place restrictions on European languages and all other languages other than English (LOTES), along with those who
spoke them. Enmity toward foreign groups perceived as threatening to Americans led to legal restrictions on immigration and citizenship. Some examples include the 1906 Nationality Act, which required English proficiency for naturalization as a US citizen, and the 1924 Immigration Act, which limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to two percent of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890. Thus, it restricted all non-white immigration (O. García, 2009a). Schools also began to abandon bilingual education and restrict the study of other LOTEs after World War I, focusing instead on Americanization and the teaching of English (Ovando & Collier, 2006). By 1923, 34 states had required that English be the sole language of instruction in the classroom (O. García, 2009a).

However, the US Supreme Court was slightly more permissive than the states at this time, striking down language-restrictive laws in three states in 1923, and ruling in the case *Meyer vs. Nebraska* that language minority communities deserved protection under the constitution (Baker, 2006). As a general rule, the first half of the 20th century saw increasing restrictions placed on LOTEs, those who spoke them, and their use in education and government.

Attitudes began to shift again, however, in the second half of the 20th century. Many mark the beginning of the shift with the launch of the Russian Sputnik satellite into space in 1957, leading to a renewed interest in Americans learning other languages in order to be more competitive on an international scale (Baker, 2006). Others posit this shift began when the 1954 US Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that segregated schools are unconstitutional “set a precedent that when it came to education, same was not always equal, a principle that was later to be used for the
education of language-minority students” (O. García, 2009a, p. 168). What can be said is that bilingual education in the US experienced a revival beginning in the 1960s.

The beginning of this revival is often marked with the foundation of the Coral Way School in Dade County, Florida, a Spanish/English DLBE school established by Cuban exiles in 1963. Many argue that the success of this school paved the way for national discussions on the merits of bilingual education for Spanish-speakers (Baker, 2006). However, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, or national origin, was arguably more influential (O. García, 2009a). This provision of the Civil Rights Act influenced minority populations such as Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and Native Americans to petition the government for their right to learn bilingually. Looking for ways to “dissipate the growing anger in the nation about injustices and inequities, specifically those surrounding the education of language-minority students,” the US government passed the Bilingual Education Act (“BEA”) designed to help Latinos and Native Americans who were failing in the school system (O. García, 2011, p. 134). Enacted in 1968 as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, its purpose was to “ease” Spanish-speaking and Native American students living in poverty into English (Baker, 2006). Speakers of languages other than Spanish also petitioned for bilingual education. In 1974, a landmark case, Lau versus Nichols, was brought before the Supreme Court by a group of Chinese-speaking parents who argued that the schools – where English was used exclusively in instruction – were not meeting their children’s needs; this case determined that an English-only education for speakers of LOTEs was in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (O. García, 2009a). This case established the Lau remedies, which gave all students not
proficient in English the right to academic support, such as ESL classes or some form of bilingual education. While these legislative acts initially targeted only students living in poverty, they can be recognized as instrumental in establishing the right to bilingual education for students in the U.S. who were not speakers of English.

Subsequent amendments to the BEA were not as friendly to bilingual education. When the Act was reauthorized in 1974 and 1978, for instance, “increasing emphasis [was placed] on the importance of mastery of English-language skills” (Ovando & Collier, 2006, p. 64). The maintenance and development of the home language was not addressed, as the definition of bilingual education set forth in the first (1974) reauthorization makes apparent: “It is instruction given in, and study of, English and (to the extent necessary to allow a child to progress effectively through the education system) the native language of the children of limited English speaking ability” (cited in O. García, 2009a, p. 169). As we can see, this 1974 reauthorization defines bilingual education as transitional, where the student’s home language is used to support English learning but bilingualism is not the goal. As a result, bilingual programs that received Federal funding were mainly transitional bilingual programs, and worked to move speakers of other languages who were developing English into all-English settings as quickly as possible (Ovando & Collier, 2006). Amendments made to the Act in 1984 and 1988 that “allowed increased percentages of the funds available to be allocated to programs where the child’s first language was not used” further restricted the use of bilingualism in education (Baker, 2006, p. 194). The Act was finally terminated in 2001 by the adoption of No Child Left Behind act (NCLB), which renamed the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) as the “Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and
Immigrant Students” Act (Title III), effectively expunging the word “bilingual” from the Act’s title and refocusing its purpose on teaching English (see, for example, Crawford, 2007). NCLB has also had other repercussions for bilingual programming and bilingual learners. Menken (2009) argues, for instance, that the high stakes testing focus of NCLB, which tests emergent bilingual (“EBL”) students with the same proficiency assessments mainstream students take, punishes students and schools when EBLs fail to make annual yearly progress on these assessments. When penalized in this way, many schools have responded by eliminating bilingual programs with the idea that the more time EBL students spend learning in English the better they will do on the English-medium tests mandated under NCLB (Menken, 2009). Also, because the replacement of the BEA with NCLB took away provisions for funding and researching effective programs for EBL students, school leaders that lack appropriate understanding of bilingual education are even less likely to trust it without appropriate support and advocacy (Crawford, 2013).

Actions outside the Federal and State government have also inspired limits on bilingual education. Advocacy by the “Official English” movement, for example, has successfully inspired 31 states to pass “English-only” laws that protect the official use of English in government and education and place restrictions on bilingual education (US English, 2013). Another example is the fierce campaign against bilingual education and multiculturalism waged by California businessman Ron Unz in the late 1990s. This campaign garnered support for public ballot Proposition 227, ultimately leading to its passage in 1998 and effectively making bilingual education illegal in California; Unz’s initiative also inspired similar campaigns in states across the nation (Baker, 2006). Grass roots political movements such as these are based on notions that bilingual education is a
“wrongheaded experiment” that has failed (Pedalino Porter, 1998), or that Latino children are “shunted into subpar bilingual programs” where they don’t learn English and aren’t allowed to exit (Freedman, 2004). More problematically, these attitudes are often based in criticism or fear of speakers of LOTEs themselves. As Blackledge and Creese (2010) point out, “in recent times, the discourse of public elites has proposed that minority languages other than English are associated with, and even responsible for, problems in society” (5). These attitudes have taken root in the national consciousness, shaping the climate of restriction toward language diversity that has for a long time existed in the US. As Gándara and Hopkins (2010) assert, “the United States has consistently sought to maintain the primacy of English both in educational settings and in public life” (20).

A recent shift in attitudes toward LOTEs seems to be taking place, however. Lawmakers in key state and federal positions have lately come out with legislation or initiatives to protect and encourage the use of multiple languages in education. In California, for instance, where bilingual education has been all but illegal since Proposition 227 was instated in 1998, a bill to repeal the restrictions imposed by this law will be put to voters in 2016 (Ash, 2014). Parents and state representatives in Massachusetts are advocating for flexibility in restrictive policies governing bilingual education, with current legislation in the state senate for approval (Quinn, 2013). In New York State, times are changing as well. According to educational researcher Vanessa Pérez: “There is a shift across all levels of bilingual education – state-wide, district-wide and school-wide – to view the home language as vital for the academic development of bilingual students” (Pérez and Ascenzi-Moreno, 2013). There is also evidence that language policies are changing on a national level. A recent US Department of
Education policy brief describes a “world class education” as one that includes learning to read, write, and speak in languages in addition to English, and praises school programs that encourage language learning:

Many schools and communities across the country have established programs to encourage mastery of multiple languages. In effective dual-language classrooms, English learners and English-proficient classmates are provided opportunities to learn academic content while simultaneously becoming proficient in both languages. (Duncan & Gil, 2014)

This statement by the U.S. Secretary of Education establishes a link between biliteracy and national security as well as global competitiveness, describing EBL students’ home languages as assets to preserve and value. Statements like these, along with recent legislative turns as well as positive attention to bilingual education in national media in the past few years, show a shift is taking place in this country and restrictions on bilingual education are lifting.

It is crucial for attitudes and laws to continue shifting. When schools place emphasis exclusively on learning English, an opportunity to build on the linguistic resources EBL children bring to school is missed. English monolingual children also miss out on the opportunity to acquire additional languages. As Craig (1995) points out,

In the United States, bilingual education generally refers to special programs designed for immigrant children with little or no proficiency in the English language…[and with the goal of] moving them into regular (English-language) classrooms as soon as possible. When defined in this way, bilingual education has no relevance for mainstream English-speaking American students. (20)
The way bilingual programs have been funded and positioned in schools for years has led to this stigmatization. Middle-class, English-speaking families have not traditionally seen a place for their children in classrooms with economically disadvantaged, minority students, and even English-monolingual and bilingual Latinos have not tended to use these programs, which are transitional in nature. The emphasis on English language acquisition made their participation irrelevant: if their children had no need to learn English, they had no reason to enroll in these programs. Essentially, when bilingual education programs focus only on English proficiency, US children of all linguistic backgrounds miss out on the opportunity to become multilingual: those whose families speak LOTEs are encouraged to shed their home language practices, while those whose families speak only English never learn LOTEs.

This is not the case in most nations all over the globe. The European Commission, for instance, promotes “the mother tongue and two other languages for all citizens…[and] language diversity across Europe” (Baetens Beardsmore, 2009, p. 205). If the US is to stay on par with the European Union and other nations that recognize multilingualism as a resource, we must improve our bilingual capacity. This means no longer ignoring the linguistic resources of immigrant families and improving opportunities for their children to achieve high levels of bilingualism (see for example García & Mason, 2009; Varghese & Park, 2010). It also means cultivating opportunities for English-monolingual children to become bilingual. As Ofelia García (2009a) points out, “the greatest challenge will be how to provide mainstream children an education that prepares them with the global understandings, languages included, that will be required in the twenty-first century” (16).
2.2.3. Benefits of Bilingualism

Competence in more than one language has been shown to have numerous personal and social benefits. Reviewing these many advantages, François Grosjean (2010) discusses how bilingualism allows one to interact with more people, achieve greater clarity in speaking and a richer vocabulary, think divergently, encounter greater life opportunities, and help others. Jim Cummins (1984) developed the theory of a “common underlying proficiency” which poses that bilinguals transfer knowledge and skills in each of their languages back and forth between languages (22). This cross-lingual transfer carries with it many cognitive and academic advantages, as multiple research studies have discovered (see for example Cummins, 1984; Baker, 2006; Bialystock, 2004). Additionally, Breton (1978) positions bilingualism as a form of “capital,” which can be used to negotiate economic benefits (cited in O. García, 2009a). Bilingualism has also been linked to greater cultural awareness and sensitivity (Howard & Sugarman, 2007). Bilingual children are notable for their “divergent and creative thinking” (O. García, 2009a, p. 96, summarizing Vygotsky), which Bialystok (2004) argues allows them to excel in tasks such as understanding the structure of language and learning to read because “their advantages makes it easier to master these skills by giving them more refined cognitive processes with which to approach them” (597-598).

In an educational context, research shows that these benefits have an impact on how children learn. To begin with, learning bilingually allows students to activate the linguistic resources they bring to school and utilize them to learn another language. Research findings also support a link between learning in two languages and improved academic outcomes for all students in enrichment bilingual programs. De Jong’s review
of empirical studies evaluating the efficacy of bilingual education, for instance, uncovered positive academic outcomes for participants (2008). Thomas and Collier (2003) suggest that the “cognitive stimulus of schooling in two languages” provided by bilingual education “enhance[s] creativity and analytical thinking,” providing ways for students of multiple linguistic backgrounds to receive accelerated instruction that helps them grow academically (61). Many examples of positive academic outcomes for students in bilingual programs may also be found in Adescope’s (2010) meta-analysis of over 63 studies, which describes a reliable association between bilingualism and several cognitive advantages, including increased attentional control, working memory, metalinguistic awareness, and abstract and symbolic representation skills.

Apart from all the social, academic, and cognitive advantages of bilingualism and bilingual schooling, a critical benefit to a multilingual approach in education is that it allows for schools to reflect the diversity of their student populations in a more sensitive way. As O. García (2009a) suggests, bilingual education helps to, “foster and develop tolerance towards linguistic differences, as well as appreciation of languages and bilingual proficiencies” (9). This tolerance also extends to more positive feelings toward the groups who speak diverse languages. Wright and Tropp (2005) found, for instance, that white children educated in multilingual and multicultural contexts tend to be more positive in their assessment of non-white children than those in white-only or predominantly white, monolingual classes (313). Education that develops multilingualism and respect for diversity has also been linked to positive national and global security outcomes (UNESCO). However, it is important to understand that positive outcomes for children’s intellectual, emotional, social, and cultural growth are likely best achieved
through *enrichment* bilingual education. Enrichment bilingual education develops and maintains a child’s home language practices while simultaneously developing a new language. A DLBE program where cultural diversity and linguistic plurality are honored would be an example of this; a transitional bilingual program where Latino EBL students are pushed to learn English and American culture as quickly as possible and limit the use of Spanish would *not* be an example of enrichment. Lindholm-Leary (2000) indicates that an enrichment bilingual education can foster “self-esteem, self confidence, and general psychological well-being” (46). Interestingly, enrichment is also often what attracts parents to enroll their children in DLBE programs in the first place (see for example Doherty, 2008; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011).

### 2.2.4. Bilingual education in Spanish

García and Mason (2009) describe a recent shift in attitudes toward the Spanish language: “In the USA, Spanish is often characterized as the language of the conquered, the colonized, and the immigrants; that is, as *a language of poverty*. But in the context of economic globalization in the 21st century, Spanish in the USA is slowly being *negotiated* as a language with economic value” (78). The increasing demographic presence of Latinos and Spanish-speakers is urging this attitudinal shift along. According to most recently available US Census data, Hispanics make up 17.1% of the total US population (US Census Bureau, 2014). Among US residents who speak LOTEs at home, the majority (62%) speak Spanish, and their numbers have grown over 200% in the 30-year period between 1980 and 2010 (Ryan, 2013). Bilingualism for US Latinos and new Latino immigrants to the US is a critical issue for social justice given the connections between bilingualism and economic profitability (García & Mason, 2009) and positive
self-identity and cultural maintenance (Romaine, 2011). It is increasingly recognized that bilingualism in Spanish can also benefit non-Latinos. In fact, this recognition seems part of a larger national movement toward embracing multilingualism for all Americans.

One example of this shift occurred during US President Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign. At a Town Hall Meeting in Georgia, Mr. Obama stated: “Instead of worrying about whether immigrants can learn English – they'll learn English – you need to make sure your child can speak Spanish. You should be thinking about how can your child become bilingual? We should have every child speaking more than one language” (Rohter, 2008, p. 1). When reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2010, his administration emphasized “a well-rounded education” for students so that they may “contribute as citizens in our democracy and to thrive in a global economy;” learning languages other than English was mentioned as an essential part of this “complete” education (US Department of Education, 2010, p. 4). While the recent national political climate seems more supportive of multilingualism, and may lead to changes in local educational policies, the US school system has not historically supported the development of fluency in languages other than English (LOTEs).

When speakers of LOTEs enter the US school system they are typically not encouraged to maintain or develop their home language practices. One outcome of this is the rapid “language shift” to English that takes place in Latino communities by the second or third generation, which has been well documented (Valdés, 2011; O. García, 2009b; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). And for English monolinguals, national efforts to promote bilingualism have yet to affect foreign language education; in fact, only 44% of US high school students and 15% of junior high students were enrolled in foreign
language classes in 2002 (O. García, 2009a, p. 191). School districts increasingly focus on student test scores in English and Mathematics, not their multilingualism, to determine student progress. Forty-six US states have now adopted the Common Core Standards, a set of expectations that emphasize college and career readiness, which prize English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics ability – and high test scores in these subject areas – above all else (achievethecore.org). This focus threatens programs like DLBE established to protect and build children’s multilingualism, for “when high stakes assessment takes place in English only and children are linguistically mixed, it is easy for English to overcome Spanish” (Garcia, O., 2009b, p. 169). Finally, while English-monolinguals are left to study new languages unmolested, anti-immigrant attitudes present Spanish-speaking Latinos as a “looming challenge to…our national identity,” making their bilingualism controversial (Huntington, 2004, p. 8). As Pomerantz (2002) indicates,

for heritage language users (and especially those who are non-White and non-monied), Spanish may be viewed as a problem by both the speakers themselves and English-monolingual, middle class, American society, whereas for upper- and middle-class foreign language learners it is often seen as a resource. (p. 277; citing Ortega, 1999, Pavlenko, 2002, and Ruiz 1984)

Herein lies the negotiation: while certain Federal policies and societal attitudes support bilingualism for elite populations (e.g. those already fluent in English), many others denigrate the linguistic resources EBLs bring to bear. In a global society, however, bilingual education advocates emphasize that, “[p]owerful economic, social, diplomatic, and security needs argue for cultivating multilingualism…We should make normative
multilingualism an educational objective for all youth growing up in the global era, immigrant and native alike” (Suárez-Orozco, et. al., 2008, p. 368-69).

2.2.5. Parental Choice and Bilingual Education

NLES families and Spanish-speaking or bilingual Latino families enroll their children in DLBE programs for many reasons, some similar and some different. Because parents choose these programs, Parkes (2008) points out, “these programs have to consider student recruitment, parental motivation for selecting the program, and parents’ reasons for choosing the program more so, perhaps, than other models do” (659). Previous studies on why and how parents choose DLBE for their children exist, and elucidate some of the reasons families make this choice:

Table 1: Prior studies on parents’ choice of DLBE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title of Study</th>
<th>Type of Study &amp; Instrument</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Craig, B. (1996)</td>
<td>Parental Attitudes Toward Bilingualism in a Local Two-Way Immersion Program</td>
<td>Quantitative Written survey</td>
<td>113 parents, Latino and White (numbers not specified) with children in DLBE program.</td>
<td>Is there intergroup variation in parents’ feelings on bilingualism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doherty, V. F. (2008)</td>
<td>Voices of the Parents: A Qualitative Study of Parental Perceptions of a Dual Language Program</td>
<td>Qualitative Individual and small group interviews; researcher memos; observations at school and of PTA meetings</td>
<td>6 English-speaking parents and 6 Spanish-speaking parents with children in the DLBE program; 3 teachers, 3 administrators, and 1 family liaison from the school.</td>
<td>Is there variation between how middle class, white, English-speaking parents and working class, LSS parents view the purpose of a DLBE program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gerena, L.</td>
<td>(2010) Parental Voice and Involvement in Cultural Context: Understanding Rationales, Values, and Motivational Constructs in a Dual Immersion Setting</td>
<td>Mixed Methods Field observations of parents involved in school setting; survey; focus group interviews</td>
<td>Parents of students in one DLBE cohort of 15 students. 6 are identified as English-only; 8 as Spanish-only; and 1 as bilingual.</td>
<td>What are the deep cultural understandings that provide rationales, motivation, and contexts for parents to enroll their children in a DLBE program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer, D.</td>
<td>(2009) Middle-Class English Speakers in a Two-Way Immersion Bilingual Classroom: “Everybody Should Be Listening to Jonathan Right Now…”</td>
<td>Qualitative Case Study in 2nd Grade DLBE class including school visits, classroom observations, and interviews.</td>
<td>6 focal students (3 English-speakers and 3 Spanish-speakers) in DLBE program, parents of 6 focal students, and 8 staff members from school.</td>
<td>Does symbolic dominance of English exist in DLBE classroom because of how middle class English speakers interact with peers and teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkes, J.</td>
<td>(2008) Who Chooses Dual Language Education for their Children and why?</td>
<td>Quantitative Survey (“Family Survey Project”)</td>
<td>724 families with children in DLBE programs within one New Mexico school district. At home with their children, 65% speak Spanish, 27% speak English, and 5% speak both languages.</td>
<td>What are the top reasons parents select DLBE programs in this New Mexico school district, and do responses vary between Spanish-, English-, and bilingual speakers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of Responses</td>
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<td>Leary’s (2001) book “Dual Language Education”)</td>
<td>Latino, 2.2% Caucasian; 2.5% Other about it, and how do they support program goals at home?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shannon &amp; Milian (2002)</td>
<td>Parents Choose Dual Language Programs in Colorado: A Survey</td>
<td>Quantitative Survey</td>
<td>1,043 families with children in Colorado DLBE programs. 46% speak mostly Spanish, 32% speak English, and 21% speak both languages. Do parents support DLBE programs? (Focus on disproving anti-bilingual education initiative in Colorado).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silver, B. (2011)</td>
<td>Parental Motivation for Enrolling a Child in a Two-Way Immersion Language Program</td>
<td>Quantitative Survey</td>
<td>268 parents of children in DLBE programs in one California school district. 53% speak mainly Spanish, 41% speak English, 3.3% speak other languages. Are there different motivating factors for English- and Spanish-speaking parents to enroll their children in DLBE programs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lindholm-Leary, K. (2001)</td>
<td>Dual Language Education</td>
<td>Mixed-methods Surveys of parents, teachers, and students; student outcome data; and classroom observations</td>
<td>Students, parents, and teachers at 20 DLBE schools in the US How can the implementation and outcomes of the DLBE model in the US be described, and what are the implications for the student population?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whiting, E. F. and Feinauer, E. (2011)</td>
<td>Reasons for enrollment at a Spanish-English 2-way immersion charter school</td>
<td>Quantitative Survey (CAL household survey from Evaluator’s)</td>
<td>287 families, 70% Hispanic/Latino, 25% Caucasian, 5% Other. What motivates parents of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to</td>
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</table>
The studies summarized in the preceding table share certain commonalities, one of the most notable being that they are mainly quantitative (six of the studies are quantitative: Craig, Parkes, Ramos, Shannon & Milian, Silver, and Whiting & Feinauer) and most employ survey in some capacity (eight of the studies use survey: Craig, Gerena, Parkes, Ramos, Shannon & Milian, Silver, Lindholm-Leary, and Whiting & Feinauer). Two studies use qualitative analysis (Doherty and Palmer), and two studies employ mixed methods (Gerena and Lindholm-Leary). Only five of the studies (Gerena, Parkes, Shannon & Milian, Silver, and Whiting & Feinauer) directly address the question of why parents enroll their children in DLBE programs; the other studies only include this data among other aspects of their analysis. Of the five studies that directly address parent choice, not one is a qualitative study. Additionally, no study focuses exclusively on NLES parents who select DLBE programs. These studies focus either on majority Hispanic/Latino families (Parkes, Ramos, Silver, Whiting & Feinauer) or look for differences between Latino and Anglo respondents (Craig, Doherty, Gerena, Parkes, Silver, Whiting & Feinauer). In summary, most studies on the topic of parent choice DLBE are quantitative, employ surveys in their data collection, and do not focus specifically on non-Latino families.

The current study – a qualitative analysis of non-Latino, English-speaking (NLES) parents who choose dual language bilingual education – will fill a critical gap in the literature. There are currently, to my knowledge, no other studies like it. Further, not

| among highly motivated parents from a diverse community | Toolkit for Dual Language Programs | enroll their children in a DLBE program? |
one of the studies takes place in New York City (NYC), a location where opportunities to study in DLBE settings are expanding, as NYC Department of Education data shows:

As of June 2012, the DOE offered a total of 462 bilingual programs. Between 2011 and 2012, the DOE opened more than 50 new bilingual programs, the most the department has ever opened in such an isolated span. Of these programs, 18 are Transitional Bilingual Education, 33 Dual Language, and three are hybrid TBE/DL programs. Five languages are being taught within these programs: Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian Creole, and French. What is also noteworthy is that, following the release of this report, OELLs is committed to working with 65 schools as they plan to open new bilingual programs. As this data highlights, the DOE’s bilingual programs are in the midst of a period of steady expansion. (OELLs, 2013; emphasis mine)

Opportunities for bilingual education are expanding in NYC, and the emphasis of the expansion is on programs called dual language.

The current study will be a valuable contribution to scholarship on bilingual education, school choice, and the parental role in selecting DLBE programs for their children. It will, in addition, highlight an understudied population in DLBE programs in NYC; while the NYC Department of Education collects and reports on myriad data points around students identified as “ELL” in bilingual programs, there is no data available on non-ELLs in DLBE programs. In fact, precise numbers of NLESs in these programs are not reported in NYC or elsewhere, nor available from NYC or national organizations at my request.
Prior research has elucidated some reasons for why NLES parents might choose DLBE programs for their children. Many of these studies have found differences between why parents of multiple demographic backgrounds select DLBE programs for their children. The main demographic difference prior research has focused on to determine program selection is the home language practices of the families enrolled. As such, the following sections will describe the findings of prior scholarship around reasons families identified as English-speaking and Spanish-speaking select bilingual education.

2.2.5.a. Non-Latino English-speaking families who choose bilingual education

It would be next to impossible to describe a “typical” non-Latino English-speaking (NLES) family with children in a DLBE program. However, studies looking at who chooses DLBE and why have found that these individuals tend to come from a higher socioeconomic class and be more well-educated than the Latino Spanish-speaking (LSS) families who choose the same programs for their EBL children (Hadi-Tabassum, 2002; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011; Doherty, 2008; Shannon & Milian, 2002; Lindholm-Leary, 2000). Another general finding is that children from NLES families tend to have little or no exposure to Spanish prior to registering in a DLBE program. When such families place their children in DLBE classes, some worry that educational equity for Latino EBLs, along with the unique importance to the Latino community of Spanish and Hispanic culture, is placed at risk (Valdés, 1997). Others argue that including NLES children limits segregation, brings middle class resources into low-income schools, and normalizes bilingualism (Howard, et al., 2007). Whatever the risks or benefits might be, NLES families are increasingly choosing DLBE programs for their children (Wilson,
or, when these programs are not available, requesting some type of foreign language education program at the elementary school level (Cloud, et. al., 2000).

NLEs choose DLBE programs for many reasons, some very different from what LSS families value. Gerena’s (2010) investigation found, for instance, that English-speaking parents were more concerned than Spanish-speaking parents with job opportunities and global connectedness for their children. Another study found that while English- and Spanish-speaking parents all valued bilingualism, English-speaking parents were most likely to have enrolled their child in a DLBE program to expose them to cultural diversity, enhance career opportunities, and provide intellectual stimulation (Craig, 2004). Other studies show that NLEs families value DLBE as a superior educational experience to other options. As Doherty (2008) discovered, parents viewed DLBE as a “challenging and enriching option” for their children, thus “the dual language program brought them into the public school by offering what they considered a more rigorous academic option” (111). In fact, the theme of enriched academic development comes up repeatedly in studies of why NLEs parents select DLBE programs, and in many cases is even more important to them than language acquisition.

2.2.5.b. Latino Spanish-speaking families who choose bilingual education

Latino Spanish-speaking families who place their children in DLBE class are also difficult to characterize. What may be said is that even for families where mostly Spanish is spoken by the parents, there is generally English spoken or present in the home; that is, most of the “Spanish-speakers” are actually bilinguals. According to the American Community Survey (2011), 74% of LSSs consider themselves bilingual, with only 9% considering themselves Spanish-monolingual (Ryan, p. 3). Thus, language
practices in these families generally tend to be more fluid than they are with NLES families, who tend to be English-monolingual. Some researchers caution that this dynamic can lead to the “symbolic dominance” of English in the classroom (Palmer, 2009, p. 189; see also Ramos, 2007; Rubenstein-Ávila, 2002; Valdés, 1997), shifting the focus from encouraging bilingualism to ensuring English proficiency (Morales & Aldana, 2010; Palmer, 2009; Ovando & Collier, 2006). When this occurs, the students in these programs are seen in deficient terms, as “English Language Learners,” “Limited English Proficient” or “English as a Second [or Other] Language” students. These labels ignore the myriad linguistic and academic skills in Spanish and/or other language(s) the children bring to school. Therefore, rather than placing emphasis on their acquisition of English, and only English, we should refer to this population as emergent bilinguals (EBLs) because these children are not simply learning English but rather adding English to their other language(s) (O. García, 2009a; O. García & Kleifgen, 2010). But we must also acknowledge that Spanish-speaking families whose children are EBLs connect English learning to future educational and economic benefits for their children (Parkes, 2008). For them, DLBE programs allow them to expand on and preserve their traditional language practices (Spanish and bilingualism) while allowing their children to learn the English they need for future success (see, for example, Ramos, 2007).

Apart from the economic advantages of learning English, language and cultural heritage sustainability is often cited in scholarship as the two most important reasons for LSSs to enroll their children in DLBE programs (Craig, 1996; Doherty, 2008; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Parkes, 2008). That is, Latino families are more likely to value developing Spanish as a way to strengthen or reconnect to home culture. Farrugio (2010) reports, for
example, that “Spanish preservation is important to immigrant parents because it supports the need to strengthen family unity for survival in a harsh economic environment. Parents associate the loss of Spanish among their US-schooled children with a potential diminution of parental authority and a disruption of cultural values” (7). This ties into the very important way DLBE helps Latino EBL children to develop a strong bilingual-bicultural identity (Ramos, 2007). One final generalization prior scholarship has found to differentiate the LSS families with children in DLBE programs from their NLES counterparts is that they are less likely to enroll their children in schools outside the neighborhood or other non-public options (Doherty, 2008).

One final point to keep in mind, when discussing choosing bilingual education, is that this choice is very different for LSS families than it is for NLES families. For the latter population, DLBE programs are entirely optional for their children, whereas for the former this is not always so. In New York State, for instance, students designated “Limited English Proficient” are “provided opportunities to achieve the same educational goals and standards that have been established by the Board of Regents for all students” through Bilingual or English as a New Language (formerly “ESL) programs (NYSED, 2014; p. 20). In other states, such as California, “English-only instruction is mandated for all English leaners unless parents sign a waiver otherwise” (Wentworth, et. al., 2010, in Gándara and Hopkins, p. 37). And even where parents have a choice about language/program options, information is often difficult to access or understand, so students are sometimes placed at the discretion of the school administration (Monzo, 2005, p. 381). Thus, Latino EBLs in DLBE programs may have joined for different reasons and under different circumstances than their NLES counterparts.
2.3. Bilingual Education Options for non-Latino English-speakers

For NLES families in the US, options for learning other languages vary by region and state and are limited to what local schools offer. Traditionally, these families have chosen foreign language education because it has been the only choice. However, other options exist and are becoming more widespread. For some families, immersion bilingual education is an option, and DLBE is becoming increasingly popular for non-Latinos and Latinos alike. Table Two below describes the three program models available to NLESs in the US. Narrative about each program type follows.

Table 2: Types of bilingual education available to NLESs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Program</th>
<th>Typical Type of Child</th>
<th>Language of the Classroom</th>
<th>Societal and Educational Aim</th>
<th>Aim in Language Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language (FL) Education</td>
<td>Language Majority</td>
<td>English with FL lessons</td>
<td>Limited Enrichment</td>
<td>Limited Bilingualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>Language Majority</td>
<td>Bilingual with initial emphasis on the LOTE.</td>
<td>Pluralism and Enrichment.</td>
<td>Bilingualism and Biliteracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE)</td>
<td>Language Majority and Language Minority</td>
<td>Bilingual with language separated for instruction during the day or week</td>
<td>Maintenance, pluralism, and enrichment.</td>
<td>Bilingualism and Biliteracy</td>
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</table>

Source: Baker, 2006 (Adapted)

2.3.1. Foreign language education

Foreign language education is the most common way NLES young people receive instruction in LOTEs in this country. In this type of education, students study language
as a subject, usually beginning in high school. Some states offer this type of foreign language education in middle or elementary school, but it is not typical. In fact, opportunities for foreign language education in the elementary and middle school have been substantially decreasing in the last decade (Rhodes and Pufahl, 2009, p. 1).

In foreign language instruction, students typically learn language in isolated pieces – listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture. Study of foreign languages generally begins in high school (there is no requirement for foreign language study in elementary or middle school), and students complete an average of 2.2 years of foreign language instruction (NCES, 2009, Table 159). Just as in bilingual programs, the most popular language to be studied as a foreign language in American schools is Spanish: 72% of students studying a foreign language in the US are enrolled in Spanish classes (ACTFL, 2011, p. 8).

The advantages of foreign language education include that such classes fit easily into a school program and give students some exposure to languages and cultures they often have limited everyday contact with. Fitting flexibly into a school program is important in high schools, where the majority of these programs exist. Through increased use of technology-based and culturally authentic materials, foreign language programs have recently witnessed improved outcomes for student language learning (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009, p. 4). Another significant advantage to these programs is that Americans, regardless of age, race, or political affiliation, are not likely to see them as threatening. Even those who oppose bilingual education or favor English-only policies are likely to view foreign language study in high school as important (Robinson, et al., 2006). This is why foreign language classes are less likely to be closed for political
motives, as has occurred with bilingual education classes (Crawford, 1999). Finally, these classes are a requirement for high school graduation in many states (NCES, 2009), so the classes reach a broader student population than the other types of bilingual education we will be considering.

This method of language learning does have its disadvantages, however. Principally, foreign language education is considered a “weak” form of bilingual education in that it rarely leads to bilingualism (Baker, 2006, p. 215). Other disadvantages include that offerings differ from school to school, and rural schools or those serving students with low socio-economic status may offer few or subpar foreign language classes for students (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009, p. 7). Furthermore, perhaps because of the popularity of Spanish, few opportunities exist to study what the US Intelligence community has identified as “critical needs” languages – Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Farsi, and Russian – with qualified teachers (Mason, 2006; cited in O. García, 2009a, p. 192). Regardless of what may be considered disadvantages, the majority of NLES who study LOTEs do so through foreign language programs.

2.3.2. Immersion Bilingual Education

Immersion bilingual education teaches a group of students who all speak the same home language for at least part of the day in a new language they are learning. The teaching philosophy of this type of education, “rests on the principle that languages are best learned when used in authentic communication than when they are explicitly taught, as in foreign language education programs” (O. García, 2009a; p. 126). Thus, unlike in foreign language education, where students study about language in isolated pieces of
grammar and vocabulary, in immersion bilingual education students study content in the language they are learning.

In immersion bilingual education programs, language majority students are instructed full or part time in another language, and the goal is bilingualism and biliteracy (Baker, 2006). The idea that these programs serve language majority students is key; the education of minority language children exclusively in the majority language is not an example of immersion bilingual education, but rather must be thought of as submersion since the goal is monolingualism (Baker, 2006; O. García, 2009a; Valdés, 1997).

Immersion bilingual education, even though the academic curriculum and classroom culture are dictated by mainstream cultural norms (e.g. English and American culture in the US), “has generally been associated with linguistic choice and cultural plurality” (Swain & Johnson, 1997, p. 2). Teachers in these programs are often bilingual, and they use their knowledge of both languages, along with special techniques, to both instruct students and teach them the second language. This type of education has a few forms: in early immersion bilingual education, students begin learning through the other language in pre-school or early grade school, while in late immersion bilingual education, students start learning in the other language in late elementary or secondary school, once “a conceptual base and academic skills have been solidly established” in English (O. García, 2009a; p. 127). Another distinction of immersion programs is that they often place an initial emphasis on the additional language, particularly in early immersion (Baker, 2006). In such programs, another language is learned while English is maintained and developed.

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4 Language minority children in the US are often offered all-English education called “immersion.” This is actually submersion education because it is not enriching, does not build on home language practices, and denigrates home culture.
Proponents of this model feel that since it generally results in bilingualism, immersion students receive cognitive and academic gains from participation. Some of the earliest research to support this was done on the St. Lambert Project, a successful and ongoing experiment in immersion bilingual education that began in Canada in the 1960s. This “experiment” was started by a group of English-speaking parents who wanted their children to be able to reap the economic, political, and social advantages of French/English bilingualism in Quebec, a French-speaking Canadian province (Lambert & Tucker, 1974). These immersion experiments drew attention from educators worldwide, and are often cited as proof of the efficacy of this type of language education. In reviewing studies on the St. Lambert Project, Swain & Johnson (1997) noticed that the characteristics of a successful immersion program include overt support for the students’ home language practices, dedication to enrichment bilingualism, and the fact that the program caters to the learning needs of its students, all of whom enter with similarly under-developed skills in the language of instruction. Immersion became wildly popular in Canada throughout the 1970s and 80s, and has become increasingly popular across the globe in the past decade, particularly for use in “the early schooling of language majority children in societies for which a global language has become important” (O. García, 2009a, p. 239).

While immersion has numerous advantages, there are also some downsides to the model. First, there is the issue of access. Opportunities for language majority children to participate in immersion programs are rare in public schools, and generally exist only in private, tuition-based schools. Language minority children have no access to immersion bilingual education. Immersion bilingual education in this country is typically reserved
for privileged and wealthy children hoping to gain access to languages of prestige and power (de Mejía, 2002). Finally, exposure to the additional language in the immersion classroom is largely confined to school, given that immersion students generally share the same home language practices as the larger community, where the additional language is not widely used (Swain & Johnson, 1997). Craig (1995) cautions that this may lead students to reinforce each other’s linguistic errors and never develop the “native-like proficiency” they would in a setting where other students serve as “second language models” in addition to the teacher and there is wider community support for the language (11). For language majority students, while immersion bilingual education is an option, if they are in bilingual programs they are most likely in programs known as “dual language” or “two-way,” as will subsequently be described.

2.3.3. Dual Language Bilingual Education

Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) teaches students from different linguistic backgrounds in two different languages. Typically, students in these classes come from English-speaking homes and homes where the additional language is spoken. Because these children are at all points on the bilingual continuum, they interact with each other in multiple expressions of language (O. García, 2009a). In this form of bilingual education, language is used as a medium of instruction and not taught in isolation.

Lindhold-Leary (2004/5) describes how DLBE programs use two languages for instruction and classwork and encourage students of all linguistic profiles to “work together” and “do work in both languages in a balanced proportion” (57). Students in these programs generally take all their subjects together, with the exception being that
some students receive supplemental English as a second language instruction during the English literacy period. Most DLBE programs adhere to a strict separation of languages, offering instruction entirely in the additional language for 90, 80, or 50 percent of the school day or week; the most common policy is the “50/50 model,” where half of instructional time is devoted to learning in English and the other half devoted to learning in the additional language (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Successful programs all share an enrichment orientation in terms of the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy, high achievement for all students, and the attempt to produce children with cross-cultural competencies (Christian et al., 1997; Cloud, et al., 2000; Lindhold-Leary, 2001). In the US, most of these programs exist at the elementary school level, are operated in public schools, and use Spanish and English as the languages of instruction (Howard, et. al., 2003). Depending on the student population, the “model” of DLBE can differ; however, “any program that provides literacy and content instruction to all students through two languages and that promotes bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic achievement, and multicultural competence for all students” is considered DLBE (Howard, et. al., 2003, p. 1). Language majority students in the US generally participate in what are known as “two-way immersion” programs or DLBE programs, where approximately half of the students mainly speak English and approximately half mainly speak the LOTE (Howard, et. al, 2003).

There are many advantages of DLBE. One often-cited benefit is the cross-cultural competency that majority language students can gain from participation. When students learn together in more than one language, they gain more than bilingualism: they

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5 When most of the students speak the additional language, such as Spanish, the DLBE program is known as “developmental bilingual education” or “one way bilingual education;” when most of the students speak English, it is known as “foreign language immersion bilingual education” (see Howard, et. al., 2007).
learn to “respect their fellow students in the learning process” and disabuse themselves of negative stereotypes of students assigned to transitional bilingual or ESL classes (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 3). That is to say, majority language students gain both the ability to interact with minority language populations and enhanced empathy toward and tolerance of other groups. For minority language students, DLBE can support long-term academic achievement, help them to close the achievement gap, and make them feel welcome, valued, and respected in school (see, for example, Collier & Thomas, 2004; R. Freeman, 1996; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). In fact, many have declared DLBE superior to other models used for educating emergent bilingual students, to the extent that in some schools these programs are replacing other models – such as transitional bilingual – that are seen as not supporting the students’ home language practices (McKay Wilson, 2011). Yet as the following paragraphs will show, this attitude can also be problematic.

DLBE is a popular and effective way to educate children of multiple linguistic backgrounds, but it is not a panacea (see also 4.4). One disadvantage is that, like immersion education, US schoolchildren have limited access to these programs. Even where they do exist, only limited numbers of students can utilize them because they are typically created as strands within an English-only school environment. Further, because DLBE programs often insist on strict language compartmentalization, there is the risk that language minority students receive a submersion education on English-only days and that the ability of students to express themselves linguistically in the way that feels natural may be impeded (Palmer, 2009; Valdés, 1997). Pressures from outside the school (for example, school districts or the Federal government) can exacerbate this effect, when teachers focus more heavily on teaching and assessing in English than in the additional
language (de Jong & Howard, 2009; Menken, 2009). This can also affect students’ bilingual proficiency: even though a “50/50” language split is often the goal, Lindholm-Leary (2001) found that the more time students – both English-speakers and Spanish-speakers – spend learning in English, the less Spanish they are likely to learn and the less bilingual they are likely to become. These “practices of English dominance outside the school” find their way into the DLBE classroom in myriad other ways, for instance, when students choose English as “the language for social interactions among peers” (Potowski, 2004, p. 96). As Genesee (1985) points out, combining students of different language backgrounds does not ensure they will interact in Spanish, even when Spanish is the official language of an instructional period. Finally, not only can strict language separation threaten the bilingual (and Spanish) proficiency of students, it is also based on an outmoded concept of language that fails to recognize the dynamic way in which how bilingual and emergent bilingual people really use language.

In addition, the increasing popularity of DLBE programs has led to the closure of transitional bilingual (TBE) programs, which can lead to fewer spots overall for EBL student in bilingual classrooms. TBE programs typically only serve EBL students, while DLBE programs serve EBLs alongside students not identified by the school system as “ELL.” Thus, an increase in “dual” programs and a decrease in “transitional” programs can reduce access for EBLs to bilingual education. In NYC, where the trend for sometime has been a move away from TBE programs to DLBE programs, this has occurred. Since 2002, student enrollment in TBE programs citywide has decreased while enrollment in DLBE programs has increased, representing fewer EBLs overall in bilingual classes (Menken, 2011). A cornerstone of the new NYC school chancellor’s
initiative for city schools is an expansion of DLBE programs; whether this raises or reduces access of EBL students to quality bilingual education is yet to be determined.

Thus, the promise of ‘dual language’ must be taken cautiously, and it should be recognized that in failing to refer to this type of education as bilingual, and replacing transitional programs with dual programs, there is a risk that fewer students who need bilingual programs for academic and personal achievement will have access to them. As with all educational programs, it is not inherently one “model” that is superior to another (i.e. TBE versus DLBE) but rather it is the enrichment approach to instruction that helps children to grow and achieve academically and socially. Because well-implemented and well-supported DLBE programs tend to take an enrichment approach to language and instruction, children in these classes typically experience the advantage of bilingual learning, which has been shown to increase content knowledge and activate all the linguistic resources students bring to school with them (Baker, 2006).

To summarize, there are multiple program models available to NLES families who want their children to learn additional languages: foreign language, immersion, and dual language, all with potential advantages and disadvantages. The reason parents are selecting DLBE is the subject of the following sections.

2.3.4. Why choose Dual Language Bilingual Education over other options?

It is becoming increasingly popular for NLES families to place their children in Spanish/English DLBE programs, and these programs are increasingly available to them. Across the nation, new programs are opening and parents by the hundreds are clamoring to get their children enrolled, even being waitlisted for popular programs in some states and locations (Garcia, A., 2015; Watanabe, 2011). The literature points to a number of
reasons why these families are increasingly choosing DLBE over other language education options.

One reason posited in the literature is the increasing value placed on bilingualism by NLES families (see for example Whiting & Feinauer, 2011; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Craig, 1996; Shannon & Milian, 2002; Gerena, 2010). Families who value bilingualism are likely to choose DLBE over traditional foreign language education because they want their children not just to be exposed to a new language but to gain some fluency and comfort in the language. It has also been suggested that NLES families choose DLBE programs over foreign language programs because DLBE allows their children to start learning a new language younger. While American students must generally wait until middle or high school to begin foreign language study, DLBE is available starting in preschool or kindergarten (Doherty, 2008). Another supposition is that these families value how DLBE settings provide their children “extended access to the second language across a range of language functions,” which enriches their language-learning experience (de Jong & Howard, 2009, p. 85). That is, their language learning is not just contained to a classroom as it would be in foreign language or immersion bilingual education. Finally, it has been reported that families choose DLBE for the academic challenge. As Palmer (2009) reports, “[f]or middle class English-speaking children, two-way programs offer an enrichment opportunity: a chance to learn another language in the early grades of elementary school, something quite rare and special for English speakers in a US context” (179). In previous scholarship, parents of all backgrounds have often cited the enrichment qualities of DLBE as a reason they value these programs.
In fact, enrichment as a reason for selecting DLBE is so often cited in the literature that these programs are sometimes conflated with “gifted and talented” (G&T) programs. This comparison may appeal to parents who want a more rigorous education for their children. Additionally, research shows that for students who are gifted (as measured by intelligence and achievement tests), a DLBE program “may result in [their] superior performance [because] of the multiple cognitive and social benefits of a bilingual curriculum” (Bernal & García, 2009, p. 1271-2). It has also been demonstrated that, irrespective of student “giftedness,” the two program models are very similar, as Castellano and Pinkos (2005) argue: “Both programs challenge students academically, in addition to advancing their overall language development. Both programs prepare students to successfully participate in a global society, and both programs advocate a healthy, nurturing learning environment, among others” (117). It is possible that the association between DLBE and G&T programs is attractive to NLES families seeking alternative options within public schools.

While there are many reasons DLBE programs might appeal to NLESs, Colin Baker (2006) argues that the only way these families will choose them is if they have a good reputation, if enrollment is voluntary and not enforced, if the curriculum is perceived as successful and effective, and if the programs are backed by the community (188). It must also be understood that parents select DLBE out of many options, and their selection may depend on the other options available. While prior scholarship hints at some of the reasons for this selection among myriad choices, the answer as to why is as of yet unresolved. This study seeks to understand the conscious choice parents make when they “buy in” to DLBE programs. When parents make such decisions, it affects the
way they become involved in their children’s education, and may also influence the way students participate in their classes, as the following sections will describe.

2.4. Non-Latino English-Speakers in Bilingual Classrooms

When she interviewed NLES parents who had placed their children into a DLBE program, Doherty (2008) found that these families generally knew about private or charter school options other than the public bilingual program they chose for their children – and had the means to send them there. Nevertheless, they chose to place their children in a DLBE program. When parents make a decision like this, they have expectations for what their children will get out of a DLBE program, and both their children and the children they are in class with experience a variety of outcomes.

2.4.1. Educational outcomes for Non-Latino English-speakers in DLBE

While past research argued that bilingual education could be detrimental, recent research repeatedly links bilingualism to positive academic achievement. In the US, much of the research on bilingualism and educational outcomes has explored language minority students learning through English and the language of their home. Recently, research has investigated the effects of bilingual education on NLESs, and the findings have been encouraging. It must nevertheless be noted that studies exclusively on outcomes of NLESs in DLBE programs are not available; therefore, the research presented below reports outcomes of students of multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds, NLESs being among them.

In Lindholm-Leary’s (2001) longitudinal study performed in over 20 schools all over California, data on NLESs in DLBE programs is separated out from data on other students. What this study finds is that NLESs achieved as well or better than their peers
in monolingual programs on state assessments. They made “extraordinary” progress in Mathematics that outstripped progress by their peers across the state, and while there was no effect of acceleration on their English reading achievement, they were on par in this subject with their peers taught only in English (270). Additionally, they had gained high levels of bilingual proficiency, associated with higher levels of reading achievement in Spanish. Another interesting finding of this study was that the more Spanish the NLES students were exposed to (90/10 model versus 50/50 model), the better their academic outcomes (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). A study by Mercado (2002) also noted that students of all language backgrounds in DLBE programs have higher passing rates on standardized exams than their cohorts enrolled in mainstream, English-only classrooms. Finally, a well known meta-analysis performed by Collier and Thomas (2004) looking at over 20 years of research on DLBE in 23 school districts and 15 states in multiple contexts found that every study they analyzed showed how children of multiple linguistic backgrounds who were schooled bilingually, NLESs among them, actually outperform their peers schooled monolingually. The researchers argued that not only did these students perform as well or better on standardized exams, they had learned an additional language that would be valuable to them in their academic or professional lives. However, they were quick to note that the “pertinent distinction” is that the programs these students participated in were “enrichment,” not “remedial” classes (Collier & Thomas, 2004; p. 2).

The idea that the DLBE programs NLES join are “enrichment” can be critical not only to their successful outcomes but also to the outcomes of their Latino EBL peers. As Palmer (2008) suggests, “[b]y including English-speaking children, and by transforming
a remedial transitional bilingual classroom into an enrichment-oriented two-way program, we can enhance the overall resources in the school and in the classroom” (180). When English-speaking students are present in bilingual classrooms, their status as Spanish language learners can elevate the status of Spanish, which stands to improve academic performance for Latino EBLs thereby growing the bilingual competency of all children in the class. As Martin-Beltrán (2010) notes, collaboration along with the use of more than one language allows students to “negotiate social and/or academic tasks and discover new knowledge” (270). Baetens Beardmore (2009) also asserts the importance of this concept: “Linguistic and academic achievement tends to go hand in hand. Language supports learning” (157). When language is used as a resource for learning, DLBE programs can be enriching and garner positive academic outcomes for all students.

2.4.2. Social and Cultural Outcomes for NLESs in DLBE

DLBE has been billed as “a way to serve students and nations in the inevitable move toward an interconnected multilingual world,” thus preparing them to compete in a global marketplace (Varghese & Park, 2010, p. 74). While ensuring EBLs gain competency in English has always been a goal of bilingual education, DLBE programs are increasingly emphasizing bilingualism for English-monolingual populations. And these children tend to fare well in such programs.

When children are brought together “in a deliberate integration” and expected to learn from one another, they “build their cross-cultural competency and empathy, important lessons in our increasingly diverse society” (Palmer, 2008, p. 180). Improving their knowledge of other cultures has been shown to have positive effects on NLESs in DLBE. Lindholm-Leary (2001) found that European-American students in classrooms
where they are the minority in terms of the number of students and Spanish is the language of instruction, “demonstrate a level of scholastic competence and global self worth that is comparable to middle- and upper-class students who are most likely in an English-only program” (287). DLBE helps such students develop positive attitudes toward other racial and ethnic groups and promotes cross-group friendships (Wright & Tropp, 2005). This is not only a benefit to NLESs but also a way to promote equity for all students involved in DLBE programs. As the executive director of bilingual education in Texas, Martha García, notes, DLBE programs ‘‘create an atmosphere where everyone is learning a language…It becomes a situation where, if I'm a Spanish speaker, I can help my English speaking classmates as much as they can help me. There's more of an equality, and kids feel more empowered’’ (Heinauer, 2008, p. 1).

Overall, NLES children seem to benefit psychosocially and academically from being in DLBE classrooms. Scholarship recognizes these students tend to value their programs and have very positive attitudes toward their teachers, parents, and the classroom environment, as well as positive learning attitudes and behaviors (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). They also have the confidence to address others in more than one language, a skill that is difficult to put a price tag on.

2.4.3. Non-Latino English-speaking Parents: Their School Involvement

Parents of all backgrounds whose children are enrolled in DLBE tend to be more involved in their children’s education (Cloud, et al., 2000; Alanis & Rodríguez, 2004; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). It has been suggested that the type of parent who actively chooses and pursues enrollment for their children in DLBE programs is the type of parent who is informed about schooling and likely to be more involved (Whiting & Feinauer,
Whatever the case may be, parental involvement is critical to both the success of the school and the children who attend it (Craig, 1995). In fact, parental advocacy has been associated with the very existence of these programs in some cases. Freeman, et. al. (2005) have described how DLBE programs are increasingly found in neighborhoods where the English-monolingual parents request an enrichment program for their children because they feel their children need more than the regular curriculum. In NYC, for instance, the school’s chancellor has committed to 40 new and expanding DLBE programs for September of 2015 because “she’s seen a ‘tremendous desire’ from parents over the past five years for such programs” (Zimmer, 2015). Once such programs are established, parental involvement is often what keeps them afloat: “Supportive families and communities provide buoyancy to the program in good times and critical advocacy that may keep the program functioning in bad times when the state or district may want to shut it down” (Howard, et al., 2007, p. 39).

Programs also rely on the involvement of parents in the local community to attract more participants. Because NLES parents place their children in DLBE classes less frequently than LSS parents do, those who do select in the program can be critical advocates for bilingual education among other parents of this demographic (see for example Craig, 1995; Doherty, 2008). Further, because these parents tend to be more highly educated and wealthy than the Latino parents, they are often more able to contribute resources to a DLBE program or serve as its advocates in the community (see for example Ramos, 2007; Doherty, 2008; Cloud, et al., 2000). Because parental involvement is associated with positive student outcomes, it is important that NLES
families buy into DLBE programs once they join them so that they can advocate for all students in these classes.

2.4.4. Special Challenges when non-Latino English-speakers opt into DLBE

Bilingual education classes in the US have traditionally served EBLs who are often economically disadvantaged. Research points to the effectiveness of bilingual education in bolstering their school outcomes, graduation rates, and college attendance (Baker, 2006). When NLESs join bilingual programs, there is the potential that the focus of the program can shift away from meeting the needs of these underprivileged Latinos to teaching Spanish to the privileged.

Palmer (2008) cautions that, “in trying to meet the needs of both language-minority and English-speaking students in one program, there is an ever-present risk that English and English-speaking students will emerge in a position of power,” predominating over Spanish and Spanish-speaking students (182). Valdés (1997) observes that while NLESs are admired and praised for acquiring Spanish skills, Latino EBLs are simply expected to learn English. This seems particularly unfair when we consider that Latino EBLs need such programs for economic advancement and cultural maintenance while for NLESs these programs are enrichment (Potowski, 2004). What is more, the very presence of NLESs in DLBE classes means that spots that might otherwise go to Latino EBLs do not exist (see also section 3.3). This effect is exaggerated when “only the families who are aware of their options and know the system” are able to get their children into the program, further reducing the number of Latinos these programs serve (Palmer, 2010).
Another challenge that arises relates to language learning. It has been well documented that Spanish-speakers learn more English than English-speakers learn Spanish in DLBE programs in the US (Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003; Potowski, 2004; Valdés, 1997). This increases the danger that instruction in Spanish might be simplified in order to accommodate the English-dominant students, which means that all students learn less and less quickly than they would otherwise (Valdés, 1997). Such disparity threatens the many benefits a bilingual education stands to proffer. As de Jong and Howard (2009) caution, “Without conscious attention to those issues that arise as a result of native and non-native speaker student integration, the foreign language needs of native English speakers and the bilingual needs of minority language speakers can easily become dueling rather than mutually reinforcing agendas” (93). Even critics of bilingual education such as Ron Unz have argued that DLBE owes its popularity to NLES “who basically use the Spanish-speaking Latino children as tutors for their children” (quoted in McKay Wilson, 2011). Issues of equity invariably arise when children of different social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds are educated together.

Additionally, the increased involvement of NLEs in DLBE programs has the potential to change the way these programs have traditionally worked. As previously addressed, bilingual education was established during the Civil Rights movement as an important victory in the education of language minority populations. Scholarship robustly supports the multiple benefits of participation in high quality bilingual programs for EBL students, including improved academic success (such as better test scores and lower drop out rates) and personal achievement markers (such as cultural pride and
fluency in the home language) (see, for example, Howard, et al., 2003). Some caution that the increased participation of NLESs in bilingual programs threatens these benefits:

To be clear, I am not suggesting that White parents should not want their children to become bilingual. What I object to is the individualistic narrative that is often associated with their support for bilingual education. It is about how bilingual education can benefit “my child” through providing marketable skills and cognitive advantages. If there is any acknowledgement of benefits for minoritized students it is framed as an afterthought. Minoritized children are depicted as the benefactors of altruistic White families who bring cultural and financial capital that would not otherwise be available to them. (Flores, 2014)

As Flores suggests, the increased interest in DLBE programs among NLES families has the potential to move bilingual education away from its originally-intended goal. One example of this is found in Cloud, et al., (2000), where pressures from NLESs families to get what they believed their children needed in a DLBE “strand” program in their local school led to pedagogical and institutional changes that ran contrary to good bilingual pedagogy. Schools that house bilingual programs and the teachers who serve bilingual children must now, more than ever, understand the philosophical underpinnings of bilingual education. This is necessary to protect the rights of minority language speakers. It is also necessary for NLES parents to understand the purpose of bilingual education in order to remain committed to keeping their children in the programs and supporting Spanish at home, both key ingredients to a DLBE program’s success and longevity. Educating two populations whose academic and social needs can be very different is indeed a challenge, not to be undertaken lightly. DLBE programs must also increasingly
keep in mind the populations they are serving in order that programming and instruction best meets the needs of all learners: “Those wishing to develop or improve a dual language program should select a program model that capitalizes on the strengths and meets the needs of both students and teachers” (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2004). Many DLBE programs that once might have only catered to Latinos are increasingly including non-Latinos, challenging schools to accommodate new learners while still celebrating and growing the knowledge of EBL students.

It is clear that the trend of increased NLES enrollment in Spanish/English DLBE programs is not a simple issue. Increased participation of NLESs in bilingual classes has the potential to normalize multilingualism – to make it a goal for all Americans, as some researchers and politicians have suggested. But this participation also has the potential to shut minority language speakers out of bilingual classes, instead creating spaces for the privileged to learn languages that will advance their economic competitiveness. Whether the former or the latter will result from this trend lies outside the scope of this research. What this research does clarify is that Non-Latino, English-speaking families make a conscious decision to enroll their children in dual language bilingual programs. Their selection of and commitment to these programs is the topic of this study.
CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Parents are increasingly encouraged and expected to be involved in making choices about their children’s education. This may have broad ranging consequences. As Tyre (2011) asserts, “[e]mpowering parents may prove to be a crucial turning point in education reform in our generation. But if we are going to give parents broader decision-making power, they need to become more sophisticated about schooling” (1). The intent of this research has been to unearth some of the reasons parents have for making decisions about their children’s education, and elaborate the consequences of these choices.

When non-Latino English-speaking (NLES) families choose to join or leave Spanish/English dual language bilingual (DLBE) programs, the consequences of their choices have more far reaching effects than individual benefits for their children. Therefore, it is critical to gain an understanding not only of why these programs appeal to but how they retain these families. These two research questions have guided my work:

1. What factors operate in Non-Latino English Speaking (NLES) families’ choice of Spanish/English DLBE programs for their children (selection)?

2. What factors operate in why NLES families keep their children in Spanish/English DLBE programs over time or not (commitment)?

In order to explore these questions, data was collected throughout the 2013-2014 school year (Fall of 2013 and Spring of 2014) as well as the summer of 2014. Data from the pilot study I conducted in 2012 was also considered.

The data consists of (A) interviews with NLES parents who placed their children
in DLBE programs; (B) interviews with NLES parents who placed their children in DLBE programs but later pulled them out; (C) interview with the principal of one focal school; (D) researcher memos; (E) school policy documents available online. Additional details about the research design are described in the subsequent table:

Table 3: Research design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Rationale/Goal</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What factors operate in NLES families’ choice of Spanish-English DLBE programs for their children (selection)?</strong></td>
<td>- To learn how parents make decisions about children’s schooling; - To learn what other options parents explore before settling on DLBE; and - To learn what reasons parents cite as having influenced their decision to select bilingual education.</td>
<td>- Interviews with NLES parents who have selected DLBE programs; - <em>Contextual</em>: (1) Interview with principal about the DLBE program. (2) Researcher memos (3) School policy documents</td>
<td>- Parents of DLBE students, current and former. - Principal with information about why NLESs choose their school’s DLBE program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What factors operate in why NLES families keep their children in Spanish-English DLBE programs over time or not (commitment)?</strong></td>
<td>- To learn why parents remain loyal to a program over time; - To learn why parents decide to change their child’s schooling option; and - To learn about individual or collective reasons DLBE or a DLBE program is either the right or wrong choice for families over time.</td>
<td>- Interviews with NLES parents who have selected <em>and/or</em> opted out of DLBE programs; - <em>Contextual</em>: (1) Interview or with principal about the DLBE program. (2) Researcher memos (3) School policy documents</td>
<td>- Parents of DLBE students, current and former. - Principal with information about the DLBE program the parents discuss in their interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown, my two research questions seek to explore the phenomenon of NLES parents selecting Spanish/English DLBE programs for their children. The first question deals with selection: the reason for the choice. The second question deals with retention: what keeps children in DLBE programs, and why they are taken out. Both questions needed to be considered in order for the phenomenon to be explored in depth.

Qualitative, in-depth interviews were selected in order to provide rich answers to my study questions. I was guided to make this selection in part by Reissman (2001), who describes how in-depth interview encourages participants to tell stories, to make sense of their worlds, thus allowing the researcher to see both how individuals create and understand their own agency as well as “develop constituencies” with like-minded individuals. This enabled me to not only understand parents’ school choices but also contextualize individual parents’ actions within the broader context of an emerging trend, which is bilingual education for majority-language speakers.

Interviews make up the bulk of the data for this study. The parent interviews were conducted using an interview protocol (see Appendices A and B). Different protocols were used for (A) the families who opted into the program and whose children remain in the program (currently-enrolled); and (B) the families who opted into but whose children are no longer in the program (former). Two parents removed one of their children from a DLBE program during the course of the study; I conducted follow-up interviews with them using the questions from interview protocol B that relate to leaving a DLBE program. The principal of School 2 was also interviewed using an interview protocol (see Appendix C), and this interview provided context about the parents’ choices. All the interviews sought an *emic* perspective (Harris, 1988) on the choice of
DLBE, in trying to see the purpose and meaning of the families’ selection. School data (available online) and researcher memos also provided contextual data for the study.

In summary, the current study examines the reasons NLES parents choose to enroll their children in DLBE programs. A qualitative approach is used, with interviews as the main source of data. School and program data contextualize the programs in which the participants are enrolling their children. Researcher memos, written after each interview and during the data analysis process, ensure researcher reflexivity (Reissman, 2008). The research design was also informed by a pilot study I conducted in 2012, as described in continuation (see also section 3.2).

3.1. Pilot Study

During the spring semester of 2012, I conducted research into my topic at public elementary schools in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, NY. I did classroom observations and interviewed teachers, parents, and administrators. The data obtained through this project made a few points very clear:

(1) Parent interviews represent the way to obtain the most salient data on parent choice of DLBE programs;

(2) Observations and interviews of school-based personnel, while providing a framework for my research questions, do not provide me direct answers to these questions. The focus must be on the experience of the parents, and focusing on a few schools rather than many provides the most detailed information.

(3) Data on who is enrolling in public DLBE programs in New York and how they enroll is not available to the public; this is information kept on record only at the school level; and
(4) Parents of DLBE students tend to know other parents of DLBE students, which makes using a “snowball” sample the easiest way to locate interview subjects for my research project.

Based on these findings, I designed and conducted a pilot study during the fall semester of 2012 in a public elementary school in Queens (“School 1” in this study). I focused exclusively on conducting in-depth interviews with parents. Narrative analysis of these interviews allowed me to see that while each individual parent had his or her reasons for enrolling a child in the DLBE program, certain commonalities also existed among the families. As McLeod and Thompson (2009) mention, the narratives that shape the decisions one makes are very much based upon “what is happening in the present and the social circumstances in which one is embedded” (37-38). This process of analysis was highly useful in unearthing commonalities between parents and understanding individual agency. However, I ultimately determined that a study of larger scale would enable me to better observe broader trends (as contrasted with individual reasons) and ruled out using narrative analysis for the purpose of this research. Comprehending this, I honed my interview protocol and made important decisions about the current project design.

3.2. Project Design

Three elementary schools in the same Queens school district were selected for this study. The schools identified in this research as “School 1” and “School 2” are large, K-5 elementary schools; “School 3” is a small early childhood (preK-2) school. Elementary schools were selected because this is where DLBE is typically an option. Queens was selected as the borough where the study would take place because of its neighborhood diversity. In fact, Queens County, where residents are 28% Latino, 25.2% Asian, 20.9%
Black or African American, and 26.7% White (US Census Bureau, 2014), was recently reported to be “the most diverse county in the country” (Pearson, 2012). Many of these residents are also recent immigrants and speak LOTEs at home. Nearly 30% of students identified as “English Language Learners” (students referred to as emergent bilinguals or “EBLs” in this research) attend school in Queens County, the site of the highest percentage of recent immigrant students to the school system citywide (OELLs 2013).

This diversity is critical to the actual availability of DLBE programs in neighborhood schools, because neighborhoods with high populations of EBL students are more likely to provide bilingual education in the local schools. According to Commissioner’s Regulations Part 154, which governs programming for students identified as ELLs in the New York State school system,

> Each school district that has an Annual Estimate of Enrollment of English Language Learners in which 20 or more English Language Learners of the same grade level assigned to a school, all of whom have the same home language that is other than English, shall provide such students with a Bilingual Education program at that school in the following school year. (NYSED, 2014, p. 35)

Because DLBE programs in NYC are funded by the Department of English Language Learners and Student Support and specifically target EBL students, schools with low enrollment of EBL students are likely to not even have DLBE programs. The school sites in this research were selected knowing the diversity of the neighborhoods, knowing the large population of students identified as “ELL” in the schools, and knowing that all three schools have experienced a recent influx of NLES participation in their DLBE programs.
The diversity of the neighborhoods in this study also has bearing on what residents value when they select school programming. Both neighborhoods in this study are touted as among the most diverse in NYC. This super diversity is what attracts certain types of individuals: those whose home cultures are shared by others in distinct neighborhood enclaves and others who relish the area’s multicultural feeling. This super diversity also shapes practices of those who live there. As anthropological research points out, space is both a physical place as well as the product of interactions between the individuals that inhabit that place. Such an analysis privileges “the ability of people to confound the established spatial orders, either through physical movement or through their own conceptual and political acts of reimagination” (Gupta & Ferguson, 2001; p. 47). The reimagination taking place in Owl Hill and Partridge Lane is embodied by the increase in participation of NLESs in DLBE programs: their buy in may be seen as an effort at cultural hybridity and interconnectivity, an incorporation of a non-dominant cultural trait (speaking Spanish) into the dominant culture. Speaking Spanish becomes a “cultural style” (Ferguson, cited in Gupta & Ferguson, 2001) that non-Latinos can take on for the purpose of connecting with their neighbors, friends, or family members while yet remaining attached to the values, beliefs, and practices that otherwise make up their identities.

Finally, NYC offers a unique environment in which to study school choice. Parents in the city have multiple schooling and program options, and there is often fierce competition for the most desirable schools given the large population of school-aged children. Recent New York Times articles describe parents waiting in line from 4 a.m. to get their children spots in highly coveted summer programs (Sangha, 2013); fiercely
competing for admissions into private preschools (Bellafante, 2012); or being wait-listed for gifted and talented classes (Gootman, 2009). Within such an environment, parents are aware of their options, which makes studying why they select DLBE very interesting. Understanding the reasons for this choice is the subject of this dissertation.

### 3.2.1. Recruiting Participants

An issue I have grappled with in the selection of my participants is my construction of a “non-Latino/a” plus “English-speaker” identity for these families. The notion of an identity based on the language one speaks is problematic, because it fails to address the multiple and dynamic ways in which language is actually used. De Jong and Howard (2009) discuss how the construction of a ‘native speaker’ norm based on a standard language variety does not acknowledge the non-standard varieties of language children speak at home as well as the shifts in fluency a child goes through in the course of a bilingual education (91). That is to say, placing labels on children based on the language they speak “ignores the enormous linguistic variation of bilingual speakers and…the fluidity of language practices and identifications in the 21st century” (O. García, 2014; p. 100). Notwithstanding, the NYC Department of Education as well as the Federal government create such distinctions by labeling some students as “ELL” (English Language Learner”) and others as “EP” (English proficient). These distinctions are reinforced by DLBE programs, and affect enrollment decisions at the school level. Research also indicates that parents whose children fall into either of these categories choose DLBE for different reasons (see for example Craig, 1996; Doherty, 2008; Gerena, 2010). For this reason, it was necessary that I also attempt such a distinction, as described in continuation.
With regard to “English speakers” in DLBE programs, data shows that, nationwide, these families tend to speak only English at home. The reality is far more complex in NYC. Here, many of the children in DLBE programs are bilingual in Spanish and English. Some of these Spanish/English bilinguals are “heritage” Spanish-speakers; that is, they identify ethnically as Latino but speak and/or understand Spanish to varying degrees (Valdés, 2000). Others may not be Latino, or may have one Latino parent, but have been exposed to Spanish through a relative (such is the case in “mixed” families with one Latino parent, or in families where at least one parent has learned Spanish and teaches it to the children), or through a caregiver such as a nanny. In my study, for instance, 45% of participants had some connection to Spanish whether it was as a learned language, through their spouse, or through extended family (for instance, a relative married someone Spanish-speaking). Additionally, some families in these programs identified as “English speakers” have languages other than English or Spanish in the home. In my study, for instance, participants and/or their spouses spoke French, Tagalog, Japanese, Italian, Arabic, Hebrew, Portuguese, and Korean as home, heritage, or learned languages. Finally, the non-Latino category is complicated by the preponderance of mixed families among participants in DLBE programs citywide. As an example, seven of the participants in this study had Spanish-speaking Latino (Latin American) or Spanish (European) spouses. Finally, whether Latino or not, there are many recent immigrants from all over the world who participate in DLBE programs citywide. In 48% of the families who participated in this research, one or both parents had been born outside of the US (for more information on these characteristics, see section 4).
Participants in my research are mothers\(^6\) who *self-identify* as non-Latina and say they speak English only or English and a language other than English (LOTE) that is not Spanish as the primary way of communicating with their children. When Spanish is spoken in the home, it is spoken by the spouse/partner or a relative or babysitter, or the mother has some level of Spanish as a learned language yet does not use it as a primary way to communicate with her child(ren). Additionally, I considered *how children are identified* by the school system to gain more information about these families. The population considered “English dominant” in DLBE classes is always labeled “non-ELL” by school districts (that is, they are not identified as “English language learners”). By contrast, the population considered “Spanish dominant” is officially designated “ELL” (English language learner). In summary, all the participants interviewed for my study:

- Identify as non-Latino/a;
- Speak English only or English and a LOTE other than Spanish at home (unless they identify speaking Spanish as a learned language); and
- Have children who are not officially designated as “ELL.”

Attempting to create dichotomies is always messy, particularly when it comes to dynamic and fluid practices like language speaking. However, the reality is that these distinctions are created within DLBE programs, and prior research indicates that parents with different home language practices choose DLBE programs for different reasons (see for instance Craig, 1996; Doherty, 2008).

\(^6\) I did interview two fathers because their stories were particularly pertinent and interesting to my study but their spouses were unavailable for interview.
3.2.2. Selecting the school sites

Parents from three school sites in the same school district in Queens, NY, were selected for participation in this study. School 1, the site of the pilot study, and School 2 are both large K-5 schools; School 3 is a small Pre-K-2 school whose students can continue in a DLBE program by transferring to School 2 after 2nd grade. Table Four, below, describes these schools and the context of their DLBE programs:

Table 4: School sites for study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School site 1</th>
<th>Neighborhood location</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Number of classes per grade</th>
<th>DLBE classes per grade</th>
<th>Screening for DLBE program?</th>
<th>DLBE program implemented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partridge Lane, Queens</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>1 (K-5)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owl Hill, Queens</td>
<td>1,208</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>2-3 (K-5)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owl Hill, Queens</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 (pre-K-2)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Owl Hill and Partridge Lane neighborhoods are very diverse, housing longtime residents along with new immigrants from countries all over the globe. In Partridge Lane, immigration is high, mainly from Latin American countries, Korea, Turkey, Romania, and Ireland, though leveling off in recent years with a 55.5% foreign-born population. Neighborhood residents are 35% Latino, 26% White, 1% Black, and 38% Asian (NYU Furman Center, 2013). At School 1, students are 47% Latino, 22% White, 1% Black, and 29% Asian (The Center for NYC Affairs, 2015a). When it comes to Owl Hill, immigration into this neighborhood is also high, mainly from Latin

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7 All neighborhood and school names are pseudonyms.

8 Please note that statistics in this section are attributed to the document or online source from which they were obtained but an exact web address or page number is not provided, in order to protect the anonymity of the school and neighborhood sites.
American countries, with a 63.2% foreign-born population. Around 65% are Latino, 12% are White, 3% are Black, and 20% are Asian (NYU Furman Center, 2013). At School 2, 86% are Latino, 4% of students are White, 1% are Black, and 9% are Asian (The Center for NYC Affairs, 2015a). At School 3, students are 76% Latino, 8% White, 1% Black, and 13% Asian (The Center for NYC Affairs, 2015a). This neighborhood and school demographic information can allow us to surmise that non-Latino students in the DLBE programs at these schools are either going to be White or Asian. However, because these categories are so broad (Asian, for instance, could refer to someone from India or China) and the immigrant population is so large in these neighborhoods (students in any ethnic category could be speakers of LOTEs), they give us only superficial ideas about who the families are who enroll their children in DLBE programs at these schools.

Notwithstanding, contextualizing the parents’ stories within the school site as well as the neighborhood is an important aspect of this study. Squire (2008) mentions that to better understand meaning, researchers often “expand the contexts they study” by bringing in larger cultural and national narratives (43). Understanding neighborhood and school demographics is an important context for this research given how it helps inform, to some extent, what parents are selecting when they choose the DLBE program at that school site (local cultural narrative).

General information about the three schools such as that described above is readily available through policy documents on the NYC Department of Education (DOE) website (schools.nyc.gov), on The New School’s independent information website about NYC public school affairs (insideschools.org), and on the individual or DOE-portal websites of the schools themselves. However, more specialized information about the
programs – such as how they were conceived and why they were founded, who they serve now and who they served in the past, and the number of NLES families who typically enroll in the program – is only available by contacting the school directly. Obtaining this information is predicated upon the willingness of school principals to participate in the study. In the case of this study, only the principal of School 2 agreed to participate, so most of the specific information on the DLBE programs at these schools was gathered during parent interviews.

Information about the selection and admissions process for DLBE programs in schools is directly pertinent to this research, and similarly available only through contacting the schools directly. Given limited access to school officials, I relied upon local news sources to understand the broader trend (Zimmer, 2014, for instance, describes wait lists of hundreds of children long for the City’s most sought-after DLBE programs). I relied on NLES parent informants to understand the process locally. The parents explained how, when applying to the schools, they indicated interest in the DLBE program and their family’s home language (they had to choose either English or Spanish; there is no “bilingual” option). Then, closer to the start of the school year, their children were screened for admission by a school official (generally the principal or assistant principal in charge of ESL and Bilingual programming). Placement was granted if children met the school readiness characteristics assessed during this screening process and a seat was available. At Schools 1 and 3, there are typically more applicants than seats available given the schools have only one DLBE section per grade; at School 2, administration has prioritized opening additional DLBE classes at every grade to accommodate parental demand and thus generally have placement for all children whose
families request a DLBE program. Where there is excess demand for seats in DLBE programs (such as at Schools 1 and 3), children are placed on a “wait list,” and when/if a spot opens up they are granted admission. Typically, a certain number of seats are made available to Spanish home language students with an “ELL” designation, while a certain number are made available to students described as English monolingual or English dominant (approximately half and half). Parents described how administration uses discretion in selecting students in all categories, selecting among them the most academically apt and linguistically advanced in either language. No stated preference is given to students who are already bilingual and/or are described as English dominant but have Spanish in the home or as a heritage language. Section 4.1.3.b gives more details about the effect of the selection and admissions on parents’ perceptions of DLBE programs. We must also keep in mind that selecting only high performing students as well as providing entrance only to children who fall into one of two rigid categories limits access to DLBE programs. Reduced access to bilingual education is an issue of equity, in particular to EBL students (this is also addressed in sections 2.3.3., 4.1.2.b., 4.1.3.b., and 5.2). Schools like School 2 have addressed this concern by maintaining more fluid admissions procedures as well as opening additional strands of DLBE (see also section 5.2).

3.3. Data Collection

Data was collected through parent interviews; one principal interview; site visits to all three schools; participation in community events; and taking researcher memos. These procedures will be described in detail in the subsequent three sections.
3.3.1. Interviews

The primary source of my data is parent interviews. Seidman (2006) urges that interviewing “provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of the behavior” (10). The interviews collected here represent for me as a researcher the best way to understand parents’ reasoning, thinking, and ideas; to parcel out meaning from their experiences of having chosen (or opted out of) a particular educational program. To obtain appropriate data, I needed a purposeful collection of participants (Cresswell, 2009). Parents I had previously met through the pilot study or local school related events introduced me to additional participants, and through this method of snowball sampling (Morgan, 2008), I located the study participants. Moreover, as an Owl Hill community member and the parent of a non-Latino child in a DLBE program, I had “easy access to observational sites and potential interviewees” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; p. 85), which I relied on to identify and recruit participants as follows:

1. Emailing participants in the pilot study and asking for introductions to other parents who met criteria;
2. Posting to local family list serves (online message boards) targeting parents in the specific Queens neighborhoods of my study;
3. Meeting parents at local school-related events;
4. Enlisting the help of the parent coordinator⁹ as well as a teacher/participant at School 2 (Joy), both of whom emailed parents who met criteria;

⁹ In NYC public schools, the “parent coordinator” is a non-teaching school worker who provides a link for parents to the school administration and teachers. Parent coordinators often run parent workshops and families reach out to them with questions, etc.
5. Enlisting the help of the PTA president/participant at School 3 (Cathy), who emailed parents that met criteria as well as brought me to the school site and made in-person introductions to the principal and parents who met criteria for study participation; and

6. Enlisting the help of a participant at School 1 (Linda), who emailed parents that met criteria as well as brought me to the school site and made in-person introductions to parents who met criteria for study participation.

Once recruited, parents participated in an interview that ranged in length from 30 to 90 minutes based on the information they wanted to share with me.

These one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted using an interview protocol designed to elicit free, conversational responses from parents. During the interviews, I tried to elicit what Squire (2008) refers to as an “experience-centered narrative” because such narratives “represent, fairly transparently, both experience and the realities from which it derives” (45). This allowed me to learn not only how families selected DLBE, but also why. In order to elicit the most personal narratives, I allowed myself to depart slightly at times from the strict list of questions as described by the interview protocols. In this way, the interviews were semi-structured and felt rather like conversations, purposefully fluid and flexible, but always circling back to my central questions. This method, urges Creswell (2009), is a hallmark of qualitative research and allows the researcher to obtain more detailed information about each topic. The interview protocol for parents of currently-enrolled children can be seen in Appendix A; the interview protocol for parents whose children have left a DLBE program can be seen in Appendix B.

Parents were given the choice to be interviewed in person or via phone. Those who were
interviewed in person chose the site of the interview, in some cases their home or mine, and in others a local coffee shop. Those who were interviewed by phone generally requested this accommodation given the difficulty of scheduling an in-person meeting. In all cases, I followed the interview style advocated by Seidman (2006), working to listen actively, limit my own participation, and draw the interviewee out but not interrupt. As previously mentioned, the commonalities I share with the mothers as a non-Latina, Queens/Owl Hill resident, and parent of a child in a DLBE class, allowed me to establish connections with them. All interviews were recorded either using a digital audio recorder or the iPhone application *TapeACall Pro*.

### 3.3.2. Site visits

My study is also informed by site visits conducted to each school. For each school, I enlisted the help of one or more individuals who allowed me to come into the school and recruit additional participants.

In the case of School 1, a mother I had interviewed (Linda) invited me to come to the school playground at pick up time one day. I brought my children – one of whom is similar in age to the participants’ children – as an additional way to connect with other families, and this “play date” (in Linda’s words) was an important and comfortable way for me to establish connections with potential participants and become familiar with the neighborhood context.

For School 2, I established contact with the principal prior to coming to the site for the first time and secured the principal’s consent to participate. On my first visit to School 2, I interviewed the principal about the DLBE program. On my second visit, I came to the school at pick up time to meet the parent coordinator, who had said she
would introduce me to parents I could interview. While I did not meet any parents at that time, I did establish contact with a teacher at the school whose child was in the DLBE program (Joy). She allowed me to interview her, and then also introduced me to a few other parents that I was able to interview.

At School 3, I visited on the invitation of a study participant who was the school’s PTA president at the time (Cathy). During this visit, I spoke to three mothers outside of the school at pick up time as well as entered the school to meet the principal. However, the principal declined her participation in the study citing time constraints, so I had to contact parents in other ways (using snowball sampling).

Finally, as a neighborhood parent I have attended numerous school-related meetings such as New Kindergartener’s Night\(^{10}\) (attended twice), Meet the Schools Night\(^{11}\) (attended three times), and Public School Parents’ Organization\(^{12}\) (attended four times). These meetings have been of personal interest to me, but also for the purposes of this research have allowed me to learn more about the schools in the neighborhood and expanded my understanding of the hopes and concerns of local parents when it comes to the education of their children.

### 3.3.3. Researcher memos

After each school site visit or parents meeting (when pertinent information was shared), I wrote up researcher memos. These memos described my observations and

\(^{10}\) An informational session held once yearly at a local elementary school where parents of current elementary students in the neighborhood schools share their impressions of their children’s schools with families entering the school system. Name has been anonymized.

\(^{11}\) An informational session held once yearly at a local elementary school where principals of neighborhood schools present information about their schools to families entering the school system. Name has been anonymized.

\(^{12}\) A local organization of parents concerned with public schooling and involved in advocacy to create changes in neighborhood schools. Name has been anonymized.
experiences as well as any decisions I made about the interviews or visits. I also kept records of any emails I sent to and from parents or principals, and wrote memos on these when necessary. Reissman (2008) urges that such memo taking keeps research focused, in that it “fosters ongoing reflexivity – critical self-awareness about how the research was done and the impact of critical decisions along the way” (191). I found these memos helped me be more reflective as a researcher, as well as improved how I conducted my parent interviews. Going back over my pilot study interviews, for instance, I noticed that I did a lot of talking and sharing. My reasoning for this at the time was to get my participants to feel comfortable with me, but subsequent reflection revealed how this approach worked to “short circuit the listening process;” I needed to “shed” my “agenda” in order to focus on what the participant was saying (Anderson and Jack, 1991, p. 12). In the interviews for this research, I was careful to allow my participants to speak more and I feel the later interviews were less influenced by my positionality as a result.

To summarize, data collection consisted of contacting and interviewing participants, visiting school sites, meeting parents formally (at school sites) and informally (at the playground, at local parent meetings), interviewing parents and one principal, and taking detailed researcher memos.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

Cresswell (2009) describes how data analysis involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (some qualitative researchers like to think of this as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. (183)
In the case of this research, the data analyzed consists almost exclusively of in-depth interviews. Each was very different, even though interview protocols were the same for all in each category, because each was so personal; hence, many “layers of onion” needed to be peeled during the data analysis process. For each interview, I prepared it for analysis in stages by performing the following tasks:

1. Audio recording the interview;
2. Taking notes during the interview on ideas that stood out and general statements by the participant;
3. Reflecting on the notes subsequent to the interview and adding any notes regarding the interview itself (for example, my technique as an interviewer, or whether I needed to follow up with the participant);
4. Compiling a summary sheet on which I described the participant’s and her family’s characteristics, their schooling choices (e.g. joiner, sustainer, or opt-out), and the main points from our conversation; and
5. Transcribing the entirety of the interview verbatim.

Once all interviews had been completed and prepared for analysis in the way described, and the research notes page had been completed, I went back to each interview to reread it and began to look at the themes that had emerged from my data.

Upon rereading each transcript, aspects of what each parent had stated began to jump out at me as significant, so I began the coding process as described here:

1. Reading each interview and highlighting important categories as they emerged (these were ideas that repeated or stood out);
2. *Labeling phenomena* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). That is, creating codes for each reason stated by the participants, based on their own wording, as recommended by Cresswell (2009);

3. Compiling a list of codes (in descriptive form) stated by participants; and

4. Reviewing the codes and organizing them by themes.

The list of codes that arose out of the participants’ interviews was quite long. As I sat with it, I noticed similarities between the topics and began to organize them into categories of broader themes I saw arising from the data (Cresswell, 2009). These themes were: (A) Enrichment; (B) Family; (C) Community; (D) School; (E) Other Students (Peers); (F) Bilingualism; and (G) Educational Opportunity. Keeping these categories consistent for all categories of parents (e.g. both current and former families) allowed connections as well as dissonance between themes to emerge. An example is the overarching category of “bilingualism” – a common theme for joiners and sustainers in this category is “child will learn Spanish” while for opt-outers it is “child is not learning Spanish.” This example shows the utility of a common category for all participants for ease of comparison and to observe how patterns arise in the data. See Appendix D for the list of codes used to analyze the transcriptions.

The second phase of the coding process was to assign a number to each code and tag the interview transcripts with these numbers where codes arose (see Appendix F for a sample page of a coded interview transcript). First, I placed each transcript into a Google spreadsheet such that each paragraph of the interview occupied one cell. Then, in the neighboring cell(s), I inserted the number for the code(s) in that paragraph.

Subsequently, I wrote an algorithm using Google Apps Script to search through each
transcript and count the occurrences of each code. These counts were compiled in a separate Google spreadsheet (see Appendix G for sample page of the coding spreadsheet). This method of analysis enabled me to see for each individual code:

- The number of times the code was mentioned in each interview;
- The total number of times the code was mentioned;
- The number of interviews in which the code was mentioned;
- The percent of interviews in which the code was mentioned; and
- Differences between currently-enrolled and former families.

By organizing the codes in this way, I observed which reasons for selecting DLBE were the most important to the greatest number of participants. The findings for this dissertation describe only those codes that appeared in at least 60% of the interviews. All families were considered when evaluating reasons for choosing DLBE programs, while only those with one or more children who have left a DLBE program were considered when evaluating reasons families leave DLBE programs.

### 3.5. Description of Study Participants

A total of 30 participants were interviewed for this study: 29 NLES parents who had at one point enrolled their child in a DLBE program, and the principal of one of the focal schools. Because her interview is a secondary source, the principal will not be discussed here. All participants took part in individual interviews except for in one case, where two friends were interviewed together (though about their individual choices). The interviews took anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes, and – when not conducted via phone – occurred in a variety of sites: the homes of participants, my home, coffee shops, and in the case of the principal, at School 2. As discussed, I relied on snowball sampling
to find parent participants, and because they introduced each other to me – and because of the relatively small size of the “dual language community” – all of the parents at the individual schools knew each other, and some knew parents at other schools in the study.

To obtain a more representative, or purposeful, sample, I looked for parents whose children were at different stages in their DLBE career. Participants I describe as “current” families include 11 who opted into DLBE programs in grades K-2 (“recent joiners”) and 10 whose children remain in DLBE programs by grades 3-5 (“sustainers”). Participants I describe as “former” families include 8 who had one or more children leave a DLBE program in any grade (“former”). There were also two families in the current/sustainer category who pulled a child out of a DLBE program at some point within the time frame of my study, and I re-interviewed them about their choices; their choices, therefore, are counted both in the current and former categories. Therefore, while I had initially intended for a total of 10 participants in the “former” category, I felt it and all categories were sufficiently saturated by the time interviews had been completed. The following table provides additional detail:

Table 5: School choices of study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of school-aged children</th>
<th># of school-aged children in DLBE</th>
<th>Grade of children in DLBE</th>
<th># of children pulled out of DLBE</th>
<th>Grade child pulled out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JOINERS</strong></td>
<td><em>(OPTED IN GRADES K–2)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATHY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>K, 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROXY</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMILY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINDA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>preK, 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIMBERLY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEATHER</td>
<td>1 (2 total)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the preceding table demonstrates, participants vary in degrees of participation in DLBE programs, from having all their children in the program throughout their schooling experience to having only one child in for a short period of time. It is also interesting to note how many of the families made different choices for different children, for instance enrolling just one of their children, or pulling one out but keeping another in the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUSTAINERS (CONTINUE THROUGH GRADES 3–5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROBIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAMELA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BONNIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LESLIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADRIENNE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINDY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEREDITH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIDGET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMER (LEFT IN ANY GRADE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIRGINIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIANE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAROLYN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICTORIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARGARET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREYSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINCENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERRI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, as previously mentioned, one reason for conducting the study in Owl Hill and Partridge Lane was the diversity of the schools. While I set no constraints on participation for diversity, I did end up with a very diverse sample in relation to race, ethnicity, and languages spoken in the home. As discussed in Section 3.2.1, nearly half of participants had families where one or both parents had been born outside the US, and seven different languages other than English or Spanish were spoken in the homes by participants and/or their spouses. To protect the anonymity of the participants, but to contextualize the diversity of the sample, data on participants’ ethnicity and national origin is presented here in aggregate:

Table 6: Racial and cultural characteristics of study participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE</th>
<th>WHITE</th>
<th>BLACK / AFRICAN AMERICAN</th>
<th>HISPANIC / LATINO</th>
<th>ASIAN</th>
<th>FOREIGN BORN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANT</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANT SPOUSE / CHILD’S FATHER</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parents who volunteered their time for this study were guaranteed anonymity. As such, their names and identifying information have been changed, including in many cases references to the number or gender of their children. Notwithstanding, it is important to contextualize the study with relevant details from the parents’ stories. Please continue reading for brief introductions of each family (categorized by length of time their children have been in DLBE programs):
Current families: Recent Joiners

Cathy – The president of the PTA at school 3, Cathy came to DLBE as an alternative to gifted and talented (G&T) education for her two children, both of whom tested into gifted programs. She is very active in the school as well as in supporting her children’s Spanish acquisition through hiring after-school tutors and enrolling them in a Saturday school program. Neither she nor her husband speak Spanish.

Roxy – The mother of one child who attends school in the DLBE at School 3, she selected the school after hearing about how good the program was from other parents. She has many doubts about it, given her child’s difficulties with Spanish. Roxy did take some Spanish in high school, but her husband speaks no Spanish.

Emily – Emily strongly pursued placement for her younger child in the DLBE program at School 1 because her older child did not develop bilingualism at home even though her husband is from a Spanish-speaking country. She wanted her younger child to have more support than her older child did in developing the heritage language.

Linda – Linda is an academic who studies language, so was very well informed on current research in bilingual education. She strongly pursued placement for her children in the DLBE program at School 1. She speaks four languages, one of them Spanish; she and the children’s Spanish-speaking nanny support the children’s Spanish at home.

Kimberly – Her older child is in the G&T program and her younger child is in the DLBE program at School 1. She chose the DLBE for her youngest when he didn’t qualify for the G&T program. She has studied Spanish and traveled in Latin America so is able to support Spanish at home. Her husband does not speak Spanish.
Heather – Heather has two children in the DLBE program at School 1, and she enrolled them primarily for them to learn Spanish (which neither she nor her husband speak). Her main concern is her children’s performance in English and other subjects; if she ever saw them falling behind in these areas she would take them out of the DLBE program.

Sharon – When her older child was in pre-K at School 1, the teachers recommended the DLBE program to Sharon. She has since enrolled both her children in the program, and says they think it’s fun. She supports their Spanish at home with flashcards, cartoons, and the help of a neighbor since neither she nor her husband speak it.

Kristen – As a teacher, Kristen has taught students who were learning English as a new language, so she feels she understands the language learning process. She and her husband, neither of whom speak Spanish, feel the DLBE program at School 1 is a “gift” because it provides their child with enrichment they can’t provide at home.

Tanya – When looking for a school for her first child, Tanya looked into many options. The opportunity to learn Spanish “tipped the scale” for them in terms of choosing the DLBE program at School 1. Tanya recognizes the importance of bilingualism in this day and age, and wants her children to become fluent in Spanish.

Heidi – A stay-at-home mother of three, Heidi has her two school-aged children in the DLBE program at school 3. She speaks Spanish and has traveled a lot in Latin America. Her positive experiences learning languages made her want the same for her children, and she teaches them Spanish at home through singing, reading, and word games.

Beth – Beth and her husband recently moved to Owl Hill hoping to integrate into the community by enrolling their children in the DLBE program at School 3. Beth learned
Spanish, which she uses in conjunction with her work, and feels it is important for her children to also know the language.

**Current families: Sustainers**

**Robin** – Robin says she “has a love of languages,” having studied 5 different languages including Spanish. Her husband speaks Spanish and is of Hispanic heritage. Their two children are both enrolled in the DLBE at School 1. She is concerned that the attrition of Spanish in the upper grades (3rd and up) will make it difficult for her children to continue DLBE in middle school.

**Pamela** – Pamela has two children, one in college and the second in her last year of the DLBE program at school 2. Her older child didn’t attend a DLBE program because she didn’t know about it at the time. She learned about the program from her youngest child’s preschool teacher, who said that her child was very smart and could benefit from the additional challenge of a DLBE program.

**Bonnie** – Bonnie has 5 children: two are grown and the younger three are in DL programs at School 2 and the local middle school. Subsequent to our interview, she took one child out of the middle school DLBE program. Her husband is Latino and from a Spanish-speaking country, though he doesn’t speak Spanish to the children. Bonnie wants her children to learn Spanish to fit in with their neighbors and connect to their heritage.

**Leslie** – Leslie is originally from another country, though she has lived in the US for many years. She speaks her home language with her child. She believes in the importance of multilingualism, so has had her child with a Spanish-speaking caregiver since infancy to learn Spanish. Her child is in his final year at School 2 and is trilingual.
Adrienne – Adrienne is also from outside of the United States. She speaks four languages. She speaks to her children in her home language, and they travel often to her home country. Her husband is American of Latino heritage and speaks Spanish as a learned language. Adrienne is an ardent supporter of multilingualism and early language education, for her children’s work future and to connect to their respective home cultures.

Mandy – Mandy placed her youngest child in the DLBE program at School 1 before that program became popular for NLESs. She describes how her decision paved the way for future families “like theirs” to join. While she doesn’t speak any Spanish, her husband had lived and worked in Latin America for years so speaks it fluently.

Meredith – Meredith chose the DLBE at School 1 even though her child had tested every year in the top percentile for G&T schools citywide. The program is difficult for her child, who has no Spanish support from either parent at home. However, staying local and keeping her daughter with friends is very important.

Bridget – Bridget has four children. Her oldest child completed the DLBE program at School 1. She has one child in Kindergarten in the DLBE program, but this year she placed the child who had done DLBE through 2nd grade into a G&T program. Neither she nor her husband speak Spanish. However, her brother’s spouse is Spanish and they live in Spain with their children; Bridget and her family often visit.

Joy – A teacher at School 2, Joy has had her now 5th grade child in the DLBE program there since kindergarten. She is a strong supporter of DLBE both as an educator and a parent. Since her child was an infant, she was cared for in the home of a Spanish-speaking babysitter. Next year, she is not sure whether to send her child to the Owl Hill middle school where DLBE is an option, as the school does not have the best reputation.
Amy – A passionate advocate for DLBE, Amy believes children like hers, who identify as Latino (her husband is Latino and originally from a Spanish-speaking country), should by right receive a bilingual education. Her two children are enrolled in the DLBE at School 1. Though she and her husband communicate with the children in English, they share close ties to his family who is primarily Spanish-speaking.

Former families

Virginia – Virginia put her child in a DLBE program to connect to his father’s Latino heritage. However, concerns with administration and the loss of many teachers from the DLBE program made her look into other options. They secured a seat at a charter school, which did not have institutional and administrative concerns of School 1.

Diane – Diane had two of her five children in the DLBE program at School 3 in the “early days” of the program, before it was restructured by the current principal. Her children both left DLBE programs when changes in teachers occurred (the first in Kindergarten and the second in 2nd grade).

Carolyn – Carolyn placed her oldest child in the DLBE program at school 3 primarily because she had heard it was a smaller class and a lot of “G&T kids” were in the class. She opted not to continue the program once her child completed 2nd grade because the feeder school most convenient to her home doesn’t have a DLBE program.

Victoria – When her child qualified for a G&T program but didn’t get a placement, Victoria put the child into the DLBE program at School 3. She remained in the class until they got a seat in a G&T school. Victoria thought the DLBE program would give her child an additional challenge in school; however, it was more difficult to support the language at home or communicate with other parents than she had anticipated.
Margaret – The first three of her four children began in the DLBE program at School 1. All are now in the G&T program at School 1. When discussing the reasons each child was taken out, Margaret said it was different for each one. She still maintains that DLBE is essentially a better program than G&T because it incorporates language and culture instead of just more advanced academics.

Greyson – The DLBE at School 1 seemed like an “amazing opportunity.” However, his child had behavior issues that the teacher couldn’t manage so the school asked him to leave the program. Greyson found this upsetting given there is only one strand of DLBE in the school so in leaving the class, they had to give up the program.

Vincent – When Vincent’s older child was completing the DLBE program at School 3, he and a group of other parents lobbied local legislators to establish a DLBE program at a convenient feeder school. The school did not agree to start a DLBE program; however, Vincent sent his child there anyway. Vincent’s youngest child is currently in pre-K in the DLBE program at School 3.

Terri – Terri had heard from neighbors and friends that learning bilingually is good for the brain, and she felt DLBE was a good “middle ground” between a G&T class and a regular mainstream public school class. However, she pulled her older child out of the DLBE program at School 3 when they secured a seat in a new G&T school that was more geographically convenient. Her youngest child is in the DLBE pre-K class at School 3.

3.6. Study Limitations and Issues of Validity

I came to this topic with a certain degree of what Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe as theoretical sensitivity, or “having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand” (42). As a teacher, I had instructed in a DLBE program in an
Owl Hill secondary school for many years; as a teacher and a researcher, I had studied bilingual education; as a parent I had selected a DLBE preschool for my child; and as a Queens resident I was very familiar with both neighborhoods in the study. As I interacted with parents, and later with the data, I was aware of my researcher bias.

3.6.1. Validity and Reliability

Reissman (2008) reminds us that, “two levels of validity are important – the story told by a research participant and the validity of the analysis, or the story told by the researcher” (186). That is, in order for my project to reliably represent NLES parents’ choice of DLBE and sustainability in DLBE, (1) parents need to accurately present their reasons; and (2) I need to faithfully interpret those reasons. In order to protect the reliability of the first aspect, I followed these procedures (see Cresswell, 2009):

- Audio recording the interviews;
- Taking detailed researcher memos during and after each interview;
- Transcribing each interview; and
- Checking the transcripts to make sure they match with interviews, as well as align to my interview notes.

Following these procedures enabled me to ensure – prior to coding – that the data I was looking at accurately represented the parents’ voices. Next, understanding the analysis itself as a type of story (Reissman); I was careful to maintain a series of procedures to ensure the reliability of my analysis (again, following Cresswell, 2009):

- Keeping researcher memos on the codes as they emerge – and allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than attempt to impose my own ideas;
- Clarifying my bias at every step, and how my background shapes the interpretation of data or findings; and
• Not dismissing opposing viewpoints, so the credibility of what participants told me is more reliable.

In addition, once the coding procedure had been completed, the coding framework was reviewed and approved by my dissertation committee chair. In discussing my findings, I also use the parents’ own words whenever possible as a way of providing “rich data” to reveal the complexities of my study (Given, 2008). This bolsters the reliability of my study by showing that my theoretical claims are supported by evidence from the participants’ accounts (Reissman, 2008). Finally, I made my transcriptions and audio recordings available to my committee for review if necessary.

3.6.2. Study Limitations

There are several limitations worth noting. First, because the study took place over only one year, it is not longitudinal. Efforts were made to provide a broad perspective by (A) interviewing families at different grade levels; and (B) including and/or re-interviewing families from the pilot study when data seemed pertinent. However, a follow up study in a few years to see whether “joiners” have become “sustainers” would help to support (or disprove) my theories on what makes NLES families more likely to stay in DLBE programs.

Secondly, the study is based on responses from a small number of participants. While I have been able to determine commonalities among the experiences of these parents, generalizability to other groups of parents in other settings is limited. The parents’ reasons are also unique and personal, particularly among former families. The study may, however, have transferability; that is, “the extent to which the findings of one
study can be applied to other situations” (Merriam, 1998; p. 39). Future researchers may use my findings as a springboard for additional investigations (see also Section 6).

Finally, there was the issue of access to individuals I had wanted to interview for my study but could not. At the outset of my study, I had hoped to interview the principals of each of the three focal schools, but as previously mentioned only one principal consented to participate (the principal of School 2). There were also two parents I had hoped to interview, but who opted not to participate. This did not, however, have a marked effect on my study. The information I had hoped to obtain from the principals and the two parents who decided not to be interviewed was simply supplied by different informants, as well as through a subsequent informal conversation with the principal of School 3, so this limitation is barely worth mention.

3.7. Implications for Practice

The preceding sections establish the need for research on this topic, but I would urge that it is now more important than ever before. We are on the brink of what seems to be a dramatic language policy shift. State regulations determining who should receive bilingual education have changed and become more closely regulated. In NYC, the new chancellor of schools has prioritized opening and expanding DLBE programs in as many schools as possible; this is also a push at the State level. Nationally as well, a mentality shift toward bilingualism is occurring: rather than seen as a deficit, it is now being seen as an advantage to speak more than one language, particularly for the population studied here (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). This dissertation describes a phenomenon that, in some aspects, has grown out of these general policy and ideological shifts: families whose
home language is English are increasingly choosing DLBE programs to teach their children other languages.

Ironically, the push to open more DLBE programs, along with the recent increased popularity of these programs among NLESs, is occurring simultaneous to a shift in how schools approach curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The adoption of the new Common Core standards by NYC public schools has increased pressure for students to perform well on the associated high-stakes testing requirements. As the NLES parents in this study described, this has shifted the focus in DLBE programs away from Spanish and Latino cultural teaching and toward preparing for State exams – particularly after 3rd grade. The effects of this, among other findings of this study, will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR:

FINDINGS

When I began teaching 6th grade in an Owl Hill secondary dual language bilingual education (DLBE) program in 2006, we were proud of but also isolated by our status as the only middle school level DLBE program in the entire county of Queens. As one of the founding teachers and the program’s coordinator, I worked with other teachers and the administration as we built capacity and reflected on ways to improve the success of our program. One feature that drew our attention was the relative lack of home language diversity of our students: while we drew students from six neighboring elementary schools with DLBE programs, in any given year we only had three or four of 64 students at each grade level who identified as non-Latino or spoke English only or a language other than Spanish at home. In fact, I recall only one student who came from a completely English-monolingual home. We realized that non-Latino English-speaking (NLES) students in our school district, very simply, were not enrolling in Spanish/English DLBE programs in large numbers at the elementary grades and, when they did, generally not continuing into middle school. As I began doctoral studies, I remained interested in this trend and eventually arrived at the idea for this research project: I wanted to understand why more NLES families were not selecting DLBE programs. In the years that have passed since my work as a bilingual teacher, however, the population of DLBE programs in the area has shifted. Where once only a few NLES families were opting into these classes, they are now competing for inclusion. The findings of this dissertation help illuminate reasons for this change by examining the
motives NLES parents in three Queens elementary schools have for selecting, keeping their children in, and removing their children from, DLBE programs.

The NLES families in this study have opted into DLBE programs for different reasons, which they described to me through in-depth interviews, informal conversations, and emails. The findings of this research are based upon what they shared with me. In order to appreciate commonalities between families, data was coded using the qualitative methods described in the preceding chapter. As stated, codes were assigned to the themes that repeatedly came up in the parents’ interviews, and these codes were grouped into themes (see Appendix D). Some of these themes came up more frequently in the interviews than others; analyzing which themes were most prevalent in the research allowed me to create the categories I used to organize the findings of this research (see Appendix E for the top codes). Participants are directly quoted in the research wherever possible, as their voices lend authenticity and provide explicit information about the themes that are the subject of each section in this chapter.

The research findings are organized around two sets of themes: (1) the themes that emerged most often as reasons for participation in DLBE programs; and (2) the themes that emerged most often as reasons for leaving DLBE programs. They also appear in the order they were most often mentioned (i.e. the Bilingualism theme was the top theme mentioned by families as a reason for choosing DLBE programs, so it appears first in Part 1). This is the organizational structure of the Findings chapters:

PART 1: Choosing Bilingual Programs

- THEME 1: Bilingualism
- THEME 2: Community and Family
- THEME 3: Enrichment
• THEME 4: Future opportunity

PART 2: Leaving bilingual programs

• THEME 1: Bilingualism and Academic Concerns

• THEME 2: Institutional and Family Concerns

PART 3: Discussion of Findings/Risk Factors for Attrition

The findings address the essential questions I ask in my research, which are why NLES families choose DLBE programs and why some will eventually pull their children out. Part 1 addresses the first question, while Part 2 addresses the latter. Part 3 addresses the sustainability of DLBE programs for NLES families through identifying ‘risk factors’ for student attrition. Each section begins with a brief summary of the chapter contents. Because more of the data describes reasons to choose DLBE programs, and because this is the main question asked in this research, the first section is the longest.

The following clarifies how parents are identified in this research and how it affected data analysis:

• Families who chose DLBE programs were identified as “current” families. Some of them are referred to as “recent joiners” and others as “sustainers” depending on how long their children have been in a DLBE program (see Table 5). Because these families identified similar reasons for their choices, their data was not separated.

• Families whose children left DLBE programs are identified as “former,” and were counted alone when discussing the data on leaving DLBE programs.

• Both “current” and “former” families were counted when discussing the data on choosing DLBE programs, because all families were interviewed about their choices in this regard.
• Parents who cross categories were counted in their primary category but their secondary choices were also considered. These families (there are 4 of them) have one child who left a DLBE program but one or more children currently enrolled in a DLBE program.

Parents are identified by pseudonyms. To contextualize their choices, their school affiliation and the date of their interview appear alongside their names where cited. Schools are identified by numbers unrelated to their public school identification number.

The population of DLBE programs is changing rapidly, and the families in this research are part of a larger trend. What will the effect be? Is this a “Columbusing” of bilingual education, as Flores (2015, Jan. 15) has suggested – a takeover by privileged, English-speaking families of programming established by and for Latino emergent bilinguals in an important victory for the Civil Rights movement? Or is this a critical step, as US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2014) proposes, in a societal journey toward embracing multilingualism, competing in a global marketplace, and fulfilling our educational potential? The findings of this dissertation explore the individual choices that are at the roots of the trend expanding opportunity and interest in DLBE for majority populations, but future research is needed into the long-term effects of these decisions.
Part 1

4.1. Choosing Bilingual Programs

In preceding chapters, I have elaborated on the idea that NLES parents who opt into DLBE programs often have many programs and school offerings to choose from. In the words of one parent in this study,

I was the crazy, uptight, first-time mom sending her kid to school in a city where we have a tremendous amount of choice and a tremendous amount of very confusing choices, all with different processes for getting into there. We did everything…[and] I said, ‘I’ve just run around like a maniac trying to understand this whole process that is the New York City school system and it’s options. The good news is we have options. The bad news is we have options.’ And all of them operate as little fiefdoms and none of them are a conjunction. Nobody gives parents the information they need to make a choice without sacrificing some other choice. (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014)

In this passage, Cathy describes how parents in NYC face myriad choices when selecting schools for their children and emphasizes the sacrifices parents have to make when choosing a DLBE program over other options. Like most of the parents in this study, Cathy describes exercising considerable agency in the process of choosing and enrolling her children in a DLBE program. Another parent clearly emphasizes this in her statement about how she and her friends selected the DLBE program at their school: “All of this group of us that sent our kids to this particular program made this very conscious choice. [We] looked at other schools, thought about private schools, thought about charter schools, and made this real choice to be in this program” (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012). What these quotes highlight is at the crux of this research study:
NLES parents have numerous options, so selecting a DLBE program is a “conscious choice.” Why parents make this choice will be described in accordance with the subsequent outline of the main findings in Part 1:

- **Theme 1, Bilingualism (4.1.1):** NLES families are very interested in using DLBE programs to teach their children Spanish. They had generally heard about the “benefits of bilingualism” prior to enrolling their children in DLBE programs, and wanted these advantages for their children.

- **Theme 2, Family and Community (4.1.2):** NLES families are most likely to opt into DLBE programs if someone familiar recommends the program to them: a neighbor, a friend, or a family member. Connecting to community through integrating with neighbors and familiarizing children with the language and culture of the neighborhood was also described as a priority.

- **Theme 3, Enrichment (4.1.3):** DLBE is described by a majority of families as an alternative to Gifted and Talented education. It is seen as an opportunity for enrichment as well as a way to receive “more” out of a local public school.

- **Theme 4, Opportunity (4.1.4):** DLBE represents different types of opportunity for NLES families: the opportunity to try something new; future opportunities for their children; and an interesting educational opportunity.

As part of each section, descriptions of the school and community settings will also be presented to contextualize the participants’ choices.

**4.1.1. Bilingualism**

Most of the NLES families in this study (83%) indicated a primary motivation for their child’s participation in a DLBE program was for the child to learn Spanish. Yet it would be impossible to say that becoming bilingual in Spanish and English was the “top”
reason families chose these programs because other reasons were mentioned equally often. Notwithstanding, I begin discussion of my findings here because bilingualism and Spanish learning are themes that come out in so many different ways, in so many of the parents’ reasons behind program selection. In Theme 2 (Community and Family), for instance, parents discuss wanting to fit into the neighborhood, and knowing Spanish aided this goal. In Theme 3 (Enrichment), learning bilingually/being bilingual is seen as something that challenges and benefits the brain. And in Theme 4 (Future Opportunity), parents discuss how bilingualism in Spanish may give their children advantages in future career or education goals. Therefore, beginning with parents’ reasoning for wanting their children to become bilingual contextualizes many other pieces of their discourse around program choice. Essentially, as well, because parents are selecting a bilingual program, appreciating how they understand bilingualism – especially bilingualism in Spanish – situates many of the rest of their arguments.

To summarize the findings in this section, NLES parents stressed academic learning (reading and writing) of “proper” Spanish when they characterized hopes for what their child would learn in a DLBE program. Additionally, while they saw bilingualism as important, they also perceived the enrichment of learning in two languages. Finally, parents saw the immersion model of language education as more effective at teaching language because it starts children young. Parents’ personal and community motivation for wanting their children to learn Spanish will be addressed in later sections (see section 4.1.2.b); the subsequent sections will deal exclusively with factors relating to language learning and bilingualism.
4.1.1.a. Learning Spanish

Learning Spanish was a significant motivational factor for NLES families to place their children in a DLBE program. Parents specifically sought the Spanish language for its perceived utility in a global society. Yet in order for the language to be useful to their child, as described below, parents also preferred their children to learn a certain kind of Spanish – grammatically accurate, literate, and academic – and hoped their children would one day develop ‘native-like’ fluency in the language.

Spanish as a global language

As previously stated, the parents in this study see Spanish as useful in a broad national and international context. For some respondents, the decision for Spanish seemed calculated on the fact that the language is and will remain useful in this country. As one parent very practically asserted, “it’s the logical language to learn in the United States” (Mandy, School 1, Feb. 12, 2012). Another parent said, “I just think Spanish is going to be the second language of our country. [In] my job, I see the importance of Spanish and of knowing Spanish” (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). Their perceptions are based on trends widely-reported in national media, such as how the growing number of Latinos in the US has led Spanish to be the most widely-spoken non-English language in the nation (López and González-Barrera, 2013). Parents observed the importance of Spanish in their local contexts: “In New York, although not officially but in practice, there is a second language spoken everywhere” (Leslie, School 2, March 21, 2014; see also section 4.1.2.b). Parents also saw Spanish as an important international language, useful for travel, business, and education (see section 4.1.4.). Spanish actually is the second most widely-spoken language worldwide, with millions more studying it as a second or other language and the Spanish-speaking
population growing more rapidly than other language-speaking populations (Instituto Cervantes, 2014). With so many perceived opportunities to use and practice Spanish in the US and abroad, families saw Spanish as a logical, even utilitarian language to study. In fact, Spanish was preferred over other languages for this reason. As Margaret describes: “I would like to see [my children] study something they think they might actually use. If they were to pick something like Italian I can't see them having many opportunities to use that, whereas Spanish...” (Margaret, School 1, June 19, 2014). The utility of Spanish also increases the benefit of Spanish/English DLBE program participation to the child. Greyson shares, “it would be harder to get English-only kids into a Korean bilingual class for the sole reason that there’s no obvious strategic benefit for the kids...In other words, learning Spanish we all should do anyway just because of the demographics of the country” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Parents see opportunities abound to use Spanish in real world contexts, which parents believe raises its economic and cultural benefits. Additionally, parents see learning Spanish as most useful if it leads to the development of bilingualism.

*Spanish fluency*

When parents discuss their children learning Spanish, they hope that “eventually, they’ll become bilingual” (Heidi, School 3, September 24, 2014). When parents say “bilingual” and “bilingualism,” it is important to understand the framework within which their beliefs operate. Educational researchers now emphasize the “dynamic” and “fluid” nature of bilingualism (see O. García, 2009a) given how bilinguals use their languages in different contexts and different domains and with different people (Baker & Prys Jones, 1998, p. 51). In their discussions of bilingualism, on the other hand, parents in this
research emphasize a more traditional conceptualization based on the static model of
finite fluency in a language. They tended to measure language learning against a ‘native
speaker’ model. Many of the parents had gone through foreign language programs and
described what they saw as gaps or flaws in their second language learning – failure to
retain a lot of what they had learned, poor grasp on grammar or literacy, a heavy accent,
etc. Because they had not achieved “fluency,” many felt they could not call themselves
bilingual. As Tanya told me, “I took a few [language] courses...but I’m in no way
bilingual” (Tanya, School 1, August 13, 2014). Whether they had, in their own
estimation, failed at achieving bilingualism, the parents in this study felt a DLBE
program offered a different, more effective way to learn language for their children, to
“gain the ability to be really comfortable in the language...[to] truly internalize and feel
like [they’re] truly bilingual and can just go from one to the other” (Kristen, School 1,
June 11, 2014). This mother’s statement illustrates the connection the parents in this
study drew between bilingualism and fluency (see also section 4.1.1.b). It is critical to
understand this because parents used the idea of fluency – an attainable, standardized
norm of language – to evaluate their children’s progress in the DLBE programs.

Regarding fluency, parents revealed a preoccupation with learning the “proper
version” of Spanish (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014; Bonnie, School 2, March 21, 2014) or
Spanish “mastery” (Pamela, School 2, Oct. 28, 2014). The NLES parents in this study
want their children to become fluent in the “best” Spanish, and praise teachers perceived
as supporting this goal:

[The teachers are] really dedicated to the program, they insist on – you know,
there’s Spanish and then there’s Spanish – like, our kids are learning not just,
they’re learning good grammar, they’re learning – I think [the teachers are] great, they have a good accent in Spanish. And these are teachers who are making sure that they speak good Spanish to the kids. (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012)

This passage clearly describes the emphasis Mandy and the other NLES parents in this study place on standard, academic Spanish with set grammatical features, and a “good” accent. In fact, a particular accent when speaking Spanish was seen as an essential part of bilingualism. They describe their children’s “perfect accent” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014) or “beautiful accent” (Tanya, School 1, August 13, 2014), praising their children’s “standard” pronunciation: “if you close your eyes, you could feel like it’s the native tongue” (both Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014). Yet Grosjean (2010) points out that most bilinguals do have an accent in one or more languages (77). The parents in this study, however, held to the popular belief that bilinguals have no accent in their different languages, and urge their children to learn a standard variety of Spanish to enhance others’ comprehension of their speech and integrate them as much as possible into a general Latino Spanish-speaking linguistic community. The emphasis on a standard Spanish, however, implies that there is a non-standard version or versions of the language. Mandy’s statement at the beginning of this paragraph demonstrates that parents and DLBE program teachers share this belief (they “insist on...good Spanish”). While access to sufficient and appropriate levels of Spanish is critical for students whose Spanish fluency is developing (de Jong and Howard, 2009), insisting on a “standard Spanish” disregards EBL students’ real linguistic resources (McCollum, 2000; cited in Fitts, 2006, p. 352; see also O. García, 2009a). Moreover, the idea of a native-norm for language speaking is based on a monolingual view of bilingualism, which holds
that bilinguals have equal and perfect knowledge of their languages – a concept generally disregarded by specialists in bilingualism (Grosjean, 2010, p. 20; see also Garcia, O., 2009a). Notwithstanding, it is precisely this monolingual norm that parents in this study hold their children to when measuring their progress in learning Spanish, and it is also seems to be the standard both NLES and Latino EBL children are held to by teachers in DLBE programs (see Mandy’s earlier quote).

4.1.1.b. The importance of bilingualism

In addition to wanting their children to learn Spanish, many parents in this study described believing in the importance of bilingualism in and of itself. Some of the mothers I interviewed who are themselves bilingual/multilingual strongly believe that their children also need to be fluent speakers of more than one language. For these mothers, the value of bilingualism was in some ways more important than the languages one spoke (four mothers mentioned this; see also section 4.1.1.b). As Linda stated, “I was always obsessed with getting into a dual language program of some kind, and Spanish being the default option in the sociolinguistic reality of this neighborhood” (Linda, School 2, March 20, 2014). Yet it should be emphasized that bilingualism as a value was not limited only to these multilingual mothers. In fact, 57% of parents of children currently enrolled in DLBE programs indicated bilingualism is important in contemporary times and society. Even at the school administrative level, an uptick in interest among NLES families at the school in the DLBE program is ascribed to precisely this reasoning:

I think, in this society, especially, I have to say, the more educated the parents, the more interest there is in the dual language program. My Latino families, many of
them, as I shared with you before, it is more of the fact that they are concerned with maintaining the heritage language, or the native language. And then, the non-Latino families, it is because they really, truly believe that in this society their children, the fact that their children are exposed to a second, or perhaps a third language, they truly believe in that, in this global society, in this world we are living in. So you do see that; you see the parents coming in, actually requesting [a DLBE program]. (Principal of School 2, May 27, 2014)

It merits notice that the principal indicates a difference between why NLES and Latino parents are interested in the DLBE program at her school: the NLES parents’ interest comes from education while the Latino parents’ interest comes from their heritage or home language practices. This idea came out in parents’ comments as well. They often talked about reading articles about the benefits of bilingualism in widely read news sources such as *The New York Times* or *Time Magazine*, in parenting magazines, or on the Internet (half of all participants indicated they had read educational articles on the benefits of bilingualism). Roxy, for instance, read a newspaper article calling bilingual education, “a valuable way to learn” (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). Other parents had studied bilingual or language education in college (four parents said this). Others had received some professional development about it at work. Mandy is one such parent; she learned on the job about the opportunity for children in DLBE programs to “develop their brains in ways they wouldn’t be if they weren’t learning a second language” (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012). In fact, because many of the parents were in professions such as health care worker, teacher, social worker, or other such where they would interact often with bilingual colleagues or clients, they learned directly through
professional experience the practical advantages of bilingualism. Returning to what the principal stated, this education and experience shapes the views of NLES families and fortifies their commitment to bilingual education. Additionally, viewing bilingualism as a resource in a global society also relates back to the idea of Spanish as a useful language. Meredith describes it like this: “I feel like as time goes on, [bilingualism] is almost expected” (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). If bilingualism is de rigeuer, and Spanish is the world language to learn, then DLBE seems very practical. As always, the context of the study matters: the parents in this study are mainly middle class, many have international ties, and in addition live in cosmopolitan NYC, hence think perhaps more than other parents might of their children’s futures in terms of mobility and global connectivity. Bilingualism for such families is seen as a necessary tool because “no matter what you choose now, you need to have a second language” (Adrienne, School 2, May 1, 2014). In this way, bilingualism becomes as an important goal in and of itself – in the way that one can possess language as something tangible to be leveraged for future advantage (see also section 4.1.4.a).

_Becoming bilingual early_

For parents whose motivation is bilingualism for their children, a DLBE program represented the optimal means to an end because of what they considered the benefit of learning from a young age rather than waiting until high school (as is typical in most US educational contexts). As discussed previously, parents wanted their children to become fluent in a certain type of Spanish, and they felt learning younger would best support this goal. Learning younger raised the likelihood of achieving one marker of fluency identified by many of these families, which was a native-like accent: “As children tend
to be able to reproduce sounds much more easily than adults, he had a great accent
without any effort...my understanding is that children are able to get the accent much
more easily than adults are” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). Parents also
believed, very simply, that it was *easier* to learn language at a younger age than when one
was older – the belief also being that if it were easier to learn, the child would be more
likely to develop bilingualism. As Victoria said, “the kids, being young, would be able to
pick it up better and faster. And that it, again, was just a good influence on them in terms
of learning” (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014). Others, like Terri, state that, “it’s really
valuable to be bilingual…I think it’s a big benefit for childhood brain development, and
if you’re going to learn it, when you’re four or five is the best time to do it” (Terri,
School 3, Oct. 2, 2014). Put together, it is evident that many parents in this study feel it
is not only easier and more efficient for children to learn language well when young –
thus raising their chances to become bilingual one day – there are also some benefits to
bilingualism that go beyond language fluency (see also section 4.1.1.c). Because of these
many advantages, it is with pride that parents feel they are able to offer the opportunity of
bilingual education to their children starting early:

> As soon as I knew [my local school] had a dual language program, that's what I
wanted, because I felt if I could give him the advantage of learning a second
language while he was that little, which is something that I can't teach him. I just
thought if I could give him that advantage, that would be the best advantage I
could give him. Better than having him test for gifted and talented or some sort of
specialized school, I thought if I could put him in a situation where he could learn
to read, write, and speak Spanish as well as English, that would be the best thing I could do for him. (Kristen, School 1, June 11, 2014)

Additionally, a DLBE program is essentially the only way NLES children can begin learning Spanish at a young age: “There is no opportunity, for [language learning in] elementary school, no. You’re either in the [DLBE] program or you’re not” (Diane, School 3, March 11, 2014). Many participants in this study indicated interest in early language learning, so specifically sought it out when making school choices; they found, however, exactly what Diane asserted, that few options for language study exist outside of DLBE. In fact, very few language-learning programs exist nationwide at the elementary school level and they have been decreasing rapidly in recent years (Rhodes and Pufahl, 2009). DLBE programs, on the other hand, have been increasing in recent years (García, A., 2015), very notably so in NYC in the past 2 years (see Schneider, A., 2013; Zimmer, 2015). While it is not to say that NLES parents’ interest in early language learning is not sincere, it does seem a fairly recent trend. Joy, a teacher at School 2, pointed this out to me: “Generally, English-speaking parents expect language to be introduced in junior high and high school like it always has been. Until these programs started coming out, I don’t think parents really realized what a great benefit it would be to start as early as kindergarten, or even earlier if possible” (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). Many parents in this study proclaimed the benefits of early language learning, so they seemed to have “realized” the potential benefits of DLBE.

4.1.1.c. Bilingualism as enrichment

The previous section alluded to the idea many parents expressed about early language learning: not only do they believe early exposure facilitates language learning
they also ascribe other benefits such as positive influence on brain development and learning (see Victoria and Terri’s earlier quotes). We return to these perceived advantages here because they are ways in which bilingualism and bilingual education—that is, knowing two languages as well as being instructed in two languages—are considered enriching. It is important to note that parents saw benefits in both bilingualism itself (the ultimate achievement they sought for their children) and any exposure to language learning (learning bilingually). One parent explained this benefit arose because, “you access a different part of your brain when you’re learning languages” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). Such ideas tie into cognitive research on bilingualism. The work of Ellen Bialystok is often cited in relation to the positive effects of bilingualism on cognition. Her research has described, for instance, the way learning bilingually contributes to children’s development of the brain’s executive-function system, improving their ability to “control attention, inhibit distraction, monitor sets of stimuli, expand working memory, and shift between tasks,” and how these benefits have “life-long positive effects” (Bialystok & Craik, 2010; p. 122). Most parents in this study hadn’t read academic research on the cognitive advantages of bilingualism, but media attention on this subject has been heavy recently. Two prime examples are Patricia Kuhl’s 2011 TED Talk on “The Linguistic Genius of Babies,” which received nearly 2 million unique views on the TED website alone, and the *NY Times* article “Why Bilinguals are Smarter,” among the most popular “Op Ed” pieces of 2012.

Educational research and popular media can influence parents to feel bilingualism is enriching, but their own experiences of this phenomenon provide deeper proof. One father described how this affected his child when he learned Math in Spanish (his weaker
language): “You abstract the Mathematical function from the instruction…and I think for his brain anyway, he could immediately see that, you know, the concept of a circle doesn’t rely on language…it was immensely beneficial” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). I include this example because it illustrates success in thinking/cognition, not language development. The principal I spoke to also provided a very practical example of how the cognitive challenge of language development that takes place in a bilingual classroom can enrich children’s minds and help them advance (Howard, et al., 2003). She told me:

I have to say that I find that the rigor of the program, and the fact that the children, early on, from the time they are in kindergarten, are being asked to simultaneously learn two languages and become literate and fluent in both. The fact that you are using strategies in both languages to strengthen one or the other, or both. The outcome, and we see this more when they get a little bit older and they are in the testing grades, our dual language students tend to outscore the non-dual language students on the state tests. (Principal of School 2, May 27, 2014)

Examples of DLBE program participation stimulating children cognitively and improving their overall academic outcomes were powerful incentives for parents to believe in the enrichment value of bilingual education. Such arguments can be powerful for NLES parents when starting out because it assures them that no matter what the outcome – no matter whether or not their child actually becomes bilingual or whether or not they continue in the program – the child will derive some special benefit (enrichment) from DLBE program participation. That is, many parents believed these advantages would help their children in other academic, personal, and social contexts regardless of Spanish
fluency: “because you work your brain even harder, it teaches you a lot about discipline” (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). Parents embraced the cognitive benefits of bilingual education no matter how long their children participated in a DLBE or what the children’s linguistic outcomes were.

The sections in this theme have illustrated how NLES use DLBE programs to teach their children Spanish, which they perceive in terms of a value or commodity. For many, it was a ‘gift’ they could provide their children, seeing as how most of them were not themselves bilingual (or bilingual in Spanish). Aware of cognitive research on the brain benefits of bilingualism, they attributed advantages to being in a DLBE program that went beyond merely language learning. As a similar research study points out, “parents connect bilingualism itself with good educational opportunities and experiences” (Whiting & Feinauer, 2011, p. 643). Thus, the bilingualism gained from participation in a DLBE program opens up special opportunities, for instance the opportunity to connect to one’s community, as will be seen in the subsequent sections.

4.1.2. Community and Family

Ulpindo (2008), citing three studies on school choice, describes how information provided by families, friends, and acquaintances within their communities influences parents’ decision-making about schools (75). In this study, 76% of the families indicated that this was the case: a neighbor or friend recommending the DLBE program made them far more likely to consider and select it. In this study, families also saw their school’s DLBE program as an opportunity to stay local and connect to their communities. Their idea of community connection was twofold: both the connection of schooling their children in a local context as well as learning a local language spoken by many of their
neighbors. Overall, community exercised considerable influence over why the NLES families in this study selected a DLBE program for their children.

4.1.2.a. Community members and DLBE program involvement

As previously mentioned, the parents in this study often described being interested in or joining a DLBE program based on the recommendation and choices of neighbors and friends. This may be described as the influence of community. While neighborhood community members exercised considerable influence over the choices of these families, community influenced the families in this study in other ways as well, depending on characteristics such as when their children joined the program or their cultural heritage. Families whose children had been in the program the longest ("Sustainers," whose children are in grades 3 and up) were more likely to describe the influence of school community members on their choices. Linguistically or ethnically blended families, on the other hand, generally cited the influence of their extended family communities. As a general rule, however, community influence was powerful, and worked in two ways: parents making choices similar to or based on the recommendation of another in their local community (school or neighborhood); or parents making school choices to better fit into their broader communities (neighborhood or family/ethno-linguistic).

The influence of the school community

As stated, the influence of community worked differently for families who joined DLBE programs longer ago than for those who joined more recently. The most salient community influence on "sustainers" was the recommendation of a school community member (such as a parent coordinator, principal, or teacher). In fact, 70% of sustainers
describe some sort of conversation with a member of the school community about their local school’s DLBE program. Many of these parents actually learned about bilingual education from these individuals. One mother confessed, “I don’t think I even heard the term ‘dual language’ until I enrolled my kid in it” (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014). Another mother stated: “I didn’t know anything about [DLBE] and had never heard of it before. But when it was first presented to me I thought it was a great idea…” (Pamela, School 2, Oct. 28, 2014). These parents learned what they know about bilingual education from the school community members they spoke to. Bonnie was approached by the parent coordinator at school 3 and encouraged to join the program, while Pamela was encouraged by her child’s preschool teacher, a former teacher at School 2. Like these two mothers, sustaining parents found out about DLBE programs from school community members and perceived them as interesting and unique opportunities, but didn’t necessarily seek them out. And when they did seek them out, because there was little precedent among their social and neighborhood peers for DLBE program participation, they had to rely on school officials for most of their information about the programs. Cathy’s statement contextualizes the population of DLBE programs around the time when she signed her child up: “Until then, there was no – English-dominant monolingual families were not clamoring for these slots” (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). This perspective illustrates an essential difference between the experiences of “sustaining” and “recent joiner” families. It also facilitates an understanding of why NLES families joining at a certain time may have been recruited by schools.

In NYC as elsewhere, DLBE programs attempt a balance of half of the students in each class identified as “native speakers of other languages” or “English language
learners” (“ELLs”) and half identified as “native English speakers” or “English proficient” (“EP”) (NYCDOE, 2013, p. 23). Many of the sustaining parents describe how, at the time they opted into the programs, the children in the DLBE classes were majority Latino, many identified by the school system as “ELL.” Hence, the sustaining families received priority for enrollment in DLBE programs at their local schools to fill out the numbers of “EP” students. As Carolyn describes:

They did not seem to have any interest at all on whether or not [my child] had been exposed to any Spanish. If anything, I think, at that time, and this may have changed, I had heard that the principal was very interested in getting more kids from English-speaking families into that school. Because, I think, maybe there was a lower count of kids from English-speaking families than Spanish-speaking families…That was just a rumor at the time, that it could work to your advantage to come from an English-speaking family because there were just not enough English-speaking kids in the class to make it truly dual language, I guess.

(Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014)

Carolyn says her child easily got into School 3’s DLBE program four years ago, before it became as popular among NLES families in the neighborhood. Two other parents even describe getting into neighborhood schools out of zone via the DLBE program because school officials were looking for “English dominant [students] who would like to join the dual language program” so allowed in NLES children from out of zone (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014; see also Pamela, School 2, October 28, 2014). This was because at the time, this and the other DLBE programs described in this study had low participation of NLES families. Diane described this in her interview, claiming that at
the time she enrolled her first child in the DLBE program at School 3 (in 2004), there was only one other NLES student in her child’s class. She described finding out about the program from the principal, and when I directly asked her whether she had been recruited, Diane stated, simply, “yes” (Diane, School 3, March 11, 2014). NLES parents who joined during this period tended to find out about the programs from members of the school community, and in some cases were encouraged to join. The families believe they were recruited because their children are English-dominant, whereas at the time the children in the DLBE class were mainly identified as “ELL” and schools were eager to create a class balanced in terms of ELL and non-ELL students (see also section 4.1.3.b). Apart from encouraging NLES parents to join DLBE programs, school officials also supported their choices in a very important way. In Cathy’s case, because her choice was so non-traditional among her friends, she recalls feeling, “like I was in a covered wagon going out west a little bit, you know? Like, ‘does this really work?’” (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). School officials not only encouraged Cathy to join the program but also reassured her DLBE could “work” for children like hers. Thus, for sustaining parents, the support and encouragement of the school community was crucial because they didn’t necessarily have it among their peers or family members.

The influence of neighbors and friends

For parents who enrolled their children in any of the DLBE programs more recently, the influence of community outside of the school was more relevant. That is, they were more likely to find out about the program from other parents in the community. Most parents in the study, as discussed previously, said the recommendation
by neighbors or friends was a reason for their choice (76%). Among families in the “recent joiner” category, every single one (100%) mentioned this influence. Some families describe what I term the ‘powerful playground connection’ – discussing the program with other families in informal settings such as preschool drop off or pick up, at the neighborhood playground, or in their apartment building hallways or courtyard. Virginia said, “I was at the park and I overheard some parents talking about it and I was just like, ‘Whoa, what’s that?’” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). Emily describes finding out about the program through “talking to other parents” at her child’s preschool (Emily, School 1, April 7, 2014); Heather describes finding out from neighbors in her building (Heather, School 1, June 5, 2014); and Tanya says she spoke to people about it at a local coffee shop (Tanya, School 1, August 13, 2014). But more importantly, the NLES parents whose children joined DLBE programs more recently describe a community of others who had made similar choices upon whose recommendation they relied. Having this community of “like-minded” parents (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014) is crucial to these parents’ decision-making process, because this recommendation normalizes the choice of DLBE. The following example illustrates how this can happen: Cathy – the parent we heard from earlier saying she felt like she was making a nontraditional choice – describes how she influenced her neighborhood peers to change their minds about the DLBE program at School 3. They would discuss the program and other parents would say, “Wow! Someone who doesn’t speak Spanish committed to this program and her daughter is doing well. She reads in English. Her English curriculum, if you will, is not sacrificed” (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). Terri corroborates how influential Cathy’s positive recommendation of the
program was to other parents in the neighborhood: “Gosh, I probably should have done more research, but a friend of mine has two daughters, and…they were both in the dual language program…and she sort of raved about it and really liked it” (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014). The friend she referred to in this statement was Cathy. In fact, 6 families total (all but 1 of the “recent joiners” at School 3) mentioned speaking to Cathy about the DLBE program and being encouraged by her recommendation. This example clearly illustrates how the parents in this study spoke to each other about educational choices and relied on each other’s recommendations. Doherty’s (2008) study of parental motivation for DLBE program participation found, as I did here, that parents were more likely to “form their perceptions from their own background knowledge and experience, or from their friends’ impressions, rather than from the research base of dual language methodology” (244). While section 4.1.1.c. addressed how the parents in the current research did inform themselves to some degree about the cognitive advantages of bilingual education, the majority base their understandings of the practical aspects of bilingual programs on what their friends said or what they found through experience of having their children in the programs. Appreciating this shows how critical “pioneers,” to return to Cathy’s earlier metaphor, can be in inspiring others in their peer group to select DLBE programs. In fact, parent networking actually shifted the demographics of the DLBE program at School 3 (see also 4.1.3.b). One parent said that when his child joined the DLBE class, he was one of three NLES children. Now, there is a long waitlist for the program at School 3; this year (2015), for instance, 86 families applied for the 12 seats opened up to “English speakers” (Principal of School 3, personal communication, April 27, 2015). Vincent feels the NLES parents who joined the program before it was
popular have much to do with this uptick in interest in the program: “Maybe it’s because more people know about it or, I guess, they’ve seen some people do it and they feel reassured – it’s ok for their kids to take the program. Not that we were the first, but, you know, very vocal about it” (Vincent, School 3, August 27, 2014). When he describes, “being very vocal about it,” Vincent means speaking in support of the DLBE program in the neighborhood. In a way, families like Cathy’s and Vincent’s assumed the role for recent joiners that previously had been taken by school officials for sustainers: they recruited for participants in the DLBE program. We must note, however, that those they recruited were others like them: non-Latino, English fluent, and generally middle class and college educated. That the parents in this study are recruited by and recruit others NLESs is not strange; in fact, research finds this typical among middle class families placing their children in local public schools not traditionally used by other, similarly advantaged families. Cucchiara & Horovat (2009) found, for instance, that middle class families “focused heavily on the task of attracting more families ‘like them’ to the school,” reaching out to parents in the neighborhood, at local playgrounds, and at special events for neighborhood families, and were very concerned with how prospective parents viewed the school (988). Middle class parents see their participation in public schools as beneficial given how it attracts more resources to the school (see for example McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999; Posey-Maddox, 2014). In the context of this study, NLES parents felt their participation in DLBE programs benefits schools because they “make it a more authentic dual language program” (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012). Thus, not only are NLES parents influenced by the schooling choices of their neighborhood peers, they feel positive about their choices through the support of other NLESs.
Peers in the classes

Perhaps because it adds credibility to others’ recommendations, the actual presence of other NLES children in DLBE classes provided an important ‘selling point’ for NLES families considering the programs. Some of the families describe getting together in cohorts and making the decision to join a DLBE program in kindergarten with a group of interested families (see Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012; and Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). Others described joining because the parents of their child’s friends had decided to place their children in the class, as in the following example:

Honestly, what was also important to me was her friends…I knew her friends were in that class and I was afraid she’d get in another class and be the only Anglo kid in the class and just be…I was nervous about kindergarten and what the kids in her class would be like. Would they all look like her? I knew that two of her good friends [were in the DLBE program at School 3]…It’s not that they’re white, but their parents speak English and are college educated and are friends with my daughter. It just gave me a certain comfort to know my daughter would be in the class with them. That was factor. (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014)

This example shows the function of having friends in the DLBE program: it ensures not only that children will have playmates but that they will be with like peers. This factor is more salient even than friendship. As one father told me, “if you were the only English-only kid, the only non-Latino kid in the program...I think there would be a sense of, ‘is this for me?’ In other words, ‘am I even invited to this?’” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). In the neighborhoods of this study, students at local schools are majority minority (mainly Latino) and majority low income (see section 3.2.2 for school
demographics). The NLES parents in this study were conscious of this when making their choices. I discussed this with a mother I know in the neighborhood after she toured School 2. She noticed that the school, which is 86% Hispanic and 38% “ELL,” offered many programs such as TBE and ESL that target EBL students. She told me after this visit that she was considering the DLBE program because “I don’t want [my child] in an ESL program – that’s not for kids like her” (Amanda, informal communication, January 22, 2015). In her perception, a DLBE class would contain the highest percentage of children, like hers, who spoke English proficiently. Families like Amanda’s and Roxy’s see DLBE programs as spaces within a larger school context where their children will encounter the greatest number of similar peers. Because DLBE programs are ‘opt in,’ Scanlan and Palmer (2009) describe this type of “internal segregation” as frequent in DLBE programs: gentrifying families use them to access local public schools but still separate their children from minority and underprivileged children (12). Yet while this may be the case, for the families in the current research, diversity was also important, and participation in a DLBE program was seen by many as an opportunity for their children to connect into a more diverse community (multicultural, multiethnic, socioeconomically diverse), as described in the subsequent section.

Community diversity

The parents in this study often described how DLBE program participation allowed their children to experience diversity. One parent, for instance, spoke about “enjoying” the fact that the NLES families in the class are “not just other Americans,” that they are diverse and multicultural (Sharon, School 1, June 9, 2014). Parents also value the diversity of the Latino EBL students in the class: “It’s a very diverse group; it’s
amazing. I mean, diverse within the Hispanic community…the Latinos are a diverse group, they’re not all from one area…you go to other places and everybody is from Puebla, but not necessarily here” (Heidi, School 3, September 24, 2014). Many of the parents (48%) stated that DLBE program participation was a way to expose their children to children of different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. One mother discusses here why this is important to her:

[S]he’s gotten to know people in a way that she might not have in another class…if she were in school and she were just gravitating towards the people that she knows, our experience would be very different. You know, most of our friends in the neighborhood are very much like us, but [in the DLBE program] we have friends – I don’t know how to explain it – but…it’s exposing her to different ways of life. (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012)

For families like Meredith’s, where both parents are white, middle class, and monolingual in English, the diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds of their child’s classmates contrasted with their home culture thus providing multiple learning opportunities. For families where parents speak different languages, are from different races or cultures, or come from different countries outside of the US, the diversity of DLBE classes provided learning opportunities, but also allowed them to establish kinship with similar families. One example comes from a family where the mother is Asian and the father is Latino; both are foreign born. The mother shared with me how happy she was to see many families like theirs in the DLBE program: “A lot of the kids that are in [class with my children], they are mixed couples. They’re Hispanic and White, or they’re Hispanic and Asian…” (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014). It was important to her that her
children had classmates with similar family backgrounds. For some parents, this ensures their mixed ethnicity children would not feel othered: “Diversity is really important to me…[my child’s] skin color is different too from most kids in the area…so that was always in the back of my mind” (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). In this research, 41% of respondents are either non-White or in mixed relationships, and 48% are foreign born or have a foreign born spouse, so this way of valuing diversity is perhaps more salient here than in other, similar studies. Palmer (2008) describes the typical population of DLBE programs nationwide: “[m]any two-way immersion bilingual programs are relatively divided in their populations. With half their students coming from a Latino immigrant, and largely working-class, background and the other half middle-class English-speaking and mainly White students, these programs work to bridge the race, class, and language differences between their two populations” (179). While the parents in the current research did see DLBE program participation in the way Palmer suggests, as a means of integration, they saw it less as an opportunity to “bridge gaps” than as to create an in-school milieu that better reflected the overall diversity of their neighborhoods (also see subsequent paragraph). Perhaps because of the super diversity of Owl Hill and Partridge Lane, the children in DLBE programs described in this study are not simply from one culture or the next (see also sections 3.2.1, 3.5). As Heidi pointed out, the families of Latino EBLs come from many different countries. Many NLES families also hail from other lands as well as speak other languages than English or Spanish. There were many mixed families in these programs as well. For children of mixed backgrounds, the DLBE programs at their schools represented safe spaces where they
would encounter similar peers, while monocultural children benefited from the exposure to diverse peers. Diversity was very important, and very present in these classes.

As addressed above, neighborhood diversity provided inspiration to the NLES families when selecting DLBE programs. Owl Hill and Partridge Lane are two of the most diverse neighborhoods in the US, as previously mentioned, and parents feel that developing cross-cultural friendships and learning about the home cultures of their classmates will ease their children’s neighborhood interactions: “…we live in the most culturally mixed section of Queens…and it’s huge to learn that everybody’s different and everyone’s the same, and everyone’s important” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Learning Spanish in this context was seen as an additional marker of how these families appreciate diversity: many considered that knowing Spanish would be an additional inroad to neighborhood integration. Beth puts it like this: “You know, I think it's important for us to be able to be part of the neighborhood in as many ways as possible and this seems like one way. One can actually have relationships with one's neighbors, with a wider swath of one's neighbors” (Beth, School 3, November 6, 2014). Parents often described how Spanish facilitates their children’s interactions with Spanish-speaking neighbors or with their Latino classmates. They also shared hopes that their children’s participation in a DLBE program would allow them to get to know their Latino neighbors better. This did not always happen (see also section 4.2.1.b). “I had hoped it would offer an opportunity to mix with parents, Spanish-speaking parents, a little more and sort of be able to socialize with more people who are part of the school. And that obviously proved a little more difficult than I ever imagined with my rose colored glasses before I got into all of this” (Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014). When Carolyn uses the
term “rose colored glasses” she means she had difficulty developing friendships with Latino Spanish-speaking (“LSS”) parents, something she had not expected. Eleven other parents in the study also mentioned difficulty communicating with or relating to LSS parents (12 total, 6 of whom opted out). The most likely reason for this is the language barrier: nearly half of the parents in the study said they struggle with Spanish. As Pamela mentioned, “I think that a majority of my [child’s] class was Spanish-speaking...I may be the only parent that spoke English...It was a challenge to communicate, it was frustrating” (Pamela, School 2, October 28, 2014). Other studies posit that social class and/or race may inhibit friendships between the different families in DLBE classes (see for instance Scanlan & Palmer, 2009). In the current study, that particular reasoning did not seem salient; at least, it was not explicitly mentioned by most parents. Yet the fact remained that study respondents generally do not mention significant friendships with Latina mothers of their children’s EBL classmates. Their peer group is typically made up of other NLES mothers, or they have no community of other mothers they relate to at school (as in the case of Pamela and a few other “sustainers”). As Bridget shared: “the likes of us would just naturally end up talking at pick up time or that, and the Spanish ones will end up grouped together. So there definitely is [a difference], but not in a bad way, just in a kind of natural way” (Bridget, School 1, April 11, 2012). Freeman, et al. (2005) propose that such separation between parents may be typical, for while DLBE programs do help build cross-cultural school communities and cross-cultural friendships among students and parents, children are often quicker to develop such understandings than are their parents. In the case of the current study, many NLES parents acknowledged a difference. Nevertheless, one inspiration for their child’s participation in
a DLBE program was the hope their child could learn Spanish and thus integrate more easily into the community than they had been able to (and perhaps help them to better integrate as well). Another element was the awareness that their children would not only need to integrate into a diverse neighborhood but also, eventually, succeed in an economy composed of diverse and multilingual peers (see also section 4.1.4.a). Cucchiara (2009) points out that while middle class families who send their children to public schools are committed to educating them in a racially and socioeconomically diverse environment, “[t]his emphasis appears to have been rooted both in a basic respect for and appreciation of difference and in parents’ interest in preparing their children for success in a diverse world” (989). That is, learning to be part of a multicultural community as a young person would eventually provide a middle class child with social and cultural capital; in the context of this study language forms part of that ‘capital.’

In summary, NLES parents were very attracted to DLBE programs if someone from the local community recommended the program to them. School community members most often recommended the programs to sustaining families, while for more recent joiners the recommendation came from other NLES families. Parents spoke of the importance of the class community, both about building community with diverse neighbors and finding similar peers in the classes. Finally, parents also hoped to use DLBE programs as opportunities to involve themselves more deeply in their broader neighborhood community.

4.1.2.b. Learning the neighborhood language

Owl Hill and Partridge Lane are neighborhoods with large Latino communities, both long-term residents and recently-arrived immigrants. Owl Hill residents are 65%
Latino, while Partridge Lane residents are 35% Latino. In both neighborhoods, the foreign-born population averages around 60% (see citations and exact statistics in section 3.2). The “linguistic landscapes” of both neighborhoods support the idea that these are communities where many Spanish-speakers reside: signs in commercial and public spaces are visible markers of the linguistic preferences of neighborhood inhabitants (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The prominence of such signage, the heard language on the streets, and neighborhood statistics available online as well as on school websites, alert residents of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds that Spanish is an important language in the neighborhood. Perhaps for this reason, 62% of parents in this study cited Spanish as a useful language in their communities. The utility of Spanish in other regards has previously been addressed in terms of parents’ perception of its economic value as an important global language as well as its enrichment value given the brain benefits of bilingualism (see section 2.2.3). The section in continuation will describe parents’ perception that Spanish can also be useful in their local communities.

Spanish as the neighborhood language

The linguistic landscape of the Owl Hill and Partridge Lane neighborhoods, and the prevalence of Spanish there, came up directly in the parents’ interviews. Diane describes Owl Hill as

a society saturated with different cultures and where you’re actually the minority at one point, because you speak mono-language and you have all these other...you’re seeing signs, stores are in different languages. You have to read some of them. Some of them you communicate with mixed words, some their language, some your language. (Diane, School 3, March 11, 2014)
As she points out, Spanish is very visible in the neighborhood and residents who don’t speak it often have to find ways (“some their language, some your language”) both to understand the signs and access the commercial or public spaces. Parents wanted their children to learn Spanish for the basic, utilitarian reason of being better able to understand all linguistic interactions in the neighborhood. As Joy put it, “being in the community we’re in…I just wanted [my child] to be able to communicate” (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). Many parents saw Spanish and English bilingualism as necessary within their communities, finding themselves at somewhat of a disadvantage if they did not speak Spanish.

In addition to easing communication within the community, parents saw the opportunity for the community to support their child’s Spanish learning. Carolyn’s statement sums this idea up. She told me,

We live in this neighborhood that seems to be predominantly [Latin American]. So we felt like there is this rich opportunity for the kids to learn the language as they go. I don’t think they know what a shoe cobbler is but they know what a zapatero is because they see signs everywhere in the street.

(Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014)

Her statement shows the reciprocal utility of Spanish in the particular neighborhood setting: not only is Spanish useful to the child for neighborhood interactions, neighbors are useful in helping extend the child’s Spanish learning outside of the classroom. Many of the NLES parents describe their children going into local businesses in the community and having conversations with Spanish-speaking employees, understanding overheard language on the street, or conversing with Spanish-speaking children at the
playground. One example comes from Sharon’s interview. She told me, “Well, also even with other Spanish people, like even going into the store and if I mention, ‘Oh, my son’s learning Spanish,’ the people from South America themselves seem delighted and they start speaking to him in Spanish. So that's really nice as well” (Sharon, School 1, June 9, 2014). Such encounters stand out in the parents’ minds as important examples of how much the children’s Spanish is supported by the community. Indeed, community support may have an effect on language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) describe how language learners who have integrative motivation, that is, the desire to get to know others who speak the language they are learning, are typically more successful than those with different factors motivating their learning. Community support can provide more formal ways to assist language learning as well. The parents in this research frequently described hiring bilingual or primarily Spanish-speaking babysitters, nannies, or homework tutors. A few mothers enrolled their children in weekend embassy schools or paid for formal afterschool classes run by a local Spanish teaching organization. These were important ways parents leveraged the linguistic resources of the community for their children’s benefit. Adrienne, for instance, hired primarily Spanish-speaking babysitters for her children from the time they were babies and says, “to have someone who speaks with them most of the time when I am not around, in Spanish, that helps them be more at ease with the language” (Adrienne, School 2, May 1, 2014). Along with the formal help caregivers provide children with learning Spanish, they also form relationships with them, providing additional instrumental motivation for learning the language.

The NLES parents in this study described Spanish as an important language in their neighborhoods. They saw learning Spanish through DLBE program participation as
a way to better fit into the neighborhood linguistic reality, and they also saw the ways the neighborhood provided opportunities for their children to practice Spanish. Many of them also see Spanish as an important family language, as examined in the next section.

*Spanish as a family language*

Just as having Spanish-speaking neighbors opened up opportunities to practice and learn Spanish outside of school, so did having Spanish-speaking family members. Every participant with a family connection to Spanish mentioned this as a factor in choosing a DLBE program and choosing to have their children learn Spanish. Some participants shared how close relatives (brothers or uncles) had married someone Spanish-speaking. The families came into contact with varying levels of frequency with these individuals, generally when travelling. Linda, for instance, has a brother living in Spain with his Spanish spouse and their children who primarily speak Spanish. In the summer when Linda and her family visit, her children’s ability to speak Spanish allows them to better interact with their cousins (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). In cases like Linda’s, Spanish was an extended family language, so opportunities to use Spanish with these family members are not frequent. What these type of family connections seemed to do was to raise participants’ awareness about Spanish and give them the idea that it would be a useful language to learn. Study participants with more immediate Spanish-speaking family members had a different level of motivation for their children to learn Spanish, and different ways in which the language could be supported. Eight respondents, or nearly a quarter of those interviewed, have a Latino spouse. When choosing a DLBE program, families thus identified stated that they wanted their children to learn Spanish and connect to their heritage. For some, the
heritage connection is very important. Adrienne, for instance, discusses this in regard to why she applied to a DLBE program: “In a way, it comes from my husband. He has some Hispanic blood in him, so it is good for the kids to know where they come from” (Adrienne, School 2, May 1, 2014). For Adrienne, Spanish-speaking reinforces her children’s cultural identity. This was important to Amy as well, but she also felt her children needed Spanish simply to be able to communicate with their family. She described how her husband’s family (siblings, mother) does not speak very much English; without learning Spanish, her children risk disconnecting from an entire branch of their family. She also felt this family connection legitimized her children’s need to participate in a DLBE program, more so than other families who might not have this heritage: “In selfish terms I think it’s because it’s their culture…I think my kids should have the opportunity to go to a dual language class because they have another parent that is Hispanic. It’s another way of giving them that knowledge, that power” (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014). The idea Amy brings up of the power associated with bilingualism is addressed in Valdés’s (1997) research: she argues that Spanish is an important resource that connects Latinos to their heritage, therefore it may be more critical for Latinos than for non-Latinos to have access to quality DLBE programs (4). Research also abounds on the importance to Latino parents of bilingual education for heritage and language preservation, as a way to maintain traditional cultural values through multiple generations (see for instance Suárez-Orozco, et. al, 2008; also see Chapter 2, section 2.5.b). Parents in this study with Latino-identifying children (like Amy) acknowledge that bilingualism in Spanish affirms their child’s identity. Bonnie addressed this when she said that because her children look Latino, “speaking a little bit of Spanish helps them fit in” with
their LSS neighbors (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014). Participants who saw Spanish as a family language viewed participation in a DLBE program through a slightly different lens than the families without a family connection. Summarizing the findings of numerous research studies, Shannon and Milian (2002) describe how,

Hispanic parents, regardless of language dominance, primarily identified with integrative motivation because of their desire to have their children acquire or maintain their heritage language. The English-speaking Hispanic parents chose the dual language programs for their children so that they could integrate into a culture that had been inaccessible, at least linguistically, to them. (684)

As these researchers point out, mothers who don’t speak Spanish but are part of a Latino community through their spouse may urge their children to learn Spanish in order to access extended family in a way they (the mothers) cannot. In fact, the non-Latina mothers with Latino spouses were often the most staunch supporters of learning Spanish through a DLBE program, partly for preservation of heritage but also because they did not take for granted their children would simply learn it from childhood (as their husband had) without extended exposure to the language. I also found that parents used the heritage or family connection to establish a type of legitimacy. Amy, as we saw, felt her children had a more immediate need to learn Spanish than others because their father is a LSS, hence more of a right to attend a DLBE program. Linda says that such claims have created a hierarchy of legitimacy at her children’s school, where some families’ program participation is questioned: “So there was kind of resentment, some people who had no Spanish language background, no heritage connection, were sending their kids. You know, some people were saying, ‘why are they sending their kids there? They don’t even
speak Spanish” (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). At this school in particular, competition to get into the DLBE program is fierce because interest is high and spots in the program are limited (see section 4.1.3.b). Parents may feel the need to assert their need for Spanish to get a leg up on the competition. Whatever the case may be, family connection to Spanish for those who had it was a powerful motivating factor for DLBE program participation.

*Supporting Spanish at home*

One final theme often addressed by participants was the opportunity to support Spanish at home. This is another theme unique to this study population, where 17 of the participants, or 59%, describe having some connection to Spanish:

- Eight have a Latino or Spanish-speaking spouse;
- Four have a Latino or Spanish-speaking relative; and
- Fourteen speak Spanish as a learned language: nine speak “some” or “a little,” and five speak it “fluently” or “conversationally.”

In prior research I am aware of, most non-Latino parents with children in DLBE programs generally did not speak Spanish. In this study, however, many participants did speak Spanish and cited this as an influence on their choice of a DLBE program. They mainly believed they could use their Spanish knowledge to support their children’s Spanish learning at home (52% of participants stated this). And, in fact, connection to Spanish did help families stay committed and support their child’s learning. Amy, for instance, shared how having a LSS spouse and relatives allowed her to maintain her children’s Spanish even when the school deemphasized Spanish instruction during testing preparation time:
I was a little upset about this year…[my child] is in third grade and they had that ELA test thing. So literally for, like, four or five months they really didn’t do that much Spanish…The one thing I have to say I think I’m one of the lucky ones is the fact that I have an in-law who does speak only Spanish. When it comes to that, [my husband] and I try to do extra homework in Spanish, or math problems, or any kind of stuff in Spanish so that the kids could still remember it. (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014)

Another mother, who had studied Spanish in Latin America in college and used it occasionally in her job, said, “I definitely felt like at least in the early grades with homework I could help her” (Kimberly, School 1, May 25, 2014). Connection to Spanish both inspired many parents to choose DLBE programs as well as allowed them to support their children throughout their academic trajectory.

Parents also described, however, how this connection was often not enough: supporting Spanish at home was more challenging than they had initially believed. As one mother described, “I mean, I had basic knowledge in Spanish, so I thought that I could help with my child’s homework. And, you know, I guess maybe naiveté, I was like, ‘it’s kindergarten, for goodness sake, how hard can it be?’ [But] I would definitely say it’s not easy” (Tanya, School 1, August 13, 2014). Even families with LSS husbands or relatives had difficulty supporting the language at home:

[My husband] will help them with homework occasionally, but he’s usually not around to help them with homework. My mother-in-law lives nearby so she does try and speak Spanish with the girls and she will help them with their homework
sometimes, but I would say she speaks more English than Spanish. (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014)

These examples illustrate how parents often thought they could support Spanish at home but actually doing so was not easy. In Robin’s case, it was she (the mother) who more often helped with homework because of work schedules, and this was the case in many families. Others wanted to use Spanish at home, but faced resistance from their children when they tried to speak Spanish instead of English (Heidi, School 3, September 24, 2014). Societal pressure to learn English is strong (Potowski, 2004), and even the families in this study who are committed to raising bilingual children recognize that English is privileged in the US. Thus, even parents who thought their Spanish language skills would help them support their children’s Spanish learning at home realized the need to seek outside support, and – as previously described – they discuss mobilizing a neighborhood network of sitters, friends, and afterschool caregivers to help with Spanish. Parents also shared that they use games, flash cards, videos, television, bilingual books, and outside of school language classes or camps to support Spanish learning at home. As Cathy noticed,

I think for a monolingual English family, for it to work, you do have to have parents that are uniquely focused on it. I don’t think you can just send your kid off and hope they’ll learn it...You cannot be a monolingual English family and not try to do extra things to reinforce it and expect that your kids are going to do really well with the Spanish. (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014)

While a connection to Spanish was helpful in supporting NLES children in a DLBE program, and clearly inspired parents’ choices of such programs, it had less influence on
students’ success than the effort put forth by parents to support their children. A
connection to Spanish, therefore, raised commitment to DLBE programs and enabled
some families to support their children develop Spanish at home. Families without the
connection did well if they supported their children’s developing Spanish in other ways.
Notwithstanding, even families with a Spanish connection had to seek multiple outside
resources and individuals to reinforce Spanish learning.

In summary, the NLES parents in this study wanted their children to participate in
a DLBE program to learn Spanish, an important neighborhood language. The idea that
Spanish is a useful language was extended to the neighborhood in terms of both
interacting with and learning from neighbors. Many of the families had some connection
to Spanish at home, and sought to leverage this connection to support their children’s
language learning. Most described, however, the difficulty of supporting Spanish just
through the family connection and how they needed a wider network of neighbors and
friends as well as other supports (neighbors and friends as well as literacy or media
materials) to actually reinforce Spanish in the home.

4.1.2.c. Staying local

The previous section addressed how parents view Spanish as a way to connect
into their neighborhoods. They also saw staying in local schools as a way of connecting
into their neighborhoods. Convenience was a related factor they considered, both the
convenience of being local and the convenience of having a DLBE program in a local
school. Revisiting Mandy’s earlier statement, opting to stay local was a “conscious
choice” for the families in this study (see section 4). The parents in this study have
myriad opportunities to send their children elsewhere, and are educated about other
options. Their choice to send their children to neighborhood schools is personal but also
connected to broader socio-political reasons and trends, as will be elucidated in the following paragraphs.

Choosing local

Many parents in this study describe wanting to stay local (72% of currently enrolled families say it is important to send their children to a neighborhood school). The NLES families in this study are all members of the middle class; as such, their urge to “stay local” can be contextualized within a broader national trend. Cuchiara and Horovat (2009) describe how, “for several decades, urban public schools in the United States have been associated with low-income populations and chronic poor performance,” dissuading middle-class families from using them (975). Yet recently the obverse has occurred, based on the migration of middle-class families back into urban areas as well as the increased willingness of middle-class families to use once stigmatized urban schools (Billingham & Kimelberg, 2013, p. 89). In the current study, the families’ descriptions clarify their choice to engage back into their neighborhoods through their schooling selection, part of this broader national trend. One mother’s story stands out as particularly illustrative of a family’s process of selecting public and opting to stay local. Prior to having children, Cathy and her husband had “assumed private” because they felt public schools had a bad reputation in their neighborhood and citywide (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). However, once they had children and the children reached school age she thought,

at least when they were young, I was going to really have to make a case for why they should travel…it was like, if the schools are good here, why are we
traveling? We should be local. We live in this neighborhood, let’s be local as long as we find some good options. (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014)

It is worth noting that Cathy was somewhat surprised to find good local options, and also that she privileges “good” over “local” in her school choices. Most families mentioned something similar. In fact, specifically DLBE programs had particular appeal to NLES families for their reputation as quality environments within local school (see also section 4.1.3). Notwithstanding, the overall school environment had to be appealing for families to stay local. Emily stresses this when she says she felt comfortable putting her child into the local school because of its “solid reputation,” which was more important than DLBE: “I wouldn’t put her in a school that offered a program but there were a lot of issues that weren’t worth sacrificing or feeling risk” (Emily, School 1, April 7, 2014). The NLES parents in this study needed to perceive the local options as good in order to consider them over sending them outside the neighborhood to more selective options such as gifted and talented (G&T), private, or charter schools. That is, they opted into a DLBE program in a neighborhood school to stay local, but only if doing so would advantage their children.

The case for convenience

Returning to Cathy’s statement that she would have to make a “good case for traveling” out of the neighborhood ties into another argument participants made for staying local, which was convenience. For many participants, outside of the neighborhood options would have to be significantly better than what was locally available to merit the inconvenience or expense of choosing them. Terri, for example, talked about how her child, “had a placement in [a G&T school outside of the
and we weren’t ready to commit to all that busing and everything,” so they felt “lucky” and “excited” to get into the DLBE program at their local school (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014). A local school was described as convenient in other ways as well: walking children to school in the morning, spending more time with children, meeting friends and neighbors on the walk or while waiting outside the school at drop off/pick up time, and more. The convenience factor is not insignificant; a majority of respondents in Parkes’s (2008) study indicated they chose a DLBE program because it was in a neighborhood school (641). Convenience may also have increased weight in the context of the study. In NYC, parents do not typically drive their children to school, so traveling for school options outside of the neighborhood means taking a public or private bus or riding the subway. This can also entail expense: parents must pay for the bus or subway service if (a) the school is outside their neighborhood zone, or (b) the school is not public. It also is an additional time commitment. Meredith’s child, for instance, was offered a seat at the city’s most prestigious G&T school, but the family opted not to send her because to do so would have entailed one hour of travel each way, each day (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012; see also section 4.1.2.c). As these examples show, staying local was to some extent a lifestyle choice, a way to diminish the inconvenience and stress occasioned by long travel days or the expense of transportation, as well as a way of increasing convivial interactions between children and their peers.

Parents also made a convenience argument for choosing the DLBE program itself. That is, they saw the DLBE program as an interesting opportunity a local school offered; it was something additional they could opt into without having to make a concerted effort to seek it out (see also 4.1.3.c). Amy says many of the families in her
child’s DLBE class think, “If the school is offering it, why not?” (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014). This idea also came up in Roxy’s interview: “I think I would have had to do more research if I was bussing her to that program…There didn’t have to be that much consideration into it because it at was the school that we were zoned for” (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). Parents like Roxy may not have specifically sought a bilingual learning environment but were willing to try out a DLBE program because it existed locally, came recommended by friends, and had a good reputation. The parents’ reasoning in this case aligns with what Billingham and Kimelberg (2013) describe as the “see how it goes” attitude – parents who otherwise may have opted for private or other exclusive options chose public schools because the risk seemed minimal and the school was right there in the community (95). In the case of the current research, parents were willing to try DLBE programs because they were convenient and the “risk” seemed minimal. The convenience of both the location of the school and the fact a local school offered a program parents were interested in raised parents’ likelihood of opting into a DLBE program. But convenience and location were not the only reason the parents in this study chose local schools.

*Neighborhood integration*

There was a strong contingent of participants in this research who felt staying local was an important expression of their social and political values. Heidi, for instance, stated, “[w]e believe in public schools” (Heidi, School 3, September 24, 2014), while Kristen said, “I'm a big public school advocate and I love neighborhood schools; I think it creates a whole sense of community” (Kristen, School 1, June 11, 2014). These parents saw their choice to stay local as directly supporting public education, teachers unions,
and community schools. Most importantly, staying local allowed families to feel more integrated into the neighborhood. Hankins (2007) argues that, “gentrifiers in the 2000s are buying not just property in the city, but the idea of an urban community…they want to feel rooted in place and vested not just in the material space of the neighborhood but in the social connections of their neighbors” (126; see also Posey, 2009). Greyson describes how choosing a local school is, “fantastic, you know, it’s like another opportunity to embed yourself in the neighborhood itself rather than isolating yourself” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Within this framework, learning Spanish became an additional, in many ways political, expression of these families’ commitment to neighborhood integration. Spanish for Carolyn’s child, for example, was “education in something that makes him hitched to the neighborhood” (Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014; see also section 4.1.2.b). And the intentional selection of a school and an educational model seen to support neighborhood integration may indeed have the desired effect. Specifically for white, English-monolingual children, bilingual education has been positively associated with their tendency to perceive culturally different children as similar to themselves, and seek these children out for friendships (Lambert & Cazabon, 1994; cited in Wright & Tropp, 2005). While diverse classrooms do have a positive effect on children’s attitudes, “language of instruction has an additional positive impact on children’s orientations toward members of an ethnolinguistic outgroup” (Wright and Tropp, 2005; p. 322). Parents in this study who value being local and integrating in the neighborhood work to ensure the success of this endeavor, even when, “it’d be easier elsewhere, it’s be easier in all English” (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). Their choices and their effort, as research supports, are likely to have lasting effects on their
children’s feeling of being part of their local communities, and perhaps go a long way to fulfill the integrative promise of DLBE.

Parents view their choices of local schools as reflections of their personal and political beliefs, but they also factor in the convenience of staying local. They felt keeping their children in a local school and learning an important community language, “reinforced their neighborhood loyalty” (Bilingham & Kimelberg, 2013). Lastly, parents viewed participation in specifically a DLBE program as a way to connect to a broader local community (neighborhood integration) and as a local opportunity to participate in a special program (“why not?”).

4.1.3. Enrichment

The reputation of DLBE often precedes parents’ interest. Especially lately, popular online and print news journals extoll the educational potential of bilingualism and bilingual education, particularly the form described in this research (DLBE). One recent New York Times article even went so far as to state that, “bilinguals are smarter” (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Reports like this, as inflated as they might seem, are based on real education research, which does indicate that DLBE programs are effective at bolstering school success: “Two-way immersion education is a dynamic form of education that holds great promise for developing high levels of academic achievement” (Howard & Christian, 2002; p. 7). Families in the study were familiar with the “enrichment opportunity” of bilingual education (Palmer, 2008), and many sought out DLBE programs because they considered them advanced or special academic environments. Participants compared DLBE to gifted and talented programs – hence more academically challenging – and valued them because they were selective. Through the way school officials spoke about the program to parents and screened students for
participation, the perceived specialness (exclusivity) of the programs was also reinforced at the institutional level. The next sections will describe not only how families see DLBE programs as special but also how the programs themselves perpetuate this reputation.

4.1.3.a. “Something more”\(^{13}\)

As previously described, parents in this study saw cognitive benefits to bilingualism, hence considered bilingualism enriching (see section 4.1.1c). One of the primary ways parents cited DLBE programs as enriching was in comparison to Gifted and Talented (“G&T”)\(^{14}\) classes: they saw both types of classes as challenging environments within public schools, and in many ways considered DLBE classes as alternatives to G&T classes with the additional and unique benefit of cultural enrichment. Previous scholarship describes the significance of this impression, stating that parents who view traditional options as inadequate for their children may be attracted to DLBE programs as challenging and enriching options for their children (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2000). As Doherty (2008) found, this may be even more important for NLES parents: “The dual language program brought them into the public school by offering what they considered a more rigorous academic option” (111; see also de Jong, 2002). And this holds true in the current research. Viewing DLBE as enrichment, more than simply an opportunity to learn another language, was a powerful motivating factor for the NLES parents in this study.

\(^{13}\) A parent described the DLBE program as “something more” in her interview: “I think the monolingual teachers are fantastic at that school also…but I just wanted something a little more for [my child]” (Heidi, School 2, September 24, 2014).

\(^{14}\) Some parents also call these classes by the acronym “TAG,” or “Talented and Gifted.”
Alternative to Gifted and Talented Programs

When parents described DLBE programs as enriching, 66% of them compared DLBE programs to G&T programs. Recent reporting shows this thinking is ubiquitous citywide: “Some parents pick a dual language program...believing that it’s akin to a gifted and talented program and will simply give smart kids an extra challenge” (Zimmer, 2014). In the current research, the association was discussed in one of three ways: (1) parents specifically wanting a G&T type of learning environment for their children who had qualified for gifted programs; (2) children in DLBE classes performing at the level of G&T students; and (3) hearing others speak about the DLBE program as though it were a G&T class. For some, particularly those whose children passed G&T tests, the school choice they make is between a DLBE and a G&T program. Because this was such a frequent comparison, it is necessary to expand on how G&T programs work in NYC, the setting of this research study.

In NYC, G&T programs exist within school districts (District) and across the city (Citywide). G&T programs are open only to students with high scores on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test and the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test. To be eligible for District programs, children must score at or above the 90th percentile on these tests, while to be eligible for Citywide programs children must score at or above the 97th percentile (see NYC DOE, 2014a). Parents apply to local public schools in January and February and receive placement offers in April, but they apply to G&T programs in April and receive placement offers in May. Screening for G&T programs is done in February, whereas screening for DLBE programs is generally done in June. Thus, a considerable
amount of planning, negotiating, and waiting factors into school choices for NYC parents who choose a DLBE program over a G&T program for their children.

Nineteen of the families (65%) who participated in this study had their children tested for G&T programs, and only four of the children did not qualify. This demonstrates two important things: (1) a full half of the participants in this study could have chosen a gifted program but instead opted into a DLBE program; and (2) a majority of study participants considered or wanted a G&T program. In fact, some parents in this study indicated they chose a DLBE program believing it was, “like an equivalent to the TAG program” (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014). Castellano and Pinkos (2005) posit that the program structures of good DLBE and G&T programs should not make this comparison surprising – both models by nature should be additive, enriching, and academically stimulating. They also suggest that the same type of children who do well in gifted classes do well in DLBE classes:

[T]he characteristics of students participating in dual language and gifted education programs are very similar….Gifted students have an unusual capacity for processing information and have developed a more advanced ability to conceptualize solutions to problems. In a program where academic content is presented in a second language the application of these skills would serve them well. (121)

The analysis of these researchers offers an explanation for why parents whose children are considered gifted may seek out DLBE programs: they both feel G&T and DLBE programs are similar and that their children would have what it takes to be successful language immersion students. Schools also reinforce the connection between G&T and
DLBE classes with the way they both introduce the DLBE program to parents and position it within the school. Roxy, for example, opened up about how she, “had heard the principal say that this was like the gifted class. She had called it that. She had said it was like the gifted class at this school” (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). Because Roxy’s child could have gone into a G&T class, hearing the principal talk about the DLBE program at School 3 in that way made the program very attractive to her. Robin stated something similar: “[my child’s] teacher actually told me that they treat the dual language like a gifted and talented program” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). Many parents also examine elements like curricula, test scores, and institutional practices and take away the idea that DLBE classes are effectively G&T classes. As Meredith told me, “They don’t label it that, but it’s considered like an alternate TAG class. We have the same level of homework, and clearly, whether it’s fair or not, clearly it’s considered a special class, like, we have privileges that the other classes don’t get” (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). Another parent described going to an orientation for his school’s DLBE program and, “finding out that it was academically challenging, finding out that it was as, you know, the test results were as successful or more successful as the gifted and talented…” (Greyson, February 25, 2012). Greyson’s description is important because it shows that the way schools position DLBE programs allows parents to draw the connection between them and G&T programs. It is evident that many factors contributed to participants in this study seeking out DLBE programs as G&T alternatives. One main factor, as will be described next, was the idea many parents had that a DLBE program “would be more challenging for [their] child, much like a G&T program would or should be” (Heidi, School 3, September 24, 2014).
Challenging environment within a local school

Both for families seeking out G&T alternatives and those not, the additional challenge and enrichment of a DLBE program was highly prized (48% of respondents mentioned this). In fact, this tipped the scale for many parents when deciding whether to choose a DLBE or a G&T program. One mother explains, “it seemed like there were a handful of parents [whose] kids might have tested into G&T but they opted out and decided to go with the language as their kid’s academic challenge instead” (Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014). As Carolyn explains, the challenging environment within a local school made the DLBE program an acceptable substitution for a G&T program. And even for parents whose children didn’t qualify for G&T programs, if they wanted an academically challenging environment for their children, they were drawn to DLBE classes. Returning to Carolyn, her child didn’t qualify for a G&T program, but she still felt he needed a more challenging environment. For her, the DLBE class was an opportunity to “to have [my child] in the slightly more advanced class, which in that school translated to the dual language kids” (Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014). Virginia and Heidi, neither of whom had children who qualified for G&T programs, also said they used the DLBE program to place their children in more academically challenging environments (see also section 4.1.3.b). And whether or not their children could have gone into G&T programs instead, the unique challenge of a DLBE program at a local school was very enticing.

In fact, for parents seeking additional academic challenge for their children, DLBE programs presented the best opportunity without having to leave the neighborhood. In both Owl Hill and Partridge Lane, local schools typically offer
mainstream classes or classes the children described in this study would not require (such as ESL or special education). There is a G&T strand program at School 1, but in the Owl Hill neighborhood no schools offer G&T programs so children who qualify have to travel outside of the neighborhood or school district. Parents in both neighborhoods who want academic challenge for their children have typically sought private, charter, or G&T options outside the neighborhood. The idea that they could find academic enrichment locally – in the form of a DLBE program – is very enticing to some parents. In fact, many simply would not use local public schools if they were not able to get their children into the DLBE program (or the G&T program in the case of School 1). As Cathy stated, “[t]he only reason I wanted to come to [School 3] is for dual language” (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). Parents want this program because they see it as the only way to get an academically challenging environment within a local public school. Victoria told me, “we wanted her to be – if she was going to be in a public school – to have a slightly more challenging environment to be in, and dual language seemed to be that opportunity” (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014). Pamela echoed this thought: “I knew it was a good choice because it was challenging for her. I needed something challenging for her if I was going to put her in regular public school” (Pamela, School 2, October 28, 2014). It seems these parents seek first an academic challenge, and second a bilingual program. There can be risks to this perspective.

When families and schools treat DLBE programs as accelerated academic environments, these classes can become “elitist” (Castellano and Pinkos, 2005, p. 121). There is also the risk that families looking for enrichment select DLBE classes not understanding the true goals of the program. As Doherty’s (2008) similar study relates,
“the English speaking parents are so concerned with academic development that they miss the point of the dual language program” (211). While most parents in this study do describe feeling invested in their children’s bilingualism (see section 4.1.1.b), they also often stress the enrichment value of bilingualism (see section 4.1.1.c) as well as other elements associated with learning in Spanish such as cultural education (see section 4.1.4.c). This type of enrichment will be addressed in the subsequent paragraphs.

**Culture as enrichment**

Parents motivated to provide their children a specialized or advanced learning environment were familiar with all their options and the unique benefits of each. For many of the families in this study (76%), the cultural immersion of a DLBE program was a very special enrichment opportunity. Cultural enrichment actually represented an added value for many of the families that trumped the advanced academics of a typical G&T program. When comparing, for instance, her children’s experiences in the DLBE class to her friend’s children’s experiences in a G&T class, Bridget comes out in favor of DLBE: “They experience the culture, like they do amazing school trips, Latino dance classes, and they really get to just experience the whole thing, as against just an accelerated – or doing things a level ahead” (Bridget, School 1, April 11, 2012). Parents like Bridget saw G&T classes as pushing kids to achieve academically, but not necessarily providing a well-rounded (enriching) educational experience. For this reason, Robin says, “I personally feel like the dual language program has so much more to offer than the gifted and talented” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). The parents often brought up how the culturally teachings present in a DLBE program provide valuable benefits their children could not encounter elsewhere. “It makes [my child] a world citizen,”
claims Meredith (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012), while Mandy feels her child has gained “cultural awareness” through participation (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012). Research does support that, more than other educational models, DLBE programs help produce children with cross-cultural competencies (see for instance Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Freeman, et. al, 2005). Parents saw these cross-cultural competencies as enriching and valuable to their children’s future.

More than anything, though, the parents valued how cultural immersion, “opens your mind more…[and] enhances your intelligence in certain ways” (Diane, School 3, March 11, 2014). They shared how contact with multiple cultures – through the class curriculum and the home cultures of the other students and teachers – opens their children up to new ideas and new experiences. Kimberly offers her thoughts:

I think being in a dual language program, part of the appeal is that it would open up her brain a little bit more than another class, not just to the learning, but to the culture. So I think that's the challenge. Partly it's the academic challenge, but also the challenge to see the world differently than she may just growing up.

(Kimberly, School 1, May 25, 2014)

Kimberly discusses the unique social and intellectual benefits of cultural exposure as it is provided in a DLBE class. These benefits, Virginia believes, are derived from learning about culture in the language of that culture: “being able to speak another language, not only are you able to communicate with many other people, but your brain, it feels like it’s thinking differently. It really does open your worldview” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). Craig’s (1996) study also found parents choosing DLBE programs believed bilingualism was an essential part of cross-cultural sensitivity; that is, you couldn’t have
one without the other (394). The current research supports Craig’s finding: parents in this study believed learning about Latino culture through the medium of the Spanish language provided deeper and more enriching exposure and learning than what might be received in a more traditional setting. One parent described how this type of learning creates a “three-dimensional educational fabric,” with positive outcomes: “I think all the kids have a better understanding of international geography and international culture than they would in a traditional class” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). As this section clarifies, many parents seeking cultural enrichment feel they can only find it in DLBE classes.

Parents in this study generally believe DLBE is an enrichment opportunity (see section 4.1.1.c). Many sought these classes as alternatives to G&T classes, especially when their children qualified for gifted classes based on tests given yearly in NYC. Others did not look at whether their children qualified for G&T classes but simply sought a local option perceived as more academically challenging. Parents also prized a type of enrichment that is unique to DLBE classes, which is the opportunity to deeply connect to cultural learning through language immersion.

4.1.3.b. Selectivity

The schooling environments parents in this study consider for their children, such as private, charter, or G&T programs, are generally exclusive. DLBE has also come to have this reputation because of the screening process for entrance: “All families…will receive an offer in April to a school. Schools will then assess incoming kindergarten students for eligibility to participate in the [dual language bilingual] program and make a final determination about program placement” (NYC DOE, 2015a). Selecting for participation in DLBE classes creates a layer of exclusivity that raises the program’s
value in parents’ minds. For some, it reinforces the connection to G&T programs, for which there is also a screening process (see section 4.1.3.a). Others feel it raises the caliber of families who participate in DLBE programs, making the peers more advanced and the parents more involved.

Children are screened

As discussed above, there is a screening process for entrance into a DLBE program in any NYC public school. Most of the parents in the study said that their children participated in a school-level evaluation. The purpose of this screening process is ostensibly to ensure an even balance of “English speakers” and “Spanish speakers” in the class (screening is used to determine language dominance). Schools are legally required to establish home language preference of children entering DLBE programs because students identified as Spanish dominant are considered “ELLs” and accordingly are offered choices of services to assist their English development (DLBE is one option). In practice, however, schools use the screening process to control the type of children allowed into the programs. As one parent stated, “kids are carefully screened so that they’re ready for this level of academic rigor” (Mandy, February 12, 2012). The teacher I spoke to described it like this:

There was a screening process. So the students were...I don’t want to say, “top,” but they were verbal students. They were students that were able to handle and be flexible enough to move back and forth [between languages]. So it turned out to be a different caliber of student. (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014)

From the parents’ and teacher’s description of the screening process, it seemed children with advanced verbal skills who tested well on school readiness skills were preferred in
the programs. Indeed, verbal intelligence and home language proficiency have been cited as effective predictors of a child’s success in learning new languages (Cloud, et al., 2000). While this may be the case, the screening process also contributed to the reputation of the DLBE programs in their schools and neighborhoods.

Having a screening process for a school program seemed to affect the way administrators, teachers, and parents treated the program, as well as raised their expectations for student performance. On a very basic level, school officials encouraged a certain type of student to screen for the program (five parents told me this). Bridget, for example, was encouraged to screen her daughter for the DLBE program even though she had not previously expressed any interest in it because “when [the principal] met her, she’s quite bright, she always has been big into reading and all that sort of thing, and that’s the type of kids they seem to be looking for in the program” (Bridget, School 1, April 11, 2012). It also came out in the interviews how screening raised the expectations of teachers: they expect children will be strong students, and push them to achieve at a higher level. When students can’t meet these elevated expectations, they leave or are asked to leave the program. Joy, the teacher I talked to, discussed how a few students at her school were “weeded out” of the DLBE program by second grade if they hadn’t developed strong enough skills in the home language or weren’t transitioning well to the new language (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). Other parents discussed how teachers told them or other parents that if their children’s academic performance did not improve, they would be asked to leave the class (four parents stated this). Lastly, the screening process affected the reputation of the DLBE program among neighborhood families. Parents assumed that, “because the kids are selected, they’re going to be the
better kids” (Emily, School 1, April 7, 2014). As Virginia said, “because they had to test into it I figured the learning level would be a little bit more challenging and a little bit higher… I felt like the kids might be better learners, you know? Kind of like the gifted” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). In many ways, the screening process extended the programs’ reputations as alternative G&T or academically rigorous environments (see section 4.1.3.a). It also worked to turn the DLBE programs in this study into exclusive spaces.

*Exclusivity*

While the screening process effectively limits who enters DLBE programs and who does not, other factors also contribute to the exclusivity of these spaces. As Freeman, et. al (2005) argue, the academic challenges of a typical DLBE curriculum can make it inaccessible to all but the brightest learners, limiting enrollment even further (50). Yet some parents seem to prefer this exclusivity for the opportunity it gives their children to interact with academically advanced peers (see Carolyn’s and Mandy’s comments in the preceding paragraph). Terri noticed during a school tour that, “the writing posted on the walls from the dual language classroom was more advanced than the other classrooms. Even the English writing just seemed like they were much further ahead...like the children were a little bit more accelerated” (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014). When she saw this, she took the opportunity to place her child into a class of more “accelerated” peers. Like Terri, parents look at the screening process and the program’s accelerated curriculum and are reassured that children in a DLBE class will be more advanced. In this way, parents select peers that are more “like” their child academically, just as they selected peers who were more “like” their children socio-
culturally in some instances (see sections 4.1.2.a). While it is not surprising that parents of academically advanced children want more exclusive, selective school environments for their children, there is a concern that many parents fixate on the exclusivity rather than on the opportunity to learn in two languages. Such parents may not remain committed to DLBE programs if what they are really seeking is a G&T program (see also section 4.2.2.c). One such example is Terri, cited above as seeking a more “accelerated” school environment, who later pulled her child out when they received a G&T placement. Another example is how Carolyn, in addition to Terri and Vincent, put younger children into the same DLBE program they pulled older children out of because they considered it the best local option for that grade level. As Carolyn’s husband told me, “the dual language program is what makes the school special. We wouldn’t want [our child] in any of the other classes” (Carolyn’s husband, informal conversation, February 2, 2015). That is, they were attracted to the specialness of a DLBE program but not committed to bilingual education. Another concern is that exclusivity in any program model functions to wrest opportunity for participation from all but the privileged. EBL students, for whom such programs were originally conceived, can be locked out of participation, losing out on the promise that DLBE helps to close academic achievement gaps (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Yet the exclusivity of these programs is very appealing to some NLES parents, who now more than ever are clamoring to get their children accepted, as the following will clarify.

*Competing to get in*

The selectivity and exclusivity of DLBE programs raises parents’ estimation of them, thus raising their interest in them, and when desirable programs are in short
demand, families compete for entrance (which in turn raises the program’s value). Linda describes how, “in the last few years, the dual language thing has become trendy” (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). Because of its trendiness, Linda told me, “you never know if you’re going to get into the dual language program, it’s just so competitive every year” (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). Roxy told me the same thing about her school: “[i]t was so competitive, [my child] was on a waiting list” (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). And Terri described how, the year her family applied for the DLBE program, “there was a ton of kids that were being interviewed. We know a lot of kids who interviewed and got in and kids who interviewed and didn’t get in, people who accepted a placement or not” (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014). Limited program availability increases competition among NLES families for DLBE programs, making them in some ways seem more exclusive or desirable. Seats are limited, and as interest increases more families apply to these programs.

One reason there is such limited availability of these programs is because they are typically created as strands within the larger school environment, which limits the number of available seats in DLBE classes. In the current research, competition for admission into DLBE programs is fiercest at Schools 1 and 3, which have one DLBE class per grade, and participation is capped at 25 students in Kindergarten, 32 in grades one through five. Because of regulations regarding participation, only half of the slots are open to NLES children every year, with none admitted after 1st grade. At Schools 1 and 3, as in other schools with only one “strand” of DLBE, this means that a maximum of 12 seats are available in the DLBE program to children entering Kindergarten whose home language is English and who are not identified as “ELL” in the school.
system. Some schools also attempt to balance the children in terms of gender profile. Victoria explained how the process worked at her school: “I know that we were only vying then for half of the spots of the English-based speakers, because the female-to-male, they wanted to try and get half-and-half. So we were really only vying for five spots” (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014). There are also official admissions priorities to contend with: NYC public schools have a ranking of preference for those who get into schools and are allowed into certain programs. Priority is given to children within the school zone, those with siblings already in the program, and those who attended the school’s pre-K program (NYC DOE, 2014b). Lastly, as previously mentioned, schools generally do not accept students who are English-monolingual after first grade, so even if there is attrition in the program seats do not open in the upper grades. These factors, along with the limited spots available, raise competition for entrance especially in Kindergarten. At the schools where interest in DLBE programs are high, wait lists are maintained for families who are interested in the program but who have yet to secure a spot – different lists are kept for “English seats” and “Spanish seats,” and the “English” list is always the longest (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). Interestingly, rather than make NLES families lose interest in DLBE programs, factors like screening, competition to get in, or wait lists actually makes them seem more valuable because it demonstrates that interest in these programs is very high among like-peers.

Notwithstanding, while popularity may improve a school or program’s good image among NLES parents in the community, it may unfortunately have the opposite effect for LSS families. A few examples of this arose in the course of the current research project. The first example is at School 1, where Robin stated that in the last few
years the students in the DLBE program have become “mostly English-speaking kids” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). Another mother from the same school corroborated this, then shared that a LSS mother told her that the presence of so many NLESs in the DLBE program has made her and other LSSs not want to put their children in the class because there are “no other Spanish people” (Heather, School 1, June 5, 2014). At School 3, the increasing number of NLESs in the program has also excluded LSSs. At this school, LSS families want their children in the DLBE program but do not always have access. This is because the popularity of the DLBE program among NLES families has led the principal to prioritize their enrollment, distributing the “English-speaking” spots prior to even making the “Spanish-speaking” spots available (Principal of School 3, personal communication, June 9, 2015). Putting the enrollment of LSSs second symbolically excludes them from the DLBE program at School 3. Additionally, it would be remiss not to acknowledge that this practice violates new NYC DOE (2015) regulations for participation in a DLBE program in the city, which state that “[e]ligibility for the program is based on status as an English Language Learner, and where there is seat availability, English-speaking children can also be accommodated” (1). As may be seen, the regulation technically grants enrollment preference to EBL students (those identified as “ELL” by the school system) yet schools like School 1 and School 3 open half their seats to children identified as “ELLs” and half to non-ELLs – a practice that privileges the interests of NLESs in these programs. What occurs is lowered enrollment in DLBE programs by EBLs – which happens at School 1, as previously described – or the placement of EBL students who want DLBE in ESL classes instead because so many English monolingual families want their children in DLBE – which happened last year at
School 3 (Heidi, personal communication, School 3, January 23, 2015). Opening additional strands of DLBE in schools with popular programs could be a solution to this imparity, yet while this has been proposed by parents and community leaders at both Schools 1 and 3, the principals have been unwilling to do so (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014; Vincent, School 3, August 27, 2014).

Perhaps this is because restrictions on enrollment and the perception that it is competitive to get into the DLBE program at the neighborhood school in many ways work to make these programs more desirable. As Robin states, “the program has grown in popularity in the neighborhood, so a lot of people want their kids in the program” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). That is, because it has become popular, more families want to join – which could work to the benefit of schools and principals (though the point can neither be proven or disproven by the current research). In terms of NLESs, competition certainly has increased interest in DLBE among families at the schools described in this research. Add to this the perceived cognitive benefits of bilingualism (see section 4.1.1.c) as well as the unique opportunities available only in DLBE programs (see section 4.1.4.c) and it becomes even more clear that parents compete for entrance into these programs because they perceive them as special – more special than other classes available in local schools. Competition for entrance into a program increases the program’s prestige within the community, making it a more highly desirable “market commodity” (Apple, 2000, p. 63). Therefore, the desirability of the DLBE programs described by parents in this research has in part to do with the fact that they are bilingual classes but additionally factors in their exclusivity and scarcity, which increases competition and desire for the programs.
Increased parental involvement

The application and screening process combined with restrictions on enrollment numbers make choosing a DLBE program a fairly complex negotiation. It is fair to say that having to select and pursue enrollment in this way indicates a certain level of motivation on the part of the parent, and motivated parents are often those who become more involved in their children’s schooling. There may also be something about DLBE programs themselves that inspires parental involvement: in reviewing findings at 20 different schools, Lindholm-Leary (2001) found that a unifying factor among DLBE programs was the high level of parental involvement (see also Cloud, et. al, 2000). In the current research, parents certainly do seem very involved. Their interviews describe volunteering at the school, participating in school-based parent organizations such as the School Leadership Team (SLT) or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), communicating frequently with teachers and administrators, and even going into classrooms either to observe or help teachers. This participation may be unique to the DLBE program; as Heidi stated, “the dual language parents volunteer a lot in the school” (Heidi, School 3, September 24, 2014). Parents in the current research felt in general that other DLBE parents were more involved in their children’s education, and they prized the classes for that reason. Emily describes how this feeling has become a local reputation: “Definitely a lot of people in the neighborhood feel, well, if your kid is in dual language or the kid is in G&T, they’re with kids that their parents are very involved” (Emily, School 1, April 7, 2014). In fact, most parents felt their involvement was necessary to their children’s academic success in the DLBE program. As Meredith told me, “you cannot have a child in this program if you don’t have time to dedicate to your child’s learning… I don’t think
it’s, it’s the kind of program where your kid can just come home and do homework” (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). According to Howard and Christian (2002), this is very much the case: home-school collaboration and parental involvement are requirements of successful DLBE programs. Perhaps with this in mind, schools actually motivated parental participation by NLES families:

If there was parents who put their children in dual language class and didn’t work with their kids and do the homework they probably wouldn’t be asked to continue on if their kid wasn’t grasping Spanish...the teacher gave the impression before that she would suggest that maybe it wouldn’t be the best. (Heather, School 1, June 5, 2014).

Requirements like this raise the bar for parent participation, increasing the exclusivity of DLBE programs by limiting participation only to involved families. Parents of children in DLBE classes may be more involved so as not to risk – in Joy’s words – their children being “weeded out.” Parents did seem concerned that their involvement was crucial if their children were to succeed in a DLBE program, and as such often mentioned enjoying how other parents with children in these classes supported them in their endeavor.

The NLES parents in this study often discussed how much they prized the ability to feel connected with other parents at the school; this was an additional way to be part of the community. The way this community develops, and the reason for its development, seems particular to NLES parents and to the DLBE classes. Parents told me of the “incredibly supportive group across all the dual language classes” (Heidi, School 3, September 24, 2014) and the strong “support network” they have established with other parents (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). One example of how NLES parents
supported each other came up frequently in interviews with families from School 1. At this school, parents at each grade level in each year used the Yahoo message board platform to set up groups to connect with other parents in their grade (parents in each grade set up a group specific to their own class; I estimate this has been going on for around 7 years). They use these Yahoo groups to communicate about school issues or get help with difficult homework assignments. As Kristen remarked, “anytime there’s something crazy, all the parents are all over the Yahoo group” (Kristen, School 1, June 11, 2014). By “crazy,” she referred to a very difficult homework assignment in Spanish. Amy stated the group was “really great networking” (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014). Other parents corroborate this through descriptions of finding out from the online group about school parties (Elaine, School 1, April 11, 2012) or changes in school programming (Sharon, School 1, June 9, 2014). Yet this method of communication seemed another way NLES parents are more involved with each other, and for their own children’s benefit (see also section 4.1.2.a). On the Yahoo groups, communication is done in English and generally for the purpose of translating or assisting with Spanish homework, making them irrelevant to LSS parents who prefer to communicate in Spanish. In addition, the school issues parents mentioned discussing are typically related to the concerns of NLESs, such as the shuttering of an after school Spanish help class at School 1 (mentioned by Kimberly, School 1, May 25, 2014). NLES parents seemed to rely mostly on each other for support, and tended to engage in the school community differently than other parents did. The principal I spoke to mentioned, “there is a disparity” between the involvement of NLESs with children in the DLBE program and other school parents: “those parents are so supportive…very involved” (Principal of
School 2, May 27, 2014). Policy makers and educators have recognized for a long time that, “parents are key stakeholders in their children’s education” (Warner, 1991, cited in McGrath and Kuriloff, 1999, p. 605) and that parental involvement is linked to improved student outcomes (see section 2.1.4). The parents in this study seem to recognize this and involve themselves in their children’s education accordingly. What this study finds, however, is that they disproportionately engage with other NLES parents in forming communities of involvement within and outside of school.

*Close-knit community*

Another draw for parents is the close-knit community formed between families in the DLBE classes when the children remain together as a cohort from grades K-5 (62% of current families said they value this). To clarify, students in the DLBE programs described in this study stay together year after year because the programs are “strands” within a larger school setting. At Schools 1 and 3, there is only 1 class per grade, so students always stay together. At School 2, there are 2 or 3 classes at each grade level, but movement of students between each is limited. Staying together in this way may increase parental participation, as described in the preceding paragraphs. In terms of the children, parents describe how they build “significant friendships” with their peers because they remain together throughout the grades (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). Robin says it helps her child look forward to going to school each day, and returning each year in September, because, “she has friends she’s attached to and she knows” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). Parents remarked that this increases their sense of security when sending their children to public schools, particularly when the neighborhood school is large. Knowing one’s child could enter a large public elementary
school but still be in a “tight knit” environment where everyone was “watching out for each other and getting to know each other and being very safe” felt reassuring to many parents (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). As Mandy noted, “I think it makes a large school and a large community feel like a small school” (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012). Beyond simply feeling happy and safe, parents also identify educational advantages to having the same classmates year after year. Parents like Tanya, for instance, pointed out how, “[the students] have to rely on each other in the learning process...so it’s good that they’ll be together with the same people through 5th grade” (Tanya, School 1, August 13, 2014). As Howard, et al. (2007) point out, this type of cooperative learning is important if DLBE classes are to be optimally effective:

[W]hen ethnically and linguistically diverse students work interdependently on school tasks with common objectives, students’ expectations and attitudes toward each other become more positive, and their academic achievement improves...also, language development is facilitated by extensive interactions among native and nonnative speakers. (12)

When the same peers remain together throughout their schooling, ideally they come to work well together and learn from each other. Especially when considering, as previously addressed, that parents self-select a more advanced peer group by choosing DLBE programs, the idea that children will collaborate with the same high-achieving peers year after year ensures parents the program will maintain its rigor. Therefore, not only does being with the same students year after year increase the community feeling for parents and make them feel their children were more well looked after, it also ensures continued access to a select peer group.
This section has clarified how selectivity not only motivates parent selection of DLBE programs but also their school involvement. Parents self-select for participation, often competing with others to get into the DLBE classes at their local school. Motivated parents like this, in turn, become highly involved in their children’s schooling experience, whether through direct presence in the schools or by helping their children with homework. One main point about the parents’ involvement is that while they describe prizing the close knit community of involved families created by the specific DLBE class dynamics at their children’s schools, they most often connect with other NLES families for the purpose of supporting and extending their children’s Spanish learning.

4.1.3.c. Extra value

Recent literature around school choice establishes an “economic rationale” for schooling, describing education as a “merit good” that confers benefits on those who participate in it (Plank, 2006, p. 14). Following this logic, parents who have options for the education of their children weigh benefits and disadvantages to determine which of their choices is most valuable. And “ambitious parents” employ different tactics “to ensure that their own children have privileged access to the best schools and programs” (Plank, 2006, p. 13). In the current research, parents in many cases competed and strategized to get their children placement in local DLBE programs because they saw the extra value in these programs. As Margaret states, “you’re getting something extra that you don’t get from a regular elementary school program” (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014). Study participants believed the DLBE programs at their local schools were more special than other options available locally and elsewhere, most often citing the extra programs associated with a DLBE class; the fun, learning, and enjoyment of their child in the class; and the program’s excellent teachers.
Unique extras

The Center for Applied Linguistics’ (2007) *Guiding Principles of Dual Language Education* is a popular resource used by schools and school districts in planning and growing DLBE programs. This resource summarizes an ideal curriculum for a DLBE program as follows: “enriching, not remedial…aligned with the vision and goals of bilingualism, bi-literacy, and multiculturalism…[and] reflects and values students’ cultures” (Howard, et. al., 2007, p. 11). The schools described in this research reportedly made significant efforts to create a uniquely enriching program for students in DLBE classes. Joy describes how the principal at her school created after school “enrichment clubs” and summer school programs like “countries around the world through cooking” that were “just available to the dual language students” (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). That unique programs are just available to certain classes is also described in other interviews. Bridget notices, for instance, “[y]ou’re talking about a program there that is really given a lot of extra funding. Like, I would say they average a trip a month for the school year” (Bridget, School 1, April 11, 2012). Many of the extras children receive in DLBE programs are justified by the cultural focus of the class. At Bridget’s school, for instance, where fieldtrips are frequent, classes visit Latino cultural organizations in NYC such as Ballet Hispánico or Museo del Barrio (Kimberly, School 1, May 25, 2014). This is important to NLES parents, as an additional opportunity to experience the enrichment of in-depth cultural study (see also section 4.1.3.a). There are special in-school opportunities as well, unique to the DLBE programs. Every family at School 1, for instance, mentioned the yearly dance recital:
Every year the dual language program does a dance performance where every class chooses a different dance that's based on some aspect of the Spanish culture, so they're learning more than just the language. They're learning about the music of the culture, they're learning about dance or learning about the different customs. (Kristen, School 1, June 11, 2014)

Parents described this as a way to “lend a little bit of dimension” to learning about the home cultures of NLES students’ Latino classmates and teachers (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). The recital is also something unique at the school that only DLBE students experience each year, which teachers work extra to provide. Finally, parents may also see an extra value in DLBE programs as compared to other options (see also section 4.1.3.a). Families mention, for instance, that the DLBE program at School 3 provides students with theater, music, gym, and after school enrichment – extras that other schools or programs don’t have (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2012). Observing how DLBE programs are supported within school institutions through additional funding and access to quality programming and extracurricular activities bolsters parents’ opinion that there is an inherent extra value to these programs.

*Quality teachers*

The NLES parents in this study feel DLBE programs have many positive aspects that contribute to the quality of education their children receive. According to a majority of respondents (59%), good teachers may be “the most important thing” (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012). Many of the parents told me that the teachers in the DLBE programs were excellent, and even said they were better than the other teachers at the school. As one parent reasoned, “I think it does attract a good – they're specialized
teachers and I think [the DLBE program] attracts good teachers, generally” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). Robin is correct that, in NYC, bilingual teachers are specialized: they are required to hold a Master’s degree in childhood education as well as a bilingual teaching license, a 15-credit extension onto their degrees, as well as pass an additional teacher certification exam, the Bilingual Education Assessment (Woodward, 2011). While these additional requirements don’t make them better than other teachers, it does show how additional training is required to become a bilingual teacher. And research posits that this additional training is necessary: according to Howard, et al. (2007), not only do DLBE teachers need all the characteristics of effective teachers in general (experience, good content knowledge, expertise in curriculum and instruction), they also need appropriate training with respect to the language education model along with high levels of academic language proficiency (18). The NLES parents in this study, most of whose children entered school with little to no prior Spanish exposure, pointed out time and again how the skill of their children’s teachers was critical to their children’s achievement in a new language environment. In Kimberly’s case, her child had a hard time transitioning into a class where Spanish was used as a medium of instruction but the teacher supported her through the transition and the child is now happy in the class: “I think the reinforcement from the teachers was so important” (Kimberly, School 1, May 25, 2014). Other parents also discussed how the “nurturing” (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014) and “positivity” (Bridget, School 1, April 11, 2012) of the teachers supported their children’s developing bilingualism. Adrienne described how dedicated the DLBE teachers are, saying, “The teachers they have in dual, they do everything for the kids. Yeah, they are 100% for the kids” (Adrienne, School 2, May 1, 2014). In parents’ minds,
not only is this dedication important for their children’s education, it also upholds the program model. They believe this is important because it pushes their children to achieve at an advanced level and teaches them important school skills:

   I just feel like the teachers are the best in the building, with the rigor and the high expectations that they have for the kids. They have determination to get the kids to learn and understand what it is that they’re trying to accomplish. It definitely instilled in [my child] the importance of being persistent and to keep trying. (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014)

Additionally, good teachers bolster the good reputation of the DLBE programs in the neighborhood. Before enrolling her daughter, Roxy “heard from [other neighborhood parents] that the teacher of the dual language class was really good,” and this attracted her to the program even more (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). Thus, not only did currently-enrolled families see good teachers as integral to their children’s achievement, parents considering enrolling their children in DLBE programs were heartened to learn from other families about the quality of the teachers of these classes.

   Children enjoy their DLBE classes

   Another theme that frequently arose in the interviews was how beneficial DLBE program participation was to children. Seventy percent of currently enrolled families stated that their children were enjoying and learning from being in DLBE programs. Beth, who has two children in the DLBE program at School 3, said, “I’ve been very pleased with how engaged and happy they seem to be to go. They’re thrilled to go to school in the morning, they’re happy when I get them at the end of the day” (Beth, School 3, November 6, 2014). This is a critical point because many families worried
initially that their children would struggle socially or emotionally in school with the additional challenge of learning in Spanish. Kimberly, for instance, noted her child’s initial difficulty with Spanish “turned into a bit of a worry. I thought, ‘Oh, she’s really stressed out!’” (Kimberly, School 1, May 25, 2014). Many parents said they didn’t want learning Spanish to feel like additional pressure on their children: school enjoyment was primary. As Roxy told me, “I want her to like school…I want her to have some pleasure from school. If she ends up hating Spanish, then I’m not going to make her keep doing it” (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). Therefore, a majority of parents felt it was important to see their children were enjoying the DLBE classes as well as learning. This proved to them that the programs were working as they should and validated any additional efforts they had personally put forth to support their child’s Spanish language acquisition. One critical measure for parents of their children’s success in DLBE programs, apart from their enjoying school, was seeing that the children could make connections between their classroom language learning and real world situations. When children are able to do this, parents feel it provides benefits beyond simply speaking Spanish. As Pamela shared, “I feel like it really build up her confidence, and I’m grateful for that” (Pamela, School 2, October 28, 2014; 6 other parents also mention confidence). Second language study may, in fact, enhance a student’s sense of achievement. When children excel in second language study, “the resulting benefit to self-image, self-esteem and satisfaction with school experience are enormous. Evidence from several studies shows language students to have a significantly higher self-concept than do non-language students” (NEA, p. 4). These benefits are in and of themselves motivating factors for parents. As one mother suggested, when your children succeed,
“you feel great as a parent” (Amy). For the NLES parents in this study, seeing their children actually learning Spanish proved the program was working, but it was most critical to see their children enjoying and benefiting from the program – whether through language learning, development of a positive self-concept, or access to quality teachers and school resources.

4.1.4. Opportunity

Palmer (2008) argues that, “it is easy to see why proponents are so enthusiastic about the possibilities of [DLBE]; this type of program has worked well to keep middle-class children in public school settings for the unique opportunity of language immersion, while offering a superior language-oriented enrichment opportunity to...English language learner students” (181). Parents in this study generally showed enthusiasm for the “possibilities” and “opportunity” of DLBE that Palmer describes. At times, this enthusiasm aligned to the “why not” or “see how it goes” attitudes previously described; that is, parents thought they might try DLBE because of all its promise (see also section 4.1.2.c). For a majority of participants, however, their enthusiasm for bilingual education was based on a few reasons: the future benefits of bilingualism, the educational foundations provided by DLBE, and the unique opportunity of DLBE.

4.1.4.a. Future benefits

In this study, parents see bilingualism as a resource to provide many future benefits to their children. In Joy’s words, Spanish is something her child will “use forever” (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). Participants described how knowing two languages gives children, “the confidence to be able to communicate with people from all walks of life” (Kimberly, School 1, May 25, 2014), a confidence that opens opportunities in the future, particularly as relates to jobs but also to traveling and living abroad. This
finding aligns to the utility of Spanish described earlier (see sections 4.1.1.a. and 4.1.2.b). Gerena (2010) believes that seeing the opportunity in Spanish learning may be unique to English-speaking parents:

English-speaking parents, while not denying the value of developing competence in Spanish, repeatedly responded that the development of greater employment/job opportunities, higher-level cognitive abilities, and greater global connectedness were of paramount importance to them. Their responses focused on utilitarian aspects. (364)

Perhaps these “utilitarian aspects” were what led Amy to describe Spanish fluency as “another extra notch on their belt buckle” when her children apply to college or enter the workforce (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014). Whatever the case may be, parents in this study described their hopes that DLBE program participation and resulting bilingualism would open future opportunities for their children in work, travel, and education.

*Future opportunities*

Providing future opportunities was one of the more popular reasons for DLBE program participation given by the parents in this study (62% of current families mentioned it). Heather (School 1, June 5, 2014) and Kristen (School 1, June 11, 2014) both say that speaking Spanish and English will give their children “more options,” while Robin (School 1, June 8, 2014) addresses the “extra advantages” bilingual people have. Margaret expresses how, “having more languages opens more doors to you, more possibilities long term” (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014). The parents in this study tended to clarify their ideas about future opportunity around jobs and education. This finding is consistent with other research on the topic. In one of the more extensive
studies on DLBE in recent years, Kathryn Lindholm-Leary (2001) investigated, among other program aspects, parental motivation for enrolling their kindergarteners in DLBE programs. She found that non-Latino families were more likely than Latinos to choose “instrumental” reasons for selecting a DLBE program; the reason they most often cited was “academic/career advantages” (162). Just as in the current research, parents in the Lindholm-Leary study identified integrative motivation for DLBE program participation; a significant point to mention, however, is that Lindholm-Leary finds differences between Latinos and non-Latinos. Because the current study provides no comparison group to the NLES parents interviewed, I cannot make the claim Lindholm-Leary and others have made (see, for instance, Gerena, 2010). Notwithstanding, my study has demonstrated that future opportunity in jobs and education (instrumental motivation) is a significant reason NLES parents selected DLBE programs for their children.

An “edge” in the labor market

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, many parents in this study hoped bilingualism would provide their children some advantage in future careers (half the currently-enrolled families said this). The families thought bilingualism would help their children find work, be more successful at their jobs, and have more (or better) opportunities for employment. This vision aligns with the argument that “[m]ultilingualism matters in the present-day labor market…[and] bilinguals in the new generation will more readily find jobs and many will make more money over their lifetime as a result of their linguistic skills” (Callahan & Gándara, 2014, pp. 288-289). And parents certainly did recognize the economic advantage overall of Spanish/English bilingualism. What is unique to this study, however, is the way in which
the unique environment of NYC affected parents’ reasoning in this regard. In NYC, parents can very easily see future economic benefit from speaking Spanish because Spanish and English are used quite frequently in the workplace by myriad individuals for multiple purposes. As Margaret asserted, “certainly in New York, you don’t have to go far to have plenty of people who speak Spanish. So I felt it could be useful long term in your career no matter what kind of work you were in” (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014). Linda echoed this sentiment: “Whatever profession you’re in in New York City, it’s such an advantage” (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). In a city like NYC, not only will many jobs require bilingualism, many other job candidates will also be multilingual. Heather described this: “[my child is] growing up with a whole lot of people who have the two languages because they learned at home. So it’s good for him to be in the running for the jobs that might need both languages” (Heather, School 1, June 5, 2014). Heather reasons, as other parents do, that bilingualism would in a way level the playing field for her child when applying for jobs since so many people in NYC grow up speaking multiple languages. As another mother told me, “I just want her to be able to put that on her resume and say that she can speak another language” (Pamela, School 2, October 28, 2014). This exemplifies a trend Leeman (2007) writes about when she suggests that, “[s]econd-language ability is increasingly commodified as a job skill, rather than a symbol of education and cultural capital” (Leeman, 2007; p. 37). Along these lines, some parents assert how the type of language skills their children gain through the training of a DLBE program actually provide superior “job skills” for the future labor market. Kimberly describes this here:
At work...I see a huge need for people that are not only bilingual, but also biliterate in Spanish, at least in my field. There are plenty of people that can do interviews and speak and reach out to various community groups, but I haven't found, even when we've been hiring people, a lot of people are fully biliterate and can write and read and present professional documents. (Kimberly, School 1, May 25, 2014)

Her comment relates back to how parents spoke about wanting their children to learn “fluent” or “proper” Spanish and gain solid academic skills in Spanish (see section 4.1.1.a). It also shows how parents recognize the professional usefulness of Spanish, and know how advantageous it would be if their children could speak, read, and write it at a professional level. As García and Mason (2009) acknowledge, “a space for Spanish-English bilingualism and biliteracy has been opened globally, in which Spanish may be considered an economic resource for those who are educated and bilingual” (96). The parents in this study pushed their children to achieve academically, and hoped their children would become bilingual in a way that could leverage future economic opportunity. They drew a clear connection between bilingualism and future job opportunities, such as an “edge” against other job candidates or increased work mobility. Parents also saw advantages to bilingualism in other realms.

Going abroad

Another way parents viewed bilingualism as advantageous was in terms of travel (both current and future). The families in this study are uniquely connected to international countries. As previously noted, nearly half (48%) of the families had one or both parents born or raised outside of the US. On top of this, many participants noted
travelling, living, or going to school (foreign exchange) or work (business travel) in other countries. Many families also had close relations living in Spanish-speaking countries. These international ties both normalize and necessitate considerable foreign travel, and parents saw travel as an inevitable part of their children’s future experience:

That’s the other thing in this day and age, because we’re nomadic and travel is so accessible, and work – most people’s jobs can entail a lot of travel these days. It’s just going to be such an advantage for our kids to be able to connect, and to deal with things, and to be able to handle things in another culture and in another language. (Leslie, School 2, March 21, 2014)

Parents who have traveled abroad, perhaps mastering a second or third language as a result, raise their children with a certain mindset, instilling in them the value of multilingualism. Such parents have also devoted considerable time and effort to language-learning, hence want their children to have similar values and experiences. As one mother told me,

I feel like, from my own experience of knowing another language and having seen how that opened my worldview, that was something that I wanted. I just felt, for me, it was so enlightening that felt like it was an amazing opportunity to open [my child’s] eyes to another world. (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014)

In the context of this study, foreign study and travel were normal and desirable. Becoming bilingual was a helpful tool for children to grow up having as they navigated the world their parents want them to experience anyway. This was the case for the many European families who responded to this study (nine families had one or more European-born/raised parent). They discussed how, in Europe, it is normal to travel and
know many languages, and when their children visit family there they want them to be able to fit in. Additionally, families with significant connections to relatives abroad consider the possibility of moving back someday. Especially in the case of respondents whose husbands are Latino, the idea that they may one day live in the husband’s country of origin provides unique incentive for their children’s DLBE program participation (Emily, School 1, April 7, 2014). Thus, the finding that learning Spanish and becoming bilingual would make their children more able to travel and live in other countries seems to be rather unique to the current research, and seems to relate to the international connections and aspirations of the families who responded to the study.

4.1.4.b. Educational foundations

A positive educational experience for their children was very important to the families in this study, as previously detailed. It is not surprising, then, that parents saw their child’s elementary school DLBE program as the starting point of a positive academic trajectory. These programs were seen as providing good educational foundations for future learning.

Future language learning

Fifty-nine percent of respondents with children currently in DLBE programs felt participation in an elementary school DLBE program would provide a solid foundation for their children’s future language learning, whether in Spanish, English, or another language. Margaret summarizes these ideas here:

Well, I think they finish elementary school pretty fluent in reading and writing and speaking a second language, so that puts them ahead of a lot of their counterparts in middle school. Even if they don't do Spanish in middle school, if
they take on another language, they seem to have a better aptitude for languages if you know at least one other one already. (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014)

Margaret’s words reflect the thinking of many participants, who believe learning Spanish in elementary school will either provide a solid base from which to eventually achieve fluency in Spanish at a later date, or help the child become a more efficient learner of language in general terms. In regard to the first thought, numerous participants indicated that learning Spanish is inevitable given course offerings in middle and high school, so why not start now (seven families mentioned this). Said Sharon, “later on, when he goes to high school, he’ll have to learn it anyway” (Sharon, School 1, June 9, 2014). This thinking also relates to how parents think Spanish may someday become the second language either of the country or NYC; in some ways, they see a certain inevitability to their child’s learning Spanish (see also sections 4.1.1.a, 4.1.2.b). Parents also comforted themselves with the thought that, as mentioned, even if a child never becomes bilingual, language study will help their children become generally, “better at learning other things” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). An interesting variety of responses came out in support of this idea. Parents who speak another romance language as the home language discussed how their child developing bilingualism and biliteracy in Spanish and English enables them to better grasp spoken and written home language (three families stated this). Others said that the way children learn about language through DLBE program participation helps them in any literacy or language learning setting: “They’re getting all that exposure to all those different phonological features and, you know, cognates that will help them with other languages” (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). Robin saw how this would positively affect future Spanish learning, because “[e]ven if they don't end up
continuing it later, I think the fact that they have this base and learned it when they were young, if they want to go back and study Spanish later...I think they'll just pick it up really quickly” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). Carolyn also saw benefits for future English learning; she described how early language study helps children to develop “an ear for language” which can transfer to “knowing vocabulary a little easier when it comes time for SATs and things like that” (Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014). Parents in this study generally held a more “monoglossic” view of language, seeing fluency as finite and holding the ‘native speaker’ standard as the ideal (see García, 2009a; see also section 4.1.1.a). However, it is clear that they also saw language learning as interconnected and linked to other educational goals. This is an important finding because it shows that NLES parents felt DLBE program participation would teach their children Spanish as well as provide other enriching benefits (see also section 4.1.3).

Educational opportunities

Along with the language foundation provided through DLBE program participation, parents also felt their children would have more opportunities in education if they completed the program at least through grade 5. A few mothers agreed that this would allow their children to either opt out of Spanish in middle or high school or continue to the next level (see for instance Heather, School 1, June 5, 2014). Outside of simply the question of language, parents expressed the belief that bilingualism gave their children the confidence to tackle any educational goal they might have. One example is the parent who was able to get her child into a very competitive International Baccalaureate school because of the child’s multilingualism (Adrienne, School 2, May 1, 2014). Another parent said that the ability to work hard and persevere even in an environment where one’s status as a language learner can make understanding difficult
has made her child very confident now that she’s applying to high schools (Bonnie, School 2 and 3; email communication November 24, 2014). Parents also suggested their children could participate in foreign exchange programs if they achieved fluency in Spanish (five parents said this). Lastly, it would be remiss not to recall that parents saw DLBE programs as providing the opportunity of a more advanced, selective class within a local school. Half of the parents with currently-enrolled children saw the DLBE program as the best educational opportunity in general in their school or zone, irrespective of language of instruction, because of the way the classes were organized, structured, and positioned within their school communities (see section 4.1.3.a). They also saw the unique opportunity of bilingual education.

4.1.4.c. The unique opportunity of bilingual education

The NLES families in this study realized that their children’s bilingualism would be rather special among like-peers. In the US, as in the rest of the Anglophone world, bilingual abilities are rarely developed: “Speakers of languages with high prestige have less inclination to develop bilingual competence than speakers of languages with low prestige since they do not perceive a need for bilingualism” (García, 2009a; p. 107). Cathy expressed frustration at such attitudes: “We live in a country that doesn’t generally support the idea of really fluently learning other languages unless your family happens to be from somewhere else and you get to learn it at home. We just don’t value that” (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). For NLES families who do value bilingualism, bilingual programs represent the chance for their children to really set themselves apart from their peers. Becoming bilingual would afford them unique professional, travel, and study opportunities (see section 4.1.4.a). Amy confided, “I think it’s a great opportunity for the kids...there’s so much that the world will offer to you knowing that you are
bilingual” (Amy, School 1, June 5, 2014). Bilingual education is a unique opportunity particularly because of the language learning aspect; the parents in this study generally had the means and talent to enrich their children in many ways, but could not teach them Spanish. As Cathy remarked, “I can be running them to all these great museums and things and they can be interested in whatever they want to be interested in. The thing I can’t provide them with is another language” (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). Parents also think the opportunity for bilingual education is very special, and marvel that the local schools offer what, to them growing up, might have been only seen in exclusive enrichment schools. As Greyson exclaimed, “Oh my God, a public school offers this incredible opportunity? For dual language?” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Parents like Greyson marvel that an ‘elite’ program like language immersion could be available at no cost in a local, public school. And, truly, it seems that bilingual education is a unique opportunity for these families: something they may not have experienced in their youth, and different from most public school programming.

The NLES parents in this study selected DLBE programs feeling the promise of this opportunity. They thought DLBE programs could contribute to their children’s cognitive development, enrich them culturally and socially, help them excel in school, and additionally teach them a new language. But for some families, the promise of bilingual education was not delivered. The following sections of the Findings chapter will discuss what happens when the opportunity is not what families were prepared for in their initial enthusiasm.
Part 2

4.2. Leaving Bilingual Programs

Part 1 of this chapter essentially describes “the hopes and everything that parents pin on dual language” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). The parents in this study not only hope participation in DLBE programs will teach their children Spanish, they also see the potential for academic and cognitive advancement, enrichment, and community integration. What is more, these highly motivated families often give up other prestigious or coveted options (such as a charter school or G&T seat) to participate in these programs. Yet the hopes parents have for DLBE programs can remain unmet, as this part of the Findings chapter will describe. Whether the programs worked differently than they had initially understood, a different schooling option came available, or they felt forced out of the program, former families described how their experiences with a DLBE were very different from what they had expected.

The following is an outline of the main findings in Part 2:

- **Theme 1, Bilingualism and Academic Concerns (4.2.1):** NLES families were most likely to leave DLBE programs if they felt their child wasn’t learning Spanish. Because this was often associated with a child’s resistance to learning Spanish and frustration, behavioral or academic concerns sometimes resulted. Parents felt this occurred when the DLBE program didn’t properly instruct their children in Spanish, and they couldn’t support their children’s Spanish at home.

- **Theme 2, Institutional and Family Concerns (4.2.2):** DLBE program sustainability and continuity were significant concerns. Parents also shared concerns with how program stability was affected by administrative decisions,
teacher attrition, or student attrition. Parents also chose other options over DLBE programs when they felt these offered a preferred environment.

The families in this section of the study include six that no longer have children in DLBE programs, and four that have one or more child(ren) currently enrolled in a DLBE program but who took another child out of a DLBE program. It is also important to note that not all schools are represented equally in terms of former families. Four of the families (Bridget, Virginia, Greyson, and Margaret) left the DLBE program at School 1. No family left the program at School 2. Three of the families (Victoria, Diane, and Terri) left the program at School 3. Two of the families (Vincent and Carolyn) chose not to continue a DLBE program after their children finished grade 2 at School 3, though they could have transferred to School 2. One of the families (Bonnie) pulled a child out of the DLBE program at the Owl Hill middle school where children transfer upon graduating from 5th grade at School 2. The following chart details the decisions of each family who removed a child from a DLBE program:

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15 During the course of the study, two “current” families pulled one of their children out of a DLBE program, and two “former” families enrolled a younger sibling in a DLBE program although the older child had been previously taken out of the program.
Table 7: NLES families who opted out of DLBE program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of school-aged children</th>
<th># of children in DLBE</th>
<th>Grade of children in DLBE</th>
<th># of children pulled out of DLBE</th>
<th>Grade children pulled out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIRGINIA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIANE</td>
<td>3 (5 total)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1, 3rd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAROLYN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICTORIA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARGARET</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1st, 2nd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREYSON</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINCENT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERRI</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>preK</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BONNIE</td>
<td>3 (5 total)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4th, 8th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIDGET</td>
<td>3 (4 total)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subsequent discussions will address why the NLES families in this study opted out of DLBE programs. Just as in part 1, descriptions of the school and community settings will also be presented to contextualize the participants’ choices.

4.2.1. Bilingualism and Academic Concerns

When NLES parents enroll their children in DLBE programs, they want them to learn Spanish. This was, in fact, the most significant reason parents in all categories gave for having selected a DLBE program in the first place (see section 4.1.1). What many did not anticipate was how difficult this goal can be to actually achieve. As Greyson
describes, “the dream outcome is a bilingual child. I think the reality sets in pretty quickly that because we’re not [Spanish-speakers], it’s hard” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). His statement summarizes what many of the former families stated, which was how they had not expected supporting Spanish at home to be as difficult; many, in fact, cited this as a reason for leaving a DLBE program. They described their children’s difficulties with learning Spanish quickly enough, and how their children’s frustration and resistance to Spanish at times translated into problems at school or clashes with parents. In fact, the child struggling to learn Spanish was the most powerful motivator for NLES parents in this study to remove their children from DLBE programs (8 of 10 former families mentioned this).

**4.2.1.a. Perception that child was not learning Spanish**

Because the NLES parents in this study so often choose DLBE programs to teach their children Spanish, they tended to measure their children’s success in the programs by Spanish acquisition: whether the children could use Spanish in real world contexts or whether the children felt proud of their language learning (see section 4.1.3.c). When parents were unable to measure the extent of their children’s Spanish learning, or perceived their children’s resistance to using the language, they questioned whether to continue with a DLBE program.

*Child is struggling with Spanish*

Struggling, resisting, or feeling frustrated by Spanish was the most frequent theme the parents in this study mentioned when describing why their child left a DLBE program (80% of former families stated this). These parents said they had to “force” their children to speak Spanish (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014), or “drag [them] to school” on Spanish days (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014), or described how their children felt that
“the days with full immersion were jarring” (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014). They also note that these struggles intensify as cognitive and academic pressures increase in higher grades. After three years in a DLBE program, Greyson said that for his child, “Spanish has gotten much harder, much; he’s become much less willing...when he was younger he would use the Spanish he knew conversationally, like if we were ordering ice cream off the street...but in the last year he’s become very resistant to speaking Spanish” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Meredith shared that she has seen many NLES families leave the program when their children struggle with the new language:

The only people who have dropped out so far have all been English-speaking people...they just couldn’t do it, they just couldn’t keep up. You know, I think most of the Spanish-speaking students came in speaking some English, and most of the English-speaking students came in speaking no Spanish...so every other day, they’re sitting there going, ‘What?!?,’ hating school, not understanding anything...” (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012)

Because Meredith did keep her child in a DLBE program throughout elementary school, her perspective is important because it alludes to a common concern that NLES parents with children in DLBE programs can have. In fact, half of the currently-enrolled families also mentioned that their children resisted or felt frustrated by learning Spanish. How parents respond to this frustration determines whether this factor will lead to a child leaving a DLBE program. Kristen, for instance, told me about her child struggling on Spanish days because he’s “not as good at it as he is at English,” but also acknowledged, “I think that’s a natural part of the frustration of learning a new language” (Kristen, School 1, June 11, 2014). Because she was able to manage her child’s frustration and
understand the language development process, Kristen remained committed to keeping their child in a DLBE program. When parents were not able to manage this frustration, or saw little measurable progress, they considered leaving.

*Perception that Child isn’t learning Spanish*

Half the parents whose children were taken out of DLBE programs mentioned the concern that their children were not learning Spanish. Margaret, for instance, remarked that one of her children “just didn’t pick up a whole lot of Spanish” in Kindergarten so she transferred him to a G&T program for 1st grade (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014). Another parent shared that her NLES neighbor pulled his child after 2nd grade because the child “still didn’t understand half of what the teacher said” on Spanish days (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). These statements show the “misunderstanding of foundational knowledge about second-language acquisition and anticipated outcomes of a dual language program” of some NLES parents, as described in previous research on this topic (Doherty, 2008, p. 115; see also Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Grade level proficiency in any given language is based around measures in both productive and receptive language, which English-monolingual parents may be ill equipped to measure. Bonnie shared, for instance, that she is unable to check her children’s Spanish homework for completion or accuracy because “I have no idea what they’re writing” (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014). Traditional estimates determine it takes 5-7 years to achieve grade-level proficiency in an additional language (Cummins, 1984). More recent research, however, acknowledges it may take as many as 11 years (Shohamy, 2011). Additionally, because these studies refer to minority-language speakers acquiring a majority language, the length of time it takes for the reverse may be even longer. As Bonnie suggested,
Well, they talk about the idea that it takes five years for them to become fluent in a language, but it's not. It takes longer than that. It does for the English maybe, because it's so intensive in English, but it's not that intensively Spanish. [My child] has been doing this since pre-K, and she’s now in seventh grade and she is not fluent in Spanish. (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014)

Parents unaware of how long it may take to achieve fluency, and unable to judge how well their children are advancing in their Spanish learning, may not be willing to “stick with it” (Bridget, School 1, April 11, 2012). As Bridget shared, many NLES families leave the program after kindergarten or first grade if they feel their children aren’t learning enough Spanish – which research and the input of sustaining parents prove is far too little time to become fluent.

NLES families can also receive pressure from teachers to pull their children if they struggle in Spanish. As four families from School 1 shared, teachers have told them or other NLES parents that if their child weren’t developing Spanish quickly enough, they would recommend a transfer to a monolingual English setting. In another case, a parent was told his child was having behavioral issues in the class due to frustration over learning Spanish and administration recommended the child’s transfer (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Yet with limited assessment done of productive or receptive language proficiency in Spanish, both teachers and parents have an incomplete picture of these children’s true progress in the new language. Bilingual teachers have traditionally worked with EBL students learning English, hence have a limited baseline for what to expect regarding majority language students’ Spanish development. They, too, may be unwilling to remain patient while a child’s language develops. However, research
indicates that students who are English-monolingual when they enter DLBE programs need additional support in developing the new language in their first few years in a bilingual class. As De Jong and Howard (2009) describe, “native English speakers often do not have the oral proficiency to carry out their academic tasks exclusively in and through the minority language, especially in the first year or two of the programme” (90). Parents or teachers who rely on simplistic measures of language development and expect grade level performance in the new language within the first few years of DLBE program participation are unrealistic in their expectations. As Carolyn points out, some children, like hers, are “grasping the language at a slower pace” (Carolyn, School 3, June 5, 2014). Teachers and administrators should recognize this and support children’s language development accordingly, rather than fall back on transferring them to monolingual settings. As Greyson shared, “to blame the Spanish education is, I think, not the case…” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). That is, he feels other supports should first be tried before removing a child from a DLBE program because of frustration over Spanish learning. Notwithstanding, parents in this study often cited their own perception of their child’s lack of Spanish or a teacher or administrator’s mention of the same as a reason for removing their child from a DLBE program.

Struggling academically because of Spanish

Finally, parents themselves may feel pressure to take their children out of DLBE programs if they feel the child’s lack of Spanish proficiency is affecting their overall learning. Diane was one parent who had this concern. She told me directly that she was unable to keep her child in a DLBE program because his lack of Spanish development had affected his academic progress: “He was horribly behind…I also have limited
knowledge of Spanish; there’s only so much I can help him with. So at this point, I felt it was too much hindering and unfortunately that’s when I let the program go” (Diane, School 3, March 11, 2014). Yet, as another parent’s perspective proves, with the appropriate trust in the DLBE model and sufficient support from teachers, even a child who is struggling can eventually catch up. Bonnie, whose third child struggled academically in a DLBE program, confessed,

There’s a point where you’re like, “Should I keep doing the Spanish when he’s not even passing the English?” But, in fact, he caught up. Just like he was a slow speaker in English, he caught up with the Spanish and now he’s fine. But there is that temptation then, just saying, like, “My kid's falling behind. Should I be doing this Spanish thing?” (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014)

Because she had the success of her first two children in a DLBE program to reassure her, Bonnie was willing to stick it out even when her third child struggled. Other parents, not aware of how long it takes for a child to become academically proficient in a language, are not as willing to take this chance. Additionally, this study and previous research alludes to the fact that NLES parents will pull their children out of DLBE programs if they struggle academically in a DLBE program because it is not imperative for NLES children to become bilingual in Spanish:

[A]s far as educating their children bilingually, dominant groups often have a choice. Their bilingualism is optional. And their children are bilingually educated in schools where children acquire a second language not to replace but to add to their own linguistic repertoire. (Garcia, O., 2009a, p. 103)
Therefore, NLES parents can and do pull their children from a DLBE program if their Spanish language skills are not developing well enough. For NLES families, Spanish is an add-on, and they have the luxury of being able to let it go if they feel their children are not successfully learning the language because it is not an essential component of schooling. EBLs, on the other hand, must stick with English no matter what; for them, it is not optional, and for this reason DLBE programs often focus more on English than Spanish (which can leave NLESs unsupported in their Spanish learning, as the subsequent section will relate).

Children were pulled from DLBE programs or asked to leave by school officials when their Spanish proficiency was perceived as limited. While this demonstrates a lack of understanding regarding just how long it takes NLESs to become bilingual in Spanish, it also clarifies why parents might worry when their own monolingualism makes it difficult for them to supplement their child’s Spanish learning outside of school. The subsequent section will address this issue.

4.2.1.b. Unsupported Spanish Learning

A strong majority of the NLES parents in this study were focused on their children learning Spanish through DLBE program participation (see section 4.1.1.a). As a result, families in all categories mentioned the importance of sufficient support for Spanish learning while a child was in a DLBE program. Both current families and those whose children have left these programs shared concern, for example, that their children would not be as successful in acquiring Spanish without additional support outside of school. Parents worried that they could not support their children’s Spanish at home, yet also shared that the schools did not do enough to support their children’s developing
bilingualism. Families generally observed that schools stressed progress in English literacy and other academic subjects over Spanish development in general, which adversely affected their children’s ability to acquire Spanish. Whether these issues contributed to NLES children leaving DLBE programs will be discussed in the following sections.

No Spanish at home

Parents whose children left a DLBE program were disproportionately concerned with not having Spanish at home and/or not being able to support their child’s Spanish learning at home: 63% of former versus only 34% of currently-enrolled families stated this. And indeed, families whose children left DLBE programs were far less likely than currently-enrolled families to have any connection to Spanish. Only one former family with no other children currently enrolled has a connection to Spanish; by contrast, 16 currently-enrolled families have a Spanish linguistic or cultural connection (see section 4.1.2.b). This is an important finding that bolsters claims in prior research that a family connection to Spanish raises commitment to developing the children’s Spanish fluency (see for instance Farnuggio, 2010). A family connection to the language can also be leveraged to support children’s Spanish learning (see section 4.1.2.b). Notwithstanding, it is critical to mention the finding that while a family connection to Spanish can be helpful, it is not necessary if the parent is highly motivated to support their children’s learning outside of school. English monolingual parents whose children remain enrolled in a DLBE program support their children’s language learning through community resources such as tutors, nannies, and language classes (see section 4.1.2.c). This allows these families to build a connection to a vital community language, whether or not there
is Spanish in the home or family. Connections like this reduce isolation, thus improving parents’ likelihood to keep their children in a DLBE program. I revisit this important point here because the parents in the study whose children ended up leaving DLBE programs, for the most part, did not seek outside support: only one former family described seeking outside help for her child, by hiring a homework tutor. In contrast, 65% of currently-enrolled families accessed a variety of resources outside the home to support their children’s developing Spanish. And a supportive home environment, stresses Lindholm-Leary (2002), “will lead to higher levels of second language development” (149). Therefore, not having a home connection to Spanish as well as not seeking outside help for the developing language were associated with students leaving DLBE programs.

_Difficulties with Spanish homework_

When parents lack support and Spanish language skills, it can be difficult to help their children with homework, as Bonnie shares:

> I was kind of blown away about how hard, as a parent, it would be...I guess all the immigrant parents have it – but I can’t help my kids...I can’t help them with the homework...they’ll say, “I don’t understand this,” and I’m like, “neither do I so I can’t help you.” (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014)

In fact, concerns about homework, such as parents not being able to help with homework or students finding it excessive or too difficult, were cited by 70% of parents whose children left DLBE programs. One parent even suggested that it was a relief switching her child to a G&T class from a DLBE class for precisely this reason: “In dual language, she had five pages of homework every day...but in the G&T program she is in now she
only has one page” (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014). Interestingly, what Victoria mentioned may be an issue citywide: Queensmamas, an online resource and social community for parents in the borough of Queens, NYC, reports in a recent article that, “The biggest challenge seems to be the amount of homework. [Parents say] that sometimes the dual language learners receive more homework than the gifted and talented kids” (Calas, 2014). Heavy and difficult homework in Spanish can be frustrating for families who don’t have Spanish at home. As Virginia shared, “A lot of the English-speaking parents who didn’t have Spanish background to help when the kids came home from school to do homework, they were always complaining about how hard it was trying to help with the homework” (Virginia, School 3, January 24, 2014). As Terri shared, “…all of the Spanish homework, all the instructions were in Spanish. And because they don't speak Spanish, it would take us quite a bit of time to sort through what was supposed to happen” (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014). Apart from struggling with the language came the extra burden of the extended time needed to decipher homework neither the parent nor the child could understand. Carolyn described it like this: “We couldn’t do it. It was taking the entire weekend to do one page of homework” (Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014). In fact, a main reason Carolyn opted not to continue a DLBE program for her child was due to academic pressures such as difficult homework. Struggling to support children with homework is also emblematic of parents’ general frustration with not being able to support their children’s Spanish learning at home (see section 4.2.1.a). As previously mentioned, a major way currently-enrolled families moderated difficulties with homework or Spanish was by seeking outside support. Yet parents should also be able to seek support from schools. Previous
research establishes the importance of a well-developed home-school connection for children’s success in DLBE programs (see for example Moll, 2007; Gerena, 2010; see also section 2.1.4). The following paragraph will show, however, that parents who sought support from schools for their children’s Spanish learning usually received none.

*Not enough support for Spanish*

Half of all families interviewed for this research – both former and currently-enrolled – stated that their child’s DLBE program did not focus enough on Spanish in general, and/or provided insufficient support for Spanish acquisition by English-speakers. What they most often mentioned was that the general school culture seemed to stress English learning: more English was taught during the school day, bilingual substitute or “specials” teachers were unavailable, linguistic interactions outside of class were in English, and extracurricular activities (including extra academic support) were only available in English. With this emphasis on English comes a de-emphasis on Spanish, as Bonnie shared: “I guess my biggest negative is that I think there's a lot of false advertising going on. It's not 50-50; it's definitely 75-25, and every year it gets less and less...It’s all in English, and my biggest thing is that I would like more Spanish” (Bonnie, Schools 2 and 3, March 21, 2014). Having had three children go through DLBE programs at two different schools, Bonnie’s perspective is valuable because she bears witness to a recent trend another mother describes as the “attrition of Spanish” (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). Bonnie, like many other parents, believes that schools are extending instructional time in English and limiting instructional time in Spanish. As Greyson told me, “…the English education and grading is still the primary focus, and, in fact, this year because the teacher has some students who are still struggling with their
English, she’s put much more emphasis on the English instruction than the Spanish instruction” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Because DLBE programs in NYC are funded by the Department of English Language Learners and Student Support (DELLSS, formerly the Office of ELLs) and part of the City’s effort to improve educational opportunities for EBL students, they typically focus on the needs of students designated “ELL” rather than majority language speakers – and teachers and administrators believe that EBL students need more time in English in order to do well on English-medium tests. While the needs of EBL students should be prioritized in DLBE programs, emphasizing English instruction may not be the correct approach to ensure education equity for these students or for their non-EBL peers. As previously detailed, prior studies reveal that all students in DLBE programs who receive more instruction in the minority language are more successful at developing bilingualism and more successful academically overall (see section 2.4.1). For this reason, Flores (2015, Aug. 10) and others argue that building on the “already existing rich linguistic repertoire” of EBL students is “the most effective way” to support them academically in meeting the demands of new common core standards. Additionally, Brisk (2006) points out that worrying about not teaching enough English in the United States is “ironic” given its dominance in this nation and globally; if anything, she argues, bilingual programs should emphasize and protect minority languages (199). Finally, limiting instructional time in English and emphasizing achievement on English-medium tests is problematic for NLES children in DLBE programs because it limits opportunities to practice their developing language and deemphasizes the importance of bilingualism. In this study, for instance,
parents described how not having enough Spanish at school factored significantly into leaving a DLBE program.

As many of the parents shared with me, a lack of support for Spanish at school caused them to discontinue their child’s participation. Diane, for instance, felt forced to remove her child because, as she explained it, his first and second grade teachers had focused so little on Spanish that he was unable to keep up with grade-level work in both languages by grade three (Diane, School 3, March 11, 2014). Margaret shared how one of her children had been similarly held back by insufficient exposure to Spanish in kindergarten:

[My child] had a really good first grade teacher that really pushed the Spanish but I think he found that hard because too much English had been used in the program during kindergarten. Whereas if he had started off from day one being all Spanish, it would have been easier for him. (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014)

For children with limited home exposure to Spanish, school time is often their only opportunity to learn the language. When children do not have sufficient support for Spanish at school, parents worry it may hold them back in other areas and are more likely to take them out of DLBE programs. Lack of school support also puts the onus on parents to seek supplemental Spanish instruction for their children if they need it, and many parents are unwilling or unable to go to these lengths – particularly when there is no vital communicative or cultural need for bilingualism in Spanish. As one parent described, her NLES friend whose daughter was in the DLBE program at School 3 and struggling in Spanish was advised by the teacher to “hire a tutor,” but instead chose to drop out (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). This statement illustrates a larger concern
expressed by parents, which is how schools are either unwilling or unable to provide supplementary instructional support for children learning Spanish in DLBE programs.

De Jong and Howard (2009) point out the importance of scaffolding instruction in DLBE programs to both meet language learning goals and give students access to content in the developing language. Yet many NLES parents interviewed for this study, whether current or former parents of DLBE students, complained that their children were not being sufficiently supported as they developed Spanish – by teachers, by the school, or because of an English-dominated curriculum. Parents mentioned requesting help for their children through the “extended day” programs at their schools, free or low cost afterschool opportunities for children to “explore new interests, get extra support, and supplement what is being taught during the school day” (Center for NYC Affairs, 2015). Schools often use “extended day” programs to catch students up and prepare them for State exams; hence, very little is offered in the line of supplemental Spanish instruction for students already at grade level in English. Greyson noted how problematic this was for his son, who struggled in Spanish and was receiving supplemental Spanish instruction three days per week in 2nd grade, but was shut out of these classes when, the next year, the teacher switched the extended day instruction to all-English to support the 3rd grade tests (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Lack of institutional supports like encouraging teachers and supplemental language instruction can make second language acquisition difficult for NLES children. It can also frustrate parents, and make them feel that the school is not doing enough to meet their children’s needs. Because the parents who left DLBE programs did not, as a general rule, seek support for Spanish outside of school, not having in-school support raises the likelihood they will pull their children
out: the two factors, really, go hand-in-hand. Parents also cited an increasingly high stakes testing-driven curriculum as a reason their children received less support in Spanish than they needed for optimal success, as examined in continuation.

Focus on testing

In New York State, children in grades 3-8 are given yearly State tests in Mathematics and English Language Arts. These examinations are aligned to the Common Core learning standards and “intended to provide students, families, educators, and the public better measures of student proficiency in the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college and careers” (NYSED, 2015). Student test results are a major factor used to determine student promotion and evaluate teacher effectiveness and school services (NYCDOE, 2015b). Schools are understandably concerned that students perform well on these assessments in order to meet mandated accountability measures. Parents of children in DLBE programs, on the other hand, are concerned that the focus on testing is making their children’s DLBE classes less bilingual. They describe how, because of testing, “the Spanish is beginning to get squeezed out” (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014). As described in the preceding paragraphs, when children are not exposed to sufficient Spanish in school – especially when they have little exposure at home – they may not be able to do grade level work in the second language. Yet teachers were increasingly delivering instruction all or mainly in English because “English is the language of high stakes” (Varghese & Park, 2010, p. 78). Parents also noticed how the testing focus has led to a modification of curriculum in DLBE programs that is less centered on culture and language and more on acquiring skills needed to do well on standardized exams.
In 2014, the district that houses the three schools in this study adopted “ReadyGEN,” a K-6 balanced literacy curriculum created by the Pearson Company. This curriculum focuses on “preparing young children for colleges and careers” by exposing them to “authentic texts” (Pearson Education, Inc., 2015). These “authentic texts,” many of which are non-fiction, are academically advanced and only available in English; the curriculum itself is likewise only available in English. The texts were not chosen, nor was the curriculum put together, with bilingual or multicultural students in mind. Research cautions that for bilingual students to be most successful, they need “culturally relevant” texts they can connect to and which celebrate their cultural experiences as well as extend their cultural learning (Ebe, 2010). Yet I heard from parents again and again that not only was the curriculum no longer culturally focused, but that the pressures of the curriculum were so intense that Spanish was used less and less in DLBE classes. This caused some to question whether the DLBE program was any different from a regular education class: “When I heard that the teacher that they had was putting Spanish way on the back burner, I was like, ‘What’s the point?’” (Virginia). Seeing so little Spanish in the DLBE program made Virginia’s choice to transfer her child to a charter school easier. Others felt similarly. In Carolyn’s case, her son was “burning out” trying to manage both learning Spanish and regular class work, so opting out of a DLBE program presented a way to seek at least partial reprieve from these extra stressors: “I think now in transitioning him into third grade we’ve been a little more likely to ease up on pursuing dual language because the Common Core curriculum has gotten so intense” (Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014). Even current parents described how DLBE programs have lost some of their special appeal as extras such as field trips,
celebrations, or extracurricular activities get pushed aside at the service of test preparation. It has been widely documented locally and nationally that “[t]he intensity of testing means that less time is being spent on challenging and creative teaching or teaching subject matter that is not tested” (García & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 109). Parents in this study shared the concern that high stakes testing-driven curriculum and instruction takes time away from language and cultural instruction in DLBE programs. For former families, this tempered the “guilt” they felt upon taking their children out of DLBE programs (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). For both former and current families, the lack of Spanish in the new curriculum made it increasingly difficult for their children to attain bilingualism or reach grade level standards in Spanish (see also section 4.3.).

Many parents in this study indicated that their child’s Spanish development was not sufficiently supported at school. Half of all parents were concerned about this. Currently-enrolled families, however, were more able to mitigate this deficiency through outside resources and family connections to Spanish. Former families were more likely to stress how difficult it was for them to help their children with little or no Spanish at home. Thus, while lack of school support for Spanish was a frustration factor for many parents it was more likely to cause families to pull their children from DLBE programs if they had no ability or made no effort to support the Spanish at home.

4.2.2. Institutional and Family Concerns

The families in this research were not unlike the middle class families across the nation who, as research describes, are increasingly opting back into local, urban public schools – as long as they meet certain standards for safety and academics (see Posey-Maddox, 2014; Cucchiara & Horovat, 2009). In this study, families prioritized
institutions with certain characteristics (see section 2.1.3), indicating these were more important than a DLBE program: “I guess ultimately those other things would have trumped that, if I felt it was a school with a bilingual program but there was horrible communication and it wasn't safe and all those other things, yeah they would trump that in the end” (Beth, School 3, November 6, 2014). When schools or programs operated differently than parents had imagined, or major concerns arose with institutional practices, the NLES parents in this study were willing to pull their children from DLBE programs, as the following sections will relate.

4.2.2.a. Program Instability

The parents in this study whose children left DLBE programs expressed concern over the stability of both the schools and the programs themselves. This is understandable given that the parents at School 1 and School 3 who had been there for longest described how those schools’ DLBE programs had at one time been shuttered due to these very concerns (see for instance Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012; Diane, School 3, March 11, 2014). Stability is an issue for schools, who want to maintain the solid reputation of their programs (Baker, 2006). And especially in the case of DLBE programs, program stability is critical for optimal language development in both English and Spanish for all students who participate (see Howard, et. al., 2007). Schools are accordingly concerned with student retention in DLBE programs, at least through fifth grade. However, as respondents to this study indicated, if programs seem unstable they will not keep their children in them. Virginia, for instance, told how she placed her child in the DLBE program at School 1 “wholeheartedly being committed to the concept but, in the end...I did feel sort of bad about leaving the program. But in retrospect, seeing the
way they handled some things, I felt like they weren’t holding up their end of the bargain” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). The families who left for reasons of program instability often described, as Virginia did, how schools failed to deliver what the parents interviewed thought had been promised. Most commonly, these issues were expressed in terms of teacher turnover, student attrition, administrative leadership, and program availability.

_Administration and program stability_

Administrative decisions can have a powerful effect on school culture and teacher morale. As Howard, et al. (2007) point out, the most effective DLBE programs are those with strong, visionary leaders who not only supervise but also advocate for the program and help in its planning and coordination (27). In the case of the schools in this study, where there was a good relationship between parents and administration, the DLBE programs were the most stable. At School 2, the only school in the study from which parents did not remove a child, parents praised administration, saying the principal is “fabulous” (Bonnie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014) and “really supportive of the staff” (Leslie, School 2 and 3, March 21, 2014). The principal herself acknowledged that this good relationship affects program retention rates for NLES students: “they do not pull [their children] out, and they are so supportive” (Principal of School 2, May 27, 2014). On the other hand, parents at Schools 1 and 3 described how difficulties with administration colored their child’s experience and made them consider leaving DLBE programs (see section 2.2.b). One very concrete example of how this affected program stability was previously alluded to: DLBE programs at schools 1 and 3 were at one point shut down by the school administration. One parent whose child was at School 3 when
this occurred told me about her experience. Diane said that after a change in administration at School 3, many DLBE teachers left or were fired (“the turnover was ridiculous there”), and “the program fell apart” (Diane, School 3, March 11, 2014). In her case, her child missed out on so much Spanish instruction during that transition year, he was unable to continue in a DLBE program in the following grade because he was so far behind. Administrative decisions can profoundly affect children’s school experiences.

Administrative decisions also affect teachers’ experiences. Parents mentioned how administrators failed to provide enough time or support to teachers in developing bilingual curriculum after the school district adopted the ReadyGEN literacy curriculum (see section 2.1.b). In fact, adequate and appropriate instructional materials and quality professional development for bilingual teachers have typically been lacking in a majority of bilingual programs in NYC (Mastro, et al. 2000; p. 19). This affects the way teachers are able to provide instruction; as parents in this study mentioned, without the Spanish-language literacy materials or time to adapt English-medium materials in order to use “ReadyGEN” in a bilingual class, teachers taught “all in English” during the 2013-2014 school year when the new curriculum was adopted (Bonnie, 2 and 3, March 21, 2014). When school administration is unsupportive to teachers, they may not enjoy working at the school and/or opt to work elsewhere. This was of particular concern at School 1. Even insideschools.org, a project of the Center for NYC Affairs at The New School and a popular website accessed by NYC parents and organizations looking for authoritative, independent information on NYC’s public schools, reports the “downside” of the school is “some friction between the principal and staff. A majority of teachers responding to the Learning Environment Survey said the principal is an ineffective
manager and nearly half said they didn't feel supported by her." Administration had a strong effect on teacher retention rates at the schools described in this study: at Schools 1 and 3, the relationship between teachers and administration is not the best (especially at School 1), and teacher turnover is high, while at School 2, teacher turnover is very low and the teacher-administration relationship is excellent. And as parents related, instability in the school’s teaching staff can cause DLBE programs to suffer.

*Teachers and program stability*

Virginia told me she began considering removing her child from the DLBE program when her son’s teacher told her he was leaving because he was so unhappy with the principal: “when I heard that, it was like bells going off and red flags. I was just like, ‘I’m sick of all these great teachers leaving this program. It makes me feel very uncomfortable. It makes me feel like something is not right’” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). Parents who took their children out of DLBE programs were very concerned with teacher attrition. As Virginia mentioned, it made her feel like something was wrong at the school. Greyson noted that when his child got a new teacher at the beginning of 2nd grade, continuity and communication with families was disrupted (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Parents also became concerned with teacher quality, when less experienced teachers replaced those who left. Margaret claims that having a “weaker teacher” made it so her child didn’t learn enough Spanish to keep up with his class so she pulled him from the program (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014). The literature does address the link between teacher quality and student outcomes. Howard, et al. (2007) stresses, for instance, the importance of experienced teachers and program stability

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16 This quotation is not directly cited in order to protect the anonymity of the school and that of the parents in this study who describe their children’s experiences attending the school.
teachers with high levels of expertise in language acquisition and classroom instruction on student achievement in DLBE programs (see section 4.1.3.c). Yet it may not be as simple to find effective DLBE teachers as parents might assume. Recent data indicates, “the certification areas with the largest percent of full-time equivalent teachers without appropriate certification in New York State were bilingual education (28%) and bilingual special education (19%)” (Woodard, 2011, p. 1). With the City’s push to open more DLBE programs (see Wiener, 2014; Zimmer, 2015), the shortage of properly certified bilingual teachers only stands to grow. As previously discussed, good teachers were one of the very special aspects that attracted parents to DLBE programs initially (see section 4.1.3.c). Thus, an important finding of this research is that retention of high quality, certified teachers is of utmost importance to the stability of DLBE programs. When good teachers leave DLBE programs, it disrupts students’ educational experience, communication with families, and parents’ perceptions of the programs, all of which threatens program sustainability. The next paragraph will relate that families believe disruption in the student population can also threaten programs.

Classmates and program stability

While one of the features that attracted some of the families in this study to DLBE programs was the relatively small class size, they also recognized that the smaller class size had to do with students leaving the program and not being replaced by others. When too much of this attrition was from other NLES families like theirs, they were concerned. As mentioned, NLES families felt more comfortable using DLBE programs when they encountered higher numbers of ‘like’ peers for their children (see section 4.1.2.a). Mandy described, for instance, how her NLES friend pulled her daughter from
the DLBE program in its prior iteration at School 1 because, “[she] was the only non-Hispanic kid in her class by the time she left” (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012). Families like Mandy’s actually associated the lack of buy-in from NLES families with the initial failure of the DLBE program at School 1. Knowing this history makes one parent skittish when he sees NLES families exit the program now:

So after kindergarten, three of the English-only parents pulled their kids out to go into the TAG\(^{17}\) program. Now that’s their prerogative, and that’s their decision, but to me it threatens the program. It’s like, well, great, if all the white, yuppie parents pull out of the program so that they can be in TAG then they’re gonna stop this program again, and then where are all the kids who have stayed committed to the program [going to go]?” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012)

In fact, part of his anger at being pulled out of the program stemmed from his child being one of the last NLESs left in the program – and the feeling that his child was not supported enough to be allowed to remain. The literature does demonstrate a link between the involvement of NLES families in DLBE programs and both student success and program sustainability, justifying Greyson’s concern (see for example Craig, 1995; Cloud, et. al, 2000; see also section 4.1.2.a). Therefore, when NLES families leave DLBE programs, parents begin to worry, as Virginia had prior to pulling her child from a DLBE program:

It was a very small group. I think they started at 25 kids and then each year people left. When he was there in third grade, there were only 19 kids in the

\(^{17}\) Please note that School 1 has one DLBE and one G&T (“TAG”) class per grade, so when parents at this school only pull their children out of a DLBE class, the gifted class is in the same building.
class...which for the program it’s not as good, it’s a question about maintaining
the vitality of the program, then.” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014)

Like Greyson, Virginia also noted that the majority of those who stayed were LSSs, while
those who left tended to be NLESs. When too many families, especially other NLES
families, pulled their children out of these programs, former families indicated they no
longer felt the programs were sustainable.

Additionally, parents whose children left DLBE programs shared that a lack of
connection with other families influenced their choice to leave. As described previously,
NLESs in this study more typically described significant friendships with other NLES
parents in the class (see section 4.1.2.a). Thus, when NLES families left, they felt they
lacked a peer group. When families felt linguistically and culturally isolated from the
other families in the class, they were more likely to consider removing their children
from DLBE programs. This was mainly expressed in terms of an ability to connect to or
communicate with LSS families (60% of former families mentioned it). Victoria shared
how this played into her family’s decision to transfer their child to a G&T school:

If anything, it would be the ability for, not just her, it’s not just for the kids, but
it’s also parents being able to socialize with one another. And so, we would
sometimes be walking to school and we would run into one of her classmates but
the mom would only speak Spanish; we couldn't communicate. And so, maybe I
could set up a play date with her, maybe I couldn’t, but then you’re restricted to
only half the class. It really limits your social circle, from a parents’ level.
(Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014)
The separation between families in DLBE whose children are designated ‘English-speaking’ and ‘Spanish-speaking’ is documented in the research literature (see Fitts, 2006). In this study, this separation was shown to have an effect on parents’ feeling of community for themselves and their children within a DLBE program.

Continuity and program stability

One final reason parents cited that relates to program sustainability was the continuity of programs. Among families who opted out, the availability of satisfactory options at which to continue their child’s participation in a DLBE program caused 60% of them to leave for different reasons:

- Carolyn and Vincent: Didn’t continue the program because it wasn’t available at a convenient feeder school for grade 3.
- Diane: Couldn’t continue the program after administration closed it at School 3.
- Greyson: Couldn’t continue the program after his child was asked to leave because there is only one bilingual class at School 1.
- Bonnie and Bridget: Either pulled a child out or didn’t choose the DLBE middle school because it was seen as an unsatisfactory option.

When parents had difficulty continuing DLBE programs, they cited two main factors: (1) availability of other options within the school; and (2) availability of satisfactory options at other schools. Regarding the first concern, because the DLBE programs described in this study are ‘strands’ within a general education setting, when students must exit the programs for any reason they often don’t have a different bilingual option. Greyson, whose son was asked to leave the program given his behavioral concerns couldn’t be managed by the teacher, said, “the negative part of it is this limited – and I’m sure that’s
part of all the other niche programs – is when you only have one class for each grade, there’s no flexibility, there’s no options...there’s no back up” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). He would have wanted to keep his child in a DLBE class but because there was not another section available, he could not. Other families who left felt similarly, like they would have liked to continue DLBE but felt they could not. Their reason was different, however; they cited a dearth of convenient local options.

As previously addressed, convenience was high on parents’ priority list when they chose DLBE programs (see section 4.1.2.c). Both Vincent and Carolyn opted out of a DLBE program once their children completed 2nd grade at School 3 (the last grade there) in favor of a more convenient local school, which does not offer the program. Though their children were automatically accepted into School 2 for 3rd grade, both families chose a different neighborhood feeder school (we will call it School 4) that does not offer a DLBE program. Because School 4 is much closer to where these families live, it was a more convenient choice. As Carolyn shared, “being able to walk [my child] to school every day is more of a priority for us” (Carolyn, School 3, May 7, 2014). Even Vincent, who served as a powerful advocate for DLBE programs among his peers (see section 4.1.2.a) and petitioned community representatives to start a DLBE program at School 4 so that School 3 students could continue it there, chose convenience over a DLBE program in the end (Vincent, School 3, August 27, 2014). While not continuing a DLBE program in 3rd grade can be seen as a lack of personal commitment to bilingual education, it is a more accurate demonstration of how outside factors such as continuity at a convenient local option can tip the scales in determining parents’ choices.
Attractive options for continuing DLBE programs in middle school were also an issue for parents. As previously mentioned, two families (Bridget and Bonnie) did not continue DLBE after 5th grade or opted out in 6th because of unsatisfactory options for DLBE in middle school. Because 10 other families mentioned they would not consider DLBE in middle school, it is not unfair to suggest this number might be higher had more children in this study reached this level in their education. However, not continuing a DLBE program in middle school has to do with myriad factors. First, it is unique to even have a middle school option, and most previous research counts children as having completed a DLBE program if they remain in through grade five (see Baker, 2006). Second, parents in NYC must apply to middle schools in 5th grade, and have numerous choices in-zone, citywide, and borough-wide: they often go for the choice with the best reputation for getting their child into a good high school and onto a good college. The local middle school with a DLBE program does not precisely have this reputation. It is large and overcrowded (300 students over capacity, according to The Center for NYC Affairs, 2015a), and while for Owl Hill residents it might be geographically convenient, for Partridge Hill residents it is not. Additionally, local residents don’t hold it in high estimation, as Joy, a teacher in the neighborhood for many years, shared with me. She said that because the school is not considered a safe school, she wouldn’t send her child there regardless of whether they had a DLBE program: “my number one concern is safety for my son. If I can’t find a school where I feel comfortable and my son is going to be happy and flourish, then dual is not going to be my priority” (Joy, School 2, August 22, 2014). In fact, Bonnie, “a long-time supporter” of DLBE, pulled her child out of the Owl Hill middle school because it is “big and
chaotic and full of middle school pressures” and he was not thriving there (Bonnie, School 2, March 21, 2014). Again, while not continuing a DLBE program in middle school may be seen as not being committed to bilingual education, multiple institutional and logistical factors play into parents’ decision-making as well.

To summarize, parents who opted out felt DLBE program stability could be threatened by administrative decisions, teacher or student attrition, and program continuity. These concerns should also be considered ‘risk factors’ for the continued participation of NLES families (see section 4.3). The next section will discuss in more detail the administrative factors that caused families to leave DLBE programs.

4.2.2.b. Administration Matters

The parents in the DLBE program believe they are more involved than other families in the local schools, and also feel it is more important for families with children in DLBE programs to be involved than in a mainstream class (see section 4.1.3.b). This involvement included participation in the School Leadership Team (SLT) or the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), as well as communication with teachers or administrators via phone, email, or personal visits. As prior research indicates, such involvement gives parents, “access to knowledge about school and disproportionate influence with administrators and teachers” (McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999, p. 618). Not surprisingly, when home-school communication became difficult, or contact with school officials broke down, parents considered pulling their children from DLBE programs.

*Ineffective school communication with parents*

Families used to having a certain level of access and influence become frustrated when schools are not open to parent participation or limit communication with parents.
(Billingham & Kimelberg, 2013). When parents in the current research described their frustrations with home-school communication, they brought up not being able to contact teachers or administration and not having clear information about how the program functions. To begin, former families described how they were not informed on how the program actually functions prior to enrollment. As Margaret told me, “I went up there, and the orientation was mostly in Spanish...going in, we weren’t 100% sure what to expect” (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014). Another parent said that, “I probably should have done more research” prior to enrolling her child in a DLBE program because in many ways participating in the program ended up “not being a good experience for my daughter, and it wasn’t a good experience for us” (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014). Because these parents understood DLBE programs to function differently from how, in reality, they do, they ended up transferring their children to G&T programs. This finding is corroborated by prior research, which suggests that when schools fail to clearly communicate the rationale underlying DLBE program design, parents develop or maintain erroneous expectations for student outcomes (Doherty, 2008, p. 244). Parents also indicated schools did not communicate well with them once their children were in the programs. Greyson described how at School 1, “there’s almost zero communication between the school and the parents...It makes it challenging when you’re kind of floating free on some of this stuff” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). In his case, an insufficient level of communication with the teacher allowed his child’s behavioral issues to escalate to such a degree that there was no other choice but to remove him from the class (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Had these issues been addressed from the beginning, there might have been a better chance at finding a solution other than
transferring out. Because so many parents in the study mentioned frustration over not being able to communicate well with their child’s teacher – for example, via email, or at Parent-Teacher conferences – it is clear that while Greyson’s experience was extreme, his concerns are not unique. In sum, lack of home-school communication endangered NLES children’s continued participation in a DLBE program when they were unclear about the program goals or were not updated on their child’s performance or class expectations. These issues cause annoyance and difficulty for parents; however, as currently-enrolled families described, they could be mitigated by connecting with other families or being more persistent about engaging into the school community. What could not be mitigated, according to parents whose children were taken out of DLBE programs, were serious concerns with program administration, as the following will show.

Conflict with administration

For some parents whose children left DLBE programs, a conflict with administration was a reason given for their choice. They described having concerns that were brushed aside by administration, or feeling that administrative decisions were not in their family’s best interest. Research supports the idea that parents expect school leaders to address legitimate concerns they have with, for instance, teacher performance or their children’s academic issues, and become concerned when these issues are not handled appropriately (McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999). And when their concerns were appropriately addressed, the parents in this study were indeed willing to move beyond large or small issues that arose during the course of their children’s schooling. At School 2, for instance, when parents had concerns about too much English being used in the curriculum, the principal met with them, listened to their concerns, and subsequently
made changes (see Bonnie, School 2, March 21, 2014; Principal of School 2, May 27, 2014). On the other hand, parents at School 1 were disregarded by administration when they had concerns, which they said made them feel pushed out of the school. One example is Virginia, who told me that, had administration handled her concerns about teachers leaving the DLBE program with more “warmth,” she, “would not have applied to the charter school” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). Her decision to change her son to a different school, “was more about the administration, ultimately. I can’t say that it was really about the program” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). In Greyson’s case, administration made the decision to move his child out of the DLBE program without sufficiently involving the family or trying other avenues prior to the move (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). Just as with Virginia, the move was not one he looked for but rather predicated upon how administration handled his family’s concerns, and when the decision was made to switch his son’s class, “that just killed us, that crushed us” (Greyson, School 1, February 25, 2012). These two families, like Diane whose child could not continue a DLBE program after the disruption of an administration change at School 3 (see section 4.2.2.a), felt like administration caused their negative experience with a DLBE program. And, like Diane, they would have stayed had they been given other options, but the way administration acted toward them made this impossible. The way administration addressed families’ concerns as they arose had a significant effect on the retention rates of NLES families in DLBE programs.

To summarize, parents who took their children out of DLBE programs expressed concern over the administration of DLBE programs, exclusively at School 1 and School 3. These concerns included a failure of administration to communicate appropriately
with families and a conflict between administration and parents. When parents feel alienated by administration – which in many ways represents the overall school culture – they are more likely to seek different placements for their children.

4.2.2.c. The Grass is Greener

One of the overarching themes of this research is the idea that parents in NYC have myriad options when it comes to their children’s schooling, DLBE being but one of these options. Especially in the case of more exclusive options like G&T or charter schools, acceptance is lottery-based so not guaranteed. Because these options are so desirable, some families will maintain their child’s name on a waitlist for a G&T or charter school, hoping a seat will open up during the school year, or reapply every year – even when they already have a seat in a regular school or a DLBE program. In the current research, families did accept placements elsewhere after some time in DLBE programs for a variety of reasons, typically because another school was a preferable environment or seemed a better fit for their child.

**Got a preferred placement**

Many parents, as I have discussed, choose DLBE as an alternative to a program like G&T, even conflating the two educational programs (see sections 4.1.2.c and 4.1.3.b). This assumption may lead to erroneous expectations about program outcomes, as well as indicates parents may prefer a different type of environment yet chose DLBE because it was the best option at the time. As one mother told me,

Another major reason – this is to be 100% honest – that I put them in the dual language program is I was not aware of the Talented and Gifted program at School 1...And I felt that by putting [my daughter] into the dual language class it was going to be an extra challenge. Hopefully she would be in with a group of
kids where the parents were more interested in the education of their children.

(Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014)

Margaret put her first three children into the DLBE program only to pull each of them out either one or two years in, as soon as they received a placement in a G&T program. While she says she recognizes the value and enrichment of a DLBE education, ultimately the gifted program proved most appealing – and was, in fact, what she preferred from the start. According to some respondents, Meredith’s willingness to accept a DLBE spot until a preferred option came along is not unusual. As Cathy described, “There were probably six or seven neighborhood families like me that were interested. Most of them dropped out the second they ‘won the lottery’ at a charter school or got into a G&T because...they were intrigued by [the DLBE program], but didn’t trust it” (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). So what is it about DLBE that some NLES families do not trust – yet still choose it for their children? Even six currently-enrolled families shared that they have considered removing their children from a DLBE program to place them in a G&T class. Meredith shared how, “every year we think about switching [our child] out. Every year we wonder if we’re doing the right thing, every year we apply, we take the [G&T] test, and we’re like, ‘well, what do we do now?’” (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). There are many factors that go into this decision, such as excessive homework in a DLBE program (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014). Other families view a G&T program (or charter school) as a convenient way to lock in a good school for a longer academic trajectory; a few parents who transferred to a G&T program shared how it would allow their children to continue at the same school until 8th grade, rather than just through 2nd (at School 3) or 5th (at School 1; no parents
transferred to different programs at School 2). Sometimes, parents simply related how, “this better opportunity came up” (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014). As Victoria, who transferred her child out of the DLBE program at School 3 into a G&T program, put it, “Well, if we didn't get that letter, she would still be in the program now. We weren't actively seeking another place to send her” (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014). The letter she referred to was the letter telling her that her child had been taken off the waitlist and was offered a seat at a G&T school. Families prefer other environments over DLBE programs for a variety of reasons, often citing simply that another type of program or another school was a better fit for their child.

*Another school is a better fit*

When making school choices for their children, parents in this study overwhelmingly reported seeking select options rather than mainstream options. They described certain criteria for what they look for in a school, such as positive communication and enrichment (see section 2.1.3). If DLBE programs cease to meet these standards, parents look elsewhere, and if they find preferred options, they will select them instead. This was Virginia’s case: she pulled her child out of School 1’s DLBE program when administration failed to address her concerns about teachers, opting for a school where she as a parent feels more respected. In her words, “[t]here’s better communication from the school. It’s just a happier environment...the overall feeling, that I feel like I can speak my mind more openly there and be heard and be responded to” (Virginia, School 1, January 24, 2014). Other families selected schools more aligned to their child’s interest. Terri, for example, transferred her daughter into a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) G&T school because, “her favorite subjects at school were math and science...so we just decided to make a leap and we’ve been really
happy with the new school so far, and she's happy. She's much happier” (Terri, School 3, October 2, 2014). This family chose an academic program more aligned to their child’s interests (math and science versus language). Another family also emphasized that their decision to take their child out of a DLBE program was based on finding a preferred alternative: “It wasn't so much removing her from the program as much as, ‘Well, this is a different, maybe better opportunity in the long term for her’” (Victoria, School 3, May 8, 2014). When a program is one of many options, parents may be willing to try it out while still remaining open to exploring alternatives (the ‘see how it goes’ attitude described in section 4.1.2.c). For the parents who opted out of DLBE programs for other schools or programs, the other options met more of the criteria they were looking for in a school: Virginia got better communication, Terri found a better academic fit, and Carolyn and Vincent, as previously discussed, got a more convenient commute. This shows that a choice is not always about moving away from bilingual education; sometimes, it is about moving into a better environment for the particular child or family (see section 4.3).

As this section has described, parents who opted out expressed a number of institutional concerns that led them to pursue other options for their children’s education. When parents had abiding concerns over the commitment of administration, teachers, and other families to the success of the program, for instance, they were likely to opt out. If they looked for different environments for their children, they typically pursued places where they as a family felt better supported (for instance, home-school communication was better) or their child’s individual needs were more appropriately met. There was also a contingent of parents willing to try out DLBE programs until a
better option presented itself, which families in the study describe as more typical of NLESs than other groups.

To conclude, multiple considerations affected why NLES families left DLBE programs. For some, it was a choice: they wanted a different type of program, for example, or they felt their child was not doing well in a DLBE class. For others, their decision to leave felt forced: some described being pushed out by administration, or cited not being able to find a suitable place to continue the child’s DLBE education after grade five. What those who left had in common was that a number of factors contributed to their leaving. These factors included isolation – from administration, teachers, and other parents; frustration – with excessive homework and children’s resistance; and/or failure – of their child to learn Spanish, of themselves or the school to support Spanish, or of the program in meeting their expectations. Yet families who left were not the only ones who experienced these concerns. Currently-enrolled families had some of the same worries, and a startling majority (72%) shared that they had considered taking their child out of a DLBE program at some point for various reasons. As the following section will caution, this relates to the sustainability of DLBE programs because the concerns of currently-enrolled families can be risk factors for program attrition.
4.3. Commitment to DLBE programs and Risk Factors for Attrition

DLBE programs need NLES families to buy in if they are to be successful, but program sustainability truly rests on NLES families’ continued participation in and support for these programs. Interest in DLBE programs among NLES families has rapidly increased in recent years, but it takes more than interest to keep them afloat; families must remain in the programs typically at least until the child completes 5th grade. As previous research has indicated, participation in DLBE programs by NLESs can bolster their good reputation and help these programs remain viable for the long term – when families remain committed (see for instance Howard, et. al, 2007). Thus, while understanding what makes families select or leave DLBE programs is important, it may be even more critical to understand what the findings of this dissertation tell us about why families keep their children in the programs (commitment). The section in continuation describes factors that can contribute to program attrition (risk factors), which are based on findings gathered from the 72% of current families who have considered leaving a DLBE program at one point or another. Subsequently, these and other key findings are summarized and compared in order to describe factors that may contribute to higher retention rates of NLESs in DLBE programs.

4.3.1. Risk factors for DLBE program attrition

As mentioned beforehand, a majority of families in the study (72%), even many who describe themselves as highly committed to bilingual education or bilingualism, expressed doubts about their children’s DLBE programs. Families cited the following

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18 While DLBE programs really require the participation and support of families of all language backgrounds, the current research focuses on NLES families and, as such, focuses on factors that dissuade or bolster their retention.
concerns as reasons they would leave a DLBE program, and they include factors outside a parent’s control (such as a child’s liking a DLBE class) and others that are controlled by the school institution (such as enrichment or language classes). These risk factors are divided into *if / then* and *existing* concerns – that is, “*if* X were to happen *then* I would pull my child from a DLBE program” versus “*this problem exists* in my child’s school so I am considering taking her out of the DLBE class.” Overall, the findings in continuation describe why current families might leave DLBE programs:

*If / then risk factors*

1. **Children’s happiness:** Parents said that their child’s happiness was a primary consideration when making any educational decision. If children indicated they did not like or were not happy in the DLBE class, parents would remove them: “He’s too young to be miserable in school. I want him to be happy and not to get disillusioned with school or not wanting to go or anything like that...if he is truly miserable and unhappy, I would say, ‘okay, fine. We won't do it, then’” (Sharon, School 1, June 9, 2014). For many parents, children’s happiness trumps learning another language: “It would be great if she was bilingual, but that’s not...I just want her to like school” (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). Parents said that if their children showed resistance or unhappiness with a DLBE program, they would look for different options.

2. **Children’s personality:** The parents in this study suggested that some children were better suited to the DLBE class than others. It was not uncommon for families in this study to have multiple children all in different schools or different programs as a result. Bridget, for instance, has her third child in DLBE and her
second in G&T at School 1, while her first child is in G&T at another school (Bridget, School 1, April 11, 2012). In another case, because his daughter seemed to catch on to Spanish more quickly than his son, Vincent thought maybe girls did better in DLBE programs than boys (Vincent, School 3, August 27, 2014). Margaret, who pulled three children from a DLBE program, said, “I’d like to emphasize the reasons for taking them out [of the DLBE program] was different for each child” (Margaret, School 1, June 9, 2014). Parents expressed that DLBE works well for some children but not for others, and if it was not the right fit for their child they would leave a DLBE program.

3. Children’s academic success: The parents also expressed the opinion that if their children struggled academically, they would not keep them in a DLBE program. Heather told me, “We always went into it with the outlook that if it didn't work out we could always put them into the regular education…if it was taking too much away from his regular school work, it wouldn't be that important for us to keep him in” (Heather, School 1, June 5, 2014). Three of the currently-enrolled families indicated that they have their children take the G&T test every year to make sure they are still doing well academically overall and keep options open (see for example Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). Parents say they would take their children from a DLBE program if they don’t learn enough Spanish and “start falling behind in everything” (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). Academic success was more important than DLBE program participation for many families.
4. **Parental workload:** Forty-two percent of current families shared that having a child in a DLBE program is hard work for them as parents. They shared, as previously mentioned, the struggles to support children at home with schoolwork in an unfamiliar language, and the extra effort they must put forth to hire tutors, for instance. When this workload seems too heavy, parents have considered taking their child out of a DLBE program. As Meredith mentioned, “I think it would be easier elsewhere, it would be easier all in English” (Meredith, School 1, February 6, 2012). Another parent, who will have to transfer her child to a new school in grade 3 because her current school is only preK-2, shared this: “I don’t know how much work it would take if we kept doing this program after second grade…. I’m seeing that the class seems to be the most valuable for people who already know Spanish. I don’t know if this is the ideal program to teach English-speakers Spanish” (Roxy School 3, March 6, 2014). Because of how surprising and difficult it has been to give her child the additional support needed to develop Spanish and do well in a DLBE program, Roxy said she will likely not continue after grade 2, even questioning whether such programs are right for families like hers. She also mentioned that it was something she had not known about prior to enrollment, which indicates some of the *if/then* risk factors may arise when NLES parents choose DLBE programs without wholly understanding either the program or how to support their child’s success.

As the preceding demonstrates, NLES parents are willing to stick with a DLBE program or try it out as long as their children are happy, doing well socially and academically, and the additional workload of a DLBE program does not put too much
pressure on the family. Many of the individuals quoted are recent joiners or were describing their thoughts about a DLBE program upon enrollment. The risk factors that follow are those expressed by current families who have had their child/ren in DLBE programs for a number of years but see changes or faults in the programs that are very concerning and make these programs less appealing to them and other NLES families:

**Existing risk factors**

1. **Focus on testing:** Half of all currently-enrolled parents stated that curriculum and instruction that is testing-driven has negatively impacted DLBE: “I think what's happened in [School 1] and a lot of schools across the board is these schools are obsessed with the testing, the ELA and the Math state tests, and the kids getting certain scores and teaching to those tests, and I think that's taken a toll on dual language” (Emily, School 1, April 7, 2014). As previously described, parents noted how it has impacted curricular decisions (adoption of ReadyGEN) and increased pressure on students (see section 2.1.b). In describing how this testing focus would affect their decision to move a child out of a DLBE program, however, parents mentioned two main areas:

(a) **Enrichment:** The parents in this study sought DLBE programs for their unique enrichment opportunities: cultural celebrations, in-depth cultural and language study, field trips, and more. However, families indicated that enrichment in DLBE programs increasingly seem lacking, because of the tests. As Linda described: “I think a lot of parents might say this, we’ve all noticed a big difference this year, totally nothing to do with the teachers, but with the Common Core…there just seems to be, in my opinion, such a
disincentive for teachers to do anything extra, that they’re just, like, weighed
down by the pressures of these new teacher inspections and the testing\textsuperscript{19} that
now seems to be snuck into kindergarten, first, and second grade via this
assessment” (Linda, School 1, March 20, 2014). Not having enrichment has
made current families consider taking their children out of DLBE programs,
particularly as it relates to the subsequent point.

(b) Spanish: NLES parents enroll their children in DLBE programs so they can
become bilingual in Spanish. Parents informed me, however, that DLBE
classes are increasingly less bilingual – especially in the upper grades.
Importantly, and unique to this study, NLES parents sought to make DLBE
programs more, not less bilingual – they considered including more Spanish
as key to their children’s success. As Robin remarked, “[my older daughter]
basically got no Spanish this year, and I’m pretty disappointed about that. In
fact, I’m thinking of testing my younger daughter for the gifted and talented in
second grade, and if [the Spanish] doesn’t improve, pulling her out of the
program. Because there’s no point being in the program if they’re not
speaking Spanish” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). Parents worry about
Spanish being “pushed to the side” (Tanya, School 1, August 13, 2014).
These parents and others shared how not enough consistent Spanish
instruction leads to their children falling behind in school – which as
previously established was a reason parents did, in fact, pull their children

\textsuperscript{19} The “teacher inspections” Linda refers to are the evaluations mandated by New York state governor
Andrew Cuomo’s 2013 revisions to the “Annual Professional Performance Review” that bases up to 20% of a
teacher’s evaluation on student test scores (NYSUT, 2015). The “testing” she refers to is the Common
Core Standards-aligned state tests put into place in NYC schools in 2012 (NYSED, 2015).
from DLBE programs (see section 4.2.1.a). Not enough support in Spanish affects bilingual language development and makes families feel less supported, increasing the risk NLES parents will pull their children from DLBE programs. Simplifying Spanish instruction or including less of it also negatively affects all students in DLBE programs: in programs with less Spanish, Latino EBLs do not stretch their linguistic and cognitive capabilities in their home language, and English-monolinguals do not achieve Spanish bilingualism by 4th or 5th grade (De Jong and Howard, 2009, p. 89).

2. **Program sustainability:** Just as former families mentioned, if current families witness significant changes to the program features they value – for instance, if teachers leave, other NLES leave, or administration changes/does not effectively address their concerns – they will pull their children out (see section 4.2.2.a.). Suffice to say, current and former families shared the same concerns relating to program sustainability, thus all factors mentioned as having caused parents to leave are also risk factors for subsequent attrition of NLES families.

Spanish-English DLBE programs are rapidly gaining in popularity among NLES families in NYC, yet many of their pre-scripted features as well as the constraints of the curriculum and instruction model utilized in public schools make them ineffective at promoting bilingualism for majority-language speakers. As this study has shown, bilingualism is a top priority of NLES families who choose these programs. The families in this study advocate for more Spanish, and more focus on Latino culture – which ample prior research associates with higher levels of Spanish proficiency for both NLESs and EBLs (see section 2.4.1). For EBLs in particular, this is critical because higher home
language proficiency is linked to overall academic success as well as academic performance at or above grade level in English (see for example Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Potowski, 2007; Martin-Beltrán, 2010). It seems, then, that there is a disconnect between practices and principles in the local schools studied in this research. While on one hand these schools voice support for bilingualism, with the other they remove Spanish from the curriculum and fail to provide sufficient supports for the Spanish language development of NLES children (and, by extension, Latino EBLs, as previous research indicates).

Despite all these concerns, however, many NLES families are committing to DLBE programs over the long term and happy with their children’s bilingual development and academic progress. The following section will compare and describe factors that lead to program retention and program attrition in an attempt to decipher what leads to the highest levels of commitment among NLESs in DLBE programs.

4.3.2. DLBE program commitment

The table to follow provides an overview of reasons the families in this study selected or left DLBE programs, showing where current families differ from former families, and where they converge.
Table 8: Reasons families gave for choosing or leaving DLBE programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents of currently-enrolled children are more likely to:</th>
<th>Parents of formerly-enrolled are more likely to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Be committed to bilingualism (Want child to learn Spanish; become bilingual/fluent; or develop academic skills in Spanish. Say it is important to be bilingual in today’s day and age)</td>
<td>• Worry their children are not learning Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have home Spanish connections</td>
<td>• Have children who resist or dislike Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be committed to neighborhood integration</td>
<td>• Think learning a language is easy when you are young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prefer a neighborhood school</td>
<td>• Prefer a different school or program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feel part of a community (Close-knit class and involved parents)</td>
<td>• Feel unsupported by administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Think their child enjoys the DLBE program and receives enrichment</td>
<td>• Feel their children are struggling academically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Think Spanish opens future opportunities</td>
<td>• Think of DLBE programs as advanced classes or alternatives to G&amp;T programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Both groups are equally likely to:

• Choose the DLBE programs because neighbors or friends recommend them
• Choose the DLBE programs because they offer a unique opportunity over mainstream classes (more challenging, selective, enriching, multicultural, etc.)
• Feel testing and/or the new curriculum increases academic pressure and decreases enrichment
• Think Spanish is a useful language

As this table illustrates, while peer suggestion and the attraction of enrichment is influential on NLES parents’ choices of DLBE programs, it does not have as salient an effect upon their commitment. If parents rely upon the idea that DLBE programs are enriching/G&T alternatives, or select them because their friends want them for their children, they may not have realistic expectations about program goals, parent
participation, or anticipated outcomes for children. Another salient factor that raises commitment is the feeling of connection to the Spanish language through family, community, or personal learning experiences – just seeing Spanish as useful was not enough to raise families’ level of commitment. To summarize, program retention rates in this study were most influenced by commitment to Spanish bilingualism, connection to community (school, neighborhood, and Spanish-speaking communities), and positive educational experiences for children. The risk factors detailed in the preceding section corroborate this finding, given that families were more likely to consider leaving when the factors that increase commitment were not in place.

The findings discussed in this chapter establish that DLBE programs as they are currently conceived may not be meeting the needs of NLES families. They also indicate that NLES families may either not understand or not commit to the level of support their children need to be successful in these programs. As such, the subsequent and final chapter offers recommendations for families and schools that can help to balance the concerns of NLES families with the joint – and, in many ways, more important – goal of supporting the educational needs of EBL students. While this research has focused specifically on NLESs, EBLs also participate in DLBE classes thus the implications of any recommendations for schools and bilingual programming are by nature more far-reaching. Therefore, the recommendations to follow stand to benefit students of all home language backgrounds. Schools and families need to learn to trust that bilingualism is developed along a continuum, and that students of different home language backgrounds need different levels of support along their journey. Only then will DLBE programs improve retention rates and accessibility to all students.
CHAPTER FIVE:
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When bilingual education was revitalized in the 1960s, its key beneficiaries were Latinos and Native Americans who were failing in the school system. Legislative protection of their right to learn bilingually grew out of the Civil Rights movement (O. García, 2009a). For years, research has shown the potential for late exit, enrichment bilingual education to close achievement gaps between emergent bilingual (“EBL”) students (those identified as “ELL” in the school system) and mainstream students (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Notwithstanding, bilingual education has been considered controversial for decades, criticized by native and immigrant groups alike for either being ineffective or serving exclusive interests (Pedalino Porter, 1998). The growing popularity of dual language bilingual education (“DLBE”), which includes language minority and language majority children who learn together in two languages, has had a positive effect on bilingual education’s image. As the LA Times reports, “dual-language immersion programs are the new face of bilingual education—without the stigma” (Watanabe, 2011). The promise of DLBE is that English-monolingual children learn a second language through participation, while EBLs benefit from the enrichment focus of these programs (see for example Palmer, 2008).

This dissertation project gathered and reported on reasons parents who are not Latino Spanish-speakers (“NLES”) gave for selecting DLBE programs. Their stories helped describe a trend previously identified in research: majority language speakers are using bilingual education programs for enrichment (see Freeman, et. al, 2005; de Jong and Howard, 2009). Yet their stories were also unique, rooted in the neighborhood and
schooling environment of NYC: urban parents whose children grow up in multicultural neighborhoods also view DLBE as a way to learn an important neighborhood language and connect to their communities. The parents in this research are majority middle class, college educated, and as in previous research involving families with these characteristics, looked for the best possible local schooling options for their children (see McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999; Posey-Maddox, 2014). Unlike what was found in previous scholarship, however, the families identified as “English-speakers” were very diverse, many with personal ties to Latino communities (such as Latino spouses or Spanish bilingualism), others foreign born, and others bilingual or multilingual. This distinction aligned these families with their local neighborhoods, characterized not only by large Latino and immigrant populations but more importantly by super diversity – the Owl Hill neighborhood, for instance, is cited as the most diverse in Queens, as well as in the US itself.20 Thus, while many families did use DLBE programs for enrichment, many also used them to more closely align themselves with their neighbors and neighborhoods.

I would argue that the voices of the parents in this research provide a snapshot of what is to come. Bilingual education is changing, particularly in urban centers. Because of the preference for DLBE programs in policy and parental enthusiasm for DLBE programs, more English-monolingual families now include their children in these classes. Opportunities for bilingual education are also expanding. In NYC, for instance, 40 new DLBE programs were added last year alone and they remain a centerpiece of the new chancellor’s reform agenda (Zimmer, 2015). Yet unbridled enthusiasm for DLBE programs – particularly among the parents themselves – has its dangers. When parents

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20 While this information is widely reported in reputable online news and information sources, I cannot directly cite it without revealing the identity of the neighborhood.
emphasize the enrichment nature of these programs, for instance, they lose sight of their actual intent, which is to promote and celebrate bilingualism for both minority and majority populations. Yet as this study shows, choosing DLBE for its perceived ‘specialness’ was what inspired a majority of parents to choose to include their children. Yet this specialness is also under attack: as schools choose curricula and teaching methods that focus on preparing students for high stakes examinations and building English proficiency, programs are becoming less enriching and less bilingual.

Following an overview of the main findings of this study, I will suggest some recommendations for how the potential of DLBE programs can be harnessed in ways that better fulfill their “promise” (O. García, 2014). Understanding why NLES parents selected or left DLBE programs – and how curricular and instructional choices affect their perceptions of DLBE programs – allows a deeper understanding of what families expect from these programs and how to sustain and improve them for all students, for years to come.

5.1. Overview of Main Findings

Chapter 4, Part 1: Choosing Bilingual Programs

Chapter 4, part 1 provides descriptions of why the NLES parents in this study selected DLBE programs for their children. Parents described many reasons, some of which were contingent upon their family characteristics. For example, parents with a Latino spouse were more likely to mention reasons in the “bilingualism” category, while parents whose children qualified for a G&T program were more likely to mention reasons in the “enrichment” category. Overall, parents in all categories described how DLBE
programs would provide benefits to their children that a regular education program could not provide.

_Bilingualism_

One principle reason NLES parents placed their children in DLBE programs was to learn Spanish, which was seen as an important language locally and internationally. They wanted their children to become bilingual, not simply to speak Spanish but also given the multiple enrichment benefits they attributed to being bilingual and learning bilingually. More than in previous research, parents emphasized the necessity to be bilingual in today’s day and age. Parents also frequently considered their local contexts, which are multilingual and multicultural.

_Staying local_

The parents in this study saw opportunities for their children to learn from neighbors, and Spanish represented a way for their children to become more integrated into the community. Yet while parents praised neighborhood integration and community diversity, they simultaneously described wanting DLBE programs only when other NLESs like them used and recommended the programs. For many families, the DLBE program was an opportunity to stay local while still receiving an exclusive education experience.

_Enrichment_

Families frequently conflated DLBE programs with G&T programs, stating they wanted a challenging environment for their children. The exclusivity of the DLBE programs appeals to parents wanting a selective option. Parents also have the perception that DLBE programs provide more advanced academics and students in the programs are
more advanced, a perception which neighborhood peers and school officials also promote. Essentially, many of the families thought a DLBE program would be an opportunity to get something extra out of a local school.

**Future Opportunity**

Parents described the multiple benefits eventual bilingualism would provide their children, such as the opportunity to travel, an advantage in the job market, and educational opportunities like foreign exchange. They also believed that, regardless of whether the child became bilingual, early participation in a DLBE program would benefit children cognitively and academically; lay the groundwork for successful future language learning; and ensure children learned the Spanish their parents wanted them to (literate, with an ‘authentic’ accent).

**Chapter 4, Part 2: Leaving Bilingual Programs**

Chapter 4, part 2 provides descriptions of why the NLES parents in this study removed their children from DLBE programs. Some describe concerns with academic or institutional issues that made them choose to leave. Others felt forced out, for instance because of administrative decisions. Still others indicated not that they were dissatisfied with a DLBE program but rather that a different, better educational opportunity arose. Overall, parents who left described how DLBE programs failed to meet their expectations in some way.

**Bilingualism and Academic Concerns**

Parents were concerned when their children struggled to learn Spanish either well enough or quickly enough. They worried that it affected the child’s overall academic progress or caused the child frustration, for instance, with homework. Families were
especially concerned when they could not support Spanish at home. They also described feeling that schools do not appropriately support the Spanish acquisition of NLES children, where no supplemental support during or after school is provided, and where there is a pervasive concern that not enough Spanish is used in teaching and learning at school overall.

_Institutional and Family Concerns_

NLES selected DLBE programs located in stable institutions. When major institutional concerns arose with administration, teachers, other families, or the programs themselves, parents were unwilling to keep their children in DLBE programs. This was of particular concern at School 1, where friction between administration and teachers is high. Parents were particularly concerned when families like theirs pulled their children from DLBE programs, as it increased the perception that they and their children were socially isolated. When major institutional concerns arose, NLES parents typically sought another exclusive option for their children (G&T or charter school).

5.2. _Recommendations_

When the NLES families in this study chose DLBE programs, they were primarily influenced by the choices of others they know in the neighborhood, along with the idea that DLBE programs are enrichment-oriented. The families who were most likely to _commit_ to DLBE programs were families who also believe in bilingualism, understand the level of support their children need in order to do well in a DLBE program, and have some connection to Spanish. Families who mainly wanted enrichment, for instance choosing DLBE programs as G&T alternatives, were less likely to prioritize or support bilingualism hence their children were more likely to leave the
programs. It therefore follows that the sustainability of DLBE programs relies on the level to which families support and prioritize their children’s development of bilingualism. The following recommendations for parents and for schools and teachers provide ways to improve program sustainability by fortifying both parents’ and schools’ commitment to bilingualism and improving overall understanding of the goals of a DLBE program. The recommendations are based on the findings from this dissertation.

5.2.1. **Recommendations for families**

- **Commit to bilingualism**: DLBE programs are grounded in the goal of promoting and supporting bilingualism and biculturalism. Yet among those whose children left programs, families in this study indicated the enrichment aspects of DLBE programs attracted them more than the language learning aspect. Many families also conflated DLBE and G&T programs which, though the two program models are enriching and comparable in many ways (Bernal & García, 2009), is an inaccurate comparison because their aims are different. Additionally, many families in this study either considered leaving or actually removed their children from DLBE programs if the children struggled with Spanish. What these findings indicate is that the sustainability of DLBE programs rests on two important understandings: (1) DLBE programs promote bilingualism, and (2) DLBE programs are bilingual programs. While this may seem facile, it must be stressed because parents need to understand what they are choosing when they select DLBE programs, and commit to supporting their children’s language development. Learning a new language can take many years, and for optimal bilingual development to take place, children should remain in a DLBE program.
at least through grade five (Howard & Christian, 2002). Parents can also consider exposing their children to Spanish prior to school and establishing a network for continued language support while their children remain in a DLBE program in order for optimal bilingual learning to take place. This recommendation is based on the finding that families whose children were exposed to Spanish and supported in the language outside of school were most committed to DLBE programs over the long term, so directly relates to program sustainability as well as positive student outcomes.

- **Support Spanish at home:** This recommendation is, in many ways, an extension of the preceding. NLES children who were most successful in DLBE programs received support in Spanish outside of school: at home from a parent or family member; through supplemental language classes; or from a hired caregiver such as a tutor or nanny/daycare provider. Having this support helps children feel connected to the language, diminishes parental frustrations, and provides academic support schools can/will not offer. This does not preclude the participation of monolingual English families, but it does demand extra from them: “You cannot be a monolingual English family and not try to do extra things to reinforce it and expect that your kids are going to do really well with the Spanish” (Cathy, School 3, March 5, 2014). Language support at home is also increasingly necessary as parents report schools are focusing less on Spanish and more on English and teaching to the test.

- **Self-educate:** Once NLES children are enrolled in DLBE programs, their parents need to make an extra effort to learn about bilingual education. Even on a basic
level, parents can access popular news sources on the Internet to learn more. If the school does not provide them with sufficient information and support, parents can contact the school’s parent coordinator or arrange a private or group conference with the child’s teacher (on Tuesdays, for instance, their new contract obliges NYC public school teachers to hold after school parent conferences). This does not negate the responsibility of the school to help parents make informed decisions about their children’s education; it is, however, an extension of the finding that NLES families need to put in extra work if their children are to be optimally successful in DLBE programs.

- **Advocate**: Advocacy by middle class parents has been linked in numerous studies to DLBE programs becoming more enriching for all students (Thomas & Collier, 2003), as well as to program sustainability (Howard, et. al., 2007). In this study, parents indicated two main changes they wish to make to DLBE programs: ensure they are enriching and bilingual; and improve access.

(A) Parents witnessed how the testing focus is making programs less bilingual and less enriching. They can and should advocate to change this, for the benefit of all children in these classes. Parents can raise this issue with the PTA and SLT (school leadership team), petition legislators, and connect with families in the classes to work together on solutions. High-stakes testing and “drill and practice” curriculum is disproportionately used in classrooms with EBL students (see Moll, 2007). If advocacy by NLES parents is successful in changing the practice of teaching to the test, it will improve access to
opportunities for Spanish learning and enriches the curriculum, which benefits all program participants.

(B) Parents frequently reported difficulty getting into DLBE programs – both for their children and for emergent bilingual children. Inside Schools reports that “parents do have a big role in establishing dual language programs” (Baum, 2012). If parents are concerned that all interested families are not able to get seats in DLBE programs, they can petition their local schools to add seats or implement new programs provided a sufficient number of EBL children also need and want access.

• **Connect:** The families in this study praised the ability of a DLBE program to improve neighborhood integration and let their children connect to a local community. Yet while children built cross-cultural friendships, parents rarely mentioned this – a trend commonly exposed in research on DLBE programs (see for example Freeman, et. al., 2005). Whether they attend school events, host/attend class birthday parties, take Spanish classes, or visit local restaurants serving food typical in the country of origin of some of their children’s classmates, NLES parents also need to make an effort to participate in the community. This is based on the finding that NLES families whose children were most successful in DLBE programs accessed community resources to help their children learn Spanish, or had family connections to Spanish.

• **Realistic expectations:** Parents who had unrealistic expectations about what a DLBE program would do or be – such as those who thought it was equivalent to a G&T program or that their children would be bilingual by 2nd grade – were more
likely to remove their children from DLBE programs. On the other hand, parents who viewed their children’s participation in a DLBE program as a first step in an educational trajectory (that is, the child would study and use Spanish even beyond elementary school), and were realistic about the supports they would need to become bilingual, were more likely to keep their children in programs. Parents stressed the “native” model as the goal, but really their children will grow up to be bilingual Americans, so rethinking what this means for their future communicative and educational goals is imperative.

5.2.2. Recommendations for schools

• Providing access: Not all families who want or need bilingual programs in NYC are able to get their children enrolled. At one school in Brooklyn, the Spanish-English DLBE program was considered “the most sought after in the city” last year, with over 200 children waitlisted for kindergarten seats for one class of 28 (Zimmer, 2014). In this study, families also described competition to get into DLBE programs, and “more interest than there are seats” (Heidi, School 3, September 24, 2014). When participation in DLBE is not guaranteed, families are unwilling, for instance, to give up a G&T placement for the chance to join a DLBE program. Others may leave DLBE programs because they cannot start or find one in a convenient and safe local school (see Vincent, School 3, August 27, 2014). Schools in NYC need to prioritize opening additional strands of DLBE programs, or transitioning their schools to bilingual schools where the need exists. The new NYCDOE push to open new programs provides seed money for schools to open new programs or expand existing ones (Zimmer, 2015) and organizations
like CUNY-NYSIEB support schools in building more equitable programs for EBL students. NLES and EBL students stand to benefit from the expansion of bilingual education, given how EBLs who cannot find placement in DLBE classes are typically educated in English-only environments where they lose out on the opportunity to develop their home language. Additionally, DLBE programs currently serve only the few, privileged students who are deemed academically capable as well as who have secured a spot. Expanding access to DLBE programs aligns with the original, equity-promoting mission of bilingual education, as well as would prepare greater numbers of children for success in a 21st century, global economy (see O. Garcia, 2011). Above all, increased access to DLBE classes would lead to increased parity: among children, among home language speakers, and within local communities.

- Orientations: Orientations for all families interested in DLBE programs should be held at schools prior to registration. Families would receive explicit information about program methodology and language learning, and receive additional resources in English or Spanish telling about the program and bilingual education generally. This would improve commitment to DLBE programs by reducing the anxiety many parents described in feeling disconnected from the school or unsure of how to best support their children. They can also help parents set realistic expectations for their children’s Spanish growth, as well as stress the need for outside of school supports. Orientations for NLES families and LSS families, targeting their specific interests, can also be held, but the goal should always be community building among all families with children in the DLBE program to
limit the separation between NLES and LSS families described by parents in this study and in past research.

- **Outreach to LSS and bilingual families:** As new regulations indicate, the enrollment of EBL students in bilingual programs is prioritized (NYSED, 2014). Schools need to ensure that sufficient seats are provided to EBL students, regardless of interest in and pressure from NLES families – especially those with only English at home – who want to enroll their children in DLBE programs. The NLES families in this study did not show concern that their presence took seats away from EBL students; if anything, they felt their presence in these classes made them more “true dual” (Mandy, School 1, February 12, 2012). While it is true that buy in from NLES families can be critical to the success of DLBE programs and their sustainability in the face of political attacks against bilingual education (see Howard, et. al., 2007), Latino EBLs need home language support for optimal academic achievement and must not be shut out to serve the desires of the dominant majority (see Palmer, 2010). Additionally, findings from this study indicate that families with more connection to Spanish and bilingualism and greater ability to support Spanish at home were the most likely to remain committed to DLBE programs in the long term (see section 4.3.2.). With this in mind, schools should prioritize enrollment of Spanish home language EBL students as well as students who are bilingual and/or come from homes where one or more parents speaks Spanish as a heritage or learned language. Bilingual children do not fit within the rigid categories of ‘English speaker’ and ‘Spanish speaker’ schools use when determining the makeup of DLBE classes, yet by not
encouraging/privileging the inclusion of such students (and EBLs with Spanish as a home language), schools diminish their ability to retain participants in DLBE programs.

- **Fortifying family commitment**: When families apply to participate in DLBE programs, the parents/caregivers should be interviewed along with the students. The purpose of this interview would be to ascertain families’ understanding of bilingual education, their commitment to bilingualism (specifically in Spanish), and their connection to Spanish. At the time, parents could also ask questions about the program and receive resources that help them better understand bilingual language development. Roxy suggested this would have helped her better understand what she was committing to: “I wish they had had an interview with me. I wish they had tried to find out more about the families and why were interested and tell us about the program. What it would involve. How I could prepare my child. There was no communication like that” (Roxy, School 3, March 6, 2014). Such an interview would help schools identify families more likely to remain committed to a DLBE program because it would help families to understand their required level of involvement as well as allow schools to ascertain which families could most likely support Spanish development. If schools enrolled children whose families exhibit characteristics identified in this dissertation as helpful for success in and commitment to a DLBE program, it could raise program retention rates.

- **Fortifying family relationships**: The NLES parents and the LSS parents did not frequently interact, and prior research indicates that this is very common (see
In order for integration to truly happen in a DLBE program, families need frequent opportunities to interact with and help each other. Parent mixers and second language classes can assist this endeavor (Torres-Guzmán, 2007). Schools also need to disrupt problematic associations between language and power in the way they perform family outreach. In NYC, schools target ESL, GED, and “parenting” classes to Latino Spanish-speakers. On the other hand, while PTA and SLT membership is typically open to anyone meetings are often more heavily attended by middle class English-speakers (see for example Billingham & Kimelberg, 2008). This sets up a problematic dynamic between parents, as well as linguistic imparity. Continuing education for parents should target a variety of families, with a variety of interests. Second language classes should be offered in English and Spanish. Additionally, positions in school leadership by parents should be taken by both parents of EBLs and NLESs in schools with DLBE programs.

- **Parents as learning leaders:** School-home collaboration and inviting families into the classroom is strongly associated with positive home-school relationships (Martin-Beltrán, 2010). The current research indicates that feeling part of a community and having open communication with the school is important for families. Families also frequently said they struggled to support their child’s learning at home but could not contact the teacher or other school officials. Teachers and schools should send frequent communication to parents with ideas for how to support learning at home, and invite parents into the classroom to lead lessons and celebrate their children’s learning. This
recommendation relates to the finding that parents in this study who felt more connected to their child’s class community were more likely to remain committed to DLBE programs over time.

- **School ecology of multilingualism**: The visual environment of any school (for instance, signage) as well as interactions among members of the school community should represent the “entire range of language practices of children and families” (García and Li Wei, 2014, p. 126). Notwithstanding, parents in this study mentioned that the predominance of English in the school and classroom problematically limited opportunities for their children to use Spanish authentically. Including Spanish text alongside English in text throughout the school building allows children to see its practical application as well as understand it as a vital language of the school and local community. It also gives them the message that bilingualism is relevant (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006). This is also a positive reinforcement for their Spanish learning outside of the classroom, a pressing need identified by the findings of this dissertation. Last but not least, developing a positive school ecology of multilingualism helps integrate students in bilingual programs with the mainstream population, especially necessary for strand programs.

- **Hire and retain highly qualified teachers**: A major problem in the DLBE program at School 1 was excellent teachers leaving the program because of dissatisfaction with the administration. Highly qualified teachers with appropriate certification are difficult to find in NYC (Woodard, 2011). Once schools find bilingual teachers, they must work to retain them by providing ongoing professional
development (“PD”) in bilingual teaching methodology, among other supports. Administration must also support teachers, for instance by providing sufficient materials and funding for the extra work it takes to translate materials and develop curriculum if necessary. At School 2, where this was done, parents praised the principal and felt more committed to the school; at School 1, where this was not done, parents reported observing high levels of teacher stress. Teachers are integral in ensuring family commitment because, as parents in this study shared, they support and reassure children and families who may initially struggle to develop either Spanish or English.

- **Flexibility in curriculum and instruction**: Parents cited over and over again that they were happy with DLBE programs when they provided the additional enrichment of in-depth cultural and language study that related to the cultures of the students in the class as well as a pan-Latino cultural heritage. This is known as culturally relevant curriculum; in addition to enrichment, such an approach allows EBL students in particular to deepen and extend their learning (Ebe, 2010). Notwithstanding, the schools described in this study have imposed a ready made curriculum, called “ReadyGEN,” which parents describe as so demanding that it is eking away at the enrichment once present in DLBE classes. Schools must have flexibility in curriculum development that keeps in mind the unique needs of multilingual and multicultural students. An appropriate curriculum for a DLBE program would not only include culturally relevant texts and themes but also instruct students in a way that acknowledges their home language resources. Students’ home language resources must be seen as an essential tool for language
learning and education, and teachers should use language flexibly and strategically in instruction so that children can access curriculum no matter where they are in the development of their new language(s) (see for example O. García, 2009a). Such changes would help mitigate the struggles of English home language children with understanding classwork and homework, and support them in developing Spanish. Additionally, they would allow DLBE programs to maintain a bilingual approach rather than overly relying on English to teach concepts to students whose Spanish is less well developed.

- **Testing considerations:** High-stakes testing has had a negative effect on students, in particular emergent bilinguals (Menken, 2009). Parents in the current study complained bitterly about how the focus on the tests and pressures of the new curriculum were making their children’s DLBE classes less bilingual, and less enriching. Schools need to advocate for bilingual students and suggest testing schedules that more realistically align with bilingual language development (for instance, an additional year or two delay in ELA testing for all students in DLBE programs). Schools also need to provide parents of all home language backgrounds appropriate information about bilingual language development and testing, so parents have the ability to advocate for their children as well.

- **Homework:** Parents described how there is twice as much homework in DLBE programs as in mainstream or even gifted education programs. The pressure of excessive homework lowers student enjoyment and raises student and parental levels of stress. Additionally, ample evidence suggests homework does not even benefit students below high school (see for example Kohn, 2006). DLBE
programs should see instruction as continuous and flexible, allowing for language choice in homework rather than doubling up. This will allow students’ home language resources to be better activated and allow parents to be more involved in their children’s learning (Torres-Guzmán, 2007). This will also reduce the excessive at-home workload identified as a risk factor for attrition from DLBE programs.

- **Commitment to bilingualism:** Parents frequently described how “the Spanish is beginning to be squeezed out” of instruction in DLBE programs (Bonnie, School 2, March 21, 2014). In some schools, teachers devote entire months to test preparation, during which time instruction is delivered primarily in English. In order to support bilingualism, schools must believe in it. During the school day, they must provide sufficient exposure to Spanish for all children to equally access the curriculum in both languages. Field trips should be culturally relevant, include community study, and be in Spanish as well as English. After school, NLESs need quality supplemental instruction in Spanish. Schools must share responsibility with NLES parents to support the language development of Spanish learners, as this directly relates to a dedication to bilingualism (*all* learners should become bilingual). All parent communication must be sent home in two languages, and parents must be addressed in both languages anytime there is a parent meeting (parents told me this was not always the case – sometimes even the bilingual teachers used English only). Adopting this recommendation will increase the bilingualism of all students in DLBE programs, which has been linked to higher levels of academic achievement (Lindholm-Leary, 2001).
Bilingualism for all students in DLBE programs – not just EBLs – should be prioritized and sufficiently supported.

5.3. Conclusion

The traditional demographics of DLBE programs in NYC public schools are shifting as more NLES parents opt to include their children. Many of these families view DLBE programs as enrichment opportunities in local schools, even in many cases considering them alternatives to gifted classes. They are attracted by the unique benefits of language learning and in-depth cultural study only such programs can provide. Particularly in the diverse, urban setting of this research, families also viewed the programs as opportunities not only to connect to local communities but also to obtain future job, travel, or educational opportunities. Yet there are drawbacks to viewing DLBE programs through a lens of opportunity and enrichment: it can lead to parents’ misunderstanding of the fundamental purpose of DLBE, and their disappointment if children’s learning outcomes are other than what they initially expect. As Dorner (2015) points out, merely viewing multilingualism as a commodity is insufficient to retain or build parents’ interest in DLBE programs. Of further concern, many of the special elements that attracted families to DLBE programs have been removed or modified in recent years (because of testing pressures and curriculum changes, as previously described). Given that nearly three-quarters of the current families have at one point considered removing their children from a DLBE program, it is clear that the recent modifications to DLBE programs have caused many parents to question their commitment to them. This observation provides insight into areas for further investigation.
One area identified for future research is the effect of the increased intensity of focus on testing in public elementary schools in NYC. Parents in this study say it has eked away at the special features of DLBE programs such as cultural study, extracurricular activities, and peer interaction, but there may be many more effects as well. Another area for further investigation is the effect of using the new “ReadyGEN” literacy curriculum with bilingual students. Many parents shared that the demands of “ReadyGEN” are so intense they have considered removing their children from DLBE programs so as not to overburden them with additional language study. Finally, this dissertation documents a demographic shift in the DLBE programs of three Queens schools that have traditionally served mainly Latino EBLs. Research cautions that the inclusion of NLES students may subsume the needs of EBLs (see for instance Doherty, 2009), yet I also argue in this dissertation that the needs of NLES students are unmet by current DLBE program structures. If NLES children join DLBE programs, schools as well as families must assume responsibility for developing these children’s bilingualism, which includes defining realistic language learning goals, assessment tools, and appropriate learning scaffolds. These observations point to the last area of research I have identified, which is how supporting Spanish development for NLES children in DLBE programs can help encourage language parity and improve bilingual outcomes for all students in DLBE programs. Answers to these questions lie outside the scope of this investigation, but are timely and urgent.

As they gain in popularity among NLESs, are DLBE programs in NYC simultaneously losing their special appeal? And if these programs offer less time for enrichment, independent and small group learning, or afterschool support, what kind of
child will be successful in a DLBE program? As this study has found, these programs are already exclusive spaces: children are screened for entrance, and many are also identified as “gifted” by examination. If DLBE programs in NYC continue using curriculum, like “ReadyGEN,” that is not enriching or culturally-relevant, there is also the risk that they will become even more exclusive because only the most academically-advanced, self-motivated students with high levels of at-home support will be able to succeed. Finally, if academic pressures continue to mount, it will become increasingly difficult to get parents of any background to remain committed to DLBE programs – especially after third grade, the first year of the high-stakes tests. The parents in this study who were most committed to the programs were also the most committed to bilingualism – and as programs take away opportunities to learn Spanish and become bilingual, parents are wondering “what’s the point?” (Robin, School 1, June 8, 2014). Retention of students in DLBE programs is critical for program longevity, and when families don’t get what they signed up for more will pull their children from the programs. Different from NLES families in past research, the families in this study were more diverse and more multilingual, and those who were the most committed to DLBE wanted bilingual classes, not de-facto G&T programs. They did want enrichment, but what they sought was the enrichment of a quality education in two languages. Thus, unless DLBE programs reinvigorate their commitment to a truly equitable and bilingual education, they will veer from their original purpose and risk higher levels of student attrition.
APPENDIX A

Interview protocol for NLES parents of current DLBE students

0. Please describe your family background: people in family, number of kids, number of kids in DLBE, number of kids in other programs/schools.

1. Please describe your life experiences with languages other than English, especially Spanish, and bilingualism.

2. When you first enrolled your child in kindergarten, did you explore other schooling options besides DLBE?

3. Before placing your child in the DLBE program, please describe what you knew about DLBE and/or about your child’s program?

4. Please describe how you found out about the DLBE program. Describe any encounters with other parents, school officials, or other individuals to obtain information about the program.

5. Please describe your reasons for being interested in DLBE and/or your child’s program.

6. Please describe the selection/recruitment process for the DLBE program.

7. Please describe your positive experiences with the DLBE program. Have these been a factor in maintaining your child in the program for X number of years/months?

8. Please describe your negative experiences with the DLBE program. Does this change your opinion of the program, or make you consider removing your child from the program?

9. Please describe your experience overall with the DLBE program: has it been generally positive or negative, and why?

10. Please describe what you expect your child will gain from participation in the DLBE program (expected outcomes).

11. Please describe the role Spanish plays (or the role you expect it to play) in your child’s K-12 schooling and future life. Do you hope your child will continue in a DLBE program or learning in Spanish beyond grade 5?
APPENDIX B

Interview protocol for NLES parents of former DLBE students

0. Please describe your family background: people in family, number of kids, number of kids in DLBE, number of kids in other programs/schools.

1. Please describe your life experiences with languages other than English, especially Spanish, and bilingualism.

2. Before placing your child in the DLBE program, please describe what you knew about DLBE and/or about your child’s program?

3. Please describe how you found out about the DLBE program. Describe any encounters with other parents, school officials, or other individuals to obtain information about the program.

4. Please describe your reasons for being interested in DLBE and/or your child’s program.

5. Please describe the selection/recruitment process for the DLBE program.

6. Please describe the process for taking your child out of the DLBE program.

7. Please describe your positive experiences with the DLBE program. Were these a factor in maintaining your child in the program for X number of years/months?

8. Please describe your negative experiences with the DLBE program. Were these a factor in removing your child from the program?

9. Please describe your experience overall with the DLBE program: has it been generally positive or negative, and why?

10. Please describe why you removed your child from the DLBE program.

11. Please describe the role Spanish plays (or the role you expect it to play) in your child’s K-12 schooling and future life. Do you think studying a language other than English is important or not?
APPENDIX C

Interview protocol for school administrators and/or school-based personnel

1. What is the history of the DLBE at this school site? When was it founded, what grades does it serve, how many students per grade?

2. Why was the DLBE program put into place?

3. Is there a screening process for students wanting to enter the DLBE program? If so, what does it assess? Who administers the screening test?

4. Who are the “English-speaking” students in the DLBE program (i.e. what race/nationality are they, what language(s) do they speak)?

5. How many non-Latino students do you have in the DLBE program?

6. Is the population of the DLBE program different from the general education population? If so, how?

7. What is your sense of the amount of interest among English-speaking parents in the program within your school’s community/neighborhood?

8. What is your perception of the commitment of these parents to the program?

9. What information do you think I need to know about your DLBE program that I have not yet asked?
APPENDIX D

Codes used in data analysis

As previously described, these codes were generated based on what parents told me, not created prior to the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Reasons for choosing a DLBE program</th>
<th>Reasons for leaving a DLBE program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enrichment</td>
<td>1. Alternative to TAG / G and T (I.1.1.) • A more challenging environment w/in public school (I.1.1.a.) • Academically rigorous (I.1.1.b.) 2. Something “extra” or “unique” (I.1.2) • Something parents can’t provide at home (I.1.2.a) • Goes beyond standard curriculum or what even G and T can offer (I.2.b.) 3. Cultural immersion and connection (I.1.3.) 4. Good for the brain / good for cognitive development (I.1.4.) 5. Special programs attached to DL (I.1.5.)</td>
<td>1. Child was struggling with Spanish, frustrated, resistant (O.1.1.) 2. Homework or classwork is a burden (O.1.2.) • Parents can’t help with Spanish (O.1.2.a.) • Too much homework (O.1.2.b.) • Child resists doing Spanish homework (O.1.2.c.) 3. Child is not happy on Spanish days (O.1.3.) • Child doesn’t want to go to school on Spanish days (O.1.3.a.) • Child suffers health or emotional problems on Spanish days (O.1.3.b.) 4. Child is not doing well in other school subjects (O.1.4.) 5. Program is too difficult or challenging (O.1.5.) 6. Program doesn’t work for NLES (O.1.6.) 7. Program changes: it is no longer enriching (O.1.7.) • Focus on testing (O.1.7.a.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Family</td>
<td>1. Connect with heritage (or preserve heritage) (I.2.1.) • One parent is Latino, or one parent’s heritage language is similar to Spanish (Tagalog) (I.2.1.a.) • Speak with relatives here or abroad who speak Spanish (I.2.1.b.) 1. One or both parents had positive experience learning language or being overseas (I.2.2.) • Parent grew up bilingual so wants to give kids the same opportunity (I.2.2.a.) • Family members (including parents) had gone through bilingual or FL programs and successfully achieved FL fluency (I.2.2.b.) • Parent speaks Spanish having</td>
<td>1. Child didn’t want to be in the class (O.2.1.) 2. Younger sibling wants to be with older sibling who isn’t in DL (Norma) (O.2.2.) 3. Moving away (O.2.3.) 4. Kid’s personality doesn’t work for DL (O.2.4.) 5. Too much work for the parent (O.2.5.)</td>
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<td>learned it and wants to share this connection with child (I.2.2.c.)</td>
<td>3. Child wanted to learn Spanish (I.2.3.)</td>
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<td>4. Parent always wanted to learn another language but never did (I.2.4.)</td>
<td>4. Parent always wanted to learn / improve Spanish (I.2.4.a.)</td>
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<td>5. Opportunity to support Spanish at home (I.2.5.)</td>
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<td>6. Children had prior exposure through babysitter or family member(s), school, etc. (I.2.6.)</td>
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<td>3. Community</td>
<td>1. Spanish is a useful language: in US; in community (I.3.1.)</td>
<td>1. Difficulties relating to SSs (O.3.1.)</td>
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<td>2. Neighborhood school (I.3.2.)</td>
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<td>3. Integration into neighborhood (I.3.3.)</td>
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<td>2. Friends who are Latino regret not learning Spanish (I.3.4.)</td>
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<td>5. DL is “trendy” or popular (I.3.5.)</td>
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<td>6. Child’s friends are in the program (I.3.6.)</td>
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<td>7. Other NLES are in the program (I.3.7.)</td>
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<td>4. School</td>
<td>1. Child’s or parent’s conflict with teacher (O.4.1.)</td>
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<td>1. Small school (222) (I.4.1.)</td>
<td>2. School suggested it (O.4.2.)</td>
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<td>3. School administration (O.4.3.)</td>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Small class size (especially in upper grades) (I.4.1.a.)</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Small program makes big school seem small (I.4.1.b.)</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>The program is very good/good reputation (I.4.2.)</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Better option compared to others in school or zone (I.4.3.)</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Principal or other school leaders “sold” program well (I.4.4.)</td>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Recruited as an ES family (or got in easily) (I.4.4.a.)</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Child’s pre-K teachers (at same school as DL program)</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>School in a bad location (O.4.5.)</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Ineffective school communication with parents (O.4.6.)</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Bad teacher(s) or problems with</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 5. Other students (peers) | 1. Selective: kids are screened (I.5.1.)  
- More advanced peer group (I.5.1.a.)  
- DL parents more involved in their children’s education (I.5.1.b.)  
- DL parents are more motivated (I.5.1.c.)  
2. Close-knit community (I.5.2.)  
- Students develop deep friendships (I.5.2.a.)  
- Parents help each other (I.5.2.b.)  
3. Diversity is important (I.5.3.)  
- Child learns from peers of different backgrounds (I.5.3.a.)  
- Child doesn’t feel “othered” within diverse group (I.5.3.b.) | 1. Problems with peers (O.5.1.)  
- Fighting with other children (O.5.1.a.)  
- Bullying (O.5.1.b.)  
2. Didn’t know any other children or families in the program (O.5.2.) |
| --- | --- | --- |
- Want child to become bilingual/fluent (I.6.1.a.)  
- Develop academic skills in Spanish (I.6.1.b.)  
- Child’s accent is very good (I.6.1.c.)  
- Establish a “good foundation” in the language (I.6.1.d.)  
2. Commitment to dual language (I.6.2.)  
- Important to be bilingual in today’s day and age (I.6.2.a.)  
3. Learning a language is easier young than old (I.6.3.)  
4. Immersion is better than FL education for actually learning a language (I.6.4.)  
5. Parent read educational articles on benefits of bilingualism (I.6.5.) | 1. Not enough Spanish (O.6.1.)  
2. Inadequate preparation in Spanish in lower grades makes it impossible to continue in upper grades (O.6.2.)  
3. Child wasn’t learning Spanish (O.6.3.)  
4. Not enough support for Spanish learning (O.6.4.)  
5. No Spanish at home (O.6.5.)  
6. No commitment to dual language (O.6.6.) |
| 7. Educational opportunity | 1. Provides interpersonal benefits (I.7.1.)  
- Good for self-esteem and self-confidence (I.7.1.a.)  
- Makes children more independent (I.7.1.b.)  
- Teaches importance of persistence (I.7.1.c.)  
2. Opens opportunities in the future (I.7.2.)  
- Helps kids find good jobs/“edge” in labor market (I.7.2.a.)  
- Helps kids achieve educational | 1. Another school is a better fit (O.7.1.)  
- Another school has a more positive environment (happier place) (O.7.1.a.)  
- Got a preferred placement (G and T, charter school) (O.7.1.b.)  
2. Another school is K-8 (as opposed to K-2 or K-5 (O.7.2.)  
3. Another school in a preferred geographic location (O.7.3.)  
4. Another school has a less strict HW |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities (I.7.2.b.)</th>
<th>Policy (O.7.4.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Move or travel to another country (I.7.2.c.)</td>
<td>5. Were “trying out” DL (O.7.5.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Opens worldview/mind know additional language(s) (I.7.3.)</td>
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<td>• Becoming bilingual makes children more able to interact with Spanish-speakers (I.7.3.c.)</td>
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<td>• Going through the experience of learning Spanish makes children unafraid of someone from another culture (I.7.3.b.)</td>
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<td>4. Helps school performance (I.7.4.)</td>
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<td>• Helps with speech development issues (I.7.4.a.)</td>
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<td>• Helps to learn grammar and language features (I.7.4.b.)</td>
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<td>• Learning Math in Spanish helps understand mathematical concepts better (I.7.4.c.)</td>
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<td>• Provides a good base for future language learning (I.7.4.d.)</td>
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<td>• Prepares kids to succeed in middle school and beyond (I.7.4.e.)</td>
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<td>5. Doesn’t hurt English or academic development (I.7.5.)</td>
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APPENDIX E

Most frequently occurring codes and themes

These were the codes that 40% and more of the participants in any given category stated. Included in the “Out” codes are both overall reasons for program dissatisfaction (stated by all participants) and those that directly caused a child to leave a program. They are discussed separately subsequent to the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment</td>
<td>I.1.1 – Alternative to G and T</td>
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<td>I.1.1.a - More challenging environment within public school</td>
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<td>I.1.3 - Cultural immersion and connection</td>
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<td>I.1.5 – Special programs attached to DL</td>
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<td>I.5.1 – Selective: kids are screened</td>
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<td>I.4.2.b – Program is fun / kid enjoys it / is learning a lot</td>
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<td>I.4.7 – Teachers in the program are very good</td>
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<td>Family and Community</td>
<td>I.2.5 – Opportunity to support Spanish at home</td>
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<td>I.3.1 – Spanish is a useful language: in US; in community</td>
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<td>I.3.2 - Neighborhood school</td>
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<td>I.3.3 – Integration into neighborhood</td>
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<td>I.3.3.a – Neighbors or friends recommend or attend the program</td>
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<td>I.3.3.b – Connecting to the other, diverse families in the program – kids and parents</td>
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<td>I.5.1.b – DL parents more involved in their children’s education</td>
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<td>I.5.2 – Close-knit community because they stay together</td>
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<td>Bilingualism</td>
<td>I.6.1 – Child will learn Spanish</td>
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<td>I.6.1.a – Want child to become bilingual/fluent</td>
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<td>I.6.1.b – Develop academic skills in Spanish</td>
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<td>I.6.2.a – Important to be bilingual in today’s day and age</td>
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<td>I.6.3 – Learning a language is easier young than old (the younger the better)</td>
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<td>I.6.5 – Parent read educational articles on benefits of bilingualism or dual language</td>
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<td>Educational Opportunities</td>
<td>I.7.2 – Opens opportunities in the future</td>
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<td>I.7.2.a – Helps kids find good jobs/”edge” in labor market</td>
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<td>I.7.2.c – Move or travel to another country</td>
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<td>I.7.4.d – Provides a good base for future language learning</td>
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<td>I.4.3 – Better option compared to others in school or zone</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUT</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic difficulties</td>
<td>O.1.2 – Homework or classwork is a burden</td>
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<td>O.1.2.b – Too much homework</td>
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<td>O.1.4 – Child is not doing well in other school subjects</td>
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<td>O.1.5 – Program is too difficult or challenging</td>
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<td>O.1.6 – Program doesn’t work for NLES</td>
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<td>O.1.7 – Program changes: it is no longer enriching</td>
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<td>O.1.7.a – Focus on testing</td>
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| Family and community | O.2.4 – Kid’s personality doesn’t work for DL  
|                       | O.2.5 – Too much work for the parent  
|                       | O.1.3 – Child is not happy on Spanish days  
|                       | O.1.2.a – Parents can’t help with Spanish  
|                       | O.3.1.a – NLES parents can’t communicate with SS parents  
|                       | O.3.2 – One of the only NLESs  
|                       | O.3.3 – Class geared toward LSSs – more English, etc.  
| School                | O.4.4.a – Teachers leaving program  
|                       | O.4.4.b – Program availability  
|                       | O.4.4.c – Inconsistent LAP  
|                       | O.4.4.d – Students leaving program  
|                       | O.4.6 – Ineffective school communication with parents  
|                       | O.7.1.b – Got a preferred placement (G and T, charter school)  
| Bilingualism          | O.1.1 – Child was struggling with Spanish, frustrated, resistant  
|                       | O.1.2.c – Child resists doing Spanish HW  
|                       | O.6.1 – Not enough Spanish  
|                       | O.6.3 – Child wasn’t learning Spanish  
|                       | O.6.4 – Not enough support for Spanish learning  
|                       | O.6.5 – No Spanish at home  
|                       | O.7.5 – Were “trying out” dual language  
|                       | O.6.6 – No commitment to DL  

**Top 5 reasons for inclusion**

1. I.6.1 – Child will learn/be exposed to Spanish (86%)
2. I.3.3.a – Neighbors or friends recommend or attend the program (79%)
3. I.1.1 – Alternative to G and T (68%)
4. I.1.3 – Cultural immersion and connection (64% - but more often cited than 5th place codes)
5. Tie for 5th: I.3.1 – Spanish is a useful language: in US and in community; and I.7.2 – Opens opportunities in the future (64%)

**Top 5 reasons for leaving (Total)**

1. O.1.1 – Child was struggling with Spanish, frustrated, resistant (55%)
2. O.6.4 – Not enough support for Spanish (45%)
3. O.6.1 – Not enough Spanish (41%)
4. O.1.7.a – Focus on testing (41%)
5. O.1.2.a – Parents can’t help with Spanish (41%)

*Where percentages tie, the number of times they were mentioned raises their priority in consideration of which is a “top” code.

**Top 5 reasons for leaving (Former)**

1. O.1.1 – Child was struggling with Spanish, frustrated, resistant (75%)
2. O.1.2.a – Parents can’t help with Spanish (63%)
3. O.7.1.b – Got a preferred placement (G&T, charter) (50%)
4. Tie for 4th and 5th: O.1.4 – not doing well in other school subjects; O.3.2 – one of the only NLESs; and O.4.4.a – ineffective or hostile administration (all 50%)
APPENDIX F

Sample page of an interview transcript

This transcript shows how I coded each interview. Each time a code would arise in an interview as a reason for choosing a program, I coded it with “I” for “In” and the number, as well as top-oriented it on the spreadsheet; leaving a program was coded with “O” for “Out” and the number of the code, and bottom-oriented on the sheet. The quote was also highlighted for easy identification. The original document was created in Google.

| Kathryn: | Well, and then, I guess to summarize your reasons for being interested in dual language, you talked about culture, learning language while young, you talked about it [your child’s] accent being very good, |   |
| Linda: | Mmm hmm. |   |
| Kathryn: | You talked about it motivating them to . . . it was the integrative motivation, right, that you were talking about? |   |
| Linda: | Yeah, yeah. |   |
| Kathryn: | So is that an accurate summary? Or is there anything else? |   |
| Linda: | Hmm. Um, let me see . . . (long pause) . . . yeah, so it’s, I suppose it’s like I devoted my life to learning and teaching language, so I’d like my children to get the richness from that too, you know? | I.2.2 I.2.2.a |
| Kathryn: | Yeah. That makes sense to me. Um, the richness of experience that you had when you were young. |   |
| Linda: | Mmm hmm. Even at an end, ’cause growing up in a different context, but it’s, you know, whatever profession you’re in in New York City, you know, it’s such an advantage. But then, obviously the cultural side is important to me too, if they never used it in their career just . . . | I.1.3 I.7.2.a |
| Kathryn: | Yeah. And then in terms of actually now talking about entering into the program, joining up with the program, you had [your child] start in Kindergarten? |   |
| Linda: | Mmm hmm. And actually I know that, like, a long time ago they actually had a bilingual pre-K at one stage in [School 1]; I don’t know what happened to that. So obviously I would have loved that, but I think was only a pilot, anyway, and it’s only 2 hours a day, so . . . To be honest, [School 1] is quite . . . you know, it’s quite hard to get information out of them. They do not promote the program in any way. And like, because everyone wants to get into it mainly, that’s part of it. | O.4.6 |
APPENDIX G

Sample page of the coding spreadsheet

This spreadsheet shows the number of times each code arose in an interview, which allowed me to keep track of what was said, who said it, and understand which themes were most prevalent in the interviews. The original document was created in Google.

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REFERENCES


speaking-out-on-bilingual-education-failures.html


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