EXPLORATION OF THE MEANING AND PROCESS OF WELLNESS AMONG FAMILIES IN VIEQUES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

### Because Vieques Is In My Heart

- Introduction: 1
- Research Problem: 3
- Literature Review: 5
  - Resilience within the wellness framework: 11
  - Risk factors that affect resilience in Vieques: 17
- Summary: 48
- Research Questions: 49

## CHAPTER II

### A Road Map And Other Trails

- The Ethnographic Method: 50
- Gaining Access to the Setting and Selecting Participants: 53
- Data Collection: 58
- Data Analysis: 68
- Validity: 71
- Writing: 77

## CHAPTER III

### Introducing Families And Friends

- Family #1 Amapola: 78
- Family #2 Rosas: 85
- Family #3 Flamboyan: 89
- Family #4 Gardena: 106
- Focus Group: Head Start Parents – Watch out for the bees! 113
- Focus Group: Civil Disobedience Camp – Morivivi: 114
- Introducing Louis – Hierba Buena: 120
- Fela: Knitting a blanket of hope one stitch at a time: 123
- Lessons from School: 128
- Summary: 131

## CHAPTER IV

### Construction In Progress: Step Gently As You Come In

- There is always someone out there: 135
- Promoting independence: 136
- Home rules and responsibilities: 143
- Raising kids with love and tenderness: 152
- Grandma’s cooking, the best in the island!: 159
- Our Father who art in Heaven: 170
- When you have an education you look farther, you don’t accept less: 181
### Appendix D
Informed Consent Form for Parent/Caregiver Participation
- **English Version**
- **Spanish Version**

### Appendix E
Parent/Caregiver Consent for Child’s Participation in the Study
- **English Version**
- **Spanish Version**

### Appendix F
Observation Guideline – Protective Factors

### Appendix G
Protocol for Unstructured Interviews and Observations

### Appendix H
Informed Consent Form to Participate in the Focus Group
- **English Version**
- **Spanish Version**

### Appendix I
Focus Group Guiding Questions
- **English Version**
- **Spanish Version**

### Appendix J
Informed Consent Form for Teachers
- **English Version**
- **Spanish Version**

### Appendix K
Guiding Questions for Teachers
- **English Version**
- **Spanish Version**

### Appendix L
Sample of Analytic Memo

### Appendix M
Sample of Format for Categories and Themes

### Appendix N
Children’s Art-work
Appendix O
Letter of Land Expropriation 340

Appendix P
Map of Puerto Rico and Vieques 341
### List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Biocological Model</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Process of Accessing Study Participants Through the Gatekeepers</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Visual Map of Participants</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Data Collection Process</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Template for Data Analysis</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Circles of Wellness for the Amapola Family</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Circles of Wellness for the Rosas Family</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Circles of Wellness for the Flamboyan Family</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Circles of Wellness for the Gardena Family</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Process of Wellness to Maintain Family Unity</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Community Support Process</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Family Process of teaching and promoting patriotism</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Process that supports the development of perseverance</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 14
Summary of Finding

269
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Forever Peace!
CHAPTER 1

Because Vieques Is in My Heart

_The jump is so frightening between where I am and where I want to be _ because of all I may become
_I will close my eyes and leap_  
_Marianne Radmacher

Introduction

Wellness is not the absence of illness but rather a state of balance that encompasses the physical, emotional, and social environment as well as the cognitive aspects of the individual (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000). Cowen (1994) has identified five components important in the development of wellness: 1) establishing secure attachment relationships, 2) acquiring age-appropriate skills and competencies, 3) developing environments that promote positive adaptations, 4) fostering empowerment, and 5) acquiring skills for coping with stress (resilience). Wellness is dependent upon the values of the culture (Cowen, 1994, Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000), with the individuals within a given culture establishing the norms of what is valued as wellness and what is not.

The purpose of this qualitative study is twofold. First, to identify the values which determine and shape the concept of wellness for four resilient families on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. Second, to identify the processes that take place in the development and maintenance of wellness within these
families. My interest in choosing Vieques as my research topic emerges from my roots as a native from Puerto Rico. The 60 year presence of the United States Navy, along with many other risk factors such as poverty, unemployment, life threatening diseases, death and environmental problems, have prompted me to explore how families in Vieques have developed strength to manage these adversities. This study will enable some of the people from Vieques to present their stories about the struggles and victories in their quest to develop and maintain wellness.

To accomplish this purpose it is important to explore how resilient children and families from Vieques define wellness. A more in-depth analysis will be undertaken that will identify what the protective factors are that foster resilience, as well as the environmental factors that promote or prevent the development of wellness. This study embraces the opportunity to learn from these families in Vieques and about the factors that have supported them in maintaining their wellness while living in an environment that constantly challenges their ability to maintain a healthy balance. The information gathered in this study will provide ideas and strategies applicable to the context and values of the Vieques community. The factors and processes that promote wellness, which are identified here, may consequently assist in the development of further interventions. These ideas may also be shared among community members in order to promote effective prevention programs that support wellness for all.
Research Problem

The island of Vieques is located eighteen miles northeast of Puerto Rico. Since 1941 the United States Navy has been using the island of Vieques for military training by air, land and water. The presence of the U.S. Navy has created negative effects on the people of Vieques, such as the contamination of the environment leading to consumption of contaminated food and water. (More risk effects will be detailed later in this chapter.) The development of respiratory illnesses, skin problems and cancer have been related to the chemical byproducts that were released into the air of the community by the military exercise and training programs (Graduate School of Public Health, 2001). In May 2000, a team of professionals from the Medical Science Campus at the University of Puerto Rico initiated a study regarding the health status of the people in Vieques. They found a higher risk of cancer, heart problems, diabetes, and AIDS than compared with the Puerto Rican population (Graduate School of Public Health, 2001). The risk of cancer has increased since the U.S. Navy intensified their practices in the early 1970's. The report from the Graduate School of Public Health (2001) describes the devastating effects of the military base on the environment.

Eight thousand acres were assigned to store ammunition, explosives, fuel and other toxic materials. The U.S. Navy created 15 fields of toxic waste within the 8,000 acres of land. Waste, ammunition, and fuel were burned in these fields, releasing toxic byproducts into the environment and consequently into the civilian area. Paint, and other waste generated by the U.S. Navy and military, is suspected to have leaked into the wells that supply the civilian community. On one particular creek the U.S. Navy deposited 1,775 pounds of fuel mixed with ammuns and 5,275 pounds of nitric acid. The food chain is also affected when these chemicals are released through the air, soil, and water. They contaminate the food people
grow, the animals raised for food, the marine life (fishing is a primary food source), and ultimately affects the entire community (Graduate School of Public Health, 2001, pg. 74-77)

Other risk factors include social and economic effects such as unemployment, high consumption of alcohol and other illegal drugs, and economic and psychological dependency on the military system. Damaso Serrano, Major of Vieques, describes the impact of these risk factors.

This island, and Puerto Rico as a whole, has been trained to be a culture of dependency. People get money for everything. When I was young, people used to get married after they had a job and after they had bought a house. Now people get married and they don’t have a place to live. They go to the Department of Family and can get a place to live for free. They can get food stamps, go to the Water and Public Service Company and get water and electricity free or for a very low cost. They teach their children, and their children teach their children, that they don’t have to work for anything. That way the dependency cycle is maintained. (Personal interview, pg. 1)

The chronic exposure to military practices such as prolonged bombing, the threat of military practice to civilians’ physical and mental health, and the socioeconomic problems that have multiplied throughout the last 60 years of military presence on the island, create an environment where wellness is constantly threatened. Given these conditions, how does a family develop and maintain wellness? It is important to determining the protective factors that have enabled families to adapt to this environment. The physical and emotional environment where children are raised influences their perception of safety, autonomy, and well being. Exploration of those factors which promote and/or are threats to wellness can assist in creating environments where children and
families can feel safe. In doing so families can feel empowered to make decisions that promote wellness for their community.

**Literature Review**

Review of the literature has been knitted through all six chapters while incorporating the history and reality of Vieques at the same time. Wellness is the ability to adapt to the daily challenges in life in order to maintain a balance between the physical, emotional, social, and environmental demands placed upon the individual. Therefore, wellness is an ongoing process, not an absolute state (Cowen, 1994). Wellness as a construct should be promoted for the entire population (proactive) and not just for those who already have, are on the verge of, or are at risk for dysfunction (reactive).

Traditionally, wellness has been associated with prevention. Prevention has been used as a strategy to avoid occurrence of deficits or as an attempt to control deficits from getting worse (Lorion, 2000). According to Cowen (1996), primary prevention should include building health and preventing dysfunction before maladjustment occurs. Primary prevention should provide psychological support and should strengthen the positive characteristics of those who are not affected by stressful events. In other words, promotion of wellness needs to be approached from the prenatal state, not as a mending process after deficits have been identified. Wellness is the vehicle we can use to promote and celebrate the strengths and virtues in all individuals (Cowen, 1994, Seligman, 1998).
Promotion of wellness can be approached from a biococological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner & Neville, 1995). The biococological construct is comprised of unique characteristics which primarily influences developmental outcomes and, therefore, influences the process of wellness. In this study, the biological characteristics of the person such as their genetics, physiological, and health status will not be addressed.

The biococological model incorporates bidirectional interactions between proximal processes, which include person, environmental context, and time (see Figure 1). According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), proximal processes relate to the enduring interactions that promote human development, and which occur between the person (child) and other persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) state that in order for a child to develop intellectually, emotionally, and morally, regular interactions must occur for an extended period of time in the child’s life. These interactions occur with one or more persons who are committed to support the child’s well being and with whom the child develops close attachments. In order for this developmental process to become meaningful and to advance, the complexity of the activities must be increased gradually.

In the biococological model the person possesses characteristics such as competencies (intellectual, physical, and socio-emotional skills), temperament, and the ability to regulate emotions and behaviors, curiosity, the ability to engage
in activities independently and in groups, responsiveness to others, readiness to defer immediate gratification in order to attain long term goals, and the ability to engage and persist in progressively more complex activities. The characteristics of the person influence the interactions between and among parent and child, child and peers, child and family, child and others across time and contexts.

In the bioecological model, time refers to the bidirectional interactions to which the child is exposed and which occur within ongoing events (microtimes), across broader time intervals such as days and weeks (mesotimes), and changing events in the larger society and across generations (macrotimes).

Placed at the center of the model are the person’s unique physical and emotional characteristics and their intellectual competences, which support the development of wellness. These characteristics are influenced by bidirectional interactions that are gradually expanded and increased in complexity as the person’s context expands from the family unit to extended family, neighbors, school, friends, coworkers, spouses. These interactions occur at a multilevel system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000).

The last component of this bioecological model is the environmental context or multi-level system. The context includes the microsystem, which is the pattern of activities, social roles, and personal interactions that occur between the child and caretakers on a face-to-face basis. The next level of context is the mesosystem, which is the interaction that exists between two settings or
microsystems. The child is an active participant and is influenced by the processes taking place in two or more settings. Schools, a childcare setting, immediate family, and playmates are some examples of the mesosystem.

**Figure 1** Bronfenbrenner ecological model based on Bronfenbrenner ecological construct

The third level is the exosystem which is the process that takes place between two or more settings. One of these settings does not contain the child, however, what occurs in that setting indirectly influences the processes in which
the developing child lives. Two examples of the exosystem, as it relates to Vieques, are the work environments of parents or primary caregivers and the U.S. Navy base. The child might never enter those environments, however, what occurs in them might directly affect the child’s immediate environment. The fourth and last level is the macrosystem, which includes the belief system, the values, resources, hazards, lifestyles, and governmental policies and laws of a culture.

The development of wellness derives from the positive transactions that occur between factors within each level of the biocultural system, which in turn influences the behavior of each individual (Kelly, 2000). Enhancement of wellness should be proactive, population oriented, multidimensional and ongoing (Cowen, 1996). When wellness processes occur across all levels, the positive qualities of individuals are strengthened, therefore building protective factors before maladjustment occurs. Cowen (1996) suggests that a global approach to wellness should include creating environments that promote adaptation, foster autonomy, empowerment and support for all members of the community, and build on skills and strategies to cope more effectively with stress.

Wellness is also culturally dependent (Cowen 1994, Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000). Individuals define wellness by their cultural beliefs, values, traditions, social norms, and by the resources available in a particular group or community. Values are the principles that guide the actions at individual, family, community and society levels. When underlying principles, such as individual and
cultural values, become meaningful for any particular group, the following criteria should be considered: 1) values should guide the process that leads to a better society, 2) values should not lead to coercive enforcement, 3) values should complement each other, and 4) values should promote personal and collective wellness (Prilleltensky, 2001). Positive values are needed to promote wellness as well as to prevent illness. There is a fine balance to consider when addressing individual versus collective values that promote wellness. Collective values enhance the possibility of promoting the individual's well-being (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000). Building stronger communities that possess common values toward wellness leads toward the promotion of social justice for all members of that community.

Parallel to Bronfenbrenner's (1998) bioecological model, Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000) have stated that a child's well-being is determined by the level of parental, familial, communal, and social wellness. Family wellness is an interdependent process in which the relationships among all family members promote support, affection, and gratification. Some individual characteristics that support wellness are courage, optimism, interpersonal skills, work ethics, hope, honesty, and perseverance (Cowen, 1994, Seligman, 1998).

Lorion (2000) summarizes this wellness framework as the need to focus on the individual's internal strengths and abilities, their transactions within the environment, the values and cultural norms that guide their behavior, and the ability to overcome stressful situations. Individual and group values are inherent
within each level of the biocological model, with the values of the culture and society reflected in the macrosystem

*Resilience within the wellness framework*

Resilience is the individual's ability to effectively adapt to adverse situations in their lives (Berk, 2000, Butler, 1997, Luthar & Zigler, 1991, Rutter, 1987). Resilience reflects the dynamic transactions between the individual's inner strength, the environment in which events occur, and the outside support received. Resilience is also a dynamic process. In other words, resilience changes as the events and circumstances in life change (Rutter, 1987). According to Brooks and Goldstein (2001) resilience "embraces the ability of a child to deal more effectively with stress and pressure, to cope with everyday challenges, to bounce back from disappointments, adversity, and trauma, to develop clear and realistic goals to solve problems, to relate comfortably with others, and to treat oneself and others with respect (pg 1)."

Several factors or mechanisms have been identified that protect individuals from succumbing to adversity. The individual uses these protective mechanisms to face adverse situations. The ability to deal with adverse events at a specific time in life creates a turning point where the developmental trajectory of the individual is changed (Rutter, 1987). What started as a risk trajectory turns into an adaptive process in which individuals build on their self-confidence, self-esteem, and determination to move further in life. This is also reflected in the
bioecological model as historical events in a person’s life, and the bidirectional interactions or influences can affect their beliefs and behaviors.

Protective mechanisms identified throughout the resilience literature (Berk, 2000; Butler, 1997, Jack, 2000, Smith & Prior, 1995, Werner & Smith, 1982) include

1) The child’s biological and genetic makeup, which in the bioecological model refers to the person’s characteristics and the bidirectional interactions within the microsystem, including

a) The child’s temperament – Children who are calm, easy going, and sociable elicit more positive responses from caregivers and other adults. Consequently this interaction promotes feelings of adequacy in the caregiver. A child’s ability for self-regulation maintains a low-key emotional state, which makes the interaction with the caregiver more enjoyable. In addition, parental warmth fosters a positive temperament. In a lifespan study of refugee Jewish children who emigrated from Germany to Australia in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Palmer (2000) found that a child’s temperament was the most significant factor in protecting him/herself from the traumatic separation from their families and helped him/her to deal with the adjustment of alternative care. These children had a higher
probability to be successful at adapting to new situations and environments.

b) The child’s cognitive level – Children with at least average intelligence have better means to assess the situation and to problem solve. Their cognitive abilities also support their self-confidence, self-esteem and efficacy. In a longitudinal study of urban children, Masten, Hubbard, Gist, Tellegen, Garmezy and Ramirez (1999) found that children’s IQ and good parenting were important resources and protective factors for the development of pro-social behavior. A child’s early cognitive functioning may have positive long-term influences in the event of adversity (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Masten, et al., 1999). It appears that children of higher intelligence are more adept at solving problems and protecting themselves. They may also attract the interest of other influencing adults, such as teachers, who can function as important protective factors against adversities. Children with higher IQs are more likely to function better at school and avoid behavior problems.

2) Establishment of attachment with a primary caregiver figure. A child’s biological and genetic makeup influences the quality of internal regulation necessary for the development of attachment with a caregiver. Likewise the caregiver’s ability to support the child’s
Internal regulation at an optimal state is crucial in the development of a sense of being safe, cared for, and loved. The Masten et al. (1999) longitudinal study found that the parent's behavior changed over time, influencing the development of competence through adolescence. According to Erickson (1963), the development of trust occurs with the delicate exchange of satisfaction of basic needs and the nurture provided by the caregiver. Masten (1985), Werner and Smith (1982), Masten et al. (1999), and Rhodes and Hoey (1994) found that parent/caregiver personal characteristics, such as being competent, loving, patient, compatible, goal oriented, and accepting, set realistic expectations and goals, fosters responsibility, helps children experience success, and helps create fundamental protective mechanisms for children. Home routines and structure (Rhodes & Hoey, 1994), such as home rules have also been found to create a more stable and productive environment, which supports a child's sense of self-control.

3) Personal social networks. These are informal relationships developed between the child and a wide range of people including relatives, neighbors, teachers, friends, and people in the community. Jack (2000) found that even the perception of having the social support available was enough to maintain the strength individuals needed through stressful events. These informal networks build a sense of
trust and mutual respect among community members, which consequently influence the child’s development and sense of belonging. Werner and Smith (1982) found that a second or third adult in the household becomes an important support for the child. There is a significant relationship between the child and another person besides the primary caregiver(s) that supports a resilience process in the child. Rhodes and Hoey (1994) found that multigenerational family households assisted in providing more supervision of children, therefore providing the physical, emotional, and moral support needed. They also found that a relationship with a teacher who set higher goals, served as a role model, and extended his/her support beyond the classroom setting made a significant difference in fostering the resiliency of these children. These personal social networks comprise the influences between the child and individuals in the mesosystem.

4) Religion and moral beliefs. Werner and Smith (1982) found that religion provided stability to children and adults during times of change. Likewise, Rhodes and Hoey (1994) found in their interviews with resilient adults, that a moral sense of right and wrong established at home was an important protective mechanism. Religious beliefs are influences from the exo- and macrosystems which, when introduced by parents or caregivers in the child’s microsystem, create or influence changes in behaviors and values.
5) Setting high expectations. Rhodes and Hoey (1994) found that when a significant adult in the child's life (parent, grandparent, or teacher) had realistic, but high, expectations about the child's performance, it served as a springboard to move forward despite adversities. Having family and community celebrate the child's accomplishments was also a significant factor (Jack, 2000, Rhodes & Hoey, 1994). High expectations relate to the influences presented by parents or caregivers from the microsystem in the bioecological model. Community celebrations, from the exosystem level, can clearly influence a child's resilience potential.

These protective mechanisms provide the foundation for the development of specific characteristics of resilient children. Resilient children demonstrate the following characteristics (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001; Garmezy, 1988, Rutter, 1985):

1) Good self-esteem. They feel special and appreciated.
2) Ability to set realistic goals for themselves.
3) Good self-efficacy. Children develop the ability to problem solve and make decisions.
4) Coping strategies that facilitate their growth rather than foster defeat.
5) Awareness of their strengths and weaknesses.
6) Strength and confidence as integral components of their self-concept.
7) Effective interpersonal skills with other children as well as with adults.
   Child develops good insight into social situations

8) Easy going temperament

9) Ability to seek assistance and nurture from adults in a positive manner

10) Ability to define the aspects of their lives over which they have control
    and on which they can focus their energy

11) In a review of research on resilience Luthar and Zigler (1991) found
    that humor plays an important role in the development of resilience.
    Higher scores on humor generation correlated with higher competence
    during stressful situations.

    All these factors are interactive at all levels. What starts with an individual
    with unique characteristics, grows over time through interaction with people,
    events and values of the culture, and re-forms the developing person into a
    resilient person.

    **Risk Factors that Affect Resilience in Vieques**

    According to Garmezy (1988) the chronic events to which the child is
    habituated are less disturbing than the acute events in life. However, it is not so
    much the isolated events that represent a risk for the child’s wellness, but more
    the cumulative factors that occur in their lives (Garmezy, 1988; Jack, 2000,
    Rutter, 1987). A constellation of 5 to 6 risk factors can compromise a child’s
    development (Jack, 2000). A combination of poverty, lack of education,
    unemployment, poor housing, ill health, and low quality child-care, among others
things, are risk factors that directly and negatively influence a family’s ability to adapt (Iack, 2000)

The island of Vieques is located in the Caribbean, 17 miles to the east of the island of Puerto Rico. It has a population of 9,400 (www.viequeslibre.addm.com). Vieques is an example of how cumulative risk factors have continued to influence the lives of families in that community and how after 60 years of military practice by the U.S. Navy, they continue to struggle to maintain wellness and demand acknowledgement of their human rights. Personal examples, as revealed to this researcher, are provided to demonstrate the impact of these risk factors on the families in Vieques.

- *Risk Factor of Housing*

In November 1940, with the support of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Congress of the United States of America approved Public Law 13 designating 35 million dollars for the construction of a navy base in Vieques. In August 1941, the Congress of the U.S.A. approved Public Law 247, which stated that the U.S. Navy could expropriate the land they wanted for the use of military purposes (Melendez Lopez, 2000). The U.S. Navy expropriated 26,000 of the 33,000 acres that encompass the island of Vieques (www.viequeslibre.addm.com). The forced possession of over two thirds of the island left the families of Vieques without the most arable land, thereby jeopardizing their principal means of subsistence (www.viequeslibre.addm.com). Thousands of families were forced to leave the land where they had lived for many generations and were clustered on a
strip of land toward the center of the island. The military assigned the area to which the families were relocated and paid an arbitrary amount for the expropriated land. As people resisted these practices the Navy issued an ultimatum stating that the people accept the price set by the Navy or be evicted, by force, within 24 hours (Melendez Lopez, 2000, www.viequeslibre.addl.com).

Pete, a taxi driver in Vieques, recalled the times when people were expropriated from their land:

People who lived in the area the U.S.A. Navy wanted to use were offered an amount of money for the land, which was decided by the Navy. They came and gave people, who owned land that they [the Navy] wanted, a document stating that they had to leave their house in 24 hours, otherwise everything they had in the house would be destroyed with a bulldozer they had for “cleaning the area.” People had to move to other areas regardless of whether they wanted to or not. That’s how they got the land (Personal Journal, pg 2, 2001)

Patricia recounts her grandmother’s experience of when she was evicted from the sugar cane plantation where she lived

My grandmother told me that they gave her twenty-four hours to leave. My grandmother didn’t have land, she was a tenant farmer, and so lived at the sugar cane plantation. She worked at the plantation and they had given her a piece of land so she could grow whatever she wanted. They gave her twenty-four hours to pick up her belongings. Those who had the means could take the wood they could, but most of the people lived in houses where the wood was already rotten, and who was going to move rotten wood? My grandmother’s house was plowed with the bulldozer. Some people were sent far away and they had to walk through the forest all the way to Santa Maria. But my grandmother was lucky and she stayed here in La Esperanza. And they gave her a number of the lot of land they were assigned to. My grandmother got lot #26. And when you got there, there were weeds all over

[Mi abuela me dice que le dieron 24 horas para irse. Mi abuela no tenía terrenos, era agregada de la plantación de caña de la central. Trabajaba en la central entonces ellos le dieron un cantito de tierra para que lo cultivara
Le daban 24 horas para recoger sus pertenencias. Entonces el que tuviera acceso recogía la madera que pudiera pero que en su mayoría vivían en casas de madera podría y quien iba a mover esa madera podría pa ca. A la casa de mi abuela le pasaron la buldózer había gente que lo enviaron allá lejos que tenían que caminar por ese monte hasta Santa María. Pero mi abuela tuvo suerte y le toco aquí en La Esperanza. Y le daban un numero con el lote que le tocaba. A mi abuela le toco el 26, y tú ibas y lo que había era un pastizal.

- *Risk Factor – Unemployment*

The Navy Base offered jobs for one year while the construction of the base was in progress. The people who had owned land and animals were forced to become salaried employees of the Navy. The salary earned by the people from Vieques was less than the salary North American workers earned. Carlos used to work at the Navy base in Vieques. He remembers a conversation regarding the salaries the Viequenses were making, and how the managers settled for less pay.

When I started working there, why was I making $2.45 an hour? Around 1974-75 a person made a comment, “Aren’t they supposed to be earning $5 an hour?” And someone answered, “No, it’s fine if they earn what they are earning.” When I was about to retire, I was making $12, almost $13 an hour. A person that came from another military base and who worked with civilians asked me how much I was making. He told me, “How could that be possible? Other people that have less years of work than you are making $19 per hour in North American bases.” I have no words to describe to you the abuse they did to this town.

¿Por qué yo cuando empecé a trabajar me tenía que ganar $2.45 cuando hubo un comentario de una persona, por el 74-75, ¿pero no se tenían que estar ganando $5 la hora? Y le contestaron “no, está bien que se ganen eso.” Cuando casi estamos yéndonos, yo en Vieques estoy ganándome $12 casi 13 la hora. Viene una persona que viene de una base militar que trabaja con civiles y me pregunta cuánto yo me estaba ganando y dice “pero esperate como es posible otras personas que llevan menos tiempo que tu en el trabajo se ganan $19.00 la hora en bases norteamericanas” Yo no tengo como describir el abuso al pueblo.
When the construction was completed in 1943, most people ended up without a job and few options to support their families, creating a large unemployment crisis (Melendez Lopez, 2000). The poor economic situation created pressure to find alternate means of survival, which resulted in separation of the families. Moving from Vieques was an option that many Viequenses considered and pursued in their search for a better financial status. Rosa describes how her family became fragmented.

My younger sister went to the United States and took with her our two youngest brothers. They worked there for a while. While there she married a guy from Vieques. The youngest brother got married to a girl from Ponce and they moved back here, but the other one moved to El Condado in San Juan. They all are retired and receiving social security. My youngest brother was a guard and stayed here. Another one worked at Banco Credito. Another sister is a retired nurse in Saint Croix. The oldest one worked for the department of education and is living in Vieques.

Laura, Rosa’s oldest daughter, remembers how the struggles regarding lack of employment affected people her age, as well as her family, when she was in high school.

After kids turned eighteen, most left Vieques because there was no future staying on the island. For the young women in their twenties it was because they were able to find a job of some kind. Most of the young people went to the United States, Saint Croix, Culebra or Puerto Rico. I have a brother who lives in Texas, my sister is in Vega Alta and my other brother lives in Bayamón.
[Porque siempre después de los 18 años la mayoría de los adolescentes se iban de Vieques porque no había futuro. Si había muchachas de veinte y algo de años era porque habían encontrado un trabajo de algo. La mayoría se iban para Santa Cruz, Culebra, Estados Unidos. Tengo un hermano que vive en Texas, mi hermana está en Vega Alta y el otro hermano vive en Bayamón.]

The same pattern of family separation continues as Maria, Laura’s middle daughter, speaks with sadness about how she perceives her future when she finishes her college degree.

Because since I can think of, we have always lived with the same problems and the same barriers. The same situation occurs with the students who go to college. You think, “Will I be able to return [to Vieques] or not.” What happens is that I am going to school now and my ideal situation would be that I can return to work here, that I can work as a professional here because this is where I grew up, because I like living here. As a Viequense, I like it here. I am an easygoing person and I like the peacefulness of this place. I have my family close, because I have always been very close to my family. But the reality is that I go to study, I am getting prepared but I am not sure if I am going to be able to end up here. It is most likely that I will have to finish my studies and work there [on the island of Puerto Rico] because the employment and life conditions here are not the best. In order to develop professionally I might need to stay there. And that’s the reality that we have to face when we go to college.

[Porque desde que yo tengo uso de razón aquí siempre a sido lo mismo, nos hemos visto con los mismos problemas, el mismo estancamiento. Y la misma situación al estudiar uno tiene que pensar “hay podré volver o no podré volver.” Porque lo que pasa es que yo estoy estudiando y la situación ideal para mí vendría siendo yo poder regresar aquí a trabajar, yo ejercer mi profesión. Porque este es el sitio donde yo siempre me he criado, porque me gusta vivir aquí. Yo como Viequense a mí me gusta. Yo soy una persona tranquila y me gusta la tranquilidad de aquí, tengo mi familia cerca porque yo siempre he sido bien unida a mi familia. Pero la realidad es que yo me voy a estudiar, estoy preparándome pero no se si puedo terminar aquí. Lo más seguro es que yo tenga que terminar de estudiar y trabajar allá porque las condiciones de empleo, las condiciones de vida y eso aquí no son las mejores. Y pues para yo poder desarrollarme]
profesionalmente tal vez necesite quedarme allá. Y eso sería la realidad que uno tiene que enfrentar estudiando.

The poor economic situation in Vieques, which was created by the Navy, and their expropriation of \( \frac{1}{4} \) of the land that pushed the population toward the center of the island, left no land for farming or for any kind of development. It also promoted divisions in families as they decided to leave for other shores to look for a better financial status. Luis, a schoolteacher and leader of the civil disobedience movement shares his analysis of the situation:

The Navy purposely destroyed the economy of this town because the Navy has always wanted to have Vieques. The Navy worked for this in many ways. They didn’t support employment in Vieques because if they did, people were going to return, the population would grow and it will make it harder because people would start demanding the use of more space. And that economic crisis was promoted so that people would voluntarily leave the island, they say voluntarily. And I say like Pablo Freire said that there is no voluntarily illiterate person. The state creates the conditions for illiteracy and here the economic crisis was created by the state, was created by the Navy.

Currently Vieques has an unemployment rate of almost 50%.

(www.viequeslibre.adhr.com) Fishing is the only industry on the island. When the U.S. Navy ships enter the deep waters where the fishermen have their traps, the propellers of the Navy ships destroy the buoys that indicate the position the...
Iraps are fish trapped in the bottom of the sea for eight to twelve months. These nets can collect from 4,500 to 5,000 pounds of fish in ten months. Without the buoys the fishermen are unable to locate their traps, which creates a large threat to the marine ecosystem in that region and a loss of income to many families (www.viequeslibre.addr.com). Mr. Damaso Serrano, Mayor of Vieques, summarizes the unemployment situation and the magnitude of its effects on the population:

Right now the unemployment level in Vieques is about 40-50%. The sources of employment are fishing, government jobs (there aren't that many) and about 100 jobs through the Navy. Right now a person receives $79.00 on food stamps per month. That won't feed a person for a month. What happens is that the person buys drugs [changes food stamps for money] with that money and makes double that amount by selling drugs. So the dependency problem for feeding a person creates a bigger problem of drug addiction, unemployment, as well as other social problems such as alcoholism, prostitution, etc. (Personal Interview, pg 1, 2001)

Sameroff, Seifer, Baldwin, and Baldwin (1993) found that the poor economic status of the family creates a risk factor for the optimal development of the child's intelligence. The total number of students in Vieques in the academic year 2001-02 was 1,946. Of that total 1,586 (81.59%) were classified below the poverty level (Department of Education Report, 2002). In the following excerpt Damaso Serrano describes how the people from Vieques have been denied their rights for development, leaving the people in a desperate, survival state:

The U.S. Navy has blocked the development of Vieques. There's lots of poverty in this island and it was worse when I was a child. I remember during the "zafra" (time of sugar production) people had some money and resources to eat. But during the "witch time" [time when there was no production of sugar, it usually lasted 6 months] representatives from the community where I lived and from communities closed by the Navy base
used to go to the base to collect food that was thrown away. The left over food collected was for the pigs. I remember my mother searching through the army food cans looking for good left over pieces to feed us. We, the people, became the pigs. (Personal Interview, pg. 2, 2001)

Daniel comes from a family of twelve children. He was raised in Vieques primarily by his mother because his father died when he was five years old. Of the twelve children, only six are alive. Daniel describes his life as a child, the struggles, hard work and cooperative effort that the family developed in order to survive.

I remember that time when we had to get firewood from the forest in order to cook. Sometimes we had to go far away because most people cooked also with wood. There was no running water. I remember that there was a public faucet far away and we had to get water in cans. I remember when my mother ironed with the coal irons. Our house was made out of wood. Most of us slept in hammocks. Those were very difficult times. Food was very limited, not like now that there is abundance. I remember that a chicken was killed once a week. On those days what we primarily ate was flour, arepas, funche, and fish broth. That was what we could do, and that had to feed all of us.

[Yo me acuerdo esa época que nosotros teníamos que buscar leña en el monte para poder cocinar. A veces había que ir bastante lejos porque la mayoría de las personas cocinaban con leña. No había agua. Yo me acuerdo que había una pluma pública bien lejos y teníamos que ir a buscar agua en lata. Me acuerdo cuando mi mamá planchaba con las planchas de carbón. La casa de casa era de madera. Dormíamos en hamaca casi todos. Era un tiempo bien difícil. Se comía bastante limitado, no como ahora que hay abundancia. Yo me acuerdo que una vez en la semana se mataba un pollo. En ese tiempo lo que mayormente se hacía era la harina, la arepa, el funche, el caldo de pescado. Era lo más que se podía hacer y era para que diera para todos.]

In the 1950's and 1960's people in Vieques would go to “the ditch” looking for food. The ditch was a hole the Navy built in the military base where they threw away the trash. That trash included cans of food that had expired, and
people took the risk of crossing the fence to look for food. In fact, Rosa reported that one of her cousins got injured when a bomb exploded at his feet as he was looking for food in the ditch. The items found in the ditch created a source of income for some Viquenses. Jose used to go to the military base looking for ammunition, for copper that they could re-sell. Likewise, people went to the ditch looking for food and sold two cans for five cents in town. When people started to organize in protest against the presence of the Navy in Viquenses, the Navy stopped throwing the food in the ditch. They brought the discarded food to town and distributed it in the communities. This is how Jose, a schoolteacher, describes the situation and the Navy’s hidden intent.

One way [the Navy] tried to create attention and to be seen as good neighbors was by using the food or leftovers that they had and giving it to the community. People didn’t have to go to the ditch anymore. They gave it to them. People looked and fought for it. Boxes of everything that they were going to throw away went to that place. They brought it there so that people could take it. That’s what we call “pig’s food” because what you give to the pigs is the food that you throw away. And that’s what they did. All that was left over, what they were going to throw in the ditch, they started to bring and leave in a place so that people from the barrios would come and pick it up to use it. It wasn’t boxes of food that had the expiration date on it. No, no there was a little of everything there. People found there what the Navy didn’t want anymore. That’s where the “pig’s food” came from. And we ate the food the Navy didn’t want for a long time. That was a way to keep the people quiet because, imagine, when you are in need and someone gives something to you, they fill in your stomach, then you calm down, you control yourself. Because when you are facing many adversities, you keep things in silence. And that’s what happened here. And I know they did that maliciously, with the intention of using us.

[Pero una forma de llamar la atención muchas veces, de ser los buenos vecinos fue muchas de estas comidas o sobrantes que ellos tenían, dárselos a la comunidad. Entonces ya no había que buscarlo ahy. Se los daban. La gente los buscaba y se los peleaban. Cajas de todo lo que ellos iban a
botar, iban a un lugar, lo llevaban para que la gente lo cogiera. Eso nosotros decíamos que era comía de puerco porque lo que se le da al puerco es comía que sobra. Y eso era lo que ellos hacían. Todo lo que les sobraban, que iban a tirar al hoyo, comenzaron a traerlo acá para dejarlo, soltarlo, colocarlo, dejarlo en un lugar para que entonces la gente de los barrios fuera y lo recogiera para su consumo. Pero no era que eran provisiones con sus cajas con fechas de expirar. No, no, allí había de todo, allí estaba lo que ellos no querían de todo. De ahí viene lo de la comía de puerco como quien dice. Y así estuvimos mucho tiempo, comiendo sobras. Y esa era una forma de mantener al pueblo callado. Porque imagínate muchas veces cuando tu estás necesitado y te dan, te llenan la barriga, te tranquilizas, te controlas, porque ante una necesidad, pues el silencio. Y eso paso aquí. Y yo sé que fue hecho maliciosamente, con la intención de utilizarlos.

The island of Puerto Rico and its archipelago, which includes the islands of Vieques and Culebra, have established a political and economical status of a Commonwealth with the United States since the late 1940s and early 1950s. This commonwealth agreement has brought many financial funds such as food stamps and subsidies. Although the economic support was received with appreciation, it has also created a bigger problem of dependency and lack of empowerment.

María P. is a schoolteacher whose parents have always lived with welfare assistance and food stamps in order to support their family of ten children. Her parents and siblings are an example of the macrosystem level in Vieques. It is a big social problem. People don’t see the need to study and to improve, mostly because there are so many government agencies that will provide them with what they need. María P. describes her interpretation of people’s attitude.

It is a social problem and a pattern. I have this agency that is going to give me everything without having to do anything for it. Why should I struggle? Why should I study?
Of the ten children in Maria P’s family, one of her sisters finished an associate’s degree, Maria P finished her bachelor’s degree in education, but the other eight siblings didn’t finish high school. Neither one of her nephews has finished high school either. Her mother and all her siblings, except for one brother, depend on welfare. The pattern of dependency complexity with the status quo is passed down through generations. The dependency factor sinks even deeper as residents from Vieques realize that if the U.S. Navy left the island, they would lose the welfare benefits such as food stamps. Jose, a schoolteacher, describes people’s perception about the Navy:

In this town everyone, or most of the people, the ones who support the Navy, have the excuse that it is because of national defense. And the national defense is that there are food stamps, or other assistance, or social security. They think they will lose those benefits.

[Y eso es un mal social. Y que es un patrón. Entonces tengo esta agencia que me va a dar todo sin hacer nada pues pa que me voy a reventar, pa que me voy a estudiar.]

[Risk Factor: Violence]

The effects of separation or loss of loved ones, as well as the effects of war are considered pervasive threats to the security of individuals (Garmezy, 1994). When violent events are paired with a constellation of cumulated stresses, it places the child at a developmental high-risk level. There is a dynamic interaction between the adversities, the context in which they occur, and the child.
According to Wyman, Sandler, Wolchik, and Nelson (2000) these dynamic interactions affect how the child interprets adversity, how the child responds to it, and whether the adversity will recur, be resolved, or if it will lead to further adversity over time.

War and community violence intensifies the challenge of becoming competent. Children living in war or in a violent community experience more difficulties establishing trust and building a sense of safety (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996). Parents in these environments are psychologically unavailable to nurture some of the basic needs of their children. According to Garbarino and Kostelny (1996), children create a mental map of the world and how they fit in. Children who live in war, or in communities where violence is high, develop a mental map that represents “terminal thinking” instead of a map that represents life.

Mr. Damaso Serrano, Major of Vieques, recounts his memories of a violent episode he witnessed as a child:

When I was young I used to go with two friends to the Navy practice field just to hang out with the soldiers. People had the perception that the U.S. Navy and Army were the greatest thing in the world. One day we were goofing around with them and one of the soldiers pointed his gun at my friend’s heart and shot him. He shot him right in front of me. The judge, who was bought out by the Navy, did not declare the soldier guilty. My friend’s family got three or four thousand dollars from the Navy and that was the end of it. (Personal Interview, pg. 1, 2001)

Other killings of civilians have occurred in Vieques but have not been published. Jose, a schoolteacher, was told by his mother that she never met her grandparents because they died while they were looking for vegetables and roots.
According to Jose, his maternal great grandmother was pregnant when she stepped on a bomb in the field where they were looking for food. Both great grandparents died as a result of the explosion.

The death of David Sanes, a civilian guard working at Camp Garcia, the Navy Base in Vieques, was declared an accident. In April 1999, the Navy was doing military practices in the evening when a bomb fell close to the Observation Point (OP) located on the east side of the island of Vieques, where David Sanes was working. The explosion caused his death. Many people in Vieques know that David Sanes was not the only one that died that evening, however the Navy didn’t report it. Patria, a leader in one of the civil disobedience camps told me what happened that night.

Seven people died but this has been kept silent. There is a forensic pathologist who is in charge in case someone dies in federal territory. They called her and she went. When she got there, there were seven bodies placed on a row, including David Sanes. They didn’t let her see anymore and told her, “We will take care of this, you can go.” There were seven. They were not Viequenses because no one else died who was from Vieques. The OP is underground. That means that the others were Americans who were stationed under the Observation Point.

As a result of such continuing violent episodes, a child’s feeling of safety in the environment is compromised.
The presence of the Navy brought an increase in prostitution. Prostitution became a source of income that didn’t exist before in the barrios and it changed and challenged the culture and values of the community. Jorge remembers how, in his barrio, children were used as tuggers by the military men.

They [the military] went to the bars and businesses where prostitutes were. There were young boys who were called “tuggers.” Those boys’ job was to take the military men to the woman that had an “easy life.” I remember the barrio where I lived, Barrio Buena Vista, there was always a military police officer standing on one corner of the street and in the other corner there was another one. As kids we used to talk with them and they gave us candy.

As children worked as “contact resources” for the military men in the barrios, their safety was greatly compromised. Protective factors at a micro system level, such as the supervision of an adult, or at a macrosystem level, such as protection from government agencies, were not existent or enforced. Because rules and municipal laws protected the actions of the Navy, people were afraid to report any violations or mistreatment they received from the military and navy personnel. This is the story that Patria heard as she was hiding under the house while her grandmother was conversing with other adults from the neighborhood.

What hurts the most was the sexual abuse of children. They sexually assaulted children. They were looking for women I know all this not because I saw it but because I used to go under my grandmother’s house to listen. I heard them say, “They caught him and broke all his parts.”
Americans said, “We want señoritas.” They gave the boys a quarter, and because the marines were drunk, when the boys came to tell them that they had not found any señoritas, the drunken marines sexually assaulted the boys.

The presence of the Navy on the island of Vieques created many conflicts between civilians and marines. Families lived with tension and stress, fearing for their safety. Parents usually required girls and young women to stay in their homes when the marines were on leave. Manuel remembers how it was when the marines were in the town of Vieques.

When the marines arrived in town they were too rowdy and some urinated on the streets or on the sidewalks. There were about one thousand marines on leave in the small town of Vieques. They were very loud, got drunk and had fights. We couldn’t sleep until about two or three in the morning because of the noise on the street.

Laura remembers her father’s rules, with regard to their safety, when she was young.

We lived in town and my dad used to say, “We have to keep the girls inside because it’s almost 6:00 pm and the gringos are coming.” And so we were raised that way. There were fights and they [parents/guardians] were always watching for us, that we didn’t have a problem with any gringo. There were fights between the gringo soldiers and the Viequenses. And
because they also sexually assaulted young women and all that, they always kept us that way. We lived under fear and seclusion.

[Y nosotros vivíamos en el pueblo y mi papa decía “hay que guardar a las muchachas porque ya van a ser las 6:00 y vienen los gringos.” Y entonces pues nos criaron así. Había guerrillas y ellos siempre estaban pendientes a que nosotros no tuviéramos ningún problema con ningún gringo. Habían guerrillas entre los gringos soldados y los viequenses. Y como también violaban muchachas y todo pues ellos también nos tenían, vivian bajo ese temor, guardaditas.]

Many fights between marines and civilians, as well as damage to private property, occurred when marines were on leave. Viequenses, especially the young men, felt the hostility against the marines as they witnessed many violent and unjust acts. This is how Jorge describes it:

In the past there were lots of fights and it was mostly because they thought that they owned the island. They were abusive. One of them killed a civilian. I don’t remember why and no one ever found out who did it. When they got drunk, that’s when we got the big problems. And not all the women that were on the streets were “easy women,” but they treated all as if they were prostitutes. And that’s when the fights with military and civilians started.

[Antes se formaban muchas peleas y era que ellos creían que eran los dueños de la isla. Ellos eran unos abusadores. Allí uno de ellos mato a un civil, no me acuerdo bien porque Y nunca se supo quien fue. Pero cuando ellos se metían en tragos hay eran donde era el gran problema. Y no todas las mujeres que habían por ahí eran mujeres fáciles las trataban como prostitutas y se formaban peleas con los militares y los civiles.]

The young Viequenses developed affiliations with Latin American and African American soldiers in order to combat the Anglo American soldiers when they were on leave on the island. According to Jorge, the Puerto Ricans who were in the Navy were called the Latin Power, the African Americans were called the Black Power, and the Viequenses were called the Puerto Rican Power.
Risk Factor - Health/Environment

As children grow up, the environment where they live changes. These dynamic negotiations between the environment and the child's capabilities influence their ability to develop competences (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). The changes created in the environment of Vieques, during the last 60 years, represented a challenge for the community's ability to deal with threats to their health and safety.

Lack of health resources. In Vieques there is only one health center that allows pregnant women to deliver their babies on the island. This center opened in October of 2002. For the past twenty-one years women were transported, usually by plane, to the island of Puerto Rico to deliver their babies. All patients with illnesses or injuries/trauma that required a medical specialty need to be transported to the island of Puerto Rico. These limitations for medical services represent a high risk for mother and babies as well as for other patients with an acute illness or trauma. Laura, a schoolteacher reports, “People have died of heart attacks or cerebral vascular accidents during transportation to the island of Puerto Rico, because there are no specialized medical services in Vieques.”

Because Vieques is such a small island, where people have been pushed to live on one third of its land area, there is no sense of privacy. As a result, people in Vieques usually don't seek assistance from the few primary resources available for fear that their confidentiality won't be honored. Marisa, a schoolteacher, feels
confidentiality is not honored Nora expressed her feelings about confidentiality
in Vieques

Let me tell you, I am not going to the Family Department here. Because here, people have the bad habit of knowing about everything that happens to people everyone knows it Confidentiality does not exist here

[Pero sabrá que yo no voy a ir aquí al departamento de la familia Porque aquí se tiene la mala costumbre que todo lo que pasa se sabe, tal confidencialidad eso no existe aquí]

Pregnancy Another health risk for young people in Vieques is the high occurrence of teenage pregnancy Milagros, a ninth grader in middle school, reported that teenage pregnancy is a common problem and that there are seven or eight girls pregnant during the calendar year, 2002-03

According to Jose, a schoolteacher, Vieques has the third highest incidence of pregnancy among middle school girls in the archipelago of Puerto Rico Many of the young girls who become pregnant come from dysfunctional families They don’t have parents that are watching or caring for them Those girls usually get pregnant by older men because they are looking for some kind of emotional support they think they can find Maria identified another reason why so many young girls become pregnant “There are no resources for young people to engage in more productive leisure activities Most of the time people go to have sex or they go out to drink, but end up having sex ”

When parents have a child who becomes pregnant, it creates a financial burden for the family They have to support an additional person on their limited income The pregnant teenager usually quits school because she has to look for a
job that will bring some money to her parents household. Because there aren't many jobs in Vieques, the young mother becomes trapped in a very difficult situation. According to Maria, "There isn't enough development in Vieques to help people look for other options when they get stuck." A chain reaction of risk factors is created as young girls become pregnant and are faced with minimal support or resources on the island. The potential for wellness for these young girls, their babies, and their families are put at risk due to the multiplication of these risk factors.

Toxic contamination On the island of Vieques, the weapons and practices that were used during the military exercises released chemicals that have been considered to be one of the primary causes of illness within the community. This is a violation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc), Article 12.2 which affirms "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" and to Article 12.2(b) which addresses the importance of "the improvement of all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene" to achieve physical and mental health. The people of Vieques have been proscribed from achieving their right to health for the sake of training and continuation of military practices. There is great danger to the population regarding the high rate of cancer, respiratory illnesses and skin problems (Graduate School of Public Health, 2001)
Nora, a college student and mother, fears that her daughters will become contaminated and develop cancer. She has seen family and friends die of cancer in Vieques. Her sense of impotence is expressed as follows:

That span of ocean limits us in so many ways. We have the contamination and diseases but we don't have the best ways to deal with them. And that affects us because we don't want to see our friends dying of cancer. We don't want to see our children losing their hair. Do you understand? And that's what I don't want for my daughters. I have a cousin that died of cancer when he was 14 years old. And about three or four years ago, I saw a teacher that lived there and got all the dust and contamination directly over there where you are living, in Barno Destiny. Cancer ate her in less than one year. She had surgery for breast cancer and never healed. And I don't want that for my daughters.

[Este charquito nos limita a tantas cosas. Tenemos la contaminación y las enfermedades pero no tenemos las mejores maneras de combatirlas. Y eso te afecta porque tu no quieres ver a tus amistades muriendo de cáncer, tu no quieres ver a tus hijos con el pelo cayéndosele, entiende, y eso es lo que yo no quiero para mis hijas. Yo tengo un primo que murió a los 14 años de cáncer. Y yo vi una maestra hace como 3 ó 4 años atrás que vivía allí y cogió todo ese polvo y esa contaminación directamente, allí donde usted se está quedando, en El Destino. El cáncer se la comió en menos de un año. La operaron de cáncer del ceno y nunca cicatrizaró. Y yo no quiero eso para mis hijas.]

From the community’s perspective, the ratio of people dying of cancer on the island of Vieques is very high. In fact all the four families interviewed had a family member, or knew of a friend, who had died of cancer. This is how Maria, a college student, describes the ratio of cancer on the island:

I have had two or three classmates in my life as a student that have died of cancer. In elementary school there was a boy in my class who died of cancer. There was another one in middle and in high school. And you can ask any child here if during their life as a student, they have had a friend die of cancer and they are going to tell you yes. Those are things that you see in society and you say, “But this is not right,” you know. And regardless how much they want to say no, it is inevitable that it does affect you, it is a reality.
Yo he tenido como dos o tres compañeros en mi vida de estudio que han muerto de cáncer. En elemental tuve un nene que estaba en mi grupo y murió de cáncer. En intermedia otro y en high otro. Y tu le preguntas a cualquier nene aquí que si en tus años de estudio has tenido algún amigo que se a muerto por cáncer y te va a decir que sí. Son cosas que tu ves en la sociedad y tu dices “pero es que esto no está bien” tu sabes. Y por más que quieran decir que no pero es inevitable evitar que eso te afecte, que es una realidad.

People’s mental health is also compromised because the community is exposed to so many dangerous chemicals. The fear of being contaminated and contracting a terminal disease, or giving birth to a child who might have a terminal disease, is evident in adults and young people. Maria shares her concerns about being contaminated and the unknown possibilities of what might happen when she has her own children.

You live with that, as a Viequense. I live with that preoccupation, that additional load of thinking, that you can have something at any time. That at any time you go to the doctor, they will diagnose you with cancer. That you have metals that are affecting you. That your child, in the future when I am ready to have children, I am going to have that worry present all the time. I am going to think that my children could easily be born with any kind of disability or any other kind of problem because, God knows if I am contaminated. And only God will know what could happen from having lived here for so many years. That is a reality. And it is not fair that we have to live with that additional worry.

Uno vive con esa, uno como viequense tiene esa preocupación, esa carga adicional de que tu piensas de que en cualquier momento tu puedes tener algo. Que en cualquier momento tu vayas al médico y te encuentren cáncer. Que tengas metales que te están afectando. Que tu hijo. Cuando yo vaya a tener mis hijos en un futuro. Yo voy a tener esa preocupación ahí presente. Yo voy a pensar que mis hijos fácilmente pueden nacer con cualquier impedimento o cualquier problema porque sabrá Dios si yo estoy contaminada y sabrá Dios que pueda causar por tantos años de haber vivido aquí. Es una realidad. Y no es justo que nosotros tengamos que vivir con esa preocupación adicional.
In relation to environmental and industrial hygiene, the CESCR (www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc) General Comment 14 15 states that

States should have preventive measures in relation to occupational accidents and diseases; ensure an adequate supply of potable water, prevention and reduction of the population’s exposure to harmful substances such as radiation and harmful chemicals or other detrimental environmental conditions that directly or indirectly impact upon human health.

This human right to health has been repeatedly and widely violated on the island of Vieques. Some of the findings from the study conducted by the Graduate School of Public Health (2001) described the levels of contamination on the west coast of the island, in the area occupied by the U.S. Navy. Carlos, a Viequense, who worked as a plumber at the Navy base, relates his fears and concerns from working there. His human rights to health were violated because he was exposed to many chemicals and no one seemed to be able to answer his question, “What are we doing here?”

I was a guinea pig of the Navy. They used to send us to the range field to a building which has the roof painted in red, like a checker game board. That’s what they call the OP1. It is the principal center of observation, number one, where David Sanes was killed. They sent us there. I was a plumber at the base. I was a humble labor employee. I was sent there, to that specific place, with other coworkers to wait for orders. We had a lead man for the plumbers and we asked him, “Joe, what are we doing here?” And he used to say, “Stay quiet, we have to wait for orders.” But, orders for what? In terms of my job, everything is in order. The water supply is good, the septic tank was fine, and the septic system was running well. The OP is in this position and the bombs fall right down here, the wind blows east west. I asked my co-workers, “What are we doing here?” And they said, “Shut up Carlos. Forget it, shut up, we are doing nothing.” I realized that we couldn’t go inside the building. And I said, “I don’t like this,” because we had to stay outside. When the bombs fell, the dust mushroomed since it fell on the ground among all that dust. It was about 500, 600, 900 meters. When that started to rise we saw it come over the
building and we could see when the wind moved it in many directions. I didn’t like it, because there was a man dressed in white, with a white uniform that looked like paper, with gloves, boots and with an oxygen mask. And I said, “I don’t have anything and this guy has all this?” At other times another one would walk by wearing a blue outfit that looked like he was going to space. And I think that those were different chemicals that they threw and I didn’t realize it.

[Yo fuí un conejillo de indias de la marina. A nosotros se nos enviaba al campo de tiro a un edificio que está pintado de rojo con el techo pintado como si fuera un juego de damas. Ese es el llamado OP1, ese es el centro de observación número uno, principal, donde mataron a David Sanes. A nosotros se nos enviaba allí, yo era plomero en la base. Yo era un humilde empleado de un oficio. A mi y otros compañeros de trabajo se nos enviaba a ese lugar exclusivamente a esperar órdenes. Teníamos un hedor de plomeros y le preguntábamos “Joe, que hacemos aquí?” Y él decía “quédense callados tenemos que esperar órdenes.” Pero órdenes para qué. En lo que respecta a mi trabajo está todo en orden. Abastecimiento de agua está bien, pozo séptico está bien, sistema séptico está corriendo todo bien. El electricista “¿que nosotros hacemos aquí?” no hay ninguna bombilla fundida. El OP está en esta posición, las bombas caen aquí abajo, el viento corre este o este. “¿Qué hacemos aquí?” le decía yo a mis compañeros de trabajo “Cállate Carlos. Olvidate cállate, no estamos haciendo na.” Porque es que yo me estaba dando de cuenta que no podíamos entrar a los edificios. Y yo decía “no me gusta esto aquí”, porque teníamos que estar afuera. Las bombas desde que caen allá abajo, el hongo desde que suena abajo y da en la tierra, ahí empieza el hongo, hay ese polvórín. Eso queda a 500, 600, 900 metros. Cuando eso empezaba a subir lo veíamos que pasaba por encima del edificio y veíamos como el viento se lo llevaba en todas direcciones. Por que no me gustaba, porque me pasaba por ahí un hombre vestido de blanco, con un mameluco blanco parecido a papel con guantes, botas y con un bozal de oxígeno. Y yo decía “y yo sí no y este con algo.” Otras veces pasaba uno vestido con ropa azul que lo que parecía era que iban al espacio. Y yo digo que eso eran diferentes químicos que se tiraban.]

After the military practices were completed, Carlos and his co-workers were sent to the military base, Roosevelt Road, on the island of Puerto Rico. They were sent there to “see the doctor” and for “blood tests.” According to Carlos the
hospital usually took up to six tubes of blood for samples. This is what he experienced:

And I used to ask, “Why so much blood?” They never said you have this or that. A month and a half later the National Guard in Vieques said, “Oh, great, everyone, they are going to do these tests.” And I said, “They treat us as if we are monkeys, they use us for experiments.”

[Y yo decía “¿y para que tanta sangre?” Nunca nos mandaron a decir “ustedes tienen esto o esto otro.” Al mes y medio o los dos meses, la guardia nacional en Vieques “hay que bueno”, todo el mundo [dice] “van a hacer este examen.” Y yo decía “a nosotros nos tienen a los como si fuéramos monos, nos tienen de experimento.”]

Mr. Damaso Serrano, Major of Vieques, describes the general influence of the environment in children’s perceptions of safety and health:

If you ask a child from Ponce to draw a picture of where he lives, he will most likely draw a picture of the ocean, palm trees, flowers. If you ask a child from Vieques to draw a picture of where he lives, he will draw a picture of a field with bombs falling. The Navy has its military exercises and training 90 days per year. They throw up to 1,000 to 2,000 bombs a day when they have their military exercises. (Personal Interview, 2001, pg 1)

- **Risk Factor School Environment/Practices**

Schools have been identified as an important environment in which children’s developmental and academic competencies, and sense of self worth and efficacy can be nourished. Planta and Walsh (1996) describe a Contextual System Model in which there is an interrelation between the child, family, and schools. This model accounts for open interactions between systems such as children, families, schools, communities, and agencies. Therefore, all systems are influenced by each other in many ways. Positive and responsible connections within systems can promote protective factors that support the children and
family's wellness (for example, when child rearing practices within the family system correlate with school discipline practices within that system) When using a contextual model, each system faces the others and identifies what the common practices and protective factors are that support wellness and how these factors interconnect and are influenced within the entire system.

Krovetz (1998) proposed that protective factors such as having an environment where adults care deeply about the child’s well-being, establishing positive expectations and having support systems that are created for its accomplishment, and promoting meaningful participation and involvement within the system are essential within the family, school, and community. Sagor (1996) further describes some practical strategies that support students’ success within the school system. Sagor (1996) proposed that schools should provide students with, 1) experiences that result in academic success, therefore promoting academic competence, 2) sense of belonging, 3) feelings of usefulness, and 4) feelings of empowerment.

Doll and Lyon (1998) suggest that schools can constitute a potentially protective environment for children that have been identified as being at risk. In order for this to occur it requires that schools incorporate practices that support good problem-solving skills, academic competence, individual talents, and social competence in students, while demonstrating a real effort to establish stable and meaningful relationships with at-risk children.
In Vieques, there are several elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. If students want to pursue a college education, they must apply to universities on the island of Puerto Rico. There are no universities in Vieques, since there is not a large student population to support it. Torres Marquez (2001) reported that according to the population census of 2000, the proportion of families with children under the age of eighteen years is 32.3% in Vieques and 38.6% on the island of Puerto Rico.

*Children* Jose, a schoolteacher, describes how multiple factors can influence children, families, and schools. According to Jose, almost half of the students in the classroom live with grandparents, uncles, or cousins. The parents of those children are either blood related, have a low educational level (fourth or fifth grade), or they are the results of a broken family. Jose summarizes the situation:

> The results of all this is a student who is a slow learner. How is that going to benefit the family? In that sense the family gets worse. It deteriorates because what kinds of goals, principles, and education do they have? Basically none.

> Y de todo esto el resultado va a ser un estudiante lento. ¿Y cómo eso va a beneficiar la familia? La familia en ese sentido va empeorando. Va empeorando porque metas, que principios, que educación tienen, básicamente ninguna.

*Teachers* Milagros, a ninth grader at the middle school in Vieques reported that although the team of teachers from ninth grade are very united, there is one teacher whose practices are damaging to students. At the middle school
some teachers demonstrate little respect for themselves and for the students when they use offensive language.

But there are teachers in that school, I don’t know, there are teachers that use offensive language. And some students don’t even care. Because he starts using bad words and some people laugh but sometimes people stay quiet. But that’s the way it is.

[Pero hay maestros en esa escuela, en esa escuela yo no se, hay maestros que se tiran las palabras. Y como quien dice a los estudiantes no les importa. Porque el empieza a hablar malo, a gente que se rie y ahí veces que se quedan callados. Pero así estamos.]

Evidence of the use of this damaging practice was supported by Maritsa, an elementary schoolteacher, who reported that some of her colleagues thought that if they were not aggressive, they didn’t have classroom control, “they enjoyed making life difficult for students.” Maritsa’s daughter, Ana Luz, is in kindergarten. Although Ana Luz likes school and loves to play, she is finding school not as fun lately. According to Maritsa, her daughter’s kindergarten teacher claims that Ana Luz is slow in her writing, therefore, she is not allowed to play at the classroom centers until her writing work is done. Most of the time Ana Luz misses play time and snack time if she is too slow. This teacher has not assessed the children’s readiness for writing nor has she provided the foundation to support that task.

- Risk Factor: Isolation

Cost of living. The island of Vieques is considered, by some of its residents, to be a geographical challenge. Information and resources are delivered by boat or airplane, as the island is located seventeen miles southeast of the island.
of Puerto Rico. This isolation affects the cost of food, household items, and construction material, which are all more expensive than in Puerto Rico. With the low economy and high unemployment level on the island, and the high cost of items in Vieques, acquisition of food and other basic items becomes a challenge for some families. In summary, geographical isolation creates a financial burden for families, as the cost of living in Vieques becomes higher every year.

*Family fragmentation and stress.* The poor economic situation in Vieques resulted in families becoming fragmented as some parents decided to leave the island in search of better financial opportunities. Children were either left under the care of their grandparents, other family members, or with someone from the community. At school, teachers didn’t acknowledge nor recognize that separation of family members was a common situation for children attending schools. Maritza, an elementary schoolteacher, remembers that her own school experience in Vieques was very traumatic because at the beginning of the school year, the teachers would ask her, who were her parents? The teachers already knew that someone in the community raised her, because her parents gave her away, but every year they still asked the question to all children in front of the classroom.

The isolation factor causes a financial burden for those college students who either travel daily from one island to another, or find a room to rent close to the university they attend. The isolation factor also creates emotional stress for students as they are separated from their families. Nora, a college student and mother, has family and friends as resources in Vieques, but she worries that she
might not be available quickly if something happens to her daughters, her father, or mother-in-law when she is away.

Another component of this isolation is also the adaptation to life on the island of Puerto Rico, which they must do in order to finish a college degree. Mrs. Torres, a middle school teacher, shares her experience about going to college on the island of Puerto Rico.

When I moved to the University of Puerto Rico, I only survived one semester because I couldn’t deal with it. Because I am a small town person, I am Viequense. I felt inhibited, I was very scared. For example, when I had to cross an avenue. And in fact, I had several scary experiences. I studied full time one semester and then returned, and I started to work. That’s why I have so many years of experience. I started working and went to the university on Saturdays so I could finish.

Lack of leisure activities. The fact that there is little to do in Vieques, especially for the young people, is a symptom of geographic isolation. There are
no movie theaters, sports or recreational centers available for the community. The most common forms of recreation, for people in Vieques, are going to the beach, fishing, and drinking at the bars. Nora describes how she perceives the situation for young people in Vieques:

There are a lot of drugs here because the young people don’t have places to go. There is nothing for the young people to do, so they can say, let’s go to the movies, to an amusement park. There is nothing like that here. They take the easiest way, drugs. Young people need a place where they can spend time in a positive way, so that they are not thinking of doing other things.

[Aquí hay mucha droga, porque los jóvenes no tienen para donde ir. No hay nada que los jóvenes puedan decir vamonos para un cine, para un parque de diversiones. Aquí no hay nada de eso. Cogen lo más fácil, las drogas. Los jóvenes necesitan que les busquen un sitio donde ellos puedan pasar su tiempo de una manera positiva, o sea que no estén inventando cosas.]

If families plan a recreational, shopping, or medical trip to the island of Puerto Rico, they are under stress to be at the port by, at least, 6 15 in the morning to purchase a ticket for the boat ride. Once they are on the island of Puerto Rico, they feel stressed again. If they miss the boat back to Vieques, they will be stranded in Puerto Rico, which results in more expenses if they have to find a place to spend the night or purchase a plane ticket to go back to the island.

Geographical limitations: The geographical isolation also creates psychological stress. Some people in Vieques feel as if they are prisoners in their own land. As Nora reports, “We have always lived on this island as if we are strangers, like prisoners.” Jose B, a schoolteacher, describes his feelings of fear and the low self-confidence he experienced as a young man.
But I think there is something about being here, being limited. It is like we are prisoners. That isolated me on this island. For many years I dreamed about sharks, that the boat was going to sink. All those traumas of traveling in the boat to the island of Puerto Rico. Now we just decide to go, and we go shopping there. After church, we decide to go, at the last minute, and we leave. We are teaching our children not to be afraid of leaving the island of Vieques.

Pero creo que hay algo al estar aquí, estar limitados, es como si estuviéramos presos. Entonces eso me asustaba a la isla pues por muchos años yo soñaba con el tiburón, que la lancha se iba a hundir, esos traumas de ir en esa lancha a la isla. Ahora a veces vamos y nos vamos así, nos vamos a hacer compras. Salimos de la misa e inventamos y le estamos enseñando a los nenes a no tener temor de salir de la isla de Vieques.

Summary

According to the literature reviewed, the concept of wellness has been understudied (Lorion, 2000). Seligman (1998) urged researchers to pursue the study of an individual’s strengths and virtues in order to understand wellness. By doing so, researchers are emphasizing the strengths of children and families rather than trying to repair their weaknesses. A developmental, rather than a pathological, process approach must be pursued if the research intentions are to serve and enhance the communities’ ability to develop internal strengths that promote wellness for all (Garbarino & Kostelnky, 1996, Lorion, 2000). There is an emerging need to focus research efforts in identifying the processes of wellness and specifically how it is developed in the family unit that is facing adverse environments and conditions (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998, Masten, et al. 1999).

As documented in this chapter, the island of Vieques clearly provides a population at risk for physical, emotional, and social problems. As yet, there is no evidence of wellness studies conducted on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico.
This study will examine the process of wellness across generations. The cultural values inherent to this community, which support the process and maintenance of wellness, will be identified. The findings from this study will assist in the understanding of how communities build wellness across different ecological levels. The identification of the processes of wellness for families and the community in Vieques can be used as a foundation for future programs that are meaningful and culturally sensitive, and which promote wellness for the community at large. The results from this study can also assist other communities around the world in identifying and building strategies that support the strengths of their communities.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study will focus primarily on two components of wellness, resilience, and environment. This inquiry will attempt to describe and identify how these aspects of wellness relate to children and families in Vieques.

1. What values, attitudes, and behaviors that are typical of wellness are evident in families who live in close proximity to American military activity in Vieques?

2. How have wellness values, attitudes, and behaviors been passed down through generations within the families in Vieques?

3. What are the individual, family, and community processes that operate to develop, maintain and promote resilience among families in Vieques?
CHAPTER II
A Road Map and Other Trails

This study embraces the history of struggles, challenges, personal qualities, and strategies developed and experienced by four families and members of the community living in Vieques, Puerto Rico. The process of how cultural values influence the development and promotion of wellness, from one generation to another, among families in Vieques is the focus of this study. I have incorporated the construct of wellness within the biocultural model to understand the processes and transactions of families between different systems. In order to accomplish this analytical process, I chose qualitative inquiry to explore how wellness is developed and supported by families and the community at large. In this chapter, I present the trails that have created the structure I used to organize and conduct this study. The ethnographic map encompasses the following trails: the process of selecting participants, collecting and analyzing data, ensuring the validity of the study, and acknowledging my subjectivity and values as a researcher.

The Ethnographic Method

The qualitative paradigm addresses the importance of understanding the process, the meaning of people trying to make sense of their lives, and the events that occur from within their natural contexts (Creswell 1994, Sherman & Webb, 50
In this study I identified the cultural values and processes that support the development and maintenance of wellness for families on the island of Vieques. In qualitative research the researcher asks the participants to speak for themselves about the content of their lives. Kelly (2000), a wellness scholar, defines qualitative inquiry this way: “The wellness scholar adopts new directions and listens to the stories of persons as they describe the people, occasions, and events that have made it possible for them to become more socially developed, competent, and effective in their coping, the Wellness construct is enhanced by including narratives and oral histories (pg 113).”

I employed the qualitative paradigm to explore and understand the protective and risk factors, as well as the processes and values that support wellness for the families of Vieques, who have lived in unique and stressful circumstances for the last 60 years. Specifically, the following research questions guided my study.

1. What values, attitudes and behaviors, typical of wellness are evident in families who live in close proximity to American military activity in Vieques?

2. How have wellness values, attitudes, and behaviors been passed on through generations within the families in Vieques?

3. What are the individual, family, and community processes that operate to develop, maintain, and promote resilience among families in Vieques?
Several researchers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Kelly, 2000, Lonon, 2000, Masten & Coatsworth, 1998) have addressed the need to use a qualitative approach in order to describe the process of how wellness is developed and nurtured, while considering the values, history, and environmental transactions within a culture. Therefore, to capture the details of this process and to address the research questions, I used a combination of observations, and individual and focus group interviews.

In this study I define process as the words, communication style, body language, practice/actions, and emotions embedded in the teaching and learning of wellness within a family and across other environments. I define family as the members living in the same household, as well as the extended family living in close proximity to the nuclear family.

In order to experience and understand the meanings and processes of how wellness is developed and promoted within families, I collected data while living on the island of Vieques from September to December, 2002. Living there offered me the opportunity to establish close relationships with participant families and the community at large. I approached this study with an open mind wanting to learn more about the intricacies, dynamics, values, strengths, expectations, struggles, dreams, and goals of my participants.
Gaining Access to the Setting and Selecting Participants

Phase One – Contacting Gatekeepers

In the first phase of gaining access I was involved in approaching gatekeepers who were identified as key individuals in the community of Vieques (see Figure 2). These gatekeepers included the Catholic Priest from Vieques, a member from the Justice and Peace Camp, and the School Superintendent of Vieques. Prior to my arrival in Vieques in September 2002, I contacted these individuals either by telephone or electronic mail. This initial contact determined their openness to the purpose of this research study and their availability to assist in identifying people in the community that would fit the wellness criteria and would participate in the study. Following this initial contact, I sent another letter (see Appendix A) to all gatekeepers via electronic mail or post office mail. The letter included a detailed description of the purpose of the study and the qualities of wellness I was interested in investigating within the participating families. I also requested the gatekeepers’ support in identifying and contacting families to investigate their interest in participating in the study.

Phase Two – Getting Access to Participants

The second phase of getting access began when I arrived in Vieques in September, 2002, and met Father Nelson at the Catholic Church. He greeted me with a friendly smile and gave me a list containing the names and phone numbers of 6 families which he had developed with the help of one of his church members. Father Nelson selected this church member because he thought her qualities of
wellness matched those I have described on the letter I had sent him prior to my arrival on the island. In September, 2002, I visited the Justice and Peace camp and talked with the gatekeeper I had previously contacted via electronic mail. This gatekeeper gave me the name and phone number of one family he thought might be interested in participating in the study. Lastly, I visited the office of the school superintendent of Vieques, in September, 2002, to personally explain the purpose of the study and to provide him with a copy of the research proposal. Upon my completion of several documents required by the Vieques' school system, the school superintendent sent a letter to the school principals of the middle and high school in Vieques. This letter requested their cooperation and support in providing me access to speak with the classroom teachers.

**Phase Three – Contacting and Selecting Participants**

The third phase of gaining access to participants involved recruiting members of the Vieques community and explaining the purposes and procedures of the study. This process began when I called the first person on the list. She was very friendly and agreed to participate in the study. I contacted the other families by telephone leaving messages if necessary. Of the 6 families on the list, 3 families agreed to participate in the study. I approached the 4th family through the gatekeeper from the Justice and Peace camp.

The participants in this study comprise 4 families that have lived in Vieques over their lifetime or since they were young. Families were selected based on their strengths and abilities to successfully deal with stressful day-to-day
situations, their ability to develop effective transactions between environments (please refer to my discussion of micro, meso, exo, and macrosystem, Figure 1 on page 8), and their ability to overcome stressful situations over time. Families were also selected based on the combination of risk factors they are currently facing or have faced in the past, and their ability to maintain an equilibrium that promotes wellness for them and their family. Some of those risk factors include poverty, low education level, decreased resources, domestic/community violence, death of one caregiver or other member of the family unit, chronic/acute illness, and addiction to illegal substances and/or alcohol.

I spoke with the families about the risk factors and qualities of resiliency that I was interested in addressing for this study. Through this informal conversation, families were able to identify themselves as having experienced some of those factors and having developed strategies to overcome them. Once families had a clear understanding of the purpose of this study, they agreed to participate. When the primary caregiver had completed the interview (see Appendix B), I asked him/her to identify one of their children who possessed resilient characteristics (see Appendix F) and who they thought might be interested in participating in this study. I encouraged adult participants to identify children of various age groups including preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school level, to be considered for the study. Once the caregiver(s) identified a child from their household, I set up an appointment to conduct a semi-structured interview with that child (see Appendix C). Because this study intended
to identify how wellness is developed, taught, and maintained through
generations, I tried to select participating children from a broad age span.

Figure 2 Process of accessing study participants through the gatekeepers

Certain key individuals from the community were also participants. Some
of those individuals were directly related to the families. They included 2 teachers
from the first family, (Milagros), and in the third family (Carmen). In November,
2002, I contacted the teachers by telephone to schedule an interview and a visit to their classroom.

As I became more familiar with the setting and the inter-dynamics across contexts, I was able to ask the Parent Coordinator from the Head Start Program to recruit a group of parents from the preschool program as participants. My frequent visits to one of the civil disobedience camps provided me the access and the opportunity to establish trust with participants at the camp. A small group of community members who attended the camp regularly agreed to become participants in my study. In addition, 2 other members from the community, Fela and Luis were interviewed. They are very active in the struggle to stop the military practice and to remove the Navy military base from Vieques.

Composition of Families

The family unit includes the individuals (caregiver(s), children, and extended family) living in the same household, as well as those extended family members living in close proximity to the family unit. Participants in the first family included Jorge, the stepfather, Nora, the mother, and Milagros, the oldest daughter. Participants in the second family included Pedro, the father, Maritsa, the mother, and Ana Luz their daughter. Participants in the third family included Jose, the father, Laura, the mother, Maria, the middle daughter, and Carmen, the youngest daughter. It also included the 2 couples who raised the youngest daughter, Mommy Lusa and Dad Carlos, Rosa, the maternal grandmother, and Manuel, the maternal grandfather. Participants in the fourth family included Jose.
B, the father, Maria P, the mother, and Jesus B, the oldest son. Thus the family sample comprised seventeen participants (see Figure 3). The overall sample for this study comprised a total of thirty-three residents from Vieques.

**Families:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family #1</th>
<th>Family #2</th>
<th>Family #3</th>
<th>Family #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Torres</td>
<td>Pablo &amp; Maritsa</td>
<td>Jose &amp; Laura</td>
<td>Jesus B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milagros</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mommy Laura &amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dad Carlos (caregivers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rosa &amp; Manuel (maternal grandparents)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Rodriguez (school teacher)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Other Participants:**

**Focus Groups**

- Head Start Parents (7)
- Civil Disobedience Camp (4)

**Individual interviews to people in the community:**

- Luis
- Fela

*Figure 3. Visual Map of Participants*

**Data Collection**

This ethnographic study investigates the resilient characteristics and the wellness processes of residents from the island of Vieques. The methodology I selected for this study, a qualitative design, views the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994). Qualitative data are collected “in vivo” to represent the current meanings, goals, and dreams of the informants. Loton (2000) supports the research inquiry that investigates the diversity of expressions across individuals, across settings, and through temporal characteristics. Therefore, I had the opportunity to observe, interview, converse...
with, and join families in their activities at home, and within the community for a period of the 4 months, September to December, 2002.

I collected data in 3 phases, as I gradually attained trust from families and community members. Phase One included semi-structured interviews with families and selected participants, Phase Two included observations of families and their transactions within their contexts; and Phase Three included conducting 2 focus groups (see Figure 4). This structure provided the opportunity for events to "flow" as I became, with time, a participant in that living community.

**Phase One: Semi-structured Interviews with Families and Selected Participants**

**Adult interviews** During September and October, 2002, I scheduled home visits to conduct semi-structured interviews with family members. I spent approximately 2 to 4 hours per week with each family. According to McCormack and Stemmetz (1991) interviews are at the heart of doing ethnography because they seek the words, in all their richness, of the people we are studying, so that we can understand their situations with increasing clarity. In the first phase of data collection (see Figure 4), I interviewed 21 individual family members. I conducted all the interviews at the participants' homes, apart from one at a participant's work setting. I began each interview with a description of the study and explained the consent form (see Appendix D and E). I utilized key principles from the wellness and resilience literature to construct the interview questions. These key principles, embedded in the interview questions, were validated and
reviewed, prior to utilizing them, by individuals who are knowledgeable in the area. Thus the questions were open-ended, focusing on the resilient characteristics of the family, as well as the risk factors they are facing or have encountered (see Appendix B).

During the interview process I made a conscious effort to observe and absorb the characteristics of the physical environment, and the nuances and interactions of family members. These early visits to the homes provided an opportunity to build a process of successively deeper levels of trust. Also, I was able to identify the optimal natural context for subsequent interviews.

I tape recorded all the interviews to capture the details shared by each participant. I transcribed the interviews into Spanish since it is the primary language for people living in Vieques, and in order to maintain the cultural richness of the participants' expressions of thought, feelings, ideas, choices of imagery and language, and sequence of detail. Katsavdakis, Sayed, Bram and Bartlett (2001) state that these expressions can be better documented when they are expressed in the participants' mother tongue.

The interview sessions lasted between two and four hours as the participants became engaged in the process of sharing their stories and way of life. All participants felt at ease sharing their stories and ideas with me. Several of them expressed relief at being able to share their feelings, difficulties, accomplishments, and ideas with another person. Two of the adults told me that the interview process was like a valuable therapy session.
Figure 4  Data collection process

*Children interviews*. According to Eder and Fingerson (2002), interviews allow children to express their voice and their own interpretations and thoughts, rather than depending on adults’ interpretations of their lives. Eder and Fingerson
(2002) suggest that researchers spend some time observing before conducting children's interviews. Thus, I scheduled the semi-structured interviews, with the children, at least one week after one of the parents' interview. This provided the opportunity for the child to see me conversing with one of their parents in the home environment, which promoted a sense of safety for the child. By the time I scheduled the child's interview, we had had an opportunity to meet and converse several times on an informal basis. I made a conscious effort to build and strengthen my rapport with the children, while trying to develop a deeper understanding of their cultural and social context. Through the course of those observations, I was able to identify naturally occurring events, times, and discourse styles used within the family unit, and incorporate those insights into interview questions.

I did not change the meaning of the questions (see Appendix C), but at times reworded some in order to ensure clarity, understanding, and sensitivity to the culture. This open and flexible process gave me a clearer understanding of questions that could better capture the experiences of children living in Vieques. I maintained a flexible state of mind by allowing new questions to emerge, based, when appropriate, on what was shared through the semi-structure interview and through the informal dialogues with the children.

I conducted the interviews while the child was engaged in a regular or natural activity. For example, Ana Luz played a variety of games I provided throughout the interview session. The other three children were 14, 16, and 17.
years old, and I asked them to draw a picture of what Vieques represented for them (see Appendix N). This drawing activity was very effective, as it helped to “break the ice” while the children were engaged in their art-work and at the same time conversing with me.

The children felt at ease and volunteered to participate without hesitation. Of the four children interviewed, only one seemed shy during the interview process, although towards the end he relaxed and provided more detailed responses. After interviewing the child from family number three, her connectedness with her middle sister was so strong, that I decided to interview the sister as well.

**Phase Two: Observations of Family’s Transactions within their Context**

Kelly (2000) states that to appreciate the legacies of families, and peer contributions of social support and networks, more detailed investigation of everyday life is essential. I spent four months living on the island of Vieques in order to become immersed in the families’ environment and the community at large. I utilized a combination of active participant observer and limited observer role (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Stemmetz, 1991, Patton, 2002) in order to collect data.

As an observer, it is crucial to be aware of the effects the act of observing can cause on those who are participating in the study and to document them as well (Ely, et al., 1991). During my observations I tried to absorb the messages, body language, and nuances of conversations and actions of the participants.
designed a protocol involving descriptive and reflective notes (see Appendix G) to document, in detail, unstructured interviews and observations. Because of my concern about the intrusive nature of taking notes while observing and communicating with others, I recorded descriptive notes after each contact, but not while the interactions took place.

Although the families were open to participating in the study, as a researcher I found it difficult to ask them if I could visit occasionally. I interpreted my apprehension to the families’ lack of trust of formal resources on the island, such as the Health Center, and especially, their concerns regarding confidentiality. Although I visited the homes several times, I was cautious about the visits not perceived as an intrusion in their family routines.

*Active participant observer*

I began the second phase of data collection as an active participant (Ely, et al., 1991) working in the Head Start Program. I found that this role engendered a sense of trust within the community, and I played a dual role as a researcher and a therapist. Also, this role provided me with easy access to families, and I conducted a focus group at one of the parents’ meetings.

Observation times varied depending on each family’s activities and availability. Following the children’s semi-structured interviews, I continued my participant observer role for several more weeks, triangulating the information observed in the field with insights gained through the interview. I had numerous and informal conversations with family participants over the four month period.
which promoted a sense of trust and acceptance as I played the role of a friendly outsider. I scheduled home visits based on the family’s obligations and availability, primarily in the afternoons, evenings, and weekends. During November and December, 2002, my visits were more sporadic as families were busy with holiday shopping, end of school activities, and holiday plans. Throughout my research activities, I kept the log in a secure place at the apartment I rented in Vieques.

**Limited observer**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1993, 1995) it is important to observe the behavior and relations of individuals in more than one setting in order to have a clearer idea of what negotiations take place, which are the most meaningful, and the kinds of interactions that occur. In this study, I observed the four families and their interconnections with extended family and with people in the community, as well as the transactions among different environments (agencies) which directly, or indirectly, affected their development of wellness.

My role as a limited or non participant observer (Ely, et al, 1991, Krathwohl, 1993; Wolcott, 1995) enabled me to identify my public role as an observer who attempted to build trust over time. Also, I conducted observations of family members at school, home, and in the community. For example, I visited the Spanish class of two of the students who participated in the study, and had the opportunity to observe their interaction with peers and with their teacher.
Originally, I hoped to accompany family members on their outings. However, as I became more aware of their busy schedules, and concerns about confidentiality, I realized it was not possible to go on outings with them. Vieques is so small that if people in the community connected any of the family members with me, there was a possibility that the confidentiality of the participants could be compromised. Therefore my connection with families in the community, as a limited observer, came from attending activities in settings such as the church, grocery store, workplace, school, festivals, marches, a funeral, the port, and the civil disobedience camp.

Being immersed in the families’ daily lives as a participant and limited observer, provided me with a broader awareness and understanding of the families’ transactions within the community, and how these transactions promoted, or put at risk, their sense of wellness. As an observer, it was important for me to work towards a deeper understanding of the behaviors, feelings, and actions of my research participants. This understanding resulted in greater sensitivity towards the meaning of the participants’ actions, comments, beliefs, and their relation to the context of Vieques.

Phase Three: Focus Groups

Focus groups

I began the third phase of data collection and focus groups during the month of December, 2002. I conducted two focus groups in two of the communities in which participating families lived (see Appendix II). Participant

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families and the Parent Coordinator for the Head Start program assisted in identifying community members. I conducted the first focus group with seven parents of preschoolers attending the Head Start Program at the Head Start office building in Isabel Segunda, Vieques. I conducted the second focus group, with three members of the community, at one of the civil disobedience camps.

During the focus groups, I made a conscious effort to promote an environment that was accepting, non-judgmental and open, and that encouraged a variety of opinions and enhanced the depth and breadth of information shared by participants regarding their perceptions of wellness (see Appendix I). The focus groups brought a wider perspective of the values and protective factors that the community identified as important in the development and maintenance of wellness for all. Although the information collected cannot be generalized to the entire population (Vaughn, Schumm & Sinagub, 1996), the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the reality, beliefs, and processes that support wellness for this particular community.

Artifacts

Artifacts are gathered to gain insight into people’s reality (Krathwohl, 1993). Throughout my visit of four months in Vieques, I learned a great deal about the community history of land expropriation by reading and acquiring copies of documents at the museum in Vieques (see Appendix O). Local newspaper articles also provided me with a global idea of the values, actions, and directions where the community was moving. Furthermore, the children’s artwork...
provided me with a deeper understanding of their perception of the risk factors affecting their community, as well as of their dreams of a better place to live.

*Documentation of Data*

Dry, et al., (1991) states, "the log contains the data upon which the analysis is begun and carried forward. It is the home for the substance that we use to tease out meanings and reflect upon them as they evolve (pg. 69)." Throughout data collection, I generated a log that contained my detailed descriptive notes, interview notes, feelings, insights, hunches, biases, assumptions, and questions that emerged during the process.

*Confidentiality*

Confidentiality was a big concern for all the participants in this study. I assured confidentiality by creating pseudonyms, and by keeping the log and interview data in a locked area where I lived in Vieques. After I transcribed each interview, I erased the data.

*Data Analysis*

I conducted data analysis simultaneously with data collection. Thus, the data collection, analysis, interpretation, and narrative writing formed a continuous process throughout the study (Creswell, 1994). I adapted the template for data analysis from Crabtree and Miller (1992) (see Figure 5).

I designed a form addressing the wellness components based on information gathered from the literature on wellness and resilience. This template of wellness (see Appendix G) provided me with the theoretical frame from which...
I transcribed the interviews and documented field observations. I read each interview several times and highlighted the categories using colors. For example, information related to the individual's experience as a child was highlighted in yellow, information related to the individual's characteristics as an adult was highlighted in blue, information related to the process of wellness from parents to children was highlighted in green, information related to the environment was highlighted in red. In addition to enhancing the visibility of the information by areas, the template provided a space in which I documented my reflections and impressions, and these clarified the data.

Next, I created analytic memos from the interviews, making sure that I maintained the meaning and essence of the participants' words through the translation (Katsavdakis, et al., 2001). As a visual learner, I needed to create a "visual map" of all the participants interviewed by family and group (see Figure 3). In this visual map, each person interviewed was assigned a different color. The analytic memos (See Appendix 1) comprised three areas: protective factors, risk factors, and the process of wellness. Each analytic memo was printed on the color assigned to each participant. In doing so, I was able to identify, compare, and contrast each participant's characteristics. Then, I created a larger scale analytic memo incorporating protective, risk factors, and processes of wellness for each family.
Several categories by families and groups emerged from the analytic memos. I triangulated these with the main log to maintain accuracy and richness of the information. The resulting categories included risk factors (lived experiences), protective factors, process of wellness for parents, and process of wellness for children. Next, I grouped the categories into main ideas or concepts represented through the data (Ely, et al., 1991) and identified patterns, correlations, and recurrences across families (see Appendix M). Finally, I clustered the categories into themes (decontextualization) and compared these.
with the categories identified in the wellness and resilience literature for accuracy, consistency, and newness of findings. I wrote short stories that represented the categories and themes (re-contextualization) as I developed the data analysis.

Throughout the process of data analysis, I was flexible and open to possibilities in analyzing contrary or alternative explanations of the findings. I broke down the data into pieces and pulled them into a more comprehensive, higher analysis that represented the meanings and voices of the people in the study.

Validity

In qualitative research, validity of a study relates to the ability the researcher has to answer the research questions, while assuring credibility throughout the process. I utilized several strategies to support the validity of this study. I spent four months in the field collecting data. As I gained entry into each participant’s environment, trust gradually increased and I felt that, during our interactions, the participant’s behavior was open and genuine.

Because of the prolonged time I spent in the field, I was able to initiate my data analysis and confirm with participants my impressions and questions (Fly, et al., 1991). Thus, I was able to corroborate that my impressions corresponded to their reality. Further, I utilized other strategies for data collection. I used multiple informants and multiple methods, such as individual interviews, observations, and focus groups, which allowed me to triangulate the information for increased veracity and consistency of findings (Crabtree & Miller, 1992).
This study was designed and conducted based on the construct of wellness and resilience. The biocological model was used as a framework to understand the process of how wellness is developed and of the transactions that occur between ecological systems. The congruence of the results of this study with prior research studies will also support its credibility, therefore contributing to the body of knowledge in the field of wellness and resiliency (Krathwohl, 1993).

**Trustworthiness**

I ensured internal validity of the study by establishing trustworthiness. Trustworthiness means that the study has been conducted in a fair manner, that the analysis and impressions documented in the report truly represent the feelings, experiences, ideas, actions and thoughts of the participants (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, Ely, et al., 1991). I established trustworthiness through accomplishing four distinct steps (Crabtree & Miller, 1992).

1. **Member checks** – As different portions of the analysis were completed, I shared the information with participants in order to confirm the veracity and truthfulness of their information. According to Eder and Fingerson (2002) power dynamics are especially embedded in the process of having an adult (the researcher) ask questions to children. I attempted to break down the power dimension of the interview process by encouraging shared power status between the children and myself. In fact, all children interviewed felt at ease, as demonstrated by their facial expressions and their comments.
throughout the process and by extending invitations to me to return to their homes at another time I was also able to share my thoughts and findings with the children throughout the duration of the study in order to confirm the accuracy of my interpretations.

2. Searching for disconfirming evidence - Prolonged observation of the families (four months) allowed me the opportunity to observe any conflicting information reported by the participants.

3. Triangulation - I incorporated multiple sources, including participant observation across ecological systems, such as at community activities and at the civil disobedience camps, use individual and focus groups, and interviews with multiple informants. Analysis of those sources established corroboration of themes present in the data.

4. Thick description - Extensive descriptions of the context and the process observed during the study are a crucial component of qualitative research. I wrote descriptions and personal memos in English. However, I transcribed the interviews in Spanish and then translated components into English while trying to maintain the essence and meaning of the messages shared by participants in this study.

*Ecological Validity*

I achieved ecological validity of this study by conducting the study in the natural environment and involving people from the Vieques community in their
every-day activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993) My study design permitted the investigation of a group of individuals within the bioecological model of process – person – context – time (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) In this model, the characteristics of the person are influenced and developed by the bidirectional interactions with the different levels of the system Therefore the model allowed me to identify how the external factors such as work environment, agencies available in the community, neighborhood, government policies, and family directly, or indirectly, influence the process of wellness for the individuals (Kelly, 2000)

The ecological model also enabled me to see how those factors influence the person’s daily experiences and behavior As one system is influenced by another, the person’s capacity to enhance their wellness potential can be observed across time and contexts The investigation of the participants’ personal characteristics and the understanding of how those characteristics were manifested through the interactions that took place within the home environment and the community, represented an expansion of how the process of wellness evolved within various contexts and across time This study considered the interactions, influences, and exchanges between the person and multiple environments, such as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (see Figure 1), which directly and indirectly influenced the individual’s process of wellness
External Validity

My intent, in this qualitative study, was to describe and interpret the values and behaviors that are health sustaining, and how the qualities of the social environment and social networks nurture wellness for four families in Vieques. My in-depth study of these families limits the external validity of the findings because the findings of this study will be unique to the participating families. However, from these findings further methodologies can be used to investigate the general perceptions, values, and processes that support wellness for the community. In doing so, the study’s findings could assist in the development of programs and/or services that can support wellness for all members of the community in Vieques and other communities or countries with similar experiences or circumstances.

Researcher Subjectivity and Values

According to Wolcott (1995), the art of fieldwork requires recognition and appreciation of the feelings that provide the energy for conducting and completing a study. As a researcher, I recognize the personal bias embedded within my cultural roots as a Puerto Rican woman. I acknowledge my personal views concerning the continuous injustice, violations of human rights, and depletion of the natural, social, and economic resources for the people of Vieques. In doing so, I collected and analyzed the data through observations and interviews in the most objective way possible, without overlooking the humanness of this process (Ely, et al., 1991, Wolcott, 1995).
As a qualitative researcher I recognize that my interest in learning more about the history of the Vieques' community, as it relates to the influence of the United States Navy, came from my desire to promote social justice. At one time, when a military helicopter purposely flew over one of the civil disobedience camps creating destruction and injury to the people there, my feelings of dislike toward the U.S. Navy increased because I was witnessing and experiencing the abuse to the civilians. As I became immersed in the day-to-day inter-dynamics with people from Vieques, I acknowledged the purpose of my presence there was to identify how people from Vieques have overcome all these obstacles and how they have built stronger processes that support their wellness.

Fieldwork also provides a time for self-reflection. Reflective notes are essential in determining to what extent the researcher is influencing the field experience (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). These reflective notes provided a perspective of my perceptions, inferences, and biases as I attempted to document the actions and voices of the families from Vieques. At times, I found it very difficult to maintain an objective perspective as I learned more about the injustices and practices of the U.S. Navy toward the people in Vieques. My reflective notes provided an outlet where I was able to express my feelings, and later on, reflect on those more objectively as a researcher. Thus, I made a concerted and conscious effort to remain unbiased, and to be aware of my perceptions and feelings while I recalled observed information from my memory, and when I restated participants' comments and inferred perceptions.
Writing

In the following chapters, I describe the challenges, strengths, processes, and lessons of wellness as experienced by families and community members from Vieques. In Chapter III, I introduce the individual participants and groups who participated in this study. In Chapter IV, I present a detailed description of the cultural values and processes that have supported the development and maintenance of wellness for the four participating families. In Chapter V, I present the voices of the community as they identify the values and strategies that have helped them stay strong and promote a sense of wellness for the Vieques community at large. In Chapter VI, I share my impressions and experiences as they relate to this journey of academic and human inquiry. I also present the most salient findings that identify the uniqueness and virtues of the people from Vieques.
CHAPTER III

Introducing Families and Friends

You can do what is possible, you have to make the impossible, possible

_Fela_

In this chapter I would like to introduce you to the families and people from the island of Vieques who so graciously agreed to participate in this study. The stories, life lessons, and experiences they have shared will serve as a guiding tool in understanding how families from Vieques have developed, maintained, and promoted their internal strengths, and how these wellness strategies have supported them in facing difficult times. I have assigned a name of a flower or herb, frequently seen in Vieques, to represent each family or group. Each symbol represents my general interpretation of their strengths.

*Family (Familia) #1 Amapola*

The red Amapola (Hibiscus) is seen year round in Vieques. It reminded me of the passion and energy that Nora puts into everything she does. Red Amapola represents her optimism and positive outlook on life. Four people compose this family: Jorge, Nora and two daughters. Jorge and Nora have been married for three years. Jorge describes his marriage with Nora as his dream of a close and united family. They both had previous marriages. Jorge has two daughters from his first marriage. His daughters are adult college students still
living in Vieques. His daughters maintain a distant relationship with him, but Nora also has two daughters from her first marriage. Her daughters, who are 14 and 12 years old, currently live with her and Jorge. They live in a rental house in downtown Vieques. Although the house is very small, everyone seems to fit well in his or her own space.

They live in a cement house painted white on the outside and inside. There is a small iron gate on the fence in front of the sidewalk. That small gate leads to the entrance of a larger but narrow iron gate that accesses the house balcony. The balcony is very narrow and has one chair and a hammock, which is tied to one side of the balcony when it's not in use. Inside, the house looks immaculate and organized. The inside of the house was built in a hall-like shape. From the main entrance there are two rooms to the right. The first room is for the parents and the second room is for the girls. To the left of the main entrance, the living room has a bookshelf, one love seat sofa, and one chair. Both pieces of furniture have light-colored, flowered upholstery that brings light and openness to the small area. The computer desk and printer are located behind the living room chair. A small table with the telephone stands across from the computer and in between the two bedrooms. At the end of the hall is the kitchen, which has a dining table in the middle of the kitchen area. Pictures of Jorge and Nora's daughters adorn the living room area.

Jorge is 50 years old, average stature, light skin, and lightweight. He was born and raised in Vieques and has lived there all his life. His mother and father,
who were also from Vieques, raised him. His mother raised him and a foster sister as if they were twins. As a young child he didn’t have a happy childhood because of his father’s drinking problem.

My childhood was not happy. At least it was very sad because at that time my dad used to drink a lot. I didn’t have love from my father. Like, to give me a toy on Christmas, a candy, no. My mom was the only one. We were afraid to ask our dad for money. Every time we needed a quarter it was my mom. Our childhood was very sad because he came home drunk.

[Mi niñez no fue alegre. Por lo menos fue muy triste porque cuando eso mi papa tomaba mucho. No tuve cariño de padre. Como en navidades regalarme un juguete, un dulce, no. Mamá era la que siempre. No nos atrevíamos a pedirle dinero al papa de nosotros. Siempre cuando una peseta todo era mamá. Nosotros pasamos una niñez un poco triste porque el llegaba borracho.]

He was his mother’s favorite. His mother died eight years ago and his father lives on the island of Puerto Rico. He has two sisters living in Vieques, one living on the island of Puerto Rico, and another sister living in California, USA. He also has a brother, on his father’s side, who lives on the island of Saint Croix.

Once Jorge graduated from high school he started work in construction and other side jobs. He has been working for the General Electric Company in Vieques for 28 years. At first Jorge seemed very quiet and reserved. He enjoys his job and exercises good problem-solving skills with different situations that he has encountered there. He enjoys conversing about his religious beliefs and his experiences when he attended the Pentecostal Church.

I used to drink alcohol before I started going to church. But after being there for 13 years, I am not interested. Nora doesn’t have any addictions either. We have been involved with activities, dances, festivals and we have had a good time without having to drink alcohol. And up to this day, I have been able to turn the negative things into positive ones.
Yo antes de estar en la iglesia tomaba pero después de haber estado 13 años no me interesaba. Nora no tiene ningún vicio tampoco. Hemos estado en actividades, bailes, fiestas patronales y la hemos pasado muy bien sin tener que beber licor. Y hasta el sol de hoy lo negativo lo he sabido convertir en positivo.

He likes to observe and learn from others. Jorge is a sensitive and spiritual man who loves his daughters. He feels deep frustration at not being able to have a positive relationship with them. He feels very fortunate to have Nora as his wife and to finally have a family where everyone’s opinion counts and is respected.

Nora is 37 years old. She was born and raised in Vieques. Her parents met and got married in the United States and then moved to Vieques. Her parents’ marriage didn’t last very long. Her family consisted of her mother, father, and an older sister. She also has three brothers from her father’s second marriage. When Nora was two years old, her paternal grandmother took on the responsibility of raising her and her sister after her parents were divorced. She describes her grandmother as a very strong woman who raised all her kids and grandchildren, in spite of being widowed early in life. Her relationship with her grandmother was very special. Nora was “spoiled” by a grandmother who was a model of responsibility, courage and determination for her children and grandchildren.

My grandmother always pampered me. She loved me a lot. She always made sure that we went to school. I taught her how to write. And when she went to vote I showed her where she had to sign. She had heart problems. I always remember that she had heart attacks. And I always went to sleep with the fear that she would have an attack, because she had a lot. We had to call all our uncles and so. She was a very sick woman but she was the one who raised us, and she gave us lots of love and affection. She was
always looking for us. She was a fighter because she worked. She raised all her children alone because she became a widow. She worked ironing clothes and so on. She raised her children and her grandchildren. She raised my sister and me and raised three other ones. And all of us loved her so much. Men and women, we all bathed her when she got very ill. She died of heart problems, one of the valves got clogged or something like that.

Nora was 12 years old when her grandmother died. At that time her sister moved with their mother to the island of Puerto Rico. Nora moved in with her father and stepmother in Vieques. In her father’s household, at a young age, Nora was responsible for caring for her three younger brothers. When she graduated from high school she went to college on the island of Puerto Rico. Her studies didn’t go far because she got married at age 19. Her marriage, like her parent’s marriage, didn’t last very long. She worked at many different side jobs in order to support her daughters. She had the strength and empowerment to make difficult decisions, such as divorcing her first husband, facing many financial struggles, and moving on in life.

And I have had to work cleaning windows, which I have done, at a bakery, but what’s important is to work. A job that is worthy, not a job with drugs,
that’s wrong A job that allows you to move forward, with dignity. But never allow any man to abuse or subdue you. If he abuses and subdues you, you say, “Good bye, see you.” And you move forward. And if you divorce him, “so long.” You are not going to die for nobody. That is a lie, you don’t die because of anyone. As long as you have God as your guide, God will always help you. I might cry for a little while but after that I have to move on, and it has to go away.

[Y si hay que trabajar lavando ventanas, que yo lo he hecho, en panaderías, pero lo importante es trabajar. Un trabajo digno, no un trabajo de droga, eso está mal. Un trabajo que te ayude a seguir adelante con dignidad. Pero no permitas que ningún hombre te maltrate ni te humille. Si te maltrata y te humilla tu dices, adiós nos vemos. Y tú sigues hacia adelante. Y si te divorcias ante pues adiós, no te vas a morir por nadie. Eso es mentira, uno no se muere por nadie. Que mientras uno tenga a Dios por delante, Dios siempre ayuda. Yo llorare un ratico pero después tengo que seguir, se me tiene que quitar.]

After living on the island of Puerto Rico for nine years, she moved back to Vieques with her two daughters. She had learned to take risks in order to support her future goals. Likewise, she had learned to be flexible and have a positive outlook in order to keep life options open for her.

Nora returned to college and is currently in her senior year. She is a student in the College of Education and wants to become a Spanish teacher. Nora travels four days a week to college, back and forth from Vieques to the island of Puerto Rico. She describes herself as a good listener, good friend, easy going, and as a person who has a loving temperament. Nora’s eyes and face light up with a sense of wonderful energy that makes people feel comfortable and at ease when she is talking. Her enthusiasm and positive attitude are contagious. She is a leader at the church she attends. She has also become the support for her classmates at
college. She encourages them to stay in the program and to finish what they have started. She encourages them to not give up.

I encourage my classmates with the ambition that I have to finish. I tell them, “Look, this is almost over.” I have a classmate who doesn’t want to finish. She doesn’t want to be a teacher. I tell her, “You need to graduate and then look for whatever job you want, but don’t give up.” I tell them that the hardest month is October, but November has a lot of holy days. When you have the need, you make the decisions. You make the decision to stay or you make the decision to leave. And when you make the decision, you finish it of course.

[Con las ganas que yo tengo de terminar yo estimulo a los otros compañeros. Yo les digo, “mira si esto se esta yendo.” Yo tengo una compañera que no quiere terminar, no le gusta ser maestra. Yo le digo, “gráduate y luego te buscas el trabajo que sea pero no te rajes ni pal cara.” Yo le digo el único mes que va a ser más difícil es octubre pero noviembre tiene muchos días libres. Cuando tú tienes la necesidad, tú te decides. Te decides porque te decides. Y cuando te decides, lo terminas, claro.]

Milagros is a beautiful 14-year-old girl. She has beautiful, soft, dark skin that captures everyone’s eye. Her soft-spoken voice reflects the gentleness of her way of doing things. She is a ninth grader at the only middle school in Vieques, which was started in September 20, 1988. She is very sincere with people and lets them know what she thinks. In doing so, she has learned how to defend herself and to overcome prejudice against her skin color. Milagros has many friends who respect her.

My friends like the way I am. Because if I have to tell someone something I do it right away, face to face. And if I have to tell someone that what he or she is doing is wrong, I tell him or her. Now, they don’t dare tell me anything. Why? Because I know how to defend myself. If a boy lays his hand on me I turn around and show him mine too. I don’t stay quiet if someone tells me something.
[A mis amigos les gusta como yo soy  Porque si yo le tengo que decir algo a alguien que es verdad yo se lo digo  Y si yo le tengo que decir a alguien que esta mal, yo se lo digo  Ahora a mi no se atreven decirme nada  Porque, porque yo me se defender  Ahora que un nene me ponga la mano en mi y yo vengo y saco la mia también  Yo no me le quedo calla a nadie]

She enjoys going out with her girlfriends to Scoop Scoop is an ice cream store in town, which also has several electronic game tables  It is probably the only place in town where young people can go for entertainment  She also likes to go visit family and friends, and enjoys going to the beach  She keeps herself busy with school, she is the vice president of her home classroom  School band and orchestra, and volleyball practice are other activities that she enjoys

_Family (Familia) #2 Rosas_

Roses are seen everywhere in Vieques I chose the pink rose for this family because it represents gentleness  At the same time, the thorns from the rose branches can cause harm if those who touch it are not careful  To me, this family represents the combination of the beauty of being able to accomplish so many things in life while struggling with deep pains and internal family issues

The sound of the ocean waves whispering softly in my ears, the salty smell of the sea, and the gentle breeze moving the grape bushes and the grass is the setting where this family of three lives  They are renting the first level of a two-story house  On the outside the house has iron bars on all windows and at the front door  The house’s appearance of being shielded is in contrast with the environment of fresh air and spectacular ocean view just 20 feet away  Inside, the house is immaculate  The white furniture of the living room is protected with
transparent plastic. A media stand holds a television, the telephone, and a few
glass figures that convey their modest living style. The sunlight coming through
the windows provides a sense of openness around the house. The living room
stands on the bottom of a U-shape design where the dining room and kitchen are
to the left. On the right side of the living room is the child’s room, then the
bathroom and the parents’ bedroom.

Pedro, a 28-year-old man, was born and raised in Vieques by his parents.
He is the oldest of three boys. Of the three sons he is the only one that has stayed
to support his parents’ business in Vieques. As a family they have gone through
many difficult times, including surviving a hurricane’s devastating effect on their
property, which necessitated almost starting the business over again. He feels a
strong sense of duty toward his parents, who have taught him the value of work
and to persevere in life in order to reach the goals that he has set.

I have been working with my father as long as I can remember. Because
dad always taught us that we have to help each other. And by the way, he
never forced us to work. We did it because we saw him moving ahead and
we wanted to do it also. Always, since I was in fifth or sixth grade when
he started the business, we started in the garage of the house. From the
garage we moved to a building that was about 20 x 20 and after that we
built a bigger shop, which is 75 X 50. And all our life we have helped our
dad, all our life, all our life.

[Porque papi siempre nos enseñó que teníamos que ayudarnos
mutuamente. Y de hecho nosotros nunca hicimos los trabajos forzao. Lo
haciamos porque lo veíamos a el echar pa’lante y nosotros queríamos
también hacerlo. Siempre desde que yo estaba quizás en quinto o sexto
grado que el empezó a montar el negocio, que empezamos en la
marquesina. De la marquesina pasamos a un edificio de cómo 20 x 20 y
después hicimos el taller grande que es de 75 x 50. Y toda la vida nosotros
hemos ayudado a papi, toda la vida, toda la vida]
Pedro loves his family very much and is grateful for the support they have demonstrated, especially when he was in jail for a month because of civil disobedience. His daughter was the force that motivated him to civil disobedience. His daughter’s body is covered with large black moles, all of which have profuse hair growth in their centers. To this day they haven’t found any tests that explain the cause of the moles or if there will be any physiological side effects from them. It is suspected that biological contamination from the Navy’s military practices in Vieques had something to do with the development of her rare condition.

Maritsa is a 30-year-old pre-school teacher. Her short stature, light skin, and thin physique might cause one to confuse her with a high school student. She was born and raised in Vieques by a librarian. Her biological mother gave her and her brother away to the neighbor, a school librarian, when she was seven days old. She grew up with two or three other children whom this woman raised.

From early on in life she learned to contribute by working in the house. Maritsa’s childhood was centered on following the house rules. There weren’t many opportunities to have fun or to experience any demonstration of affection from her caretaker.

My mother was a very strict person. And I can tell you that I moved from childhood to adulthood, from a little girl to an adult. Like my developmental stages were incomplete, as if I didn’t have a chance to be an adolescent. I was never a rebel or anything like that but I had responsibilities since early in life. I had responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, to do everything in the house. I had adult responsibilities since I was a little girl. Today that could be considered child abuse but not for me because I say, she didn’t have to raise me either. Do you understand what I
am saying? That's me analyzing things as an adult. I never knew what it was like to go to a party, to a dance, nothing. Thank God that I wasn't that interested. My life was restricted because of how strict she was.

[Mi mama era una persona bien estricta. Y le diría que yo pase de niñez a adulta. De niña a adulta como que mis etapas no fueron completas como que yo no tuve adolescencia. Nunca me puse rebelde ni nada, pero yo tuve responsabilidades desde bien temprana edad. Las responsabilidades de cocinar, limpiar, hacer todo en la casa, responsabilidades de adulta. Desde nena. Hoy sería un maltrato verdad, pero para mí no porque yo digo que ella no tenía que criarme tampoco. Entiendo lo que le quiero decir, eso soy yo después de adulta, analizando. Yo no supe nunca lo que eran fiestas, ni barles ni nada. Gracias a Dios que a mí nunca me llamo mucho la atención. Mi vida fue cerrada por lo estricta que era ella.]

She feels proud that with the struggles and challenges she had as a child, teenager, and young adult, she never gave in to using drugs, alcohol or prostitution.

Of all the children who were raised in the house, she was the closest to her foster mother. She felt a sense of responsibility and reciprocity for the woman who took the responsibility of raising her. In fact, she was the only one who took care of her foster mother during her illness when she was diagnosed with cancer.

Maritsa is a hard worker. She is very determined when she sets her goals and likes to feel that she has accomplished them. For example, she is very proud that she was able to stay in college while taking care of her foster mother during her illness. After her foster mother’s death, she returned to college and finished her bachelor’s degree in education.

Maritsa is a very loving mother. She talks to her daughter with respect and kindness. She is very much in tune with her daughter’s needs and is always available to her.
*Ana Luz* is a beautiful, sparkling, and outgoing four-year-old girl. She was born in Fajardo, the closest town by water to Vieques. She has dark, black hair, which falls freely around her face, enhancing her sweet, black eyes. Some of the more prominent moles on her skin can be seen on her legs (at thigh level) and on her back. Her mother used to have her wear long pants all the time so that other children and adults wouldn’t notice and ask her about the moles on her body. However, her mother followed a friend’s advice about not being so obsessed about covering the moles because that makes people even more curious. Marissa has realized that the advice was indeed true, and now Ana Luz wears dresses and knee-high shorts.

Ana Luz loves to be the center of attention. She is currently in kindergarten and doing well in school. She loves to learn new things, but seems always to be “on the run,” absorbing every piece of action, event, or conversation that is going on around her. She loves to color pictures, to play make-believe games, and basically she enjoys everything she does. She enjoys life! She is affectionate with her mother and often asks her for a hug or a kiss which her mother offers immediately. Ana Luz is very friendly and loves to converse with everyone.

*Family (Familia) #3 Flamboyan*

The Flamboyan is a beautiful tree that is seen in Vieques and Puerto Rico. Its branches, full of deep orange flowers, spread majestically in the air. I chose this tree because it represents action, activity, beauty, and good energy, which are
qualities that I felt every time I visited and spoke with each member of this family. They live in the Barrio Santa Maria. Their two-story house, made of cement, is still in the process of getting its final paint job. The family consists of two parents and three daughters.

From the street, the house has a cement fence with an iron gate that is almost always guarded by two friendly dogs. From the main entrance, the small living room, with rattan furniture, invites people into a clean and peaceful atmosphere. The walls are adorned with a few pictures. There is a set of stairs that lead to the second level where the parents’ bedroom is located. The living room extends to the dining room area as a large open space, which ends with a large kitchen. To the left of the main entrance are two rooms (for the daughters) and a bathroom at the end, almost closing the loop between the bedrooms and the kitchen. A few plants decorate the living room, along with a small water fountain.

Jose is a tall, fit 48-year-old man. On first sight he projects himself as a very serious, quiet, and reserved person. Once he starts a conversation on a topic of his interest, he becomes more engaged and familiar. He reminds me of an old grumpy man who is waiting for the opportunity to shout a great joke and enjoy the surprise factor created in others, and then eventually has fun sharing with people.

Jose was actually born in the United States, but moved to the island of Vieques with his parents at a very young age. When he was seven years old, his mother, who never married his dad, decided to leave him and his brother with
their paternal grandmother. She wanted to return to the United States to start a new life. His paternal grandmother and grandfather took primary responsibility for raising him. When his grandfather died, his grandmother continued to raise him and his brother. At that time, his dad also took on a more active role as a father. The love that his grandmother demonstrated to them made them feel compelled to reciprocate that love to her.

She protected us. She tried to find ways so that our dad didn’t spank us, but he always did. She was always looking after us and giving us her love. At 9:00 pm, we used to go outside by the bridge, because we had limits. And she would come all the way where we were, looking for us. She didn’t spank or hit us, but she did come all the way to where we were looking for us as if we were two little kids. And we saw that as something good. We had to reciprocate because she showed that she really loved us. She substituted the love that our mother never gave us, she turned out to be our mother.

[En español:] Ella nos protegía, buscaba la forma que el papá de nosotros no nos diera, aunque siempre nos daba. Estaba siempre buscándonos y dándonos cariño, etcétera. Cuando daban las 9:00 de la noche, nosotros nos íbamos afuera al puente, porque teníamos límites. Ella iba a buscarnos, ella iba a buscarnos, ella iba a buscar. No nos daba nada pero allí nos iba a buscar ella como a dos nenas pequeñas. Y nosotros vimos eso como algo bueno. Le teníamos que responder porque ella se veía que de verdad nos quería a nosotros. Ella vino a sustituir ese cariño que mamá no nos dio, ella vino a ser como quien dice, a ser nuestra madre.]

Jose’s father was with other women while living with his mother. Jose has around 15 to 16 siblings from six different women with whom his dad had relationships. His mother was 15 years old when she lived with his dad, who at that time was about 20 years older than she. He thinks that is probably one reason why his mother left them. Those negative life experiences prompted Jose to learn
what he didn’t want for himself and his family in the future, and to develop strategies to keep his future family united.

For example, since I was young, since I was in school, when we had our girlfriends, in high school I was already thinking about having a family. I studied and read a lot about the family, about what it meant to have a family. I pretty much focused on that. And I decided that when the time came I was going to do whatever was possible and impossible to keep my family stable. And up to this day that’s how it has been.

| Yo por ejemplo desde temprana edad, desde que estábamos estudiando que tuvimos nuestras novias, ya en escuela superior yo pensaba en tener una familia. Estudiaba y leía mucho de la familia en lo que era una familia y mayormente me enfatizaba en eso. Y me incline para que cuando llegara ese momento, hacer todo lo posible y lo imposible para que se mantuviera estable. Hasta el día de hoy así ha sido |

Jose works as a schoolteacher in Vieques. He has been married for over 24 years to his wife Laura, who also is a schoolteacher in Vieques. He is a very responsible man and feels very strongly about maintaining the family’s financial stability. He works seven days a week as he has a second job beside his teaching job. According to Jose, it is crucial that he does well physically, emotionally, and financially, so that he can better support his family first and then others. His personal wellness is critical in order to feel centered and in balance so that he can help his family.

There are so many broken families, so many problems in society that we have tried to keep our family united. For me this is a struggle. It’s a struggle trying to survive not only in the cultural aspect outside of the home but also within the home. And I have always said that first I have to be well so that the others are well. I have to stay well in all aspects, spiritual and physical, in order to help my family and others.

| Porque hay tantas separaciones y tantos problemas en la sociedad que hemos tratado que la familia de nosotros se mantenga unida. Para mí esto es una lucha, es una lucha el uno tratar de sobrevivir no solamente en el |
At home he tries to practice his philosophy of doing something good that strengthens him, which gives him a stronger spirit to conquer whatever he wants. In the long run this philosophy promotes tolerance and peace within the family. José has a positive attitude about life and believes one can change things if he/she has the determination to do it.

I always say that if you start the day well you will end the day well. And even if you start the day wrong you can always transform it, you can change it. You create your own environment. All those things as a family make you feel stronger.

Laura is a 47-year-old schoolteacher who was born and raised in Vieques. She was born in the Major’s government building. At the time of her birth the hospital was under construction and a few offices in the Major’s building were transformed into hospital rooms. Laura always has a smile in her face, which made me feel welcome every time. She is always into doing something. Exercising because she wants to lose a few pounds, taking her youngest daughter to judo competitions and practice, or doing house chores. There is always something going on in their household that projects a positive feeling about the relationship among its family members.
Her parents raised Laura. She is the oldest of four children in the family. When her parents were young, their families had fairly good financial stability until the land expropriation occurred in the 1940s. Her parents promoted their children’s interest in sports, which Laura carried on through college. Her transition from high school to college was very difficult, but she had the strength and determination to persevere and succeed.

It was a drastic change but you get used to everything, you have to get used to it. For me it was very traumatic when I had to leave after I finished my fourth year in high school, because it is not the same over there [on the island of Puerto Rico]. You have to get used to a completely different life. Not so much now, but when I was young, people here (in Vieques) slept with the windows and doors open. Cars, people didn’t steal as they do now. On those days you could leave the car keys and things there and everything was there the next day. And so I had to get used to locking up my belongings because people could steal it. And I didn’t have my mother to pick me up, or to help me, or to cook. It was difficult for me.

[Y para mí fue bien traumático cuando me fui de cuarto año para allá porque no es lo mismo. Uno se tiene que acostumbrar a otra vida completamente diferente. Ahora no tanto pero en mi época aquí se dormía con las ventanitas y puertas abiertas, los carros, no se robaba así como ahora. Antes tú podías dejar el carro con llave y todo afuera y amanecía igual. Y entonces en lo que yo me acostumbraba a que tenía que cuidar mis cosas porque me las podían robar, y que no tenía a mamá que me buscaba o que me ayudara o que me cocinara pues se me hizo un poco difícil.]

She is a very creative, energetic and open-minded person. Laura feels that every person should follow their dreams and never give up until they accomplish them. One of her dreams as a child was to go to Disney World, which she couldn’t visit because her parents couldn’t afford it. When she finally had the opportunity to visit the park as an adult, it was a “magical” feeling of accomplishment, that her dreams came true.
One of my favorite memories is the first time I went to Disney. Because all my childhood I dreamed about that I watched Mickey Mouse cartoons and the Mickey Mouse Club where children sang and everything. And sometimes they showed the park, because at that time it was in California. And I dreamed and dreamed about going to Disney. I read the fairy tales and it was like a far away dream for me because at my house they were not going to be able to afford something like that. When I went for the first time was when my oldest daughter was in 6th grade and the youngest one was 8 months old and so we left her here. In other words I had just had a baby. We said, “Let’s go this year, we cannot continue [waiting], let’s go.”

When I arrived at the park and walked through the gate and saw the castle far away my mouth was wide open, tears came out of my eyes and I said, “Oh my God, finally.” At Epcot Center there is an area where they have games such as the hopscotch that they have on the floor with many sounds. I went there. Because when I was a kid I used to play hopscotch, jump rope, and all those games. And then when I saw that huge room filled with colored hopscotch games, and when I started to jump and they made sounds, wait a minute I regressed 15 or 20 years. I didn’t want to leave that place.

As a teacher, she teaches her students lessons that have been important in her life, encouraging them to follow their dreams, to pursue and persevere for what they want.
And there are a lot of children at school that when I talk with them about Disney or about other places they say, “When will I be able to go?” And I tell them, “Some day you will go because that happened to me also.” I tell them story and I tell them, “I have been there not only once but many times and you are not going to go just one time but many times if you set your mind to it.”

_Y ahol un montón de niños en la escuela que yo a veces les digo de Disney o algo y ellos dicen “ahí cuando voy a ir.” Y yo les digo “algún día vas a ir porque a mí me paso lo mismo.” Yo les cuento mi historia. Y les digo, “yo no he ido una vez, he ido varias veces, que ustedes no van a ir una vez, van a ir varias veces si se lo proponen.”_

_Carmen_ is a beautiful 16-year-old girl. She is the youngest of three daughters. Carmen’s long, light brown hair is usually pulled into a ponytail as she practices judo, weight training, and runs most days of the week. Her two older sisters joke about being jealous of her incredible physical stamina and fitness. She has been practicing sports since she was nine years old. Carmen is a junior at Herman Rockefellow High School. She loves sports, music, art, and, like her mother, is always into doing something. She describes herself as a happy person. She is active and is very much a multi-tasking person, as many teenagers can claim.

_I am a happy person. I have to be doing something. I can’t do just one thing. If I have to wash the dishes, I am talking on the phone. If I am watching television, maybe I am writing. If I am on the Internet I might be talking on the phone, because we had two lines before. I am the kind of person that has to be doing something. I cannot be still. While I was waiting for you I was in my room listening to music and dancing. I am very active. I like sports very much. I go to judo, volleyball, I go to the gym, and I run. If there is anything going on, I am there. It’s not that I am like the white race [everywhere], because I am not like that either. I like to do a little bit of everything. I like to participate in the activities here in Vieques. If there is a walk, I go there._
Soy una persona alegre. Yo tengo que estar haciendo algo. Yo no puedo estar haciendo una sola cosa. Si tengo que llegar, estoy hablando por teléfono. Si estoy viendo televisión a lo mejor estoy escribiendo. Si estoy en el Internet puedo estar hablando por teléfono, porque antes había dos líneas. Soy una persona que tengo que estar haciendo algo, yo no puedo estar tranquila. Allí hora cuando no llegaba estaba en el cuarto oyendo música y bailando. Soy bien activa, me gusta mucho el deporte, voy a judo, volleyball, voy al gimnasio, corro. Cualquier cosa, Carmen esto. No es que sea arroz blanco porque tampoco soy así. Me gusta hacer de todo un poco. Me gusta estar en las actividades de Vieques en todo.

Carmen has a visual impediment in one eye. She has received support from the school system and has learned to read using the Braille system. She has learned to overcome this physical impediment. Carmen challenges herself and likes to take risks. This is demonstrated by her dedication in judo, which has taken her to international competitions in the United States, representing Puerto Rico and Vieques. She has earned medals for her accomplishments and skills as an athlete. Recently she has expressed an interest in surfing.

She is a very good student. She has many friends at school and gets involved in fund-raising activities for her class. She is smart and determined. I remember one time, as I was watching a judo competition in Vieques, her mother told me.

Carmen is a very strong-willed child. Since first grade she has learned to earn her own money. When she was in first grade her teacher asked her to watch the class and write down on the board the name of the children that misbehaved while she was gone. When the teacher returned to the classroom, Carmen already had $1.25 collected from children that had paid her to erase their names from the board. The teacher called us about Carmen’s enterprise and we talked with her about that. Another example of her strong will was also if she wanted or needed money for something important she will come up with a raffle of some of her stuffed animals. She would give tickets to her friends so that they could help her sell it. She definitely accomplishes what is on her mind.
Her parents were her teachers in the primary grades. She has a network of friends from school, all of whom help each other with schoolwork so they don't have to depend on parents or teachers for their learning.

Carmen has a strong affiliation with her middle sister. Her middle sister and second parents (caretakers) have served as role models and a good support system. She feels very fortunate to have them.

I think that she [Mommy Lusa] is a very important person for me. The love of a mother, the way she worries about me as if I am her daughter. I see all those things and realize that other students, other young people, don't have that like me. But that's when I stop, see and value that I have to improve in my way of not being disrespectful with my mom and dad.

[Yo creo que ella [Mami Lusa] es una persona bien importante para mí. El afecto de una madre, como ella se preocupa por mí como si yo fuera hija de ella, todas esas cosas así yo me doy cuenta que otros estudiantes otros jóvenes como yo no lo tienen. Pues ahí yo veo y valorizo que tengo que mejorar de no ser tan malcriada con mami y con papi.]

Still now, at 16 years of age, Mommy Lusa and Dad Carlos are very important people and an important influence in Carmen's life. She visits them on the weekends and she spends days at their house during vacation. In fact, Carmen says that she has a room at their house because she is part of the family.

The other day I was there mixing cement with them, at the house of my other sister, their daughter. Then there was Dad Carlos, who is Mommy Lusa's husband and another man asked him, "Who is that girl?" And he told the man, "That's my daughter, didn't you know that?" And the man said, "No that's Jose's daughter." And Dad Carlos told him, "But she is my daughter too, I raised her." They are always very proud of me.

[Mira el otro día fui a virar cemento con ellos, a la casa de mi otra hermana, de la hija de ellos, entonces allá estaba papa Carlos, que es el esposo de ella, y entonces un señor le preguntó "adónde quién es esa." Entonces el le dijo: "a esa es mi hija, tu no lo sabías." Y el otro señor le]
Mommy Lusa and Dad Carlos are a wonderful couple in their early 50s. They were born and raised in Vieques. Lusa was raised within the Christian religion and with the fear of God. Her parents were strict and had specific rules and standards for what was right and what was wrong. Lusa remembers how her father used to leave a whip, which he never used, lying on a chair on the front porch to remind his daughters not to disobey the house rules. As a young adult, Lusa helped her parents financially. She purchased a stove and a refrigerator, whatever was needed at home. She lived with her parents until she married Carlos.

Carlos’s parents raised him also. They were very poor, and so, since early on in life, difficult experiences taught him to reconsider and see things in a different way.

We didn’t have a good life when I was a little boy. I slept on the side of the bed that had a hole. The bed was made out of metal. I had to sleep there since I was the youngest. That’s where the wires were broken and were sticking up or the mattress fell through the hole. Children know when there is an injustice, children know and feel it. I cried and swallowed my tears since I was young. I always told myself, “Oh God, (I don’t know how I knew there was a God but I believed in Him and my family was Methodist) God, someday I want to have a family, a home. I want to have a wife that I love and I want to have a lot of cute children. And I want to be a good man, and work, and have a house.” That was me, crying because of the bad experiences that I had during the day or in the afternoon. And I cried and talked with God and I fell asleep quietly.

[Desde que yo era niño, pequeño no se vivía bien. A mí me tocaba el lao de la cama que tenía el hoyo. Las camas eran de metal y al ser el más pequeño pues yo tenía que dormir ahí. Ahí era donde los alambres se habían partido y se iban por arriba o se iban el matres por el hoyo. Cuando]
había una injusticia, el niño sabe, el niño siente y sabe. Yo lloraba y me habría más lágrimas desde joven. Siempre me decía “Dios mío, (no se porque sabía que había un Dios pero creía en Dios, y en mi casa fueron siempre metodistas). Yo decía “Dios mío algún día yo quiero tener una familia, un hogar. Quiero tener una esposa que yo quiera mucho que tenga muchos hijos, que sean lindos. Y yo quiero ser un hombre bueno y trabajar y tener una casa.” Ese era yo llorando de los males que me habían pasado en el día o por la tarde, y yo lloraba y le decía al Señor y calladito me dormía.”

Carlos’s mother was the most important influence in his development of self-control, in helping distinguish between right and wrong, and in respecting life and self.

My mother used to tell me, “Come here so that you can learn.” I can do whatever you tell me to do. I can do the laundry. I can iron the most difficult dress that you bring to me and you will be satisfied. Well, I do marvelous things. Look, I do a little of everything. (Carlos pointed at a dry tree branch where he painted some designs such as the flags of Vieques and Puerto Rico and a vejigante.) You know, because I do a little bit of everything and because I have a little bit of dignity, and have self-respect because my mother helped me and taught me to be that way.

Mi mama me decía “vengase pa que aprenda.” Yo le puedo hacer a usted lo que usted me diga. Yo le lavo y le plancho el traje más difícil que usted traga y usted sale complacido. Bueno yo hago maravillas. Mire, yo hago de todo (señalando una rama de árbol seca pintada y en ella pintada varios diseños como la bandera de Vieques, la bandera de PR, un vejigante). Sabe porque yo hago de todo y porque yo tengo un poquito de dignidad, y calor de vergüenza en la cara, porque mi mama me ayuda y me enseño de esa forma.

Although Luisa was the primary caregiver for the children, Carlos also felt responsible for the wellbeing of all the children. They were concerned about being reliable for the families of the children they cared for. At home Luisa had a structured routine. She usually sang Christian songs to the children,
demonstrated love, fairness, and equality in her interactions with them.

Cleanliness is an important concept when caring for children.

I played with all of them when they arrived at the house, because I had many playpens. I remember I had the darker girl, the boy, and Carmen. They were about the same age. They all had their playpens. And if one of them wanted a cookie, I gave a cookie to all three. If I was giving one something, the three of them got it. That's how I raised them. They already had a bath at noon, I fed them and then they took a short nap. They already knew the routine of taking a bath, eating and sleeping for a little while. When they woke up, if they were a little dirty I bathed them again before their mothers came to pick them up. Mothers pick up their children very clean. That was my routine.

[A todos cuando venían yo les hacía mucha gracia, porque yo tenía muchos corrales. Entonces yo me acuerdo que estaba la trigueñita, un nene y Carmen que eran más o menos de la misma edad. Los 3 estaban en corrales. Y a los 3, le daba una galletita a uno, le daba a los 3 iba a darle algo, a los 3 le daba. Así los crié. Al medio día ya estaban bañados, les daba comida y a dormir un ratito. Ya ellos sabían esa rutina de bañarse, comer y dormir un ratito. Cuando despertaban sí estaban un poquito sucios los bañaba otra vez hasta que la mamá venía a buscarlos. Las mamás los encontraban bien limpios. Esa era la rutina mía.]

When Carlos came home from work he also spent time with the children, giving them attention and love.

_María_ is a 20-year-old college student from the University of Puerto Rico. She is the middle sister of the three girls in the family. María describes her parents as people who have always been there for her. She describes her family as a close one that gets along and helps one another. They all keep a good relationship as a family. Even when they have problems they always look out for each other and try to stay together. She feels they are a happy family, not one that argues with each other all the time.
Mara gets along well with her mother and tries to understand her mother’s point of view, even though she doesn’t agree with her all the time. She describes her mother as very loving and understanding in some things, but very strict in others.

She is very extroverted, creative. We tell her that she likes strange things, because she has a thing now for angels. She believes in angels. She likes other mystical or spiritual beliefs because she believes in Reiki and in the energy of things. At one time she had an obsession with pyramids and their energy. She made a few pyramids with construction paper and put them upstairs. By the way, I think that there is still one here somewhere. And she put things inside so that it gave energy to the water. And we said, “Uhuh, mom, yes, OK.” And my dad thought she was crazy, used to tell her, “Yes, OK Laura.” And she said, “But you have to drink this water that has the pyramid’s energy.” She always has something new going on. In that way I find that gracious because it is nice to see different points of view. On the other hand, as a mother she is very loving and tries to understand for some things but for others she is very stubborn.

She describes her father as a person with strong character and personality, dominant and rough. But she also describes another, more tender and loving side of her dad. He is a sensible man, cooperative, humanistic and generous, not only with the family, but also with people outside the family.
Another family, whom she considers her second parents, raised Maria as well. Mommy Alicia, as she calls her, is a very loving and understanding person. Mommy Alicia and her husband took care of Maria from infancy to middle school age.

Maria projects as a mature and confident young woman. She is clear about her future goals. First she wants to finish her studies in order to consider marriage. She has a strong sense of responsibility toward herself, her family, and her country (the island of Vieques). She describes herself as a quiet and reserved person who doesn’t like her parents to worry about her problems. However, that doesn’t take away from the fact that she feels she can rely on her parents when she talks about her problems and concerns. Family is very important for Maria, it provides the energy that keeps supporting her goals in life and is one of the primary reasons she has moved ahead with her studies.

The ideal will be that I can be with them [parents] all the time. You know, do my things but have them close by. Because I don’t mean that I am going to stay all my life living here with them, because I am at a stage in life that I have to do my things and I want to do them. But it is also true that you want to have the support of your parents close by. I think that most young people are experiencing the same thing.

[Y lo ideal sería que yo pudiera estar todo el tiempo con ellos. Tú sabes, hacer mis cosas pero tenerlos a ellos cerca. Porque no es que yo me voy a quedar toda mi vida aquí viviendo y con ellos, porque ya yo estoy en una etapa que tengo que hacer mis cosas y quiero hacerlas. Pero sí que uno quiere tener el apoyo de los papás al lado. Yo creo que a casi todos los muchachos les pasa lo mismo.]

Maria was raised within the Catholic faith, as was her mother. She feels she has a good foundation of moral values that she continues to practice as an
adult. Religious beliefs and her faith in God do not necessarily mean that she attends church every week or with regularity. It relates to a stronger sense of responsibility as an individual to follow what is right.

I pray at night and have faith. I believe in that faith and the beliefs that I have are within myself and that’s enough for me. It makes me feel good that way. I feel good in life having my faith within me, not by going to church.

Yo oro por las noches y tengo esa fe. Yo creo que mi fe y mis creencias eso está en mi y eso para mí es suficiente. Me hace sentir bien así. Me siento bien en la vida llevando la fe por dentro pero no yendo a una iglesia.

*Rosa and Manuel* are Laura’s parents and therefore the maternal grandparents of Carmen and Maria. They were born and raised in Vieques. When they were young their parents lived in financial comfort until the 1940s, when the land expropriation by the Navy took place. Their parents experienced hardship trying to re-build their house and business. Rosa recounts her experience as a child during the land expropriation.

I was in sixth grade. Our house was located where is now the parking lot for the airport, that’s where we lived. They covered the foundation of the house not long ago. My father had a very good business. He had cattle and he sold clothes and food. He had, like they used to call in those days, people working for him. He had people helping him in the business. He had people helping with the cattle. He was a wealthy man. In the 1940s, Mr. Portela, who worked for the Americans, told him that they were going to expropriate his land. And he (Mr. Portela) told my dad, “If you don’t leave in X amount of days we are going to bring the bulldozer inside your house.” My father had to leave. I don’t know how much money they gave him for the house. They gave him a piece of land in Santa Maria. He had to look for a house to rent so that we could live there, another house to rent for the business, and build our house. He took the old house in panels. We had a two-story house. We lived on the upper level and the store was on the lower level. And that’s where he went bankrupt because of all the
money that he had to spend. But he struggled and fought. We were seven
I don’t know how my mother didn’t go crazy

[Yo estaba en sexto grado. Nosotros vivíamos donde es el parking del
aeropuerto ahí nosotros vivíamos. Que cubrieron los socos los otros días
Mi papa tenía un negocio bien bueno, el tenía ganado, vendía ropa y
comida. El tenía sus dependientes como le decían antes. Tenían unas
personas que le ayudaran en el negocio. Temía personas para el ganado
Estaba hecho un reacheón. Para el 40 le avisaron que lo iban a expropiar a
travers del señor Portela que trabajaba para los americanos. Y él le dijo a
mi papa “si no te vas en X tiempo te vamos a meter la puerca a la casa.”
Pues papi entonces tuvo que salir de allí. Sin embargo hubo un vecino que
estuvo allí hasta lo último. El tuvo que salir. Yo no sé que cantidad de
dinero le dieron por la casa entonces le dieron un lote en Santa María.
Tuvo que salir para buscar casa para alquilar para vivir nosotros, otro
alquiler de casa para el negocio y construir la casa. La casa se la llevó en
paneles era de dos plantas. Arriba vivíamos nosotros y abajo era la tienda.
Entonces ahí fue que se fue a la bancarrota por tanto dinero que tuvo que
gastar. Pero así estuvo luchando, nosotros éramos 7. Yo no se cómo mamá
no se volvió loca.]

Rosa and Manuel graduated from high school the same year, they met
while working for the department of agriculture in Vieques, got married and
retired after 30 years of service. They have four children and eight grandchildren.

Manuel describes himself as the best father. Rosa describes herself as a
good mother, one that has sacrificed for her children, and the one that established
the home rules and enforced the discipline in the house. Although she was strict
with her children, when things had calmed down, she would talk with them and
explain what was wrong so that they could make better choices in the future. They
worked very hard to make sure their children attended school and had a college
education. According to Rosa, they got loans from the association where they
worked in order to support their children’s goals to finish a college degree.
Manuel describes the dynamics as it relates to the children’s discipline and their efforts to provide financial support to them.

I think so (I am the best father in the world) because I never touched the kids. This (referring to Rosa) is the most forceful woman in the world. When the children did something she would spank them. She was always forceful with them. I think I have been the best in the world, and they will tell you. Everything was for them. At one time we had three children studying in college at the same time. And I had to struggle, finding money to give them. And on Sundays when they returned to college I will tell them, “Here.” I gave them money because if not, imagine that! We had to give money to each one of them when we sent them there to study.

Yo creo que sí porque yo nunca a esos muchachos los tocaba para nada. Esta es la mujer más brava del mundo pa eso. Cuando los muchachos hacían cualquier cosa ella les daba, ella siempre era brava con ellos. Yo creo que lo mejor del mundo he sido yo, y ellos lo pueden decir. Para ellos era todo. Bueno a veces teníamos 3 muchachos juntos estudiando en la universidad. Y yo tenía que luchar, buscando pa darle chavos a ellos. Y los domingos cuando se regresaban a la universidad yo “toma” pa darle dinero a los muchachos porque imaginate. A cada uno de ellos ahí que darle chavos pa mandarlos aya a estudiar.

Family (Familia) #4 Gardenia

Gardenia is a white flower that has a sweet, fruity fragrance. I chose this flower for this family because it represents purity and peace. This family’s strong religious beliefs are a primary force that has helped the parents be where they are now and given them the strength to raise their children within an environment that teaches them self-control, justice, and love for God and their country.

This family lives in Barrio Esperanza, which is located on the south central side of the island of Vieques. Their house is located just a few blocks from the beach. There is a long embankment that borders a large portion of the beachfront on that side of the island. The embankment fence (on the ocean side),
and the benches and rest areas are painted in white with blue accents. Some palm trees and many tropical plants adorn the road. The light blue ocean shares a warm breeze that embraces the entire barrio.

Jose B.’s house has two stories. They currently live in the lower level while the upper is under construction. When finished, the upper level will provide a more spacious living area for his family of six. There are construction materials, such as sand and cement blocks, in the front of the house. The entrance is located toward the side of the house. Inside the house a book/decoration stand has many glass figures and pictures on display. In front of the bookstand are two chairs and a small love seat, which sets the boundary for a small space where the computer and printer are located. Many papers and books are everywhere on the computer area. One of the chairs in the living room area sets the boundary for the dining area with just enough space to pull the chair halfway from the dining table if someone wants to sit. At the end of this area, on the opposite side of the entrance, is the kitchen. The living space is very small but everyone seems to find their way through without much inconvenience. Between the kitchen and dining/living room space a hall leads to the bedrooms and bathroom.

Jose B. is 49 years old, of average stature and more on the skinny side. He presents as a very shy and quiet person. His dark eyes reflect a sense of peace and hope. His soft-spoken voice captures everyone’s attention as a reminder that life is short and that we should step back, slow down, and enjoy every minute of it.
Jose B was born and lived in the United States until he was five years old. His parents moved to the island of Puerto Rico and lived there for a while, but eventually moved to Vieques when he was still in elementary school. His parents raised him and his three brothers and sisters. His father set and enforced the rules in the house. As a kid, he and his brothers and sister made a calendar where they rotated the tasks that needed to be done for the week. Some of their responsibilities included going shopping on Saturday, buying bread at 5:00 a.m. every morning, helping his dad at his job, sweeping the floor, or whatever else needed to be done. The children rotated jobs and also had the responsibility of attending school.

His dad loved to work and felt proud of what he did. Jose B was in his senior year in high school when his father died. His dad's death created a strong void in Jose B's life, as he felt defeated and empty inside.

It was raining that morning and he was in a sewer ditch about two or three feet wide and eighteen feet deep. My father did it because he loved to work. It was negligence because there were no plywood panels, there was no protection and there were landslides. There were landslides before, and at that time the rain caused a landslide and covered him and another man. They were able to pull out the other man but not my father. I think that the machine they used [to dig them out] was what killed my father. No one told us when he died. We were like little animals that nobody talked to. No one went to tell my mother or us. Everyone knew that he was dead but at home we didn't know. Then our neighbor came and told us, "Go where your dad works, something happened." I went alone. When I was walking I could hear people saying, "Look, that's his son." When I got to the hospital I saw many family members. My dad's family was all there and that's when they told me that he had an accident [his voice became much quieter and shook]. He did everything in our house. The memory that I have is that we were left with nothing that day. And the people that offered to help us never did.
Una mañana que estaba lloviendo en una sanja del alcantarillado de 2 o 3 pies, 18 pies de profundidad. Mi papa lo hizo porque el amaba el trabajo. Eso fue negligencia sin ningún panel de plywood, sin ninguna protección, habiendo derrumbes. Ya había habido derrumbes antes y en ese momento la lluvia causó un derrumbe y lo arropó. A él y al otro. Al otro lo pudieron sacar y a él no. Yo creo que a mi papa lo mataron con la máquina. Primero fue que nadie nos dijo “paso eso”. Nosotros éramos como unos animalitos que nadie comentó, nadie fue a decimos, mi mi mama. Ya todo el mundo sabía que el estaba muerto y en mi casa nosotros no lo sabíamos. Entonces el vecino fue y nos dijo “mira que vayan allá donde trabaja tu papa que paso algo”. Yo fui solo. Cuando yo iba allá yo oía a la gente comentando “mira ahí va el hijo”. Cuando entró al hospital veo a todos los familiares. Estaba toda la familia de mi papa y ahí me dijeron que había habido un accidente (silencios, hablando con llanto en la voz). En casa to to hacia el (no tienes que seguir si no quieres). La imagen que yo tengo es que nos quedamos sin nada ese día entonces la gente que nos ofrecía no nos cumplió.

Although his mother never sat with them to do homework or asked anything about school, she always told them that “they will be in school until they had a beard but that they had to finish school.” Jose B. finished high school and started working as a teacher at a school in Vieques. Encouragement from colleagues at work prompted him to apply to college. He was accepted into college and finished a degree in music and master’s degree in administration. He is currently a teacher in the school system in Vieques, and the director of the school band and the municipal orchestra. He has won five awards as a musician and played at the Cultural Institute of Puerto Rico, which is a prestigious accomplishment. Music and faith in God are as much part of his life as the food that nourishes his body.

I also remember good times at mass on very special occasions when the message really gets to you and you feel God so close. I also remember when I went to see the symphony orchestra [starts a laughing attack]. That day I wanted to scream from the emotion I was studying at the
Conservatory and went to the concert of the symphony orchestra. I almost yelled when I felt all that

[Para también recuerdo esos buenos momentos en las misas en ocasiones especiales que le llega el mensaje a uno, que siente a Dios cerca. En la banda municipal. También cuando hoy la orquesta sinfónica (le dio un ataque de risa) Ese día me dieron unas ganas de gritar de la emoción, yo estudiaba en el conservatorio y fui a un concierto de la sinfónica, yo por poco grito cuando sentí to aquello]

_María P_ is 45 years old. She comes from a family of ten children, of which she is the fifth. She was born on the island of Saint Croix, but her parents are from Vieques. When she was 12 years old, in 1970, her father decided to move back to Vieques with the entire family. She has lived on Vieques since then. Because of the economical situation and the size of the family, both parents, who raised her, struggled to provide the basics. Although her father was a very hard worker, his problems with alcoholism limited the money he brought to the house. Her family had to resort to using government welfare assistance.

Her father pulled some of her brothers out of school so that they could help him in his auto mechanic business. The children helped to improve the household income and welfare was more important than getting an education. In fact, María P broke the illiteracy pattern in her family when she negotiated the issue of not having a boyfriend in exchange for her father allowing her to finish high school. After she graduated from high school, she worked as a teacher in Vieques. A year later she married José B, which, according to her father, was the only acceptable solution that would allow her to join José B at college on the island of Puerto Rico. She is the only one of the ten children who finished a
bachelor's degree in college. She has one sister who completed an associate's degree in nursing, but is not working in that field. The other eight siblings didn't finish high school. Maria P. is a schoolteacher and loves what she does.

Maria P. met Jose B. when they were in high school. He was actually in his senior year in high school. Although they were very young (she was 13 years old and he was 17 years old), they have been supported each other, and have been able to accomplish many dreams and overcome many difficulties together.

Maria P. presents herself as a very assertive and confident woman. She acknowledges and gives herself credit for what she has accomplished in life.

I have learned to live my life alone also. Since I can reason, I have learned to defend myself alone. Because like I told you, if it been up to my parents, maybe I wouldn’t have studied. I wouldn’t have studied and developed a vision for my future, to improve my lifestyle. I didn’t have that. Maybe that was a life lesson, that I shouldn’t follow what they did.

|Yo he aprendido a vivir mi vida sola también. Desde que tengo uso de razón he aprendido a defenderme sola. Porque como te digo, si por mis padres fuera a lo mejor yo no hubiese estudiado. No hubiese estudiado, por lo menos en la percepción de que desarrollaran en mí una visión hacia el futuro hacia yo mejorar mi estilo de vida, no la tuve. Quizás esa era una lección de vida que yo no podía seguir lo que ellos hicieron.|

Her spiritual strength comes from her faith in God, from going to church, and from singing Christian songs. Every morning she prays while she sings on her way to work. Singing strengthens her. In fact, Maria P., Jose B., and their children sing and play Christian music every Sunday at mass.

Jesus B. is 17 years old and the oldest of the four children in the family. He is currently a senior at Herman Röeckehoff High School. Like his dad, he is a rather quiet and shy young man. Jesus B. has inherited the love and passion that
his parents have for music. He is already planning to organize a music band for the spring semester with some of his friends from school. It is a school assignment for the spring but he has it ready “to rock.” His band is going to play primarily salsa music, which is a musical style that has its roots in Africa, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. At school he is involved in sports, such as track and field, softball, baseball, volleyball and basketball.

Jesus B. has already set his academic goals for after high school. He is an A student and has taken the College Board test twice because he wants to improve his score. His goal is to go to the Interamerican University. He wants to become an airplane pilot.

Once I get my license as a pilot I will continue accumulating up to at least 5,000 hours. And after that, move on to the big ones [bigger airplanes]

Una vez que tenga la licencia sigo acumulando horas, por lo menos hasta 5,000 para después ir pa los grandes]

One thing that impressed me about Jesus B. is his love and trust in his parents. He describes his parents as good people who are always there to help him. Jesus B.’s description of his parents is very powerful.

About his mother: My mother is the bridge that helps me walk across the bad and good things.

[Mi mama es un puente que me ayuda a cruzar las cosas buenas y malas]

About his father: Well he is the person who is always looking after me. He pays attention to what I do so if it’s right he helps me and if it’s wrong he continues helping me also.

[Bueno alguien que siempre está detrás pendiente de mi y eso, pendiente a lo que yo hago pa si esta bien pa seguir ayudándome y si esta mal pues pa seguir ayudándome también]
He uses his sports training as a strategy to relieve tensions when he has conflicts with his sisters. In doing so he has managed to deal with home situations in a more mature and healthy manner.

**Focus Group: Head Start Parents — Watch out for the Bees!**

This group consisted of seven parents, five mothers and two fathers, who gathered at the Head Start main building in Isabel Segunda for an evening meeting. They agreed to participate in the focus group and actually had a great time remembering stories from when they were children. The name of this group came from one of the stories they shared from their childhood. When these parents were children, games were created from whatever they could find on the field. One of the parents remembered how they watched for the bees at a pond where they loved to go and pretend they were sailing.

For this group of parents, who have preschool children, there is the belief that family support extends beyond the parent-and-child unit. Support is extended to grandparents, to sisters and brothers, and to people from the community. Within the organizations that provide support, the church seems to be a key influence guiding people’s behaviors and maintaining a positive outlook on their future.

Another source of support comes from the municipal government and other agencies. Sonia has a child with spina bifida and hydrocephalus. She is very dedicated to her daughter and takes her to all her appointments, most of which are on the island of Puerto Rico. She enjoys the experience of witnessing every single
improvement her daughter makes in therapy. Her daughter’s physician advises her on how to handle her daughter emotionally and physically, and praises Sonia for the excellent job she is doing taking care of her daughter. She shared with us a situation she went through regarding a prescription for her daughter:

The other day they gave me a prescription for my daughter that needed to be given by vein and cost $920.50. And they don’t want to give me the catastrophic coverage, the MPS, because they say they are missing some information about my daughter. And I really don’t know why because they know that my daughter has spina bifida but they don’t want to give me the coverage. Then the doctor told me that he was going to fill out the coverage just for prescriptions and he was going to send it by fax to see if something works out because I couldn’t continue that way. Two weeks later the Herrera’s Pharmacy got the approval and they gave me the prescription.

Los otros días a ella le dieron un medicamento para ponérselo por vena, por 10 días y me valía $920.50. Entonces no me quieren dar la cubierta catastrófica de MPS porque que le falta mas información de la nena. Y yo no se porque ellos saben que la nena tiene Espina Bifida pero no me han querido dar la cubierta. Entonces el doctor me dijo vamos a llenarte la cubierta por medicamento y vamos a tirarlo por fax a ver si podemos hacer algo porque esto no puede seguir así. Como a las dos semanas y pico autorizaron a la farmacia de Herrera a que me dieran el medicamento.

Focus Group at the Civil Disobedience Camp Morivivi

The Morivivi is a weed found almost everywhere in Vieques. While on the ground, the thin branches have their leaves wide open. But if someone steps on the branches the leaves close up and stay that way for a few seconds and then open back again. The group of people who takes care of this civil disobedience camp reminds me of the Morivivi. It doesn’t matter how many times someone or something steps on them (meaning they have been physically and verbally
attacked by Navy personnel or others), they always open up their leaves, and come back to guard the camp, to defend their land.

This camp is located about one quarter of a mile from the main entrance to the Navy/military base, Camp Garcia, on the east side of the island of Vieques. This civil disobedience camp borders one portion of the fence of the Navy/military base. The long road that leads to the camp also goes to the beach and circles up to the west side of the island and then downtown in a big loop. Horses are usually found along this road, as there is so much green grass everywhere. In fact, the road is quite dangerous at night because there are no light posts. Horses and cattle usually cross over to either side of the street looking for food, creating a potential danger for drivers who might get distracted, or for those who might be going too fast on that road.

The civil disobedience camp entrance leads to a clear area large enough to park about three cars. A big mango tree limits how close cars can be parked. The people responsible for this camp built a small wood house with donated materials. Inside, the house consists of a large room of about 12 x 12 feet. There is one bed in a corner and a few chairs, including a rocking chair. On the back wall of the house is a wooden patch. People from the camp told me that one night the Navy threw tear gas and shot at the house, breaking a hole through the back wall. Luckily, no one was injured. Next to the door a television is on, showing the soap opera of the evening. To the left of the television are about three small television monitors projecting the images of the navy base. These monitors and the hidden
cameras on the back and front fields of the house keep civilians on alert in case of any unusual events.

As I face the house from the outside, an open canvas canopy is located toward the right. Everyone who comes to the camp gathers in this area. There are several folding chairs, some arranged around a small table, waiting for that evening’s domino players. A hammock hangs on one side of the tent. Toward the right of the tent area a small path, carefully designed with rocks, leads to another wood structure where the food is stored. There is a gas stove inside the kitchen structure. That’s where the hot chocolate is prepared each evening and served with crackers or cookies for the people that gather at the camp. A few lights outside the house illuminate the tent area, creating a feeling of peacefulness. In this rural setting, all is quiet but for the voices of people conversing or playing dominoes. Sometimes, as she makes the hot chocolate, Dolores yells at the police who are guarding the fence or the military people that patrol the area.

Zinc panels on both sides of the house serve as shields to protect civilians from whatever could be thrown from the Navy side of the fence. In fact, a few weeks after the focus group was conducted, a helicopter from the Navy flew by the civil disobedience camp and across the main road. This was considered a violation of the Navy’s and local government’s agreement that none of the military aircraft should be flown in civilian areas. The helicopter flew so low it created huge winds that rippled the zinc and wood panels like leaves, and
physically hurt and emotionally scarred the people who were in the camp at the
time.

From the back yard of the property, a road establishes the boundary
between the Navy base and the civil disobedience camp. In between is a campsite
with a few state police officers who guard the fence night and day. In the evening,
the people that come to this camp are usually "the regulars," a small group of
women and men from Vieques who feel it is their duty to defend their land. On
the weekends, especially during the time when the Navy has military practices,
college students and others who support the cause of Vieques visit the camp. In
the evening, which is when I visited the camp most of the time, there is an
atmosphere of camaraderie, with people talking, telling jokes, playing dominoes,
and telling stories about the Navy and current events on the island. This focus
group took place one evening as we were drinking the long-awaited cup of hot
chocolate. Three residents from Vieques shared many of their stories and thoughts
with me that evening.

They all were born and raised in Vieques. Daniel and Patricia have lived in
the United States for some time. They both agree that their love for the island of
Vieques and the desire to be with their people were the forces that prompted them
to return. For Patricia, returning to Vieques was also a factor in helping her become
liberated from a marriage she didn’t want, to a man she never loved.

Daniel comes from a family of 12 children. He lived in New York for five
or six years, during which time he married his wife, they have two biological
children and one adopted daughter. While in the United States the only thing that kept him going was the thought of returning to Vieques. Distance means a lot for those who leave Vieques and want to return. He remembers the emotions he felt when he was finally able to return. Once he was back on the island, the strong family ties made difficult situations easier to handle. Although he had to work hard when he arrived in Vieques, it didn’t matter to him because he was close to his family. This is how he described it:

I remember when I was living over there in New York and I decided to return to Vieques. Because I just wanted so much to return here. And one day I decided it. I already had my son who was born in Brooklyn and we came back. I only had $500.00 when I came back. But when I got here I felt so good. I always remember when I came back. Because since I started my family there I just wanted to return to Puerto Rico because I didn’t like it there.

[Yo recuerdo cuando estaba viviendo allá en Nueva York y decidí venirme para Vieques. Porque es que yo ansiaba mucho eso de venirme para acá. Entonces lo decidí. Ya yo tenía el nene mío que nació allá en Brooklyn. Y nos vinimos para acá. Yo lo que traje fueron $500 pesos para acá. Pero cuando yo llegue aquí yo me sentía bien. Eso siempre lo recuerdo de haberme venido de allá. Porque después que yo hice familia allá yo ansiaba estar acá en PR porque no me gustaba.]

Life in Vieques when they were young was difficult because the depressed economy challenged families on a daily basis. Their hope and desire to move on was maintained by the support they received from each other. People helped each other and shared what little they had. Patria remembers with tenderness the time when she was about eight years old and a neighbor brought a hammock for her to sleep.

I used to do rounds for our neighbor, especially during this time of the year, for Christmas. She made the best “pasteles” in the neighborhood. We
helped each other. I also lived there around the time Daniel lived there, when there wasn’t much around. My grandmother raised pigs and in Christmas we roasted them. We sold the meat but we gave our neighbor a portion of it so that she could make the “pasteles.” We helped her make “pasteles” and she usually gave us some for Christmas Eve dinner. I was at her house helping her all the time and doing rounds for her. When she made pastries she sent us some and when my grandmother made something we sent her some also. I was at my neighbors’ all the time. When she came with that hammock it was the best present I ever had. It was like having a new bed. It had no holes, because the mosquitoes go through the holes. The hammock was so big that I could cover my entire body. We used a kerosene lamp to light the house at night. One night a bat flew and landed on my head. I started screaming and I woke up the entire neighborhood. With the new hammock I could cover my body completely. She gave me a blanket to put on the hammock and then a sheet to put it like a canopy and then I would cover up with another sheet. It was the perfect hammock. To me that was the most beautiful present that I ever had, the hammock.

This support continues as a fact of life, as a process that is already ingrained in people’s way of living. Support for the cause of Vieques from people on the island of Puerto Rico has been critical in the development and continuation...
of the civil disobedience. A sense of affiliation and compassion flows from the people of Puerto Rico to the people of Vieques. Patricia shares a conversation she had with someone from Puerto Rico:

"When we started the disobedience camp here there weren’t many people from Vieques. One person from the island of Puerto Rico told me, “The people from the island of Puerto Rico owe Vieques because we didn’t do anything about what was happening here. Now it's our turn to fight for you.”"

[Introducind Luis Herba Buena

I chose Herba Buena (red mint) to represent Luis because this herb is used in Vieques and Puerto Rico to relieve pain. Luis's quest is to fight for the rights of Vieques and to relieve his brothers and sisters from Vieques of the pain of being exposed to physical and emotional abuse, particularly the contamination that has and is killing many people of cancer and other diseases.

Luis has been a leader since the early civil disobedience movement in the 1970s. Luis was born and raised in Vieques. In fact, he still lives in the same house in which he was raised. Next to his backyard is the grave of the founder of Vieques. He identifies very much with the island, with their people and the fight to get the Navy out of Vieques. When he was young there was poverty everywhere. He and his three brothers lived in a barrio and were raised primarily]
by his mother because his father died when he was ten years old. Luis’s
description of his mother reveals the profound love and respect he had for her.
She was mother and father, who only had a third grade education and she
was like gold. My mother had a lot of courage. She was short, less than
five feet tall and skinny. Her communication was slow and deliberate but
with an incredible internal strength. And I could not figure out how in that
small woman’s body could gather so much strength.

Although Luis’s father spent more time with his older brothers and died
when he was young, Luis remembers him as a friendly man who always tried to
help people solve problems. His father was a boxer and a mechanic, but also
worked in construction, plumbing, and other occupations. He was a very
responsible father. It was very difficult for Luis and for his entire family to deal
with and to adjust to his father’s death.

My father’s death was very difficult for us and it is still a question. It was
declared a suicide. And then you find yourself with him the only support
for the family, because my mother didn’t work. And you see that all of the
sudden your world falls apart, that the support of your family disappears,
that your mother didn’t work, that you were the youngest and your other
siblings were still young.

Seeing his mother never give up after his father died built strength within
him. Luis has been in jail at least three times for civil disobedience in Vieques. He
developed a strong feeling of patriotism for Vieques from his mother. The
strength he learned and gathered from her helped him overcome the experience of
leaving his family and friends, as he knew the outcome for engaging in civil
disobedience was to go to jail.

Seeing my mother never giving up helped me. I learned from her never to
give up. And I think that has impacted my life the most. For example, I
remember when I went to jail in 1979, I already knew what was coming
because I was not going to recognize that court (Federal Court). And
because I didn’t recognize the court I was definitely going to jail. I told the
judge, “You can say what you want I am not going to recognize you, you
are the guilty one.” Before I did civil disobedience my mother was arguing
with me the week before because she didn’t want me to go to jail. And I
understand her, she is a mother. And when I was leaving I remember that I
went to see her. I was married and already had two children. I told her “I
am coming to see you. I know that you and I have different opinions about
this but I have to go.” My mother told me, “Go and do what you have to
do and I want you to come back alive.” One big tear slipped out of my
eyes when she spoke to me. When I went to court I was in charge of
myself, I was strong. And her words have been sealed within me all my
life. It is the quality of person that she was. Many people said that she was
an angel.

Bueno mi madre, el verla no rendirse. Por eso yo aprendí de ella a no
rendirme. Y yo creo que a sido lo que mas a marcao mi vida. Por ejemplo
yo recuerdo una experiencia con ella cuando yo voy a ir preso en el 1979
que ya yo se lo que va a venir porque yo no voy a reconocer la corte (la
corte federal). Y como yo no reconocí la corte cuando nos arrestaron era
definitivo que yo iba a ir preso. Y yo le dije al juez, “diga lo que usted
quiera decir yo no lo voy a reconocer a usted, el culpable es usted.” Y
antes de que me fuera, ella estuvo peleando conmigo toda la semana
porque ella no quería que yo fuera preso. Y yo la entiendo, es madre. Y
cuando me voy a ir yo recuerdo que vengo donde ella, yo estaba casado,
ya tenía dos hijos, “vengo donde ti yo se que tu y yo tenemos diferencias
en esto pero tengo que irme.” Ella me dijo “ves y cumplen y quiero que
regreses vivo.” A mi se me salió un goton (de lagrima). Muchacha cuando
yo voy a ese tribunal, yo me comí ese tribunal, si estoy fuerte. Y sus
palabras se me quedaron grabadas para toda la vida. Pero más que nada es
la calidad. Muchos lo decían, mi mamá era un ángel.]
His sense of responsibility for the people of Vieques is also at a spiritual level. Luis is Catholic but doesn’t go to church with regularity. He feels that his motivation for fighting the Navy is not the acquisition of material things, but to bring stability and peace to the island, this is how he nourishes his spiritual needs.

First I am Catholic I believe in God I am not actively participating at church What moves me are not material things. In other words I don’t have a material interest in all this My interest is for the humanity I believe that just by thinking that I am fighting for this town that possibly I will benefit from its development. To think that I can contribute to bring some stability to this town, at least I think that gives me spiritual strength. And I don’t think there is anything negative in what I do, and when I think of it that way, it gives me strength to think that it is that way.

[Felita] yo soy católico, creyente, quizás no practicante. Todo lo que me mueve a mí no hay nada material. O sea yo no tengo un interés material, yo tengo un interés humano en todo esto. Y yo creo que el pensar de que estoy luchando para un pueblo que posiblemente le saque mucho beneficio tras su desarrollo, de darle una estabilidad a este pueblo, por lo menos yo entiendo que me da mucha fuerza espiritual. Y creo que no hay nada negativo en lo que uno hace, y el pensar en eso, por lo menos me da mucha fuerza el pensar que sea así.]

Fela Knitting a blanket of hope, one stitch at a time

Knitting is one of the tasks that Fela likes to do. She does her knitting when she is waiting at a government or health services office. I think she knits as a therapeutic strategy for staying calm and under control. She also demonstrates her love and dedication to her grandchildren as she knits blankets for them for Christmas. Every piece she finishes represents steps of her life and how she is able to “mend” and connect each one for the well-being of those she loves.

Fela lives in a house in the Barrio Bravos de Boston. Her house doesn’t look like a house from the outside. The entrance looks like an abandoned, dark,
garage entrance with unpainted cement walls and surrounded by wild vegetation. At the end of that space a door provides access to the house. Fela’s house is designed in an L shape. As you enter there is an indoor patio with a square hole made of cement, this seems to be used as a space to collect water. The interior patio brings a sense of open space and light to the entire area. On the left side of the patio is the washing machine.

The rooms of the house are also designed in that fashion. The interior patio gives access to the living room and kitchen, the two granddaughters’ room, the younger grandsons’ room, and Fela’s son’s room, which is currently occupied by her oldest grandson. In the living room, the run-down furniture is covered with beautiful, brightly colored blankets knitted by Fela. A wall separates the living area from the kitchen, which has a few shelves on one wall for the storage of a few food items. On the wall next to the shelves Fela is cooking white rice, beans and fried fish on her gas stove. There is a kitchen sink and a small counter space. On the other wall that closes the kitchen space stands a large freezer, its broken door must be realigned every time she needs to get anything from it.

Fela is an amazing, 56-year-old woman who stands just under five feet tall. Her bronzed skin bears witness to long days spent working outside with her grandchildren, with other community members, or at the civil disobedience camp. Fela comes from a family of 14 children. She has eight sisters and six brothers. She was born and lived in Saint Croix until she was two years old, at which time her parents moved to Brooklyn, New York for the next eight years. They then
moved back to Saint Croix, where she lived with her parents for four more years

She was expected to help in the house from a very young age, cooking lunch for
her dad before he went to work

Since I was young, since I was six years old, I have been kneading flour. I
come from a large family. I was one of the older ones. In Saint Croix my
sister, my brother and I had to get up to fix dad’s lunch before he left to
work in the sugar cane fields and making charcoal. Dad got up at 4:30
a.m. and an hour later he left to catch a car that went by, far away, and
took him to work. So he got to work at 6:00 or 6:30 a.m. I got up at 3:30
a.m. and kneaded the flour. My sister cleaned off the salt from the codfish
and fried it, and I made the flour cakes. We made some for him first. And
sometimes, we kneaded it the night before, before going to bed. Because
we ate flour the most at home. We made the flour and the codfish and put
it in a metal container and put the coffee in a thermos for him. And then
we went to sleep. My mother would wake us up later on to go to school.

When she was fourteen years old, she moved to California with an aunt
but returned to Saint Croix when she was sixteen. At that time, she and her older
sister went to work in order to support their younger siblings. They wanted their
younger siblings to be able to wear shoes and uniforms to school and to be able to
graduate. She married her husband when she was seventeen years old and that
was when she first went to Vieques.
Fela has seven children and 22 grandchildren. She also has custody of her
daughter’s five children. Her daughter is at a rehabilitation center in the United
States recovering from addiction problems.

Fela has a friendly and easygoing personality. Her outspoken and upbeat
manner captured my attention but also made me notice the occasional sadness in
her eyes. Fela works at home taking care of her five grandchildren and one of her
sons, who has been diagnosed with a mental illness. She also takes care of her 64-
year-old husband who, despite his heart condition, is very active in the struggle to
remove the Navy from Vieques. Fela has positive self-esteem and is very proud of
her accomplishments.

As a strong woman, she is not afraid of challenging authority, even if it
means confronting a judge. She is not afraid of anyone. She has challenged judges
and people in high positions when she thinks there is an injustice and when people
don’t exercise mutual respect. She has also challenged a private mental hospital
on the island of Puerto Rico when they wanted to release her son after medicating
him without providing any additional treatment.

Because here in Puerto Rico they wait until something happens like,
“Crazy man kills his mother.” I had to tell the psychiatrist, “Do you think
what my son is doing and what he did is OK? You medicated him and
now I can take him home! Well, I don’t think so. OK, I am not going to be
on the newspaper front page like this.” I was lucky enough that that day
there was an article on the newspaper that said, crazy son kills mother
“My name is the same, is like the name of the actress. My name is Fela,
but I am the actress of Vieques and the other one is the actress from
Mexico. But listen I am not going to be on the newspaper’s front page,
crazy son kills mother or mother kills crazy son. No, but it’s OK, I will
take my son. Go ahead and talk to the doctor that in the meantime I am
going to use my cell phone to call channel 11, channel 6 and I am going to
call the press I am going to make sure this goes on the news. I have a white handkerchief and I am going to find a marker to write "please, peace for a family in Vieques" and let me see how I am going to climb this building like Tito Kayak [he climbed the Statue of Liberty in New York and set up a flag of Puerto Rico that said "Peace for Vieques"] I went outside and said, "OK, I am going to take my shoes off and climb this way all the way to the top" When they arrive I am already up there. Start making the arrangements, two rooms for us because what I am going to do is going to be crazy. And you are going to have to prepare a room for me and one for my son. And I was so nervous that I didn't dial the number on the phone and started pretending. They ran and kept my son hospitalized for two months and I saw some improvement.

Fela’s strength comes from within. She has an incredible strength and positive attitude toward life and a tremendous faith in God.
That’s the way my life has been, trying to mend one situation or another. I look for a solution to everything, to everything in life. And always have a happy face during hard times. If things get difficult I pray to God. I am a person with a lot of faith, and I pray God to give me love directly from Jesus’s heart. To give me some of the love that Jesus has, because God is love.

Her philosophy of empowerment and positive attitude is contagious. For me it was admirable to see how a person that has and continues to experience so many obstacles in life can always find a solution to everything. Her lessons on the simple things in life will stay with me forever.

I always say that there is nothing in life that you cannot do. Everything can be done. The trick is to find the way to do it. [She continues with an example] You are going to cut something and can’t find a knife. Well, you can open a sausage can and use the lid to cut [as with scissors or a knife]. Now find the way to do it because it can be done. My philosophy is that you can do what is possible, you have to make the impossible possible. That’s why I thank God because I can survive anywhere.

Lessons from School

I had the privilege of interviewing two teachers from Vieques. Ms. Torres teaches Spanish to ninth graders at the middle school. Ms. Rodriguez also teaches
Spanish, but to eleventh graders at the high school. Both teachers were born and raised in Vieques and have lived on the island all their lives. They have over 20 years of combined experience working as teachers in Vieques.

Regionalism is a concept that these teachers brought up several times. As they explain it, people from Vieques like to stay in Vieques, they love their island. Ms. Torres explains that every corner in Vieques has a memory or story for her. She still lives in the same house where she was born. Ms. Rodriguez adds, "I love Vieques, this is where my life is, this is everything for me." A similar aspect of this concept was brought up at the civil disobedience camp, where two of the people interviewed remember how much they wanted to return to the island after being away for some years. That strong desire to come back is part of being a Viequense.

These teachers' goals include helping their students develop their highest potential for their good and the good of society. According to Ms. Torres, education "is one of the most important influences in a person's life." The school environment in Vieques is like living with a big family for twelve years or so. This sense of school community is more prominent in the high school as kids have often been together since elementary school. Everyone knows everyone. School is like a big family because the kids have been together for so many years, and everyone knows if a student is hanging out with the wrong crowd. This sense of family has always been prominent in the school, such that the students take it for granted. Ms. Rodriguez describes the process as follows:
That is something natural, it is the way things are here. It is normal that it happens here because it has always been that way. And maybe the relationship with the students here is that way because they are not strangers to each other. They have all known each other since elementary school. They have been together and have studied together for many years. In other words, they are like family.

[Esso como es algo natural, eso para aquí ya es costumbre. Eso es normal que pase aquí. Porque siempre a sido así. Y quizás la relación de los estudiantes aquí se deba a eso que ninguno de ellos extraña al otro. Todos se conocen desde la escuela elemental, han estado juntos han estudiado juntos desde años. Que más bien son como familia.]

The school supports different organizations, such as the honor society and youth groups from the commerce program and the government office. These organizations provide opportunities for leadership, group competition, and social experiences with students from the island of Puerto Rico. Tutoring classes are offered to students after school. The school district is trying to promote a pre-technical program in the middle school where students can receive job preparation training while attending school. One of the purposes of this program is to decrease the amount of students that quit school after they finish ninth grade.

Although the financial resources are very limited, the classrooms I visited in each school had computers and a computer lab for the students’ use. Other school support comes from the middle school counselor and a reverend from the Methodist church. According to Ms. Torres, this reverend has been helping and recruiting youth who have been involved with drugs. She feels that the delinquency problem in Vieques is so alarming that they (the kids) reach out for help from whomever extends their hands.

130
Several core values emerged from the families’ responses and the interviews with people from the community. These core values appear to be the base upon which families build their sense of wellness. As previously noted, wellness is the state of balance that encompasses the physical, emotional, and social environment, as well as the cognitive aspects of the individual (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000). Although not all of the values expressed in this chapter were embraced by all of participants, the adult participants in this study appear to have been able to use their early experiences to build upon, develop, and carry on the core values comprising their foundation of wellness.

Maintaining the family as a unit is the first value shared by these families and people from the community. Keeping the family together, that is, living under the same roof or in close proximity, is important for maintaining the family unity. This value is consistent with Werner and Smith’s (1982) finding that a second or third adult in the household becomes an important support for the child, thereby strengthening the foundation of the child’s wellness. For families in Vieques, maintaining a nucleus of father, mother, and children reflects the integrity of the family.

The unconditional support demonstrated by family members has helped many of the families overcome difficult situations. Support comes from parents who guide and help their children to succeed. Support also comes from children who feel that it is their responsibility to work and collaborate for the well-being of
the entire family. The love and respect that children have for their parents are protective forces that help them follow the home’s unwritten rules of what is right and what is wrong.

The family unit provides the energy that helps support each individual’s life goals. This energy is what Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) refer to as the proximal processes, which comprise the primary engines of development. The enduring forms of progressively complex reciprocal interactions, which have been established for extended periods of time among families in Vieques, encompass these proximal processes.

A second important value is faith in God. Faith in God provides the strength to face difficult situations and the hope to look at the future in a positive way. Again, Werner and Smith (1982) found that religion provided stability for families during difficult times. The power of faith for families in Vieques seems to be transformed into an internal feeling of self-reliance, self-control and perseverance.

A third value, that of hard work, has taken the individuals in this study far in life. There is a sense of pride and self-respect regarding being able to perform a job that helps the family move forward. Work is a responsibility shared by all members of the family, as it promotes everyone’s well being. Along with the value of hard work comes determination. Families are determined to take risks, to follow their dreams and not give up.
The combination of the aforementioned values results in a fourth value, the sense of a positive attitude toward life and the belief that there is a solution for everything as long as the person puts all his/her effort and faith into the problem. This positive attitude evolves from a sense of control and empowerment, which in turn is generated by belief in an individual’s ability to change things around. Cowen (1994) and Seligman (1998) identified individual characteristics such as perseverance, honesty and optimism as being supportive of wellness.

A fifth value that has strengthened families is their love for Vieques. The love for the “little girl’s island” (Isla Nena), as it is kindly called by people from the island of Puerto Rico, has built unity not only in the family, but in the community at large.

The next chapter focuses on wellness at a microsystem level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000) and examines the ways in which wellness influences the child and family as a unit. The bioecological model of process, person, context and time will be incorporated in the analysis of how families have supported, taught and promoted wellness across generations. Family wellness will also be explored at the mesosystem level in the context of community, environmental, and school system influences. A third layer of this analysis will include the exosystem, which incorporates how the parents’ or caregivers’ work environment and the Navy base have influenced the wellness of families. I will address in depth how these core values, and other secondary values, have played an intricate role in the development and maintenance of
wellness in the families of Vieques. We will take a closer look at the events, experiences, and life lessons that these Viequenses families have used as instruments to teach their children how to become strong and maintain wellness across generations.
CHAPTER IV

Construction in Progress Step Gently as You Come In

*Expand the image of where you are to what you have to accomplish*

*Jose B*

In this chapter, I will describe the process of wellness and how it has been conveyed across generations for families in Vieques. This analysis represents the stories and strategies used by four families. The process of acquiring specific competencies in the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical areas that support wellness development for children and families will be analyzed within the bioecological model.

The complexity of the interactions between the concepts of process, person, context, and time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) will be abstracted from the participants’ stories in order to reveal essential lessons regarding individual, family, and community values. This analysis will examine how the process of wellness was established, transformed, maintained, and passed on from one generation to the next among families in Vieques. The quality and complexity of interactions between family members and within their community, described by Bronfenbrenner (1978) as the mesosystem, are determinants of their well-being (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000). In essence, family well-being is also determined by the support families gather from their environment, and through
social and communal entities. In this chapter I present a constellation of themes and processes addressing the construct of wellness within a bioecological model, abstracted from the families’ interviews.

*There Is Always Someone Out There*

Of the eight parents interviewed, five were raised by their parents when they were young, while two were abandoned by their mother, and one by both parents. Nora and Jose were abandoned by their mother either as a result of divorce or as a result of the mother leaving home. Consequently, they have never had a good relationship with their mothers. This is how Nora describes her feelings about her mother:

I don’t feel the kind of love you have for a mother, nor I felt that kind of love for my grandmother who was the one who raised me. Because I have not been raised by her, I like her like an aunt, a cousin. But the kind of intense love you feel for a mother, no.

[Por decir así que le tengo ese amor de madre, no. Yo le tenía ese amor a mi abuela que fue, la que me crió. Pero como no me he criado con ella la quiero así como si fuera una tía, una prima, pero amor de madre así tan intenso, no.]

Jose describes his feelings of abandonment and struggles as he tries to understand the situation when his mother left him and his brother when they were seven years old:

We were seven years old and we lived in Barrio Mambiche. I always remember the argument between my mom and dad. She wanted to leave and he demanded of her, how she could leave us like that. But she wanted to leave and that was it, she wanted to leave. When she left I don’t remember any kind of goodbye where she really demonstrated her love as a mother. I always remember that. You know, that hurt me deep inside, it made me feel really bad. I know that my father and mother separated. I know that my father was going out with other women and that she also...
failed him. And I know she must have her reasons for failing him but that
does not justify what she did. On the other hand, I know that she was a girl
when she married my father. She was 15 years old. She didn’t marry him
My father ran away with her and had four kids with her. And he was over
15 years older than her.

Marlisa was seven days old when her mother gave her away to a woman in
the neighborhood. She knew her grandmother but not any other blood relatives.
Her options for making any kind of attachments were through this woman, a
librarian, who requested permission from her biological mother and family to
raise her. This woman also raised two or three other children from Vieques. Of all
the children in the house, Marlisa was the closest one to her foster mother. Her
easy temperament was a protective factor for Marlisa, one that supported her
wellness and sense of connectedness with her caregiver. Extensive literature on
wellness and resilience (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, Shapiro, 1996, Werner
& Smith, 1982) supports the finding that responsive infants can generate feelings
of competence in caregivers, inviting them to respond in ways that support the
child’s needs.
One common protective factor for Nora and Jose was that their paternal
grandmothers took on the responsibility of raising them. These grandmothers
were strong women who cared for and demonstrated love for their grandchildren.
Both parents raised Carlos, but he considers his mother the source of strength and
support that helped him move on in life. These grandmothers, foster mother and
mother represented the protective factors that supported Nora, Jose, Carlos and
Mantsa’s development of competencies that allowed them to face adverse
situations when they were young.

The home environments of Jorge, Laura, Pedro, Jose B, and Maria P.,
were not optimal when they were children, although both parents were present at
home to provide support (food and shelter) and the supervision of at least one
adult. Pedro’s experience as a child was unique, as his parents wanted to stay on
the island of Puerto Rico, but changed their decision based on their children’s
desire to return to Vieques. For Pedro’s parents, it was most important to maintain
the unity of the family, because this represented a source of support for each
other. When they were children, the interactions these individuals had with a
significant adult figure were the foundations of what Bronfenbrenner and Morris
(1998) called the primary engines or proximal processes. These proximal
processes enable children’s development as individuals with unique
characteristics, such as positive dispositions and easy temperaments that promote
interactions with the primary caregivers and others within the family context.
Jose’s experience of being abandoned by his mother, having his grandmother and grandfather take on the responsibility of raising him and his brother, and losing his grandfather at a young age, created within him the goal of having a family of his own. His desire to have a good, stable marriage and children was the force that kept him and his brother out of trouble. From a very young age, Jose learned the importance and value of keeping the family united. As a college student, he possessed the drive to look for information and to become educated in the aspects and significance of a family. Here he describes his learning process:

I wanted to have a stable marriage and I wanted to have a family. Since a young age, since I was studying, when we had our girlfriends, since high school I was thinking about having a family. I studied and read a lot about what is a family. I emphasized mostly in that. And I decided that when the time came I was going to do what was possible and impossible to have a stable family. And it has been that way up to this day. I am not going to tell you that we haven’t had down times. When we have had down times we have looked for help.

[El querer vivir en un matrimonio estable, querer tener precisamente una familia. Yo por ejemplo desde temprana edad, desde que estábamos estudiando que tuvimos nuestras novias. Ya en escuela superior yo pensaba en tener una familia. Estudia y leí mucho de la familia en lo que era una familia y mayormente me enfatizaba en eso. Y me incline para que cuando llegara ese momento, hacer todo lo possible y lo imposible para que se mantuviera estable. Hasta el día de hoy así ha sido. No te voy a decir que no ha habido bajas. Pero en el momento que han habido bajas hemos buscado ayuda.]

Maritza, who feels that it is very important that her daughter is raised with her mother and father, also shares Jose’s value of family unity. For her, it is like an unbreakable rule, “Because I didn’t have a family, for me it is sacred that my daughter lives with her father and her mother.” In addition, they feel that it is the
parents’ responsibility to guide and care for their children. Parents often take turns advising their children. Children sometimes feel more comfortable sharing specific topics with either the mother or the father. Parents understand that, and make themselves available for their children. Jose believes that it is important that he is doing well physically and emotionally in order to support his family and others. His general wellness is critical in order to support others.

And I have always said that first I have to do well in order for others to do well. I have to be well in all aspects, physically and mentally, in order to help my family and in order to help others.

[Yo soy de los que siempre he dicho que primero yo tengo que estar bien para que los demás estén bien. Yo tengo que estar en todos los aspectos mental y físicamente bien para ayudar a mi familia y poder ayudar a los demás.]

Jose’s and Marita’s meaning and interpretation of their experiences of abandonment as children have prompted them to develop ideas of what a family should be and what they wanted for their future families. The experience of being abandoned, which comprised the risk factor, was transformed into positive concepts that created belief systems about family that the children used as adults to maintain and promote wellness (Rutter, 1985). From the biocultural model, the joint forces of a person’s characteristics and their interactions with people and systems from other environments (neighborhood, school) create opportunities over time to build upon the value of family unity. These interactions change or modify the individual’s view of the internal resources they have at hand, creating strategies they can use in the future (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).
Even if the family cannot stay united, as in the event of a divorce, the general consensus among the eight parents I interviewed was that parenting responsibilities belong to the family. Nora, like her parents, experienced a divorce in her first marriage. Her experience of being raised by her paternal grandmother and, after grandmother’s death, by her father and stepmother, taught her that there are options in life, provided you work for them. After she divorced her first husband, she kept her daughters with her all the time and worked hard to support them.

I got married when I was nineteen. I was very young when I got married and it didn’t go well. I had my daughters. I was on the island of Puerto Rico for about ten years and then I came back when they were still young. Since then I got married (three years ago). Because I raised them all by myself, I worked and all that and moved ahead with them. And my husband is helping me now in this stage of adolescence.

Although Jorge, Nora’s husband, is not the girls’ biological father, he also feels responsible for the well-being of the girls. “With Nora’s girls, I will continue giving them all the support that I can.” Nora’s daughter, Milagros, has experienced similar feelings of abandonment from her maternal grandmother and from her biological father. This risk factor has recurred from one generation to the other. Milagros has not seen her biological father for the last seven years. Her feelings of abandonment and detachment are evident. However, her parents have
been able to support her and her sister’s wellness while providing a stable and secure family environment

I haven’t seen my father since I graduated from sixth grade. He hasn’t called in three years. He doesn’t remember our birthdays. We remember his, but he doesn’t remember ours. And I tell my mom that I don’t have a father. Because he, my stepfather, is the one that is always looking after us. If we need something he says, “Nora, take this.” At least he is watching for us.

Milagros describes her parents as good people. “They teach me. If I have to tell them something I do because I trust them.” There is a dual connectedness between Milagros and her paternal grandmother. Milagros is her grandma’s favorite. The circle of wellness is completed for Nora’s family because her daughter, Milagros, is the support for her paternal grandmother. Indeed, as granddaughter, she advises her grandmother about life situations.

I’m usually at my grandmother’s house during the day. My grandmother lives with someone but when he is working I go there to keep her company. And she gets depressed because my uncle is in jail. Because she is there alone, I go visit and talk and give her advice. She worries about my dad because he doesn’t call her and that I tell her to think that she doesn’t have a son. What else can she do? You cannot turn the world upside down.
Although the risk factor of abandonment has been experienced across generations, Nora and Jorge have developed a home environment that supports the children’s sense of unity, belonging, and the feeling that the adults care for them. The complexities of the interactions between Nora, Jorge, and paternal grandmother across time and contexts have built a stronger sense of efficacy and self-esteem for Milagros. The promotion of wellness is passed on across generations.

Children from all four families feel that they have a united family.

According to Maria, her parents have always been there for them.

I cannot complain about him as a father because, although he has been strong and strict, he has always helped us and makes sure that we don’t lack anything, not only in the financial aspect but in the affection aspect. He has been a father that has always been there, same as my mom. They are with us all the time.

Como padre yo no tengo ninguna queja porque a pesar de que ha sido fuerte y estricto el siempre nos ha ayudado a que no nos falte nada. Y no solamente en la cuestión económica sino en el afecto. Ha sido un papa que siempre ha estado allí. Igual que mamá. Están allí con nosotros en todo momento.

Promoting Independence

The four families I interviewed for this study shared a general concept of responsibility. As parents they feel it is their responsibility to protect their children. In one case, that protection was used in a negative practice of control that inhibited the child’s ability to develop self-control, self-confidence, and
independence. Maritsa’s experience as a child when living with her foster mother illustrates the results of this negative control. This is how she describes her life as a child:

My life was behind closed doors because of how strict she was. She used to tell me that she had to report things to my family and so she always raised me with the fear that they might be watching whatever was going on with me. She also used to tell me that she had to respond to other people as well. And with that philosophy she kept me behind doors. My life was going to church and staying at home. I never knew what it was to socialize with friends at lunchtime. I had one hour for lunch and I had to eat at school, go home and then return back to school when the lunchtime was over. It was like that all the time through high school. And in college I lived with incredible stress.

[Mi vida fue cerrada por lo estrecha que era ella. Ella siempre me decía que tenía que darle cuentas a mi familia y siempre me creó con ese miedo a que ellos pudieran estar pendientes lo que pudiera estar ocurriendo conmigo y que ella tenía que darle cuentas a otras personas. Y siempre con esa filosofía me mantuvo todo el tiempo encerrada. Mi vida era la iglesia y mi casa. Yo no supe nunca lo que era socializar con amistades al mediodía. Una hora de almuerzo, yo tenía que almorzar e irme para mi casa y regresar a la hora de entrada. Todo el tiempo hasta escuela superior y en la universidad yo vivía con una tensión increíble.]

As an adult, Maritsa reports that she doesn’t like to depend on anyone. She experienced “living in hell” with her husband, a man who was about 15 years older than she. After living under the total control of that person for a month, the marriage ended. She had the strength to remove herself from that situation and realized she had the power to decide and make better choices in life. Maritsa’s philosophy is, “You can be patient, and if you want to help yourself, there is a way out. There is a way out of everything.”

The process of developing independence and self-efficacy is passed on as Maritsa teaches this life lesson of independence and self-control to her daughter.
Maritsa is always making sure her daughter doesn’t fall behind in her schoolwork. As an elementary school teacher and a mother, Maritsa helps Ana Luz learn the pre-academic concepts that she needs for success in kindergarten. Maritsa gives Ana Luz choices, and promotes her ability to make decisions in a way that empowers her daughter, therefore supporting her development of wellness (Prilleltensky, Geofrey & Pearson, 2001). As illustrated by the bioecological model, these lessons of efficacy are carried on in the context of school, as Ana Luz demonstrates the competencies expected in that environment.

Rutter (1987) described how individuals have the ability to develop adaptive strategies in order to overcome risk situations. In some cases, the risk situations create a turning point in which the person is “forced” to develop and use protective mechanisms that allow them to be resilient or successful in that particular situation. Jose B’s experience when he was a senior in high school illustrates this concept. He was 17 years old when his father had a fatal accident at work. Jose B recounts this experience with tears in his eyes:

He [his father] did everything at home. The memory that I have is that we were left with nothing that day. People offered their support but they didn’t follow through. “We are going to help you now, you will see, your studies.” After the funeral, people and family members talked to us with words of encouragement. But after awhile they left us alone. That experience taught me that no one watches for us, no one, no one.

[En casa lo hacía el (no tienes que seguir si no quieres). La imagen que yo tengo es que nos quedamos sin nada ese día entonces la gente que nos ofrecía no nos cumplió “No que los vamos a ayudar ahora, que ya tu veras, los estudios.” Después que se enterró y la gente y los familiares nos daban aliento. Pero entonces después nos dejaron solos. Esa cosa de que nadie veló por nosotros, nadie, nadie.]

145
That year was when Jose B. met Maria P., who was also in high school. Werner and Smith (1982) found that religion provided stability to children and adults during times of change. Jose B.'s sources of strength and stability, which helped him overcome that devastating experience, were his faith in God and his relationship with Maria P. This situation of losing his father "pushed" Jose B. and Maria P. to take on adult responsibilities at a very young age while approaching the challenge in a positive way. Their experience supports Rhodes and Hoey's (1994) finding that a child raised in a foster home and forced to assume caregiver responsibilities early on in life will develop skills that become protective factors. This is how Jose B. describes the process of how he and Maria P. took on more complex responsibilities:

"My brother was in college and I was the second of five children. I knew Maria P., but after that [his father's death] my family became Maria P. and me. After that we became the parents in the house because we were always solving all the problems. We raised my brothers. We thought that the experience would help us later on when we had to raise our own children.

[Mi hermano mayor ya estaba estudiando, y entonces yo era segundo de cinco hijos. Ya Maria P. y yo nos conocíamos pero después de eso, la familia de casa fue Maria P. y yo. Como que después nosotros fuimos los papas después en casa porque siempre estábamos resolviendo. Nosotros terminamos de criar a mis hermanos, pensamos que eso nos iba a ayudar después a criar a los hijos de nosotros.]

Jose B. and Maria P.'s son is going to college next year. As parents, they are teaching their son how to become independent. In other words, they are training him for life:

"She [Maria P.] is teaching him to wash the dishes, to iron and to do everything in the house. We talk with him about the fact that we are not..."
going to be watching him all the time. We are preparing him to survive. Sometimes Maria P and I leave them alone and they are able to work things out. So that, if we are not here anymore [if they die] they can move on.

Jose B hopes that his children learn from him and his wife to have goals so that they can attain whatever they want. According to Jose B, “You can do whatever you want if you work for it.” In order to follow that philosophy, the individual must set goals, have a good understanding of their capabilities, positive self-esteem, and a strong desire to change things. This is how Maria P describes the planning and goal setting process that she and her husband adopted when they were young.

We waited seven years. I was twenty years old when I got married and I had my first child when I was twenty-seven. Because we had plans to study a profession, we couldn’t do it with a little child. That’s why I told you, we were immature, but although we were twenty or twenty-one years old we had the capacity to see ahead of us and we did it all by ourselves. And I am not regretful. We are going to celebrate twenty-five years of being married. And we are still moving our kids forward with the only difference being that we are helping them develop goals. “You have to get here, therefore you have to do this to get to this other step.”

Eso si que nosotros esperamos 7 años, yo tenía 20 años cuando me case y a los 27 tuve mi primer nene. Pues como teníamos dentro de los planes estudiar una profesión, con un muchacho no podíamos hacer eso. Tu sabes que por eso te digo, la inmadurez de nosotros a pesar de la edad que teníamos que era de 20 y 21 teníamos la capacidad de ver más allá y lo hicimos solos. Y no nos arrepentimos. Ya vamos a cumplir 25 años de casados. Y todavía seguimos echando pa lante los de nosotros con la diferencia que si les estamos creando unas metas. Ustedes tienen que llegar a esto así que ustedes tienen que hacer esto para llegar a esto otro.”
Maria and Jose B encourage their children to organize their strategies one step before the next one. Jose B describes that process as follows: “We try to expand the image of where we are to what we have to accomplish.” They remind their kids about the goals they have and encourage them to continue working for them. For this family, continuing to work toward their individual goals implies that they have to choose the hardest or most difficult path. Maria P describes the value of working hard to accomplish your goals:

We teach them which road they need to follow. They must choose the most difficult one. On the easy path you go this way, do whatever you want, and end up doing nothing. The person that encounters obstacles in their path, fights for it and accomplishes it, that’s the path that is going to help you. We encourage them that way.

When talking about encouraging children to set goals for themselves, Jose B’s comment was that, “He hopes his kids would live in reality.” Jose B’s hopes of living in reality correspond to Brooks and Goldstein’s (2001) statement that one characteristic of resilient children is that they learn to set realistic goals for themselves. It was reassuring to see how these resilient parents are teaching and passing on those strategies to their children.

Jesus B is certainly following his parents’ advice as he is very determined to go to college and become a pilot. He has already taken the College Board exam twice in order to improve his scores and have a higher probability of accomplishing his academic goals. On planning for his future goals, he has
already contacted a pilot in Vieques to explore the possibility of completing his practicum with him.

I talked to a pilot here in Vieques because I wanted to know where he went to study and all that. He told me that if we get a group of at least ten people he could teach us the practicum here. And after that he could let us accumulate hours as a co-pilot on the airplanes here. After co-pilot I am going for captain and then will keep on going.

Yo hable con un piloto aquí en Vieques a ver donde el fue a estudiar y eso. El me dijo que si hacemos un grupito de por lo menos 10 personas él nos podía dar clases aquí, la practica. Y después él nos ponía a acumular horas de co-piloto en los aviones de aquí. Después de co-piloto sigue pa capitán y sigue por ahí pa alante.

Jose B and Maria P are not only the partial products of but also the producers of their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). They have been able to develop unique personal, resilient characteristics, such as the ability to see challenges in a positive way, see every opportunity as a learning lesson, set high goals for themselves, and work hard. These lessons of wellness have been used as life lessons for their children, as they are encouraged to become more independent while developing the competencies they need to succeed in life.

From the bioecological model, these life lessons of wellness have been passed on from parents to children across what Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) described as macrotimes. This cross-generational process occurs not only within the proximal processes of the home context, but also within the mesosystem (e.g., the school) and exosystem (e.g., an airport) to support their academic and future occupational goals.
Another strategy used by families to support their children’s independence as they are growing up is to give them advice. They encourage their children to apply their own thinking processes to determine the most adequate way to solve problems. In doing so, parents are teaching their children to discern good from poor decisions through their own analysis, while promoting their self-efficacy (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). This is how Jose describes his parenting strategy:

For example, we have had differences at times when they were going out with boys. I haven’t told them directly that I don’t accept the guy but I have inferred it and have given them my rationale for it. Time has shown that I was right and now, my daughter of twenty-four and the one that is twenty and the youngest one (who is our headache), they say many times that I was right. And the point is not that I was right, it is that they have learned and have been able to determine what is right and what is not right for them. I try to teach not by forcing them but through reasoning, so that they can determine what is right and what isn’t. And remember that things have a beginning. The beginning is to know how to plant the seed.

Jose has planted the seed in that his daughters have become more independent, but at the same time they are able to find resources to help them solve their problems. When Carmen, his youngest daughter, doesn’t feel good about a problem or a situation, she becomes more reserved and quiet because she doesn’t want her parents to worry about her. Carmen feels self-sufficient about
solving her problems. She sometimes deals with problems by letting time go by
and, after a while, she looks at alternatives and asks for advice.

Another aspect of teaching children how to become independent relates to
being financially responsible and financially independent. Jose remembers how
his grandmother raised him and his brother with the check from Social Security
that she received after his grandfather died.

And on the weekends when we were going out she always found the way
to give us five dollars. She found the way to dress us, it was limited, but
she supported us. Even though we wore the same clothes, she supported
us.

[Y esa siempre los fines de semana nosotros nos íbamos y ella buscaba la
forma de siempre sus 5 pesos dímoslo. Buscaba la forma de la ropita,
limitada, pero nos mantenía. Aunque fuéramos con las misma ropa, pero nos
mantenía.]

Jose and Laura have taught their oldest daughter to save money and plan
ahead in order to be financially accountable. For Laura, it is very important to
teach their daughters to be honest and to pay money back if they owe someone.
She would like her daughters to be reliable financially, like Jose and Laura are. In
fact, Carmen’s perception of this learning process confirms that this value has
been learned and practiced by her sister, María. She describes how parents are
perceived as the main support and primary teachers for children:

Dad is usually the one that figures out how to resolve the financial
problems, and my mother too. I think that my sister Maria learned that
from my parents because if there is a financial problem they always have
some money saved just in case something happens. It seems that with the
experience that they have and what their parents taught them, they have
learned it. They know how to handle situations and problems very well. If
there is a problem in the house they solve it right away.
It is evident that Jose and Laura have incorporated and built upon some of the values they learned from their grandparents and parents. They have developed a process in which wellness is installed in their daughters as they become self-sufficient and develop competencies for dealing with daily situations, while remaining open to seeking advice.

Most parenting styles described by these parents could be defined as controlled freedom. This leads us into the discussion of home rules that have supported wellness within the family unit.

*Home Rules and Responsibilities*

Home rules are a common component of all families in various degrees and across generations. Werner and Smith's (1982) longitudinal study revealed that some structure in the lives of teenagers served as a protective factor. Home rules allow children to do everything, but within some limits and restrictions. In terms of home rules related to being outside the house, it was a general rule in the families I interviewed that children have to tell their parents where they are going. Although there was a curfew in town, parents also established their own home curfew of 9:00 p.m.
Jose remembers that he had to be at home by 9.00 p.m. because if he and his brother weren’t there, his grandmother would go out looking for them and would bring them home! She didn’t spank them, but went looking for them as if they were little kids. It wasn’t until they turned 17 years old that their grandmother allowed them to stay out passed 9.00 p.m.

Another example of the home rules for going out is that girls or children younger than seventeen years old have to be accompanied by an adult whom their parents trust. The following event describes how María P.’s family dynamics intertwined to protect children while allowing freedom and space to grow.

For example, the other day I had to give in a little. There aren’t many things going on in Vieques and one night there was a boxing demonstration. We do not support that kind of activities, because it’s basically violence, one person hitting another one. There is nothing here for youth and they were, “Mom, this and that.” Their father didn’t want to let them go, then mother intervened. I told them, “OK, I convinced your dad, the three of you can go until 11.00 p.m., and take the cellular phone.” My son drives, so I said until 11.00 p.m. At 11.00 p.m., “Mom there is still a few more fights. This and that, I am here with so and so (with adults that we knew and with my nice).” And their dad started, “What’s going on? See you give them a chance and now they want more.” And so I told them, “OK come back at 12.00 a.m.” And they got here at 1.00 a.m. We didn’t scold them because we understood that because we always had contact with them “Call me when you leave.” They got home at 1.00 a.m. and then I went to bed because I could not sleep if they are outside.

[Por ejemplo el otro día tuve que ceder un poquito. En Vieques no se dan muchas cosas y hubo un boxeo, nosotros no patrocinamos ese tipo de actividad porque básicamente es violencia. uno dándose encima al otro. No hay nada para los jóvenes y ellos “hay mamá que si esto que si lo otro,” allá el pai no los quería dejar entonces mamá intervino. Yo le dije “pues OK ya convencí a papa, van a ir los 3 (los 3 grandes, la chiquita se quedo conmigo), hasta las 11.00pm y te llevas el celular.” Como mi hijo guía, pues hasta las 11.00 A las 11.00 “mamá todavía falta unas peleas, que si esto, que si lo otro, que si yo estoy aquí con fulana (con unos adultos que yo coneco, y con mi sobrina)” Y allá el pai “¿que les pasa? ]
Maria P. and Jose B. demonstrate how a balance between control and opportunities can be accomplished within their environment. In this example, protection of the children by the parents meant allowing the children to experience some calculated risks (Rutter, 1987) in order to support the development of the protective skills of decision-making and control. The children’s development of self-control, responsibility and accountability (protective factors) were measured in this situation within a microtime span (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) Children were able to exercise the lessons of wellness they learned from their parents within another context (the gym where the boxing presentations were taking place).

Most of the parents interviewed reported that at a very young age they had home responsibilities that ranged from cleaning the house, cooking, going to the store to buy food, ironing clothes, to taking care of younger siblings. Maritsa remembers with sadness her home responsibilities when she was a little girl

I never became a rebel or anything like that but I had responsibilities early on in life. I had the responsibility of cooking, cleaning, doing everything in the house, adult responsibilities since I was a little girl. Today that could be considered child abuse but it wasn’t so for me because I say, she didn’t have to raise me either. Do you know what I am saying? That is me now, analyzing things as an adult

[Nunca me puse rebelde ni nada, pero yo tuve responsabilidades desde bien temprana edad. Las responsabilidades de cocinar, limpiar, hacer todo en la casa, responsabilidades de adulta. Desde nena. Hoy sería un maltrato
verdad, pero para mí no porque yo digo que ella no tenía que criarme tampoco.

There is a sense of obligation to support parents and, therefore, to support the entire family by doing house chores. This obligation extended from the house to the parents' work environment. Jose B. describes his responsibilities as a child.

There were tasks assigned to us, such as doing grocery shopping on Saturdays and going to buy bread in the morning, at 5:00 a.m. We took turns bringing my father's lunch to work. We were in middle school. We helped him at his job. He worked many years as a janitor in a factory. We swept the floor. We had to help. We made a calendar and we assigned who was going to do this, the shopping, the bread, work and we rotated the jobs.

Teníamos asignados unas tareas para hacer la compra todos los sábados y por la mañana, a las 5:00 de la mañana buscar el pan, llevarle el almuerzo a donde trabajaba. Teníamos que ayudar. Nosotros barríamos. Teníamos que ayudar. Nosotros hacíamos un calendario y asignábamos quien iba a hacer esto, la compra, el pan, a trabajar, y nos rotábamos.

Home rules and structure have been identified as protective factors that adults create for children (Rhodes & Hoey, 1994). Within the biocological model, this structure creates a bidirectional process that promotes a sense of control used by the child to develop knowledge and skills within his/her environment.

For Pedro, the responsibility of helping his father's business was seen as an obligation but also the result of feeling motivated from seeing his father wanting to succeed.

I have been working with my dad since I can remember, because my father always taught us that we have to help each other. And by the way, we never worked because he forced us. We did it because we saw him succeed and we also wanted to do it. When we started the business for the
second time I worked with my dad from seven o'clock in the morning until eleven at night

[Yo estoy trabajando con papi desde que yo me conozco. Porque papi siempre nos enseñó que teníamos que ayudarnos mutuamente. Y de hecho nosotros nunca hacíamos los trabajos forcados. Lo hacíamos porque lo veíamos a él echar palante y nosotros queríamos también hacerlo. Y de hecho cuando empezamos a levantar el taller denuevo yo trabajaba hasta las 11 de la noche con él, desde las 7 de la mañana.]

All the families interviewed have established home responsibilities for their children. Even Ana Luz, the youngest daughter of Pedro and Maritsa, is responsible for picking up her toys and helping her mother wash the dishes.

Families have transformed the concept of obligation to do home chores to a value of cooperation among family members. In fact, when I visited Maritsa’s house she would often request Ana Luz’s help by saying, “You are a good girl and cooperative. Please pick up the crayons.” Jose describes the same concept of cooperation as he finds himself doing his responsibilities and sometimes those of others in the family.

If I see that if I don’t do something or if someone in the family didn’t do what they were supposed to do, and it can create conflict at any time, then I do it. I have decided not to create uncomfortable or angry situations in the family because that makes people ill. I have realized that makes people ill and makes me feel bad.

[Si veo que puede crear un disgusto en un momento dado, el que no haga algo o que le corresponda a alguien en la familia y no lo haga, pues yo lo hago porque yo he optado por no crear momentos de disgusto ni de coraje en la familia. Porque eso enferma, yo me he dado cuenta que enferma y hace sentir mal a uno.]

Jose’s lesson of doing whatever it takes to keep peace within the family has been passed on to his daughters. María, Jose’s middle daughter, describes
how she has learned from her parents that doing their chores is also a way of keeping the family united because the end product benefits everyone

I think the responsibilities have been divided in an equitable manner. My dad and my mom bring the money. And here, let’s put it this way, we have to do our work, cleaning, cooking. We help in whatever that is needed. We are not the kind of family where everyone goes their own direction. I feel we are a very close family. We have differences but in general we get along. Everyone does his or her best. In our case, because we are women, our contribution is cleaning the house and mom and dad do the financial aspect.

Yo encuentro que las responsabilidades son divididas en una forma equitativa. Pues mi papá y mi mamá son los que ponen los chavos. Nosotras aquí tenemos que poner nuestro trabajo, vamos a decirlo así, limpiando, cocinando. Ayudando en cualquier cosa. No somos una familia que cada cual tira por su lado. Yo entiendo que somos bastante unidos, y sí tenemos nuestras diferencias pero en general nos llevamos. Cada cual pone de su parte. En el caso de nosotras como somos mujeres pues tenemos que aportar el la casa en la cuestión de la limpieza y mamá y papi en lo económico.

These lessons of collaboration or cooperation, which help to keep the family strong, have not been clearly defined in other studies. These values can also be applied to social responsibility which, according to Shapiro (1996), creates a sense of community and promotes wellness for all. These interactions among family members provide the foundation for the development of personal characteristics that support wellness and, consequently, complex interactions within other contexts.

Three of the four mothers interviewed experienced the loss of a parent. Their sense of responsibility and self-control supported their decision to care for their ill parents. Nora shared her story of how she and her other siblings took care of the woman who raised them, her grandmother. She also described how men
and women took turns taking care for their grandmother because of the profound love and responsibility they felt for her.

Maritsa recounted how she took care of her foster mother for three years, attending college while traveling back and forth from Vieques to the island of Puerto Rico three days a week. Maritsa used to get up around 4:30 a.m. to prepare the meals for the day and all her foster mother’s medicines before taking the boat to her college in Puerto Rico. In the last semester of her third year of college, Maritsa quit school to care for her foster mother, who then died of cancer.

Maria P. shared that her hardest experience was her dad’s illness and subsequent death. This experience forced her to assume more responsibilities, as her siblings saw her as a person with self-control, the only one to finish school, and the one able to manage difficult situations. She ended up assuming painful responsibilities such as announcing her dad’s death to her mother and siblings, making the arrangements with the mortuary house, and calling the doctor to certify her father’s death. Maria P.’s love, strength, and perseverance were admirable as she was willing to go to the limit in order to support her father.

When my dad got ill he didn’t want to go to the hospital. And when I arrived, “Dad we have to go to the hospital.” And dad got in the car with me. And if I had to carry him I did, and I got him in my station wagon and took him to the hospital. And one of my brothers told me, “Maria P., why do you keep going, if dad is almost done?” And I used to tell him, “As long as I can, dad is going to give me one more day.” And if that day meant that I had to take him to the island of Puerto Rico, I will go with him. And he ate only with me, not anyone else.

[Papi se enfermaba y él no quería ir al hospital. Y yo llegaba y “papi tenemos que ir al hospital”, y papi se montaba conmigo. Y yo si lo tenía que cargar alombrío lo cargaba y así lo montaba en mi guagua y me lo]
llevaba yo uno de mis hermanos me decía “Mercedes por que tu sigues si papi ya no da mas” Y yo le decía “mientras yo pueda papi me va a dar un dito mas” Y si ese dito era que tenía que carretear con el a PR, yo carretéaba con el a PR Y el conmigo comía, con nadie mas |

These women’s lessons of love and dedication have been passed on to their children through the way they care for and love them. Having an internal locus of control, perseverance, a positive outlook on difficult situations, and a feeling of responsibility toward others (Garmezy, 1983; Shapiro, 1996, Werner & Smith, 1982) are powerful personal characteristics and values that have supported the process of wellness for these women and their children.

*Raising Kids with Love and Tenderness*

Literature on wellness and resiliency address the importance of attachment to an adult figure, which promotes in the child a sense of being cared for, loved, and safe (Cowen, 1994, Erickson, 1963, Masten, Hubbard, Giest, Tellegen, Garmezy, & Ramirez, 1999, Werner & Smith, 1982) All four mothers reported that they demonstrate their love and affection to their children either verbally, by telling them how much they love them, or physically, by kissing or hugging them. These women reached out beyond their microsystems to find the strength and protection they needed to support their wellness. Reaching out to other sources, such as neighbors, friends, church, and schools, enabled them to establish relationships that were nourished on a consistent basis, this helped these women break the cycle of decreased expressions of love they experienced as children.

Of the four women, Nora was the only one who expressed feeling loved and pampered as a child by her primary caretaker, her grandmother Nora was
twelve years old when her grandmother died and father took on the responsibility of raising her. Her father had never demonstrated affection for his children. In fact, Nora’s memories of him when she was a child were that he was a helpful person, but one of whom she was terrified. She didn’t feel the confidence in him that she feels her daughters have in her. As time passes, her father continues to be very helpful to her and her daughters. He is always making sure Nora is doing well. She stops by his house in the morning and has breakfast before she catches the boat to the island of Puerto Rico. In the evenings, when she comes back to Vieques, he picks her up at the port if she calls him, and offers her dinner because he knows her days are long when she goes to college.

Nora is always looking after her daughters, talking with them, making sure that they are doing well in school, and that they are safe wherever they go. Jorge also supports Nora in terms of making sure the girls have what they need in the house and being available to give them advice and support. When he was a child, his primary support was his mother, since his father was an alcoholic and their interaction was restricted to arguing because of the drinking problems. Milagros, Nora’s oldest daughter, expresses the confidence and trust she has in her parents and paternal grandmother.

I talk with my mother and with grandmother when I feel sad. Sometimes I talk with my sister. When I talk with them I feel that the sadness goes away a little. Although it doesn’t go away completely I feel better because I don’t have that inside. And my mother is always telling us to tell her everything that happens to us.

Yo hablo con mi mama o a mi abuela. A veces hablo con mi hermana. Cuando hablo con ellas pues me siento que se me va la tristeza un poco.
Nora’s multiple interactions are a descriptive example of the biocological interconnections that support children’s and adults’ learning within a variety of contexts. The complexity of the interconnected dynamics among Nora, her father, Jorge, Milagros, and her paternal grandmother establishes a network that supports the development of the children’s personal characteristics and strengths. This finding contrasts with that of Bronfenbrenner and Neville’s (1995), who stated that American families demonstrate high indicators of fragmentation and instability when compared with families in other developed countries.

When Martisa was a child, she never experienced or felt any love or affection from her caregiver. This is how Martisa describes her caregiver and the pain she feels because she never felt loved.

My mother was a person that, maybe I am this way because of that, because I didn’t have [my mother’s love]. She was not an expressive person. She was more like a dry person. I always asked her if she loved me. That meant that I didn’t feel loved. That is me now analyzing things as an adult. But I never heard any kind of those expressions from my mother [crying]. But before she died, she told me. She told me that she loved me. I don’t know if maybe she realized it because she told me then I remember that I used to ask her the same question all the time.

[No mi mama fue una persona que, yo soy así quizás por eso, yo no lo tuve. No era expresiva, era una persona bien, bien seca. Yo siempre le preguntaba que si me quería, eso quiere decir que yo no me sentía querida. Eso soy yo analizando ahora, después de adulta. Pero de mi mama nunca, nunca, ese tipo de expresiones yo nunca las oí [llorando]. Pero a la hora de su muerte, hay si que me lo decía. Me dijo que me quería. Yo no se quizás creo conciencia, pues hay si me lo decía. Yo recuerdo que todo el tiempo yo le hacía la misma pregunta.]

161
Maritsa’s husband, Pedro, was raised by his parents, who taught him the values of family support and hard work. Because of the values which he was raised, he feels obligated to respond to his parents as he continues working at his dad’s business, leaving little time to spend with his wife and daughter. Even with the little time he spends at home, his daughter, Ana Luz, searches for her father’s comfort when she is afraid and when she has problems or differences with her mother. Because of Maritsa’s negative experiences when she was a child, she makes sure that she always tells her daughter that she loves her. She plays with her and demonstrates her affection. Ana Luz says that she likes to talk with her mother and paternal grandmother when she is happy.

There is a distinct difference between Maritsa’s experience in terms of the unsupportive parent-child interaction she experienced as a child and how her daughter behaves and feels about her parents and grandparents. From a biocultural and wellness perspective, Maritsa’s negative experience of a lack of affection from her foster mother was transformed into the positive tools that she and Pedro are using to raise their daughter. This transformation of the process of wellness is carried on across generations and ultimately used in different environments.

Although his mother abandoned Jose, he received much love and affection from his paternal grandmother, who raised him and his brother from the time he was seven years old. He struggles with feelings of abandonment and sadness as he still feels love for his mother.
You know, the words that she wrote when we had our birthdays, she sent a check with a few dollars and said “My dear sons.” But the theory is not the same as the practice. But that doesn’t take away the fact that she is my mother, mother is mother. And if she comes back, I will look for her, will give her a hug but I know that I am not going to have that trust that a son has with his mother because she doesn’t feel it. What we feel for her, she doesn’t feel it and she demonstrated it. She demonstrated it when she abandoned us when we were seven years old and even when we went to see her 34 or 35 years later and she didn’t want to see us. And those are the good memories I have of my mother.

[Te sabes las palabras que nos escribía así cuando cumplíamos años, que enviaba así con un chequillo de un par de pesos, y “queridos hijos.” Pero no es lo mismo la teoría que la práctica. Y esos son los recuerdos que yo tengo de mi madre mayormente. Pero no deja de ser por eso madre, madre es mi madre. Y aunque yo digo que no la quiero yo se que en mi interior yo la quiero. Y si viene la busco, la abrazo pero se que no voy a tener esa confianza verdad de madre a hijo porque ella no siente, lo que nosotros sentimos por ella, ella no lo siente y lo demostró. Lo demostró en el momento en que a los 7 años se fue y no fue quien de volver en tantos años, 30 años de no ver a un hijo, y a mi hermano, 34-35. Y esos son los gratos recuerdos que yo puedo tener de mi madre.]

Jose’s strong attachment to his grandmother replaced and filled with love the emptiness he felt when his mother left them. His grandmother protected and watched them all the time. Jose and his brother felt compelled to give their grandmother the same love that she demonstrated for them. Jose’s description of his grandmother is very poignant as he describes her as a foundation of kindness and love, and his source of strength for life.

We had to respond because she really demonstrated that she loved us. She substituted the love that my mother never gave us, she became our mother. And because she was such a good person in the community, everyone looked for her. Everyone in the barn came for a cup of coffee at her house. She didn’t have things for herself. It didn’t matter what it was, it could be a really bad person and she would say, “Oh poor thing, he is good.” And we used to tell her, “How can that be possible?” She turned things around to look at the good things in people. And really bad people truly loved her. Sometimes they steal from her and she said, “That’s
nothing, he is a good person. Maybe he did it because he needed it.” Imagine, what can we learn from a grandma like that? She was a saint.

And what she had was for whoever was around regardless of who it was. And that was the kind of experience that I had when growing up, a style of raising that made me feel strong and with desire to move ahead and succeed during times of crisis.

[Le teníamos que responder porque ella se veía que de verdad nos quería a nosotros. Ella vino a sustituir ese cariño que mamá no nos dio, ella vino a ser como quien dice, a ser nuestra madre. Y como era tan buena con la comunidad todo el mundo la buscaba, todo el mundo iba a beber café en esa casa en el barrio. Y no tenía nada para ella. Fuera el que fuera, fuera el hombre más sinvergüenza, ella siempre decía “bendito el que es tan bueno.” Y nosotros le decíamos “pero como es posible.” Ella le buscaba como quien la forma para decir que era bueno. Y gente mala, sinvergüenza de verdad, la querían de verdad. Hasta le robaran y todo eso y ella decía, “hay eso no es nada, si el es bueno, hay bendito era que lo necesitaba a lo mejor.” Imagínate que puede uno aprender de una abuela que era como esa. Esa era una santa. Y lo que ella tuviera era para él que estaba ahí sin importarle quién fuera. Y así ese tipo de crianza hace que uno se sienta fortalecido y con deseos de uno superarse en momentos de crisis.]

As an adult, it is important to Jose to maintain a good relationship between father, children and wife. Ever since the children were little, the family has maintained good relationships and communication with each other, which has helped to keep them united. Jose’s middle daughter, Maria, describes her dad as strict, sensible, and humanistic. She also sees him as a person who has been good to them and has provided for them all the time. He has been a good provider, not only financially but also by the affection he demonstrates to them. Maria feels that sometimes people take advantage of her father. Jose’s response is, “Poor thing, I just want to help.” Lessons and values from Jose’s grandmother, such as caring for others, demonstrating compassion and love, sharing what she had with others,
establishing strong affiliations with the community, and forgiveness are definitely being passed on to his daughters.

One of his grandmother’s lessons is that people should do things that come from the goodness of their hearts, because that is important to help yourself and others. This is how Maria describes the wellness process that has been passed on from her great-grandmother to her father and herself.

He (her father) had a good foundation with her [her great grandmother]. I got to know her. I think she was about 100 years old when she died. She was a loving person. She was the kind of person that just by looking at her, she inspired a sense of love and peace. She was a good-natured person. Her voice was very calm when she talked. She was a generous person and very easy-going. She was not bothered by anything. And I think that was the example that my dad had. Maybe it can be explained this way, that when you have a person who is a good role model for you, you can move forward in life and try to see that person in order to do the things you need to do. I don’t know.

[El tuvo esa base en ella. Yo la llegué a conocer. Yo creo que ella tenía como 100 años cuando murió. Ella era un amor. Esa persona de tu verla te inspiraba una tranquilidad y una paz. Era así como a la buena de Dios. Te hablabas así tan tranquilita. Y el ejemplo que el tuvo fue ella. Tal vez esa es una de las cosas que lo ayudó a él a ser así, una persona generosa. Ella era bien generosa, era a la buena de Dios, ella no le molestaba nada. Era como que vive la vida así. Yo creo que ese fue el ejemplo que el tuvo. Tal vez se puede llamar así el tu tener una persona que sea un buen ejemplo para ti, para tu poder seguir adelante y ver, tratar de ver esa persona para tu hacer las cosas. Yo no sé.]

From a biocultural perspective, this is a powerful example of how the process of wellness is shared across time (macrotimes), generations and environments. Lessons of wellness have been taught and practiced consistently.

When looking at the proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1995, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) of tridirectional exchanges of wellness lessons
between Maria, her father Jose, and great grandmother, I can almost predict that these values of wellness and internal strength will continue to be passed on to Maria’s children.

Laura would like her daughters to be loving mothers to their children. Laura is always kissing her daughters, which make the girls sometimes feel annoyed. Her response is “Don’t you worry, I am going to be all over with my grandchildren. I am going to be a loving touching grandmother. And I am going to take them to Disney and you (her daughters) are not invited (she smiles)”

Jose’s and Laura’s parenting of their daughters with love and tenderness has been supported by the people who cared for their daughters when they were little. The circle of wellness expands as people in the community serve as resources to care for and guide their daughters. Werner and Smith (1982) also identified the importance and value of alternate caregivers who serve as protective factors that support children’s wellness. Jose and Laura have always worked as teachers for the school system in Vieques. They made sure that when each of their daughters was born they found a family that could not only provide the care their daughters needed while they were at work, but could also extend the love and support they had planted in their kids. Jose and Laura feel that they have been blessed to have found people who agreed to care for their three daughters while they were working; these families have given love to their daughters and raised them as if they were their second parents.
In the bioecological model, the proximal processes of interactions between the child and the environment become more extensive and complex (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The child's interactions with individuals who provide love, support, and protection outside the family context expand the child's repertoire of protective factors and skills. These interactions, occurring over a long period of time, shape the understanding and application of values that the developing child learns from parents and caregivers.

To Jose's and Laura's youngest daughter, Carmen, mommy Luisa and dad Carlos are her second parents. They raised her from infancy, and although she is now sixteen years old, she feels that they are still raising her. According to Carmen, mommy Luisa has helped her value the parents she has. She has helped Carmen realize that she needs to treat her parents with more respect because they love her, and to compare herself with other kids and value what she has. Sometimes she feels more comfortable sharing personal issues with mommy Luisa than with Laura, her biological mother. Carmen feels that the time she has spent with mommy Luisa has helped in building that kind of trust. Mommy Luisa doesn't reprimand Carmen, as opposed to her mother, who usually gets upset very quickly. Mommy Luisa has a calm personality, listens to Carmen, and advises her about what she thinks is right and wrong. Carmen describes her feelings about her parents this way: "I adore my parents. I love all four of them."

Marta, Jose's and Laura's middle daughter, was also raised by another couple from Vieques. This family provided, and continues to provide, the
guidance Maria needs. Their love and responsibility for providing good care went beyond their duties, as they often took Maria on family trips. In fact, these families have “adopted” the girls. This is how Maria remembers her experience of being raised by mommy Alícia.

Half of my life growing up was with them and half was here with my father and mother. She was super good with me. She was very affectionate and understanding. I communicate a lot with her. When I was in middle and high school I could spend hours talking with her, telling her my problems because I already had that trust in her, since I was a little girl and she treated me super good. I used to go with them on field trips to catch crabs, to go fishing, to the beach. I tell you, I love her as if she is my second mother. And still at this age I feel comfortable going to her and talking about any problem that I have. She always gives me good advice, always listens to me, and is there for me.

[La mitad de la crianza fue con ellos y aquí con papí y mamá. Y era super buena conmigo. Ella era cariñosa, es comprensiva. Con ella yo tengo mucha comunicación. Ya cuando yo estaba en intermedia y high yo podía sentarme con ella y estar horas para contarle todas mis cosas y como ya yo tenía esa confianza desde chiquita. Y me trato súper bien. Yo iba con ellos a excursiones, ibamos a coger jueyes, a pescar, a la playa. Te digo la quiero como mi segunda mamá. Y todavía a estas alturas tengo la confianza de ir donde ella y estar horas hablándole y le cuento mis cosas, siempre me da buenos consejos y cualquier problema que yo tengo siempre me escucha y está ahí.]

This sense of affiliation and belonging has been built on a foundation of loving and caring for others. The connectedness of the proximal processes that support wellness for Jose’s and Laura’s daughters is very unique to the island of Vieques. Jose is correct when he stated that he felt lucky to have great families who cared for his daughters. These families from the community provided his daughters with interactions that promoted support, trust, communication, and a sense of being valued and loved over an extended period of time.
Jose B. and Maria P were raised by their parents. At Maria P’s house, her mother and all the children were afraid of her father. He was an alcoholic and didn’t encourage any kind of communication with his children. Mother was more submissive, humble and subdued by the power of the man. Mother always did what father said regardless of whether she agreed with it or not. At Jose B’s household his father was the disciplinarian and everyone had to do whatever he said. These are some of the dynamics he remembers from his youth.

I resented it, that if we had an accident or something like that they spanked us. If we did something bad they spanked us, and if we had an accident they spanked us too. My dad was the disciplinarian. We had to do what he said. There was no communication. I don’t remember any. In fact, if he wasn’t at home we couldn’t turn the television on. And it was like that for many years.

[Yo resiento una cosa, que si nos pasaba un accidente o algo, nos pegaban también. Si hacíamos algo malo nos daban, y si teníamos una accidente también nos daban. En casa la disciplina la ponía él. En casa había que hacer lo que mi papa dijera. Ahí no había comunicación. Yo no recuerdo ninguna, inclusive para prender el televisor, si el no estaba no se prendía el televisor, por muchos años.]

Since their teenage years, Maria P and Jose B have been a support and source of strength for each other. Maria P credits her husband for what they have accomplished. They have learned together. She describes her family as a “fortunate family.” She is very proud of what they have accomplished, what they have earned through sacrifice. They value their family’s closeness. Jose B and Maria P are role models of hard work and love for their family. In fact, Rhodes and Hoey (1994) found that hard work was a value parents instilled, as a protective mechanism, in children with learning disabilities and in children who
were pregnant. Working hard was one of the qualities they developed that helped them overcome adversity. These lessons have been embedded in the participant’s children’s way of living, and in how they see their parents as their support or bridge to cross their obstacles in life. This is how Jesus B describes his parents:

My parents are good people, they help me a lot. My mother is like a bridge that helps me cross the bad and good things. My dad is someone that is always watching out for me. He watches what I do, so that if I am doing well he continues helping me and if I am doing something wrong he continues helping me as well.

[Los padres son buenas personas, me ayudan mucho y eso. Son buenas personas. Mi mama es como un puente que me ayuda a cruzar las cosas buenas y malas. Mi papa es alguien que siempre esta detrás pendiente de mi y eso, pendiente a lo que yo hago para saber ayudándome y si esta mal pues para seguir ayudándome también.]

*Grandma’s Cooking, the Best on the Island!*

For all the families interviewed, social ties have been constructed in different ways. Informal support includes the tasks each member of the household does. It also includes the sense of collaboration embedded within the family’s context in order to maintain a good balance within the home. Support comes from extended family members such as grandparents, godparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.

For Nora and Jorge, the support comes from Nora’s father who, although he complains about being asked to take or pick up his granddaughters for band, orchestra or volleyball practice, is always available to do so. Grandfather also goes on rounds to the granddaughters’ schools, making sure everything is going well. Another source of support for Nora’s daughters is their paternal...
grandmother. If Nora didn’t have time to cook dinner in the morning before taking the boat to college, the girls usually go to their paternal grandmother’s house for dinner. The paternal grandmother also serves as a resource for Nora. She sometimes asks the girls’ grandmother for advice or to talk with the girls when issues arise. These kinds of informal support and social networks (Dunst, 2000) keep families connected and strong. They also provide a kind of “loose structure” in which individuals feel they can count on each other. Because Nora worked as a teacher for the school system in Vieques, she has resources within the school that let her know if anything is going wrong.

At school I have my people that tell me what is going on, because the teachers at school like them [her daughters] a lot and they also like me, because I worked there. And you know, if something happens, they will let me know right away. People know everything in this little town. I have contacts. But they are good girls.

Y tengo mi gente en la escuela que me dice porque los maestros las quieren mucho y a mí también porque como yo trabajo allí. Y tú sabes que si pasa algo yo sé que enseñándola yo lo voy a saber. Aquí en pueblo pequeño se sabe todo. Tengo los contactos, no pero ellas son buenas.

People at work have provided Jorge with the support to build self-efficacy and self-esteem by encouraging him to apply for higher positions within the company. At his job they gather every morning to pray, asking God to protect them. One time Jorge was asked by his co-workers to guide the morning prayer. He was surprised because he has been away from the Pentecostal church for several years and didn’t feel qualified to do it. He recounts what happened after he finished the prayer.
I did the prayer and my co-workers congratulated me and told me not to feel bad or uncomfortable. They told me that God is the only one that knows people’s hearts, and that there are people who are at church but the church is not within them. Maybe someday I will return to church.

[Hice la oración y los compañeros me felicitaron y todo y que no me sintiera mal. Y que Dios es el que conoce el corazón y que hay personas que están en la iglesia pero la iglesia no ha entrado a ellos. Quizás algún día regresare a la iglesia.]

For Nora, support comes from her husband, her friends, and church.

Marísa and Pedro are supported by his parents, who watch Ana Luz when they go shopping on the island of Puerto Rico.

This incredible network that supports the development and maintenance of wellness expands in complexity across family, school, church, co-workers, and into the community at large. These proximal processes, which occur regularly in different environmental contexts, promote the development of wellness for children and adults alike. I think the true concept of building a village is seen when the networks supporting wellness are shared and available across systems.

Jose’s and Laura’s primary support are their friends from work. The friendships they have developed over twenty years of teaching in the school system have supported them through personal and professional life challenges.

Another source of support for them is Jose’s twin brother who, with his wife, has shared many difficult times and helped him look for solutions to problems. The families that raised them have been an important support for their daughters Carmen, the younger daughter, likes to stay overnight or the weekends at mommy Lusa’s and dad Carlos’s house. She talks to them on the phone or visits them on
the weekends. Even Maria, who is now in college, keeps in touch with her second parents. She calls and visits them. Her second mother still cooks Maria’s favorite food when she is in Vieques. Maria’s maternal grandmother also cooks her favorite foods on the weekends she is in Vieques. When she is at college on the island of Puerto Rico and misses the food from home she says, “What I want to eat is grandma’s and mommy Alicia’s food.”

Support also comes from within the family. Carmen feels very connected to Maria, her middle sister. Carmen feels very comfortable talking about almost any topic with her mother and middle sister. She looks forward to the weekends when she can see her sisters, especially Maria. Maria is the link between sisters, since she can help them approach problems in a calm or different way. She is Carmen’s support and role model. Carmen describes a unique characteristic of the process of wellness as it is supported by her sisters. Her description demonstrates how sisters become teachers of wellness, how different they are, and how their strategies complement each other.

My older sister is going to turn twenty-five. She is like a second mother for me because she is scolding me all the time. “Carmen sit down, Carmen do this, girl, don’t talk like that.” That’s why I consider her my second mother, because she is always scolding me. In that sense she is good also. But if something happens to her, if she has a problem, someone hits her ear, she gets hysterical. I compare her with my other sister who is always very calm; she turns things around in order to find a solution. My other sister doesn’t. She becomes hysterical, she drowns in a glass of water. But Maria takes things very calmly and looks at ways to solve it. Maria is usually the one that helps us, she helps her solve any problem that she has.
En ese sentido ella es bien buena también. Eso sí, si se le pasa algo aya un problema, le chocaron el carro, ya es la historia. En comparación con mi otra hermana que siempre lo coge con calma, le busca la vuelta en una forma de resolverlo. Mi otra hermana no, mi otra hermana se vuelve histérica y se ahoga en un vaso de agua. La otra hermana mía, María, pues lo coge con más calma, le busca las formas de arreglarlo. Casí siempre es María la que nos ayuda, le ayuda a resolver cualquier inconveniente que tenga.

Only three of the eight parents interviewed received support from their parents to participate in extracurricular or church-based activities when they were young. Jose B. remembers how much he liked to participate in Boys Scout activities. Although his parents neither supported nor discouraged it, he and his brothers developed many skills that helped them in life.

Another thing that helped us a lot was the Boys Scouts. One of the troops stayed at my house. One of my brothers was in charge of it, and then my other brother. I think that helped us a lot. The presence of the troop helped us to be organized and to develop leadership. We always had something going on. We were crazy, we camped, and we went hiking. My parents didn’t discourage, but they didn’t encourage us either. However, I know that my mother felt very proud of what we were doing. I knew that because she would show people our pictures and say, “Look, these are my children” but she didn’t say anything to us.

[Lo otro que nos ayudó muchísimo fue los niño escucha. Hubo una tropa se quedo en casa, y la tuvo un hermano y después mi otro hermano. Yo creo que eso nos ayudó mucho, la presencia de la tropa, nos ayudo a organizarnos, a desarrollar liderato. Teníamos siempre algo, éramos locos, acampábamos, hacíamos caminatas. No nos desanimaban pero tampoco nos animaban. Aunque si se que se sentían bien orgullosos, mi mamá, de lo que hacíamos. Por los retratos cuando enseñaba los retratos “mira estos son los nenes míos”, pero no los decía a nosotros.]

Another factor that supported Jose B. during school was extracurricular activities such as music and theater.

We went to summer school. We created a music band. We called it the Band of the Nuts. We used a trashcan as a drum and a comb, an old glass.
and that’s how we started. That was what motivated us to keep going and to get better, those types of activities that we developed in school. I think that that was what helped us.

[ Pero en la escuela una cosa que nos ayudó mucho fueron las actividades extracurriculares que se hacen en la escuela como música, teatro. Hay fue un maestro de artes industriales, había una escuela de verano estábamos ahí, inventamos un grupo. Se llamaba el Combo de los Locos. Y un día, el tambor con una peñilla, un bajo gastao y ahí fue que nosotros empezamos. Eso fue lo que nos motivó a seguir, a mejorar. Ese tipo de actividad que desarrollamos en la escuela yo creo que fue lo que nos ayudó.]

Jose B’s son, Jesus, practices many sports in school, including track and field, softball, baseball, volleyball and basketball. He likes to keep himself busy with sports. In addition, he takes artistic enrichment, for which he has to organize a music band with classmates for the next semester. Jesus B uses sports and music as an avenue to stay busy and not to get involved in drugs or other negative habits.

What has helped me is the education that I have received from my parents. I am not interested in those things (drugs) and anyway I need to have a healthy body to be able to move ahead. I look for positive things. I get involved in a lot of activities so that I don’t have to get to that point.

[Pues la educación que me han dado mis padres. Que no me llama la atención eso. Además necesito tener el cuerpo sano para poder seguir adelante. Así que busco cosas sanas, me meto en muchas actividades para no llegar a ese punto.]

Gloria, Laura’s mother, reported that her four children developed an interest in and love for sports from their father. Likewise, Laura and Jose have encouraged their daughters to play a sport. Jose explains with pride how he has taught Maria different sports.
My second daughter used to play volleyball and we used to go to all the games. When she was in high school she practiced throwing weights and the discs, which is what I used to do also. I dedicated time to teach her. Those were her favorite sports, and volleyball games, which was what Laura taught her. And in all activities, regardless of what it was, we were there.

Laura and Jose also support Carmen, their youngest daughter, in her judo training and competitions. Jose is always making sure she follows her diet and does her training, which is fairly rigorous. According to Laura, Carmen wants to become the first woman from Vieques to win an Olympic medal. Carmen has the support of a boxing champion from Vieques who follows up on her weight training. Carmen admires him and he motivates her to keep going. Laura describes how parents support children on the judo team regardless of the obstacles they encounter.

My primary doctor is also a mother of the team because her son is also in judo. She brings the therapy machine and different medications. We go with a very well-prepared contingent because we are used to that. And when we go to competition people say, “Those Viequenses, they do well regardless of the bad weather on the boat.” Because our life is like that, that we have to continue fighting, regardless.

[Porque mi doctora de cabecera es también madre del equipo porque su hijo también está en judo entonces ella lleva la maquineta de las terapias mas lleva medicamentos. Vamos con un contingente bien preparado porque ya estamos acostumbrados a eso. Y entonces la gente dice: “hay los viequenses que con todo y marca siempre salen bien.” Porque la vida de nosotros ya es así, que hay que seguir luchando como sea]
Laura further describes how children from Vieques see their struggles as a way of life. Children from Vieques excel because they are used to fighting or struggling with their entire life system. Their struggle is a day-to-day battle. When they go to compete outside of Vieques, they do well.

A colleague from work has a son who plays golf. He is the only golfer in Vieques, because his dad has taught him since he was little. His dad is a fanatic at golf and buys golf videos and all that. He buys golf clubs in the big island, not the ones with good quality because those are very expensive and he can’t afford it. His son practices golf at Sun Bay. He practices at the beach, on the green grass area. We joke with our friends and tell them, “Gee your son is really incredible because every time he goes to competitions he wins and the holes that he practice are the holes where the crab caves, how can that be possible?”

Milagros, Nora’s daughter, also keeps herself busy and has her parents’ and grandfather’s support to pursue her interest in music and sports. These parents share a common protective factor. The adults were supported by either their parents or grandparents and by the activities offered through school and church. These parents have promoted this process of protection by supporting and encouraging their children to participate in activities through school or through clubs. The school and home environments have encouraged the child’s interests.
and competencies while promoting a stronger sense of wellness (Garmezy, 1983, Rhodes & Hooy, 1994, Shapiro, 1996)

From a biocological model perspective, the exchanges of interactions not only from the family or microsystems, but also from resources outside of the family, such as the school and church in the mesosystem, provide opportunities to expand the child’s developmental capacities and strengths. What these parents have done is to promote their children’s interests or talents. In other words, they have supported what Brooks and Goldstein (2001) describe as the “islands of competence” that these children have. Supporting children’s islands of competence, or talents, (Shapiro, 1996) promotes resilience behaviors and a sense of self-efficacy and mastery of skills, all of which are unique characteristics in the maintenance and development of wellness.

Another aspect of support comes from the unwritten rules established by the community in Vieques. When people define their rules within a microsystem, they are representing the values intrinsic to that cultural group. Family values, which correspond to the society’s or community’s values, lay the foundations for the development of a state of wellness for all. Prilleltensky (2001) addressed the importance of striking a balance between self-determination and social justice and how these are embedded in a community’s value system. When these two concepts emerge as common values for the society, they create a higher degree of concern for developing community and personal wellness.
Shapiro (1996) believes that teaching children to care for others is an important factor in building resilience. This concept is illustrated in Nora’s story about her girlhood, which also reflects her current adult behavior. “Support others” was a lesson made very clear for her as a child.

Where I grew up there were a lot of older women. I remember that we used to get close to the balcony so that we could listen to the stories that a lady that lived across from my house used to tell. And I loved it because sometimes she would say, “Mrs. Elena, did you made any coffee?” I used to go to her house to drink black coffee and I loved it. I love coffee, very black. I think it is because at Mrs. Elena’s, she always offered coffee at her house. I will never forget. And you have to help people who are crazy. Because at Mrs. Elena’s, there was a crazy man who always went to drink coffee at her house. I will never forget that. She never denied a cup of coffee or a plate of food to anyone. I remember I used to go to her house and said, “Mrs. Elena, I am hungry.” And she would offer me some fish and vegetables. See, we have to be that way. I lived that.

Nora passes Mrs. Elena’s lessons of kindness and social justice to her daughters by example.

I used to live alone with my daughters at the house next door before I got married. A man called Cleto would stop by and say, “Mrs., do you have something I can eat?” And I didn’t use to cook before because I ate at grandma’s house so I looked for some crackers and a can of sausage. I used to tell him, “Here Cleto, this is all I have today.” You have to be that way because in time God will reward you.
[Yo vivía en esa casita de al lado con las nenas sola antes de casarme, que pasaba uno que le decían Cleto “Mire doña usted no tiene nada de comer por ahí” y yo antes no cocinaba mucho porque comía en casa de papi y ellas comían en casa de la abuela y yo le buscaba galletas y salchichas, “toma Cleto que esto es lo que hay ” Uno tiene que ser así porque con el tiempo Dios lo recompensa ]

In fact, the first time I visited Nora’s house, Milagros was helping her bake a cake she offered to a neighbor, an elderly woman who had a religious celebration but not enough food to offer to her guests

Laura also practices and teaches similar lessons to her daughters. She belongs to the Alliance of Women from Vieques, an organization that was created in response to a need for support for each other. The movement was initiated to support women diagnosed with cancer and to support the quest to get the Navy out of Vieques, because they believe it is one of the primary reasons why so many people are dying of cancer on the island. Laura describes the purpose of this organization:

As soon as we know that a woman has been diagnosed with cancer we quickly go to their house and provide support and financial help that way we keep supporting one another and more women join the group. We would like to continue even when the Navy leaves. We want the alliance to continue because then the fight is going to be so that we can improve everyone’s wellness.

[Tan pronto se conoce de una mujer que se le ha diagnosticado cáncer rapidito se va y se le da apoyo, ayuda económica Y entonces se siguen apoyando unas a las otras y van uniéndose más Que nosotros queremos seguir aunque llegue por fin el momento que la marina se vaya queremos que la alianza siga porque entonces la lucha va a ser para que nosotros mejoremos nuestro bienestar y todo ]
Bronfenbrenner (1995) addresses the importance of determining which proximal processes are embedded within the family’s interactions as they are transmitted across generations and extended to the community. Children learn from neighbors and from parents’ actions the values of health, gratitude, kindness, compassion, and social responsibility, which consequently build on the wellness of the community in Vieques.

Our Father Who Art In Heaven

The four primary families I interviewed for this study practice or follow the Catholic faith. Religion is the strength and the force that guides people’s actions. Maritsa describes how her faith in God is the center of her life. Her faith in God is a powerful force that guides her wherever she needs to go.

God is the center of my life. He is present in my life at all times. I am not a fanatic person because I don’t believe in being fanatic about anything, or being at church every day. But although I am not at church every day, God is always present in my life, in my house and in everything I do. He is always there. He guides every step that I take. And that is the strength that I get from Heaven, a strength that God gives me. Regardless of how dark my path is, there is always a light that comes on. There is a light that guides me, and that is Him. There is no other explanation, there is no other explanation, it is God.

[El centro de mi vida es Dios. Y en todo momento esta presente en mi vida, en todo momento. Yo no soy una persona fanática porque no creo ser fanática de nada, de estar en una iglesia todos los días. Pero aunque no estoy todos los días, Dios está siempre presente en mi vida, y en mi casa y en todo lo que yo hago lo tengo presente. Cada paso que yo doy lo dirige Él. Y esa es la fuerza que me viene del cielo que Dios me la da. Que siempre aparece una luz, por más oscuro que este mi camino siempre hay una luz que me guía y ese es Él. Que no hay otra explicación, no hay otra explicación, es Dios.]
Expectations for the future are based on or contingent upon God’s support. Nora describes how her faith in God helps her move forward while maintaining a positive outlook on life.

I pray a lot and listen to Christian music and that helps a lot. I pray quietly and say, “God you take me and bring me. I want You to guide and protect me.” I go on with that positive attitude and things go fine. That my car doesn’t break down. That it runs at least until I am done. And I know I am going to do it if God wants it. If God doesn’t want it, it is not going to work out. I leave my car at a parking lot at a man’s house in Fajardo. I do the maintenance, change the parts so that it last longer.

Faith in God is a fundamental factor in people’s lives. As Nora describes it:

God is fundamental in this home and in every home. And that is the foundation. If God helps you, you can accomplish everything. Without His help you can’t do anything.

Werner and Smith (1982) found religion to be a protective factor that provided stability or a sense of structure to people in times of change, as well as a sense of a mission. The sense of structure provided by religious faith is taught to children as they are reaching adolescence. Jorge presents his philosophy of life as a process:
God says that there is time for everything. There is time to cry, to laugh, to love, to work. There is time for everything, don’t rush through life.

[Dios dice que hay tiempo para todo. Hay tiempo para llorar, para reír, para amar, para trabajar. Hay tiempo para todo, cual es la prisa.]

Another source of structure through life is to follow the Ten Commandments. Laura expresses her determination while following those guidelines during difficult times.

I don’t think that I have to go to church all the time in order to have my faith. I don’t know. As long as people follow the Ten Commandments, and try not to hurt anyone. It is not easy to follow the Ten Commandments because people sin every day. Although it is hard, it is more important to keep trying, getting up and starting over again. And I try as much as possible to teach that Christian faith to my daughters.

All the couples I interviewed have found the church to be a resource that helps support their marriage during difficult times. Instead of using formal resources such as the psychologist from the Health Center, couples have resorted to the support of friends and church to give them direction and to help them overcome adversities. This kind of informal support has been documented as crucial to the maintenance of wellness (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Dunst, 2000, Jack, 2000). One of the couples shared their story.

We were close to a divorce. We didn’t go to a marriage counselor. Basically with the support from our friends at work we were able to solve the problem. Little by little because it wasn’t easy, it wasn’t easy. We worked things out a little bit, but when we went to Manresa [a church
Faith in God helps overcome difficult life events such as the death of a loved one. That faith also provides a sense of hope that events happen for a reason and although it might be very difficult to accept, God is always there to support them. Maria P. describes how she coped with the death of a nephew, who was a drug addict, and died as a consequence of using a "bad drug".

You always look for shelter in God. The people that are around you also provide support. But you have to be very clear that things happen because God wants them to happen. That's what I think. I think that nothing moves unless God wants it. And if it had to happen that way, my faith gives me strength to accept it and move on. And also think that you have other people that depend on you, therefore you cannot let yourself go down. It hurts but life goes on.

Religion also offers the hope of salvation, which creates a sense of protection for people. Religion is also utilized as an avenue to release stresses and
frustration. This is how Maria P. resorts to her faith in God in order to find some internal peace.

When I feel a lot of pressure, a lot of pressure, because the activities I get into, I go and get down on my knees. And I cry, cry, cry and after I cry I leave feeling better. What else do I want, right? It doesn’t happen always, it doesn’t happen all the time that I feel that I am ready to explode. I go there [to church], vent, and I leave feeling better. And then I can continue functioning. And my songs I don’t know if I do it right, people say that I sing well. Every morning I pray, I sing. It’s like praying twice. I sing any song from La Esperanza to here. And I sing every day, every day even if it is just for me. That strengthens me.

[Cuando tengo mucha presión, mucha presión, por los embelecos que me meto, me voy y me arrodillo. Y lloro, lloro y lloro y después que lloro un ratito salgo bien. Que más que eso, verdad. Que no es siempre, no me pasa mucho que no encuentro por donde, ahí, que uno está a punto de reventar. Pues acudo allí y me desahogo y sigo. Y como yo sé que Él me escucha y no se lo va a decir nadie pues me siento bien. Y después puedo seguir funcionando. Y mis canciones. Yo no sé si lo hago bien. La gente dice que canto bien. Entonces todas las mañanas no oro, yo canto. Es orar dos veces. Cualquier canción yo vengo cantando desde la Esperanza hasta aquí. Y todos los días canto, todos los días aunque sea para mí. Así me fortalece.]

Parents pass on the value of religion and faith in God in different ways.

This process of wellness has been guided by parents because they are role models for their children in terms of practicing what they believe. One example of following parents’ steps in the path of religious faith is illustrated by Nora’s family. When Nora was young, she taught catechism to children at church. Now she is a minister of the Eucharist and sings in the choir.

I am Eucharist minister. The younger one used to serve in mass, not any more. The older one reads, and participates in the Liturgy. I am a Eucharist minister and I am in the choir. But always, I was a catechist. I tell my daughters that they are doing what I did. I taught catechism when I was their age and I helped the nuns in the summer. I have always been very active at church, always, always. And I continue to be.
Another family has provided the foundation of Christian values and encouraged their children to freely choose what they believe are best for them. This is how Laura explains it:

I always teach my daughters to have faith in God, which is the most important concept. Going to church is not as important. And for me it is important that we give them the freedom so that they can decide when they become adults.

Jose shares the same philosophy as Laura. He keeps an open mind about knowing more about other religions and supports his daughters through that search. He promotes the freedom to visit other churches and to explore other religions. His philosophy is that, "If the message is good for the person, it doesn’t matter from which church it comes." Jose’s and Laura’s philosophy of providing their daughters with the freedom to choose and teaching them by example has promoted the development and internalization of values that guide them in knowing what is right and what is wrong.

Rhodes and Hoey (1994) found that teaching children a sense of right and wrong served as a protective factor during adverse times. Maria talks about the...
moral values that were taught to her by the Catholic Church, at home and through
the family. Some of those values are honesty, responsibility, generosity, and being
fair and sincere. These moral values have helped her to distinguish right from
wrong. The process that Maria’s father has employed over time to teach her the
values of self-determination, faith in God, social justice, and respect, illustrates
how the primary engines characteristic of the biocultural model support the
development of wellness. Maria’s description of what she has learned from her
father is very compelling.

Those are values that my parents tried to teach me, but sometimes it was
by their example. Not like some people that tell you things but they don’t
do it. For example, he [dad] is a person that tries to teach you the value of
sincerity, of honesty, to do things without having to owe anything to
anyone but rather by your own sacrifices. He taught me that but he also
did it. Because it is through him that I have learned to be the way I am.
To do things by myself, not to have to depend on anyone and to be fair.
The person that I have as an example is my dad. Up to now he has tried to
be a person that believes in justice and practice it. And that’s the
foundation that I have. If I am the way I am is because of many things and
through him and those values that I try to put in practice.

[Esos valores que mis padres me trataron de enseñar y muchas veces es
bajo el ejemplo. No como otras personas que te lo dicen pero no lo hacen.
Por ejemplo es una persona que te trata de enseñar el valor de ser sincero,
ser honesto, que haga las cosas sin tener que deberle nada a nadie, sino
por su propio sacrificio, el me lo enseñó pero él lo hizo. Porque por medio
de él es que yo aprendí a ser así. A ser las cosas por mí misma, a no tener
que depender de nadie. Y de ser justa, la persona que yo tengo como
ejemplo a sido él, mi papa. Porque él hasta ahora ha tratado de ser una
persona lo más justa posible. Y esa es la base que tengo, si soy así es por
muchas cosas por medio de él y de esos valores que yo si trato de poner en
practica muchos de ellos.]

187
When You Have an Education You Look Farther, You Don’t Accept Less

Literature on wellness and resilience indicates that schools, the school environment, and teachers have been identified as protective factors for individuals (Cowen, 1994, Doll & Lyon, 1998, Sagor, 1996, Shapiro, 1996) One of the factors that helped the parents I interviewed stay out of trouble and develop self-efficacy and mastery of a skill during their youths was participation in extracurricular activities such as music, Boys Scouts, and sports. These parents have encouraged and supported their children’s interests in the same activities in which they participated when they were young. These parents have experienced first-hand the positive outcomes of being involved in various activities.

Education stands out as an important value for all four families I interviewed. However, when these parents were young, only a few of them were encouraged by their parents to study. At Nora’s and José’s home, although their grandmothers didn’t know how to write or read, they always made sure the children went to school every day and received an education. Consequently, Nora has learned from her grandmother, and feels that it is her responsibility and obligation to support her daughters in school.

It is true that I am going to school, but I also have the responsibility that I have to help them, because they are getting prepared. That is my obligation.

[Esta bien yo estoy estudiando pero yo tengo la responsabilidad también que ellas se están preparando y que yo tengo que ayudar, esa es mi obligación]
Jorge’s mother, although she only stayed in school until third grade, always helped him with schoolwork. She encouraged her children to stay in school. Laura’s mother, Rosa, had a routine established for the four children when they came home from school. Rosa describes how she kept a consistent home routine that supported the development of study habits in her children.

When they arrive home from school I used to tell them, “Now go get a shower, and after that you need to do your homework, and after that you can watch television.” In other words I developed that habit and that’s what they did all the time. They were always good students.

[ Cuando venían de la escuela yo les decía “bueno ahora van y se bañan y después a hacer la asignación y después pueden mirar televisión.” O sea crearle el hábito ese y así lo hicieron todo el tiempo. Siempre fueron buenos estudiantes ]

For Jose B.’s mother, going to school was important. Although she never sat down with them to help with schoolwork or asked how things were at school or if they were getting good grades, she always told them that they would be going to school until they grew beards, and that they would not leave school without finishing it. He later realized what she meant by those words.

She wanted us to study. She wanted us to become something, to have a profession. She wanted us to become something, so that we didn’t end up like her.

[ Había que estudiar. Quería que fuéramos algo, una profesión. Que fuéramos algo, que no fuéramos como ella ]

Even with the support that Jose B. had from his mother in terms of pushing them to go to school and to finish high school, he described an interesting example of the lack of self-worth embedded in the culture of the people living on the coast of Vieques. There was no meaningful purpose in going to school, and there was no...
vision or aspirations to follow after high school. Jose B. describes the struggles teachers have, even to this day, when trying to educate children and contend with these visions of lack of empowerment.

To be a schoolteacher in this coast area you have to go back in history to the African heritage. It’s something that also happened in my house. It’s something you grow up with. It’s something that you believe that you are good for only one thing. If you think about it, the slaves could not question what they were asked to do. So what they have learned is that they don’t have any other choice. That happened to me when I was in school. I knew that the doctor’s and the pharmacist’s sons were the ones who will be going to college, and I never questioned that I also had the right to go to study. We went to school just because we had to go to school, to learn to read because you had to read. But it wasn’t because I was going to learn some information that I am going to process, that is going to help me in the future. I learned that when I took some psychology courses at college, and that helped me a lot.

Even with the obstacles of poverty, partial support from his parents, and the cultural beliefs of disempowerment and lack of self worth, Jose B. was able to beat the odds. According to the bioecological model, Jose B. was not so much a product of his environment as a producer of his environment. He finished a bachelor’s degree in music and a master’s degree in administration. At a young age, he was also the primary support for his wife in terms of encouraging her to...
finish high school and to attain higher education. One of the positive resources he had available when he finished high school and started working was a teacher in Vieques, his colleague. Luis was a teacher at the school where Jose B. worked, and was one of the forces that motivated Jose B. to pursue a college degree. I will describe his history and the influence he has had in this community in the following chapter.

Only one of the eight parents I interviewed reported that when she was young her parents discouraged her from going to school. In fact, Maria P.'s father pulled the older sons out of school so that they could learn the trade of auto mechanics and help his business. Of the ten children in Maria P.'s home, one of her sisters completed an associate's degree in nursing and the other eight children never finished high school. As a result of her father's ideas about education and the lack of support she received from her mother (as her mother always followed her husband's rules, regardless of whether she agreed with him or not), Maria P. felt that she never had the guidance or support to have a vision of her future with a better life. Her husband was the protective factor who, at the young age of seventeen, encouraged her to continue with her studies. Maria P. recounts that story:

When I became Jose B.'s girlfriend, my dad wanted to pull me out of school because I couldn't have a boyfriend and study. I had to choose one or the other. And I told him, "All right, Dad, I am going to leave my boyfriend." And I was lying because I saw my boyfriend at school. The fact is that later on he [dad] accepted him. From that time on he [Jose B.] and I, as young and immature as we were because I was thirteen and he was seventeen years, we formed ourselves. We didn't know if we were going to stay together because we were so young, 13 and 17, and people
said, "They won't last very long." And he [Jose B.] was the one who used to tell me, "No, you are going to continue your studies."

[Yo cuando nos hicimos novios papi me quería sacar de la escuela Porque yo no podía tener novio y estudiar. Tenía que escoger una de las dos. Y entonces yo le decía "esta bien papi voy a dejar al novio." Y era embuste que en la escuela yo veía al novio. La cuestión es que después lo acepto y desde entonces el y yo en nuestra corta edad y nuestra inmadurez de unos 13 y 17 años nos forjamos. Que no sabíamos si ibamos a cumplir porque novietos de 13 y 17 y decían "a esos duran poquito." Y entonces el era el que me decía "no, tu vas a seguir estudiando."]

When looking at Jose B.’s and Maria P.’s experiences when they were young, from the biocological model’s viewpoint, it is evident that for them, strength came from within and not so much from what their parents taught them. In fact, Maria P. reported that, “she learned from her parents what she didn’t want to be.” It is evident that their support and the strongest influences on their development as individuals came from themselves, as they became each other’s family, and from other environments, such as the school.

All the children I interviewed from the four families are wonderful people. They have easy temperaments, and are happy and friendly. They are intelligent, one is on the honor roll. They like to go to school, have many friends, and are very involved in extracurricular activities. The two main extracurricular activities in the schools of Vteques are music and sports. Milagros, Carmen, and Jesús B. participate in one or both of those areas. The youngest one, Ana Luz, is in kindergarten and loves to learn and play.

All these parents encourage and support their children’s interests as evidenced by attending school activities, participating in fund-raising activities,
and taking them to practice. One afternoon I visited Milagros's home. She had just woken from a nap because she had to get up early in the morning to bake cupcakes to sell at school for a fund-raising activity. That morning Nora helped her fill the cups with cake mix before she took the boat to college. Demonstrating to children that adults are there to support them, their efforts and interests, illustrates how wellness is taught across generations.

Parents also make sure that their children do their homework and don't fall behind in school. One afternoon I visited Laura's and Jose's home. Carmen, their youngest daughter, showed me a preschool story she wrote for a school literature contest. Laura helped Carmen with the book illustrations, which were large and colored very creatively. Parents encourage their children to study and offer them incentives for good grades. Parents also promote higher aspirations for their children. Nora has been a role model for her daughters. Jorge and Nora shared with me that her youngest daughter has watched her studying early in the morning and now asks Jorge to wake her up at 4:00 a.m. to study.

These parents have transformed the skills they learned, and continue learning, into opportunities for growth for their children. Parents are available, have high expectations or goals for their children, and are resources for them. As parents engage and are active participants in their children's learning process, they are extending to their children the protective factors of wellness they have learned.
Parents also have other resources available to support their children’s learning, such as computers. At the three homes where the children attend middle or high school, the parents have a computer at home available for educational purposes. Other support systems for children are grandparents, friends working in the school, and school counselors. Nora’s daughters have a good relationship with the school counselor, in case they have a problem or need some advice. At school, Milagros likes to hang out with her friends at lunchtime. They gather at a plaza behind the school and play cards or bingo, talk about the latest news in town, and are always doing something. Milagros feels that the ninth grade teachers are very united and always available to help students. She has no problem asking questions when she doesn’t understand something.

Jesus B. expressed similar feelings about the teachers in high school. If there is something that he doesn’t understand, he asks the teacher after class. He feels that this is part of his learning, therefore, he asks when he doesn’t understand something. Although Carmen feels comfortable asking questions in class, she has a network of friends that help each other when there is something one of them doesn’t understand. Her sense of empowerment and self-efficacy is very evident.

We are a very close group. Whoever is good in English explains things to me. The one who is good in math explains things to me. We are very united in that sense. I always have to explain algebra to my cousin because he is a little slower than me. In physics, I ask Stephanie. For English, I ask Carlos or Edgar. We already know who is good in this and that, we help each other and that way we do well. Neither my parents nor my teachers have to help me. We have learned to help ourselves.
Nosotros somos un grupo bien unido, la que es buena en ingles me explica, la que es buena en matemática me explica, somos bien unidos en ese aspecto. Yo tengo que explicarle siempre en álgebra superior a mi primo porque el es más lento que yo. Ya en física pues le pregunto a Stephane. De ingles pues a Carlos o Edgar. Que ya uno sabe quien es bueno en esto y lo otro y nos ayudamos todos y así salimos bien. Mis padres no me tienen que ayudar ni los maestros tampoco. Nosotros mismos hemos aprendido a ayudarnos.]

Education is valued as a tool for achieving independence and self-sufficiency. Religion is also seen as a factor that helps accomplish educational goals. This is Nora’s lesson to her daughters.

What I tell them is to study. If they marry a bad husband, they have their profession, so no one can abuse them. The world is theirs as long as they are prepared. If one door closes, another one will open. Always have God present in your thoughts. They have to rely on God, as long as they do that, everything works out. They have to believe in God when they are studying because He will give them the energy to continue. When you have an education you look farther, you don’t accept less.

[Que estudien, yo lo que les digo es que estudien. Si les toca un marido malo pues ellas tienen su profesión, nadie las maltrata. Que después que ellas estén preparadas, el mundo es de ellas. Se te cierra una puerta pero se te abre otra. Siempre tengan presente a Dios. Tienen que contar con Dios, que después que ellas cuenten con Dios, todo aparece. Para estudiar tienen que aferrarse mucho de Dios, pues es el que le da a uno ese amn. Cuando tu tienes una educación tu miras adelante, y no aceptas menos de eso.]

In Vieques, the integrity of the family’s structure is very important. It is important for families to stay together and support each other. When children need to leave the island in order to start a college education, it causes stress for the entire family. Nora, Maritsa, and Maria P’s example of traveling every day back and forth from Vieques to Puerto Rico while trying to balance so many responsibilities, demonstrates how the educational process is very challenging.
When Laura went to college, she stayed in a dorm. Her mother, Rosa, went with her daughters when selecting a dorm, because she wanted to make sure that it was a safe environment.

Transition from high school in Vieques to college on the island of Puerto Rico required many sacrifices and adjustments because life there is completely different. From the biocological model, the proximal process of interactions between the person and the environment is another challenge. Students are challenged to incorporate protective mechanisms learned over time through their families and community into a completely different environment. This is how Laura describes the contrast between the two islands when she went to college:

It was a very drastic change but you get used to everything, you have to get used to it. For me, it was very traumatic when I finished my fourth year and had to go there because it was not the same. You have to get used to another life, which is completely different. Not so much now, but when I was young, people in Vieques slept with the windows and doors open. Cars were left with the keys in and with everything there and you will find it exactly the same the next morning. I had to get used to watching my belongings because they could get stolen. I didn't have my mother who watched for, helped, or cooked for me. It was a little difficult for me.

[Fue un cambio bien drástico pero uno se acostumbra a todo, se tiene que acostumbrar. Y para mí fue bien traumático cuando me fui de cuarto año para aquí porque no es lo mismo. Uno se tiene que acostumbrar a otra vida completamente diferente. Ahora no tanto pero en mi época aquí se dormía con las ventanas y puertas abiertas, los carros, no se robaba así como ahora. Antes tú podías dejar el carro con llave y todo afuera y amanece igual. Y entonces en lo que yo me acostumbraba a que tenía que cuidar mis cosas porque me las podían robar, y que no tenía a mamá que me buscaba o que me ayudara o que me cocinara pues se me hizo un poco difícil.]

For Laura's middle daughter, María, the transition from high school to college has also been very difficult and stressful. María expressed having a
feeling of loneliness and of not being sure of what to do with her life. She felt lonely because, although she had a roommate from Vieques, she was not at home with her family, sharing and participating in the everyday dynamics. Love and unity of the family is so strong for Maria that she doesn’t feel she will be able to completely overcome the pain of being away from her family. Like her mother, Maria struggled with adjusting to college life. Maria also struggled with her insecurities about being in a new environment and wondering if she would be able to conquer all those obstacles. Even with those struggles, Maria decided to overcome those feelings and not preoccupy her parents with it. Her love for her parents and sensitivity is described in her conversations about adjustment to college life.

My mother says that between my older sister and me, I have been less affected. I am the kind of person that doesn’t express my feelings often. But that should not matter because it doesn’t mean that I don’t have those feelings. It was very difficult for me. I tried not to call them a lot and tell them, “Mom, I want to go back home, I missed you.” My older sister did that a lot. And a lot of students do it. But I tried my best not to do it because I didn’t want to make them worry. Because I know that for them it was also a difficult change because they experience the same, “I am going to lose them, will they miss us?” And that’s why I tried not to call them a lot. But at that time I used to cry a lot. I remember that has been one of the most difficult moments in my life, the change when I had to leave for college.

[Mami dice que entre mi hermana mayor y yo, que yo no, que a mí me ha afectado menos. Pero lo que pasa es que yo no soy una persona que expresa muchos los sentimientos, pero eso no quita. Que no por eso no es que no los tenga. Y a mí se me hizo bien difícil lo que pasa es que yo trataba lo más mínimo de llamarlos y decirle “hoy mamá quiero irme pa ya, hay los extraño.” Que mi hermana mayor hacía eso mucho. Y muchos estudiantes lo hacen. Pero yo trataba lo más que pudiera de no hacerlo por el hecho de no preocuparlos a ellos. Porque como yo se que para ellos es también un cambio fuerte. Porque ellos experimentan lo mismo, que me
van a perder, que me extrañan. Y por eso yo trataba de no llamarlos mucho. Pero como quiera yo para ese tiempo lloraba y todo, yo me acuerdo. Ese ha sido uno de los momentos que hasta ahora en mi vida ha sido uno de los más difíciles, el cambio para irme a estudiar.

Being around other college students from Vieques has helped Maria overcome the sadness and feeling of loneliness she experienced in Puerto Rico during her first year of college. In this way, she is expanding her network of resources and interactions with other students from Vieques. She comes home to Vieques every weekend. Her parents and younger sister always pick her up at the port and, of course, her grandmother does for her granddaughters as she did for her children - she has Maria’s favorite food ready.

When looking at education from the wellness and biocological model, there are multiplicities of interactions among different persons and environments occurring over years, or macrotimes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The richness of these interactions and processes includes grandmother supporting Maria’s need for care by making her favorite meals when she comes to Vieques on the weekends, parents supporting Maria’s right to independence, academic competencies and self-efficacy, and Maria developing college networks. Together, these interactions illustrate how the proximal processes of the biocological model interact to support and maintain wellness.

Friday, it’s “Pincho” Time

One unique component that has kept families united and supported through the years are the celebrations and times they spend together in recreational activities. Because of their busy work and study schedules, families
usually gather for fun family activities on the weekends. Some of the most common activities families engage in are fishing, catching crabs, going swimming at the beach, going shopping on Puerto Rico, and visiting family either on Vieques or Puerto Rico.

Only one parent, Jose B., commented on his experience as a child in terms of family gatherings. His family never got together with extended family for special occasions. Even during Holy Week when everyone in town went to the beach, he and his brothers watched the people go by their house, and they wanted to go, but they couldn't. They never questioned it or asked their parents about it because that was the adults' decision.

Everyone participated but us. I think we got used to it. I don't know. It's like you see sometimes in the movies, that people get used to being abused or maybe that we learned to think that it was for other people but not for us.

[Todo el mundo participaba menos nosotros. Creo que nos acostumbramos. Que se yo como ve uno a veces en películas que la gente se acostumbra a que los maltraten o que ya estábamos que eso era para ellos y para nosotros no.]

As adults, Jose B. and Maria P. make sure that their children get the experience of visiting and connecting with their family. When they go to the island of Puerto Rico, they visit their paternal grandmother and paternal uncles. Most of Maria P.'s family lives in Vieques and so their children can often visit their cousins, grandmother, aunts and uncles. In fact, while I was interviewing Maria P. at the school where she works, she received a phone call from her mother inviting her and the family for dinner that evening.
Jose and Laura always go with their younger daughter, Carmen, to the port on Fridays to pick up their daughters who are returning from studying all week at the university in Puerto Rico. Their tradition is that every Friday they gather with Jose's brother and his family at a small restaurant in Vieques to eat chicken for dinner. Laura describes this family tradition:

As a family we go every Friday to eat “pincho” [chicken shish-kebab] We usually say, “It’s Friday, pincho time” with accent that we as Puerto Rican have. Pincho time is that we go to Barrio Florida in front of the park where Juan Ortiz lives. Every Friday and Saturday he sells pinchos, and a lot of fried food. On Friday neither one of us cooks. When the girls come from Rio Piedras they know that that’s what we eat on Fridays. And we go there and we stay until about nine or ten at night, since six o’clock is when the boat arrives. That’s when we pick up the girls and then go over there. Close by there is a video place where they can rent movies at the video club and then we come back home.

[En familia todos los viernes vamos a comer pincho Nosotros decimos “es viernes pincho time” con el acento que nosotros los puertorriqueños tenemos. Pincho time es que vamos al barrio Florida, frente al parque de Florida vive Juan Ortiz que todos los viernes y sábados el vende pinchos, rellenos, alcaparras y de todas esas cosas. Entonces el viernes ninguno de los dos cocinamos. Cuando ellas llegan de Rio Piedras ya saben que los viernes vamos a comer eso Y nos vamos para allá y estamos hasta que son como las 9-10 00 de la noche Desde las 6 00 pm cuando llega la lancha que las recogemos seguimos con ellas para allá. Cerca le queda también el video que van y alquilan películas en el video club y después nos venimos para acá.]

Maria’s most positive memories are when they get together as a family for Christmas celebration. That family gathering is usually with her uncle’s family, Jose’s twin brother, whom they consider their second family. This year they are spending the holidays with Laura’s brother and family who live in Texas. Actually, when Grandmother Rosa goes to Texas to visit, the grandchildren get very excited because she is coming and because they love and miss her cooking.

200
The connection Carmen and Marita have with the families that cared for them when they were young is very strong and unique. Carmen visits momma Lursa and dad Carlos during the Christmas holidays and also before midnight on New Year’s Eve, and then she spends the rest of the evening with her biological family.

For Maritsa and Pedro, one of the escape times they have as a family is during Christmas vacation. Maritsa, Pedro, and Ana Luz travel to the island of Puerto Rico and spend two weeks visiting friends and family. They like to disconnect from Vieques at least once a year and not have the pressure of having to work at his dad’s business.

Another activity that has influenced the unity of all the families I interviewed is related to their participation in the vigils, marches, and protests at the civil disobedience camp. The civil disobedience camp was developed by members of the community in Vieques and has also been supported by people from Puerto Rico. Their primary goal is to use peaceful civil disobedience in order to force the United States Navy base to stop their military practices and leave Vieques. Families find unity when they participate in activities to support the struggle to get the Navy out of Vieques.

Families’ activities and celebrations create opportunities for different interactions among families and friends. These interactions also reflect the families’ cultural beliefs and their values of unity and connectedness.
have the opportunity to teach their children social and emotional skills while creating environments that support their wellness (Cowen, 1994)

*Defining the Struggle*

All families interviewed have shared their support for the civil disobedience movement in Vieques. This movement focuses on attempts to force the withdrawal of the United States Navy base from Vieques. Residents from Vieques and from the island of Puerto Rico have gathered to build camps in different areas in Vieques. At these camps, people gather to learn more about the effects of the Navy on the island, learn about the history of Vieques, get training in peaceful civil disobedience activities, celebrate rallies and events in protest of the presence of the Navy in Vieques, and pray. When the Navy has military practices scheduled on the island of Vieques, those who want to enter the firing range, to stop the military practice as a response of peaceful civil disobedience, stay at the camps. Usually, at night, the group selected to “go in” follows a leader that takes them to the border of the military base. The cyclone fence is cut and the group enters the firing practice area. The goal is to get as far into the area as they can and try to stop the military practice as a result of their presence on the firing range.

Participation in this community movement has served to bring families and the community closer as they fight to accomplish a common goal. Laura’s parents, Rosa and Manuel, lived through the experience of land expropriation when they were young. Because they lived through those injustices and witnessed
how their parents had to struggle to sustain the family, they also became
participants in the movement to get the Navy out of Vieques. When they got
married and had children, they taught them to love and fight for Vieques. The
message Laura got from her parents was “that we have to fight to get the Navy
out.”

College students from Vieques struggle between their love and
responsibility to participate in the struggle to get the Navy out of Vieques, thereby
engaging in civil disobedience, and their obligation to their parents who have
gone through many sacrifices in order to pay for their college education. If a
college student is captured because of engaging in civil disobedience, it is most
likely that that student will lose that semester of school due to serving jail time.
Laura’s analysis of the situation is, “If a Viequense does civil disobedience it is
because they have made many sacrifices to do it. It is very difficult.” Like other
college students, Maria supports the struggle for peace in Vieques by participating
in rallies at the university, doing presentations, distributing fliers, and inviting
students to visit the civil disobedience camps in Vieques.

Participation in the civil disobedience movement promotes a sense of
empowerment and unity for the community as they work toward a common goal
(social action) to reach social justice (Prilleltensky, 2001). The actions and
interactions demonstrated through this process provide a range of protective
strategies that children learn from parents and the community at large. These
interactions expand children’s repertoire of wellness factors as they are learned and practiced (Bronfenbrenner, 1993)

The struggle to stop the military practices in Vieques has created a strong sense of affiliation, belonging, and empowerment to claim and fight for their rights. These are characteristics that the people from the island of Vieques have developed over the course of many years. The development of these concepts or values has created a unique repertoire of collective protective factors from which wellness is maintained.

*My Love for Vieques*

All the families I interviewed are teaching their children to love Vieques, the land that has seen them grow and develop as a community. Love for Vieques is an important value for the families and the community in general. It is the common link that keeps the community united and strong. I have not found mention in the wellness literature of the concept of patriotism as a source of strength that supports the wellness and sense of justice for the entire community. Prilleltensky (2001) reminds us that the context and the experiences people have had determine the meaning that a community places in the set of values they adopt and practice. The experiences the community of Vieques has had with negative factors at a macrosystem level, such as the presence of the Navy, poverty, limited use of their land, and limited educational and health resources, represent great challenges which have empowered them to improve the environment where they and their children live.
It is important for Jose and Laura to teach their children love for their country and their island. They have taught their daughters to love their land and to support the struggle for the peace of Vieques. Laura was raised that way. Jose and Laura explain that their daughters are very patriotic and participate in the fight to get the Navy out of Vieques. Laura describes the feeling of pride that they feel as Viequenses and as parents when they go with Carmen to her judo competitions.

When she competes, when she wins a medal and goes to the podium, she always brings two flags, the flag from Vieques and the flag from Puerto Rico. She brings the flags, one in each hand. She is very proud of that. First she is Viequense and then she is Puerto Rican because she already has that sense of regionalism. She has learned that from us. She is crazy about Puerto Rico and when they play the hymn of Puerto Rico she cries because it is very emotional. We also feel very proud and it’s a great emotion. The three of them have that feeling.

Jesus B summarizes the feelings young people have as he describes a picture he drew of Vieques, “My country is my mother earth.” I would like to end this chapter with what Carmen shared with me when I asked her this question: “If you had the power, what would you change?” The following excerpt is Carmen’s dream of peace.

I don’t think I would change anything in my home. Because we have problems, we have ups and downs but we have been able to overcome them. I think that I will change things outside of my home, those people who want to hurt us. If I have a magic wand I would do a lot of things.
with those people who sexually abuse women and children. I would be very good. The world would be perfect if I had a magic wand. There would be no wars. There would be disagreements but not big ones. For me, in my world, there would not be poverty, there would not be necessities. Everyone would have a place to eat, a place to live. There would be no drugs. I would change the world to make it better. I would get the Navy out of Vieques and would try to decontaminate that area because it is going to take years in order to clean it. And also, I would like for Puerto Rico and Vieques to be independent, or not so dependent on the United States. That we become more independent. We need peace so that we can live in peace. We have to reach the path of peace through peace. Life is unique, we need to learn how to live it in peace.

Yo creo que en mi casa no cambiaría nada. Porque uno tiene problemas, uno tiene altas y bajas que nosotros lo hemos sabido sobrellevar. Yo creo que cambiaría afuera de mi casa, esas personas que nos quieren hacer daño. Si yo tuviera una varita mágica yo haría muchas cosas yo a esa gente que se pasa violando a las mujeres, a los niños, yo fuera muy buena. El mundo sería perfecto si yo tuviera una varita mágica. Que no hubiesen guerras, que hubiesen sus discusiones pero que no hayan problemas tan grandes. Para mí, en mi mundo no hubiera pobreza, no hubiera necesidades, todo el mundo tuviera donde comer, donde vivir, no hubieran drogas, cambiaría el mundo para que fuera mejor. Lo primero que haría es sacarla de Vieques, tratar de descontaminar eso en esa área porque va a necesitar años para poder limpiar. Y también, no se me gustaría también que PR y Vieques se independizaran o que no fueran tan dependientes de los Estados Unidos, que fuéramos más independientes. Necesitamos paz para poder vivir en paz. Lleguemos al camino de la paz por la paz. La vida es única hay que saber vivirla en paz.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the most prominent themes gathered from interviews of four families from Vieques. The values established by a cultural group determine the direction of their actions. For these participant families, the data point at several values that have supported the development of wellness. These values have been taught across generations by great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, and children. Parents from these participant families have
made an effort to provide learning opportunities for their children in order to help them make an informed decision about incorporating these values in their lives.

Some of the most prominent values that have promoted wellness for these families are education, family, and faith in God. Education is perceived as the means to better their lives, not only intellectually but financially. Although it also requires separation from the family, since there are no universities in Vieques, it is a value highly promoted among these families. Parents have established processes to support children’s wellness during the period of ecological transition to college such as supervising the dorm or apartment where children stay on the island of Puerto Rico, cooking their favorite meals when they return home on the weekends, and supporting them financially through their college education. College students from Vieques have established strong networks of friends that support each other while studying on the island of Puerto Rico.

Family is another important value for the families participating in this study, maintaining a united family is essential for the wellness of all. Some of the processes they have established to make sure families stay united are: Maintaining open communication, establishing home rules and a structure that seems fair and reasonable, having everyone contribute to the well-being of others and of the space (home) that they share, and having family celebrations or taking time to spend together.

Other components of this process relate to parents’ attitudes and disposition toward their children and their sense of responsibility as parents.
Parents provide guidance and support to their children. They encourage them to take risks and learn from those experiences. Adults are seen as reliable providers, therefore establishing a sense of security for children. They promote their children's independence while maintaining a loving and safe home environment.

The value of religion, or their faith in God, permeates everything that happens in their lives. Faith in God is perceived as the power that helps them move forward and directs their path. Faith in God also provides an outlet to release tensions or stresses in life. Prayers, reading books, teaching children a sense of right and wrong, are processes used to promote and maintain wellness.

The value of hard work has been influenced and challenged by the island's poor economic, political and developmental history. All but one of the parents interviewed came from impoverished homes. As one of the parents described, hard work is a way of life in Vieques. People in Vieques have learned that in order to achieve their goals they have to work harder than people on the island of Puerto Rico. For the families interviewed, hard work is equivalent to success and is the way to achieve the goals they have set in life. Parents support children's process of hard work by establishing home routines and rules, supporting their personal interests, such as in sports and music; having high expectations or goals for them, and by helping their children to plan ahead.

The values of respect, compassion, and charity toward others are very important for these families. It is important to respect oneself. Self-respect relates to the moral and societal rules established within the community of Vieques. The
process of teaching children respect for themselves comes from advice from parents, siblings, teachers and community members. Respect for parents is expected as they are portrayed as the authority figures in the home.

Respect for parents is not seen as fearing them but as listening to their advice, evaluating the outcomes, and making wise, well-reasoned decisions.

Respect for others comes along with the value of helping others. The combination of these two values brings about a unique sense of community for people in Vieques. Nora once told me, “In Vieques, no one goes to bed with an empty stomach.” The community (macrosystem level) teaches the value of generosity. If a person does not have money to buy food at the convenience store in the barrio, he/she can get the food and pay for it another time. This process is taught by parents’ example of helping people in the community, and also by helping their children with fund-raising activities or in class projects for school.

The love for their island has been a value ingrained through generations. Even though people have left and continue to leave the island looking for better financial status, many of them return. The love for their land is taught to children through the vigils they attend as a family and at the civil disobedience camp, where they learn about the history of Vieques and the environmental effects of the military practices of the United States Navy. Parents have also taken their children to the military base so that they can see first-hand the devastation the Navy has caused with their bombing, and they encourage their children to decide for themselves what they feel is best for their land. One parent taught these
lessons of love for the island by making the sacrifice of committing civil
disobedience, being arrested, and serving at least one month of jail time in a
federal prison on the island of Puerto Rico.

The values of the families from Vieques have been presented and
intertwined in an attempt to describe how the process of wellness has been passed
from one generation to the other. From the biocultural perspective, these values
determine the means by which the intricate processes of wellness are shared in a
multidirectional fashion. The first family (See Figure 6) has supported their
family wellness by incorporating two crucial components from the exosystem into
their micro- and mesosystems. Those components are Milagros’s maternal
grandfather and paternal grandmother. They maintain daily contact with Nora and
her daughters, supporting each other throughout life events. Milagros’s
interactions with them occur on a daily basis. Grandmother calls daily to make
sure the girls are doing well. Milagros often eats dinner at her grandmother’s
house and visits her daily. Grandfather provides transportation to sports and
musical practices and is always looking after his granddaughters at school. These
grandparents have become part of Milagros’s microsystem.

Grandfather also provides much support for Nora, such as picking her up
from the port and offering food in the mornings or evenings when she returns
from college. Church is another important component that has been integral to
their well-being. Nora’s involvement with church began when she was a little girl
and her daughters are currently following the same path. Her faith in God and
continuous involvement in church activities is part of her daily life, giving her the internal strength to continue moving forward despite the numerous adversities she and her family have faced. From a macrosystem level, cultural values that have supported the development of wellness for this family include religion, education, and the hard work.

Figure 6  Circles of wellness for the Amapola family.

In the second family (See Figure 7), the paternal grandparents have moved from the exosystem level to the mesosystem as they care for Ana Luz when her parents go shopping in Puerto Rico and maintain contact with her on a regular
basis, Maritsa’s biological mother gave her away to a woman in the neighborhood. Her source of strength came from within as her foster mother never showed affection toward her and had very strict and controlling rules at home. Maritsa has pulled in from the exosystem her source of strength and protection. Her friends and faith in God have represented an important source of wellness and therefore are an intricate component of her microsystem. Cultural values that have supported Maritsa’s, Pedro’s, and Ana Luz’s wellness include hard work, faith in God, and family unity.

![Diagram of systems levels](image)

*Figure 7* Circles of wellness for the Roses family.
The third family (See Figure 8) in this study is very interesting in that they have incorporated the couple that provided child care for their daughters as an essential component of their microsystem. The interactions of this child care couple with Carmen, the youngest daughter, have made and continue to make a great impact on her life. The interactions among parents, childcare providers, and children have created a scaffold in terms of its complexity. Even now, as a 16-year-old, Carmen shares and looks for advice from the people she refers to as her "second parents". Carmen has also incorporated her middle sister, Maria, as a strong source of wellness support. Extended family, as represented by father's brother and his family, has also been incorporated from an exosystem level to a microsystem level. Families see each other on almost a daily basis. Their children have played and studied together and shared vacation trips as a big family. The macrosystem-level cultural values that support this family's wellness are generosity, family unity, financial responsibility, and the freedom to make choices.

Although the parents from the fourth family (See Figure 9) didn't have a strong support to build upon, they developed their own strategies and strength from the support and interactions between each other. Jose B. and Maria P. feel very proud of their accomplishments because what they have and what they have accomplished have been from their own efforts, determination, and work. As a family, they have incorporated religion within the micro- and mesosystem level. Religion and faith in God are what moved this family toward wellness.
cultural values they have incorporated from the macrosystem, and others developed by themselves to support their wellness, include self-determination, self-sufficiency and perseverance.

Figure 8 Circles of wellness for the Flamboyan family.
Figure 9 Circles of wellness for the Gardenia family

The processes of teaching children how to become stronger take place in multiple environments involve interactions among many individuals within and outside of the family nucleus, the transference of some external sources into the family system, and regular teaching across their life span. In the next chapter, I will describe and compare the themes and values specific to these four families in relation to interviews and information gathered from members of the community.
CHAP ER V
Voices From The Community

When you stand up and say “I can do it”, you can change the world in front of you

Luis

In this chapter I will present the most significant community values which, although similar to the ones described by the families on the previous chapter are presented from a different perspective. Interviews with individuals from the community as well as information gathered through two focus groups have provided a rich source of information that clarifies, defines, and supports some of the views presented in the previous chapter. Therefore, this chapter represents what Ely et al., (1991) described as the triangulation process, which establishes correlations among the various sources of information. The community’s values, although similar to those described by the families, are seen from a different perspective.

The Strength of a Woman

Some of the participants described their mothers or grandmothers as the figures in their childhood who provided the strength and force necessary to move on in life. Luis’s father died when he was about ten years old. He describes how the lessons of strength and determination he learned from his mother have helped him keep a positive attitude and been instrumental in accomplishing his goals.
My mother taught me that I could do it. She only had a third grade education, she didn’t have a job. The only thing she had was her social security check and that’s how she pushed us, and we were four boys, four devils. She moved us forward. She had a small stature. She wasn’t a large, strong woman that could easily punch and knock down someone, no. That woman was fragile but had a strong character. She always amazed me.

Some of the community’s women are living examples of that internal strength and determination. Zaida’s son was born with a congenital kidney condition. Because of the lack of specialized medical services in Vieques, she had to take him to the island of Puerto Rico every Monday of his first six years of life. Although she received support from her family and the municipal government, the lack of financial resources and her discomfort when traveling by boat created a great challenge. Her determination and love for her son helped her get through this difficult situation.

I had the support of my family. I also had help from Chapter One from school and from Legal Services. And my friends sometimes gave me a little bit of money that I saved. I picked up aluminum cans all around Vieques. I picked up a lot of aluminum. I walked the entire Barrio Esperanza and downtown during the festivals. I used to take plastic bags and fill them with aluminum cans. I sold the aluminum and used the money when I had to travel with my son and to buy food.

[El apoyo de mi familia, el Capítulo Uno de la escuela, Servicios Legales que me ayudó. Y mis amistades que dos o tres chavitos me daban y yo los guardaba. Yo recogía potes, recogía latas en todo Vieques. Yo recogía mucho aluminio. Yo caminaba toda la Esperanza, todo el pueblo cuando había patronales. Yo me llevaba bolsas de plástico y las llenaba de latas de]
Fela has a son with mental illness. Mental health services in Vieques are very limited. When he falls into a more disorganized and disruptive mental state, usually resulting in problems with the law, he needs to be hospitalized. Because resources for hospitalized interventions are available only on the island of Puerto Rico, Fela’s son was separated from his family during his hospitalizations. The distance between the islands and the family’s poor economic situation limits their opportunities to visit their loved ones when they are hospitalized in Puerto Rico. When Fela went to visit her son at the hospital, she didn’t know that she needed to have an identification card in order to see him. This is how Fela was able to quickly think of solutions on her visit to the hospital.

Hospital visits are only allowed on Wednesdays and Sundays. You have to have a special permit to see the patient. And I told them, “But I am his mother.” And they told me, “Well you need this and that.” I asked them, “What do I need to get an ID card?” They told me, “A picture.” I sat down and because I always carry my knitting stuff, I pulled out my scissors and cut a picture from an old card I had from Florida. Then I waited in line and told them, “Here is the picture.” And they were surprised because they didn’t see me go outside to get a picture done or anything. They made the card for me right away and I was able to see my son. But you have to make it work.

[Aquí solamente lo puedes ver los miércoles y los domingos. Y tiene que tener un permiso especial. Y yo se lo dije a ellos “bueno yo soy la mama de él” Y me dijeron “a pues mire usted necesita esto y lo otro” Y yo les dije “que yo necesito para sacar esta tarjetita” Y me dijeron “un retrato.” Y yo me senté y como yo siempre ando con mis cosas de tejer, saqué mis tijeras le corte un retrato de una tarjeta vieja de allá de la Florida y voy hago la línea y le digo ahí esta el retrato.” Y se sorprendió, ella no se pudo ir a sacar retrato, ella ha estado ahí. Ahí mismo me la preparo y pude ver mi nene. Pero tu tienes que hacer tu las cosas, tu sabes.]
Fela’s lessons in problem-solving and using wisely what she knows and has learned in life have been a lifesaver for her daughter. Her daughter used to guide people who were going into the Navy base to participate in civil disobedience. Once, as her daughter was trying to get out of the military practice area, some military guards detected her and started chasing her. This is how Fela recounts her daughter’s experience and how her mother’s lessons helped her survive that situation.

That girl used to take people [to the military base] from the civil disobedience group. She took people all the way to the firing range and then she came back without being caught. One time she climbed a tree because they were chasing her and they were saying, “It’s a bitch, it’s a woman, man, sheet.” She told me, “Mom, I almost made a mistake because I wanted to answer them back when they were down there looking for me.” She was carrying pepper spray and sprayed it on herself. The dog could not follow her trail all the way up to the tree. She told me that she almost told them, “So what, I am a woman, and I am better than you.” She told me that she remembered my advice that sometimes it is better to stay quiet and afterwards you can laugh about it. But stay quiet because there are times that you cannot speak, sometimes it is better to stay in silence.

And she told me, “Mom, in that occasion I followed your advice. I thought, what would my mother would do in a situation like this one? Stay quiet, OK, shut up.”

[Esas muchachita llevaba gente de la desobediencia civil, llevaba gente hasta allá hasta el campo de tiro y venía y no la cogían. Una vez se subió a un árbol porque la persiguieron y ellos decían “it’s a beatch, it’s a woman, man, sheet.” Ella me dijo “mamí por poco meto las patas porque estaba a punto de contestarles, ellos allá abajo buscándome.” Y ella andaba con pimienta y se hecho y el perro no la siguió pa arriba del árbol. Ella dice que por poco les dice “so what I am a woman and I am better than you.” Y ella me dice que se acordaba de mis consejos que a veces es mejor callar y te ríes después. Pero cállate, ahí veces que no se puede hablar, a veces ahí que mantener silencio. Y me dice “mamí en esa pues seguí tus consejos. Yo pensé que haría mamí en estos momentos, callarse la boca. Esta bien, cállate.”]
The determination, self-confidence, goal-orientation, work ethic, coping strategies, internal loci of control, and problem-solving skills possessed by these women have been documented extensively in resiliency literature (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001, Garmezy, 1983, Luthar & Zigler, 1991, Werner & Smith, 1982). These women’s personal characteristics have been passed on to their children over time. Children value those lessons, as they have been milestones in the development of the internal strength they have used to move forward in life. In Fela’s daughter’s case, her mother’s lessons helped her overcome a very difficult situation. Although the social structures in these individuals’ macrosystem include a lack of specialized medical services, mental health institutions’ policies, and lack of employment resulting in high levels of poverty, these women have been able to overcome these obstacles. One of their sources of support comes from the exosystem level, as extended family becomes involved in supporting each other.

These findings correlate with those of the four families interviewed. For the four families as well as for the individuals presented in this chapter, a caring adult figure is crucial in the development of protective characteristics. Individuals depend greatly on the support of their extended families in order to maintain their wellness. In terms of the biocological model, families and community from Vieques bring the component of extended family from the exosystem closer to the mesosystem level to support their wellness.
My Gift To You Is, To Be Humble

The parents I interviewed in this chapter shared a common value of love and protection for their children. They experienced from their parents or caregiver (grandmothers) a sense of protection and belonging. For Luis, that affection and love came not only from his mother but from aunts, uncles and other people. Although at his home the expressions of love were not articulated, he always felt loved. As a father, Luis tells his children how much he loves them.

I verbalize [the love I feel] with my children. I kiss my children, I tell them that I love them. When I call them I tell them, “Be careful, I love you.” I kiss my oldest son. But at my house we didn’t use to do that. But that didn’t mean that there was absence of love. Maybe we didn’t verbalize it but we felt it.

[Yo lo verbalizo con mis hijos, yo beso a mis hijos, les digo te quiero, lo llamo “cuidate, te quiero mucho.” Al mayor lo beso. Pero en mi casa eso no se acostumbraba mucho pero eso no quiere decir que eso era ausencia de. Quizás no lo verbalizábamos pero adentro lo sentíamos.]

Another value important in Luis’s home is humility. He explains that his children have learned from his wife the value of sharing with others. As he describes his children, his definition of being humble reflects the values of kindness, cooperation, and a sense of helping others:

One of the things that I believe most is to be humble, to be humble, to be humble. And I have taught that to my children. I want my children to be humble. My children are very humble. Whatever they have, they share with everyone. They don’t have aspirations of being rich. The wealth they have is the wealth of being good to others. There is nothing better than when people tell you, “Your children are so good, they are so humble.” And I respond, “I am a fortunate man.”

[Una de las cosas que yo mas creo es la humildad, la humildad, la humildad. Y eso yo se lo he señalado a ellos. Yo quiero que ellos sean humildes. Han sido humildes, lo de ello lo comparten con todo el mundo,
For Patria, her feelings of love for her daughters are embedded within the values of independence, self-determination, and understanding. According to Patria, love and understanding among parents and children is an important family component. Her philosophy is that her children are not hers, that she has "borrowed" them because they belong to God the Father.

You have to consider with much love, comprehension, and understanding that our children are not ours, we have borrowed them. That's how I have been able to let go to my two daughters, telling myself, I have borrowed them. They belong to God the Father. That's why you have to let them go. And now that I am alone, it's not easy, but you have to let them go.

Understanding

The values of self-sufficiency and efficacy are important traits she believes parents need to demonstrate in order to promote their children's wellness.

According to Patria, parents need to let their children live their own life. Children have to learn how to earn their living.

When you let them go, you start understanding what it is that they want to do. And you give them love and you can talk about things such as, look I don't like this. But they have to live their lives. You have to accept it. Most of us, Puerto Ricans, are very close to our family, to our children. You know they are like little chicks that we want to protect from so many things. Although we lived our lives the way we wanted, when it comes to our children's lives then we want to protect them constantly. That's how we comprehend when we understand them.
Cuando los dejas ir vas comprendiendo lo que ellos quieren hacer y le das amor y puedes hablarle sobre por ejemplo, esto no me gusta. Pero tienen que hacer su vida. Tienes que aceptarlo. Y los puertorriqueños la mayoría somos bien apretados a la familia, a los hijos. Tú sabes, son como los polletos, queremos protegerlos de tantas cosas. Aunque nosotros vivimos la vida como quisimos pero cuando es la vida de nuestros hijos pues como que uno quiere protegerlos constantemente. Ahí viene la comprensión al entenderlos.

Sonia, the mother of a child currently attending the Head Start Program, presents another example of teaching kids love, self-efficacy, and competency.

Sonia’s child has a genetic condition that has compromised her ability to walk independently. Sonia is very dedicated to her child, takes her to all her appointments, and experiences satisfaction in every single improvement her child makes. Sonia’s continuous support and interactions promote her child’s strengths and resilient characteristics.

The doctor told me he felt very proud of me. That he didn’t expect my child to be doing so well because of her condition. And what is important is that my child is invested in getting better. My child tells me, “Mommy I am going to walk and you are going to give me a bicycle and a scooter.” And I say, “I will give it to you, you can be sure I will do that.” My child is strong. My child says, “God the Father help me. You think I can do it, God?” The other day my child stood up without holding onto anything for a little over two minutes. I feel very proud of my child. I love my three daughters equally but I tell my daughters that I am showing more love to the little one because even the doctors have told me to demonstrate more affection for my youngest one, and especially to demonstrate love and support from all of us.

El doctor me dijo que se sentía muy orgulloso de mi, y que el no esperaba, para la condición que tiene la nena, el no esperaba la mejoría tan grande que tiene esa nena. Y lo importante es que ella tiene mucho interés en recuperarse. Ella me dice “mami voy a caminar y tu me vas a regalar una bicicleta y un escuter.” Y yo le digo “te lo voy a regalar si, tenlo seguro que yo te lo voy a regalar.” Ella es fuerte, dice “Papa Dios ayúdame ¿Verdad que yo puedo Papa Dios?” El otro día estuvo dos
The value of raising children with love has also been addressed by the four families' interviews in the previous chapter. All participants believe in the concept of cooperation among family members, which promotes mutual understanding and therefore wellness. The resilient characteristics parents promote in their children are what Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) described as the dispositions, developmental resources, and competency characteristics of the person. Those characteristics have been nurtured by these parents through dynamic exchanges with their children, the extended family, and the medical staff. Sources from the exosystem, the pediatrician, have also influenced, through dynamic interactions with Sonia and her child, the promotion of wellness. This process of wellness has been developed in different contexts and presented consistently over an extended time frame.

**Solidarity of Love**

Love has also been taught as a value that extends to the community in the form of respect. Luis’s mother taught him the fundamental principles, which are respect, humility, and sharing. Luis describes how he and members of the community exercise the value of respect as an expression of the solidarity of love. I learned that at home, to respect everyone and to share, that solidarity of love. When someone she knew died I had to go with her to the vigils, we had to reciprocate. I remember when someone from the family died we had to turn off the radio and the television. At my house we had a time for
mournig. And still now in Vieques when a funeral is passing by people close the doors of their houses or businesses. It’s a sign of respect. I have seen new generations of business people not doing it. The other day I was participating in a funeral and I saw that one of them did it. It is logical, it is passing from generation to generation, and there are some things that stay behind and others that continue.

Yo recibí en mi casa esa enseñanza. Respeto a todo el mundo y de compartir, de solidaridad, de amor. Tan pronto había alguien que se moría yo tenía que ir con mi mamá al velorio, y había que reciprocarse eso. Yo recuerdo cuando en casa se moría alguien, había que apagar el radio y el televisor no se podía prender. Yo no sé si tú has notado o has visto en Vieques todavía la gente cuando pasa un entierro la gente cierra la puerta. Si esa es una práctica aquí. Por respeto si por eso las cierran. Los otros días yo estaba participando en un entierro vi que uno no lo hizo. Pues es lógico esto pasando de generación en generación y ahí unas cosas que se quedan, otras que le dan continuidad.

Fela exercises flexibility in her thinking and in the way she does things. That’s how she has earned the friendship and respect of many people. She listens to other’s opinions because in doing so she can learn more. Fela has practiced and taught her children and grandchildren to respect their elders and to approach them with love and compassion. Her mother was 76 years old when she decided to move from Florida to live with Fela in Vieques. Her mother had diabetes and her behavior was like that of a little girl. Fela found ways to support her mother’s needs with gentle requests and by explaining things to her grandchildren.

When my mother came I noticed that although she wasn’t young, she was 76 years old, she behaved like a little girl. She used to tell my granddaughters, “Where did you get that doll? That doll is mine.” Then my granddaughter cried and came to tell me about what great grandma had said. And I used to tell my granddaughter, “Come here sweetheart, your grandma had a doll when she was little just like you. You know that she is very old. Let her borrow it because she is very old but now she is like a little girl.” And my granddaughter said “OK grandma.” And I learned to live and to teach my family how to live with my mother.”
Entonces cuando vino mi mamá yo note, era joven porque lo que tenía era 76 años. Pero mi mamá ya estaba como una niña pequeña, le decía a la nietecita “esa muñeca de donde te la sacaste, esa muñeca es mía.” Entonces la nena lloraba y me daban la queja. Y yo le decía a mi nieta “ven acá corazón, abuela tenía una muñeca cuando era chiquita como tu, tu sabes que ella está vieja, préstamo porque ella es una vieja pero ahora está como una nena chiquita” Y me decía la nena “a pues esta bien.” Y aprendió a vivir y enseñarle a los míos a vivir con mi mamá.

When Fela and her sister were taking care of their mother, Fela involved her children by teaching them to deal with negative situations, to love and respect, and to become part of the solution. Fela related in detail the story of her interaction with her mother, who suffered severe diabetes and refused to eat her meals or take her medication:

I remember tenderly when my sister was preoccupied because my mother didn’t want to eat and she brought her to my house. I had three of my grandchildren at home, the others were with their mother in the United States. The conversation went like this:

Sister: Look, I don’t know what to do with mother, she doesn’t want to eat breakfast and her sugar level is very high.
Fela: Don’t worry, I will give her breakfast.
Sister: I tried hard and I couldn’t get her to eat.
Fela: You will see how I have mother eat breakfast. Stand right there. Well, tell mother that you are leaving and that you are leaving her here. And stand over there and see.

I remember this with so much love and tenderness because I just came up with that idea.

Sister: Mom, do you want to stay with Fela for a bit while I go to town?
Mother: Of course.
Fela: Of course, you and I are going to have fun now. Here is your insulin for when you eat breakfast.
Mother: No, no, no, I am not going to eat breakfast.
Fela: I checked your sugar and it is high.
Mother: No, forget about that. OK but I am not going to eat breakfast.
Fela: (Calling her grandchildren and telling them), “Look, grandma has a sugar problem and she needs to eat breakfast.”
Grandchildren  We know, Grandma  We have seen you when you give her the injections.
Fela  You are going to play in the living room and I am going to ask you to play outside. I want you to play outside for a little while and then to come back. When you try to come inside your grandmother is going to tell you, “Go over there to play, your grandmother doesn’t want you to come here now.” When she says that you don’t come, stay over there because I want to see if your grandma eats breakfast and I have to prepare my plan.

Grandchildren. OK, Grandma

Sister  Mom, I am leaving. I will see you later
Fela  I am going to ask the children to go outside because I need to tell you something. I have a stomachache and I want to eat something but those children eat everything. I made oatmeal and they ate it all. They don’t let me eat. I am going to send them outside and you stand by the door and watch them for me. And if they come this way you tell them that I said that they need to stay over there. In the meantime I am going to make some oatmeal. My mother fell into my game and told me

Mother  OK, OK.
She felt important. I made the oatmeal for me and for her. And I really don’t like oatmeal but had to eat it so that my mother would eat something. Her oatmeal had to have diet sugar. And all of the sudden the children came back and I asked my mother,
Fela  Mother asked them to stay over there
Mother  Your grandmother said to stay over there, don’t come to the house until she calls you, and respect
My sister was watching from the window
Fela  Yes mother, those children eat too much and if they come here they won’t leave any oatmeal for us. I made a little bit of coffee for you. And you like the sugar that I have here. [I had a bowl with her sugar but I had put it in a regular bowl] I gave her bread, I gave her oatmeal and she drank her coffee]

[Mi mama, me acuerdo con mucho cariño que mi hermana me la trajo bien preocupada. La trajo para cuidarla. Yo tenía dos nietecitos nada más. Los otros estaban con su mamá en los Estados Unidos. Entonces un día me la trae bien preocupada “mira que yo no se que hacer con mami, no quiere desayunar y tiene la azúcar alta.” Y yo le dije “no te preocupes, yo le doy desayuno.” Y ella me dice “y yo no pude por mas que luche.” Y yo le dije “ya tu veras. Ya tu veras como yo le doy desayuno a mami. Parate ahí. Es mas di que tu te vas y que la vas a dejar aquí y parate allì pa que tu veas.” Lo recuerdo con tanto amor, con tanto cariño porque es que se me ocurrió Y ella le dijo “¿mami te quieres quedar con Fela un ratito en lo que yo voy al pueblo?” Y ella le dice “a si como no.” Y yo le dije “seguro vamos a gozar tu y yo ahora. A mis tres nietecitos los llame. Y en eso yo hablaba
con ella “pues mira aquí esta tu insulina y cuando desayunes” Y ella dice “no, no, no, yo hoy voy a desayunar” Y yo le digo “yo te chequee el azúcar y la tienes alta” Y me dice “no olvidate de eso” Y ella me dice “esta bien pero no voy a desayunar” Entonces yo llamo a mis metecitos y les digo “mira abuela tiene un problemas del azúcar y tiene que desayunar” Y los nenes me dicen “si nosotros lo sabemos abuela si nosotros te hemos visto cuando tu le pones la inyección.” Y les dice “ustedes van a estar jugando en la sala y yo los voy a mandar a jugar pa fuera Cuando ustedes se vayan pa fuera y estén allá un ratito y al ratito van a venir pa ca Cuando ustedes hacen venir pa ca abuelita les va a decir “váyanse pa ya, se tienen que quedar allá jugando que su abuela no los quiere aquí” Ustedes no vengan, se van porque es que le quiero dar desayuno a abuelita Y tengo que preparar un plan” Y los nenes me dice “esta bien abuelita” Se fue “mami me fui adelante” Y los nenes estaban jugando afuera Y yo le digo a mi mamá “voy a mandar a los nenes afuera a jugar porque le voy a decir algo Yo tengo un dolor de estomago que quiero comerme algo pero esos nenes son comelones mami Yo hice una avena y mire no me dejan, se lo comen to esos muchachitos No me dejan comer. Los voy a mandar pa fuera y usted se para en la puerta y me los vela Y si vienen pa ca le dice que se vayan, que yo dje que se queden por allá En lo que yo preparo una avena” Y ella me siguió el juego, me dice “esta bien, esta bien” Se sintió importante Hice una avena pa mi y una pa ella Y a mi que no me gusta la avena me la tuve que comer pa que mi mama comiera Y como la de ella tenía azúcar de dieta. Y de momento vienen ellos Y yo le digo a mamá “mami digale que se queden allá.” Y ella decía “mira, dijo tu abuela que se queden allá, no vengan pa la casa hasta que ella los llamen, y respeten” Y mi hermana mirando desde la ventana Y yo le dije a mamá “si mamá porque esos muchachos son comelones, si vienen pa ca nos dejan sin avena” Y le prepare una avena en un brinco Y le dije “le prepare un poquito de café Y el azúcar le gusta la de acá” Pero que yo tenía un bowl con azúcár de la de ella que yo la había echado ahí Le di pan, le di avena y se bebió el café

The lessons of wellness portrayed in these stories represent processes parents use to teach their children to respect themselves and others while practicing love and compassion. For the four families I interviewed in Chapter Four, this value of respect was embedded within the home rules and values of support to the community. The influence of Luis’s mother and the influence of Fela on her children and grandchildren demonstrate how the process of wellness
is taught from one generation to another. From a biocological perspective, individuals from the exosystem, such as grandmother and aunt, are participants in the development of wellness for Fela’s grandchildren. Grandmother and aunt are immersed in the microsystem of grandchildren, promoting more complex and richer experiences that support their wellness. The values of the outer community at a macrosystem level are supported by Luis’s mother’s lessons of respect for those who have died in the community.

*Keeping the Family United Goes Beyond Everything*

The sense of family unity is very strong for this group of Viequenses. The unity of all members in the family helps conquer very difficult times. The goal is accomplished due to everyone’s participation and effort. Daniel shared how difficult it was to survive after his father passed away, leaving a family of twelve children. He was still very young when his father died. Most of the children had to go to work.

I can tell you that when my dad died it was very hard for us because there were so many of us. And we were very poor, really poor. And many of us had to go fishing so that we could have something to eat because in those days there was nothing. I studied until fifth grade and after that I had to go fishing, working in construction, in whatever I could find. And I think that the unity of all us [the children] was what made the family stand up. Because we got together and we all put in our grain of salt, that’s how the family was able to move forward. Those times were very difficult.

(Yo te puedo decir cuando mi papá murió eso fue bien difícil y nosotros éramos muchos. Y nosotros éramos bien pobres, bastante pobres. Y muchos de nosotros tuvimos que irnos a pescar para soportarnos porque en ese tiempo no había nada. Yo fui uno que yo estudiaba hasta quinto grado y después tuve que irme a pescar, a trabajar en construcción, en lo que encontraba. Y yo creí que la unión de los hermanos eso ayudó a que la familia se levantara. Porque todos se unieron y cada cual puso su grano de sal.)
When she was young, Zaida remembers seeing her father return from the hospital. It was a happy moment for her and her family. Having the presence of her father at home was very significant for her as a child because it promoted a sense of protection and stability.

Well, from what I remember, it was very special when my dad left the hospital after some guards beat him. It was very beautiful seeing him come home. Imagine, seeing him come home after having seen him at the hospital. We were very happy. Imagine, dad was home! We lived a few months in Saint Croix. I don't know why the guards beat him because I was very young when that happened. But when he came home it was a very happy moment although he had bruises and cuts all over. It was very important to see him come home and seeing him well, seeing my little brothers happy. We were alone with my mom and there were seven of us.

Keeping the family united sometimes requires sacrifices. Fela's oldest son was 25 years old when he was found dead in Vieques. Her son was involved in some “bad business.” Fela didn’t know about it until it was too late. Her son was found hanged from a tree. She feels that the Navy had something to do with it because when the Navy came to evict them from their home, her older son put up resistance. It was declared a suicide. However, the investigation lasted three years.
in the homicide division. They found that he had three bruises on his back and there were other footprints around the tree where he was found. Forensic reports declared that he didn’t die from being hanged, and therefore it was not a suicide, but a homicide. They gave Fela the name of five suspects. Three of the suspects are dead and of the remaining two, one lives in Vieques and she sees him sometimes. For her, protecting her family is more important than anything. She decided to stop the investigation into her son’s death in order to protect and maintain her united family. Family members were talking about revenge so she didn’t want any chain of negative events to continue as a result of her son’s death. Her grandson was left without a father and his unemployed mother didn’t have the means to support him until the case was settled in court.

Collaboration, family unity, hard work, goal-orientation, being able to make difficult decisions, and positive expectations are personal characteristics learned from very difficult life experiences. These personal characteristics, integral to these participants’ personalities, could be the result of their genetic makeup, as they appear to have an easy and likable temperament. In addition to their genetic makeup, the constant interactions at various levels or contexts creates dynamic processes that influence the way individuals approach obstacles in life and build their capacity for wellness. It is interesting to note how, despite the risk factors and challenges offered by the judicial system, that at a macrosystem level Fela has been able to access the support and love she has for her family, at a microsystem level, to maintain the family unit.
Home Responsibilities and Rules

Home structure and rules have been identified as one of the protective factors that support children's wellness (Garmezy, 1983; Masten & Coasworth, 1998, Werner & Smith, 1982). Parents create an environment where a child's behavior is expected to correlate with the rules established at home. Daniel came from a family of twelve children. In his home, all children were responsible for working and collaborating to maintain the overall wellness of the family.

Each one of us had a job to do, to get water because there was no plumbing and there was no electricity. I remember that my father used to tell my brothers and my mother, he used to work in Puerto Negro which was very far away. And my brothers had to bring lunch to my father. That was about three hours walking distance. My father sent firewood to us. And at that time my father also had a piece of land that he cultivated.

When Luis's father died, his mother was left with four boys to raise by herself. Luis was the youngest when his father died, so his older brothers were responsible for watching out for him. What is interesting about Luis's family is that even now as an adult, one of his brothers still watches out for him.

We started working early on. For example, when my father died I was ten years old. We all started to look for jobs, some sooner than others. My brothers have always looked out for me, all of them, all of them. That's why I am telling you that I feel so proud of them and of my mother. Even these days I have a brother that still watches out for me.
Luis’s children have learned this lesson of support and responsibility for each other. His oldest son is married and working, but he also helps his younger brother who is still in college. One of Fela’s sons, who lives in the United States, has asked her to send his younger brother, who has a mental illness, to live with him. Fela’s son realizes the stresses she is under while taking care of her five grandchildren, her ill husband, and her youngest son. The values of responsibility, cooperation, and support have been passed on to Fela’s and Luis’s sons as their actions reflect their resilient qualities. From the biocological model perspective, parents’ teaching of these lessons have built in their children unique characteristics that now support positive interactions that promote the wellness of the family.

When the Community Gives Its All

The community of Vieques is very small. Everyone knows everyone which, depending on the circumstances, can be positive or negative. When I attended community activities, it was very common to see the social worker greeting all the students she knew, those who had gone through her school and the ones who were currently enrolled. This social worker’s interactions with these young people from Vieques had a maternalistic but very supportive flavor as they engaged in conversations regarding their recent activities in school and in life in general. When the conversation was finished, the social worker reminded each
youth to do well and let them know in a teasing manner that she was still watching out for them. That sense of commitment, making sure the younger population felt supported and understood, was very refreshing for me to see. I was able to see that many resources and individuals at the exosystem level, including teachers, social workers, and priests, become closer to the child’s immediate context in order to provide the support needed.

Patria had three daughters. One of her daughters died in a car accident on Vieques and was transported by airplane to the island of Puerto Rico for emergency care, as those services are not available on Vieques. The accident occurred at night. When Patria traveled to Puerto Rico to see her daughter, she had already been transported to the Medical Center in the metropolitan area. Finding transportation from the town of Fajardo to the medical center was almost impossible. There was no public transportation available at night and she waited three hours until the same ambulance that transported her daughter to the medical center arrived to pick up another person who had been transported by airplane from Vieques. The driver of the ambulance gave her a ride to the medical center. By the time Patria arrived at the hospital, her daughter was already dead.

This experience has been one of the most difficult ones for her to overcome and she is still grieving the loss of her daughter. One of the factors that helped her move through this painful process was the support she received from her family and from the entire community of Vieques. Her daughter’s body was scheduled to be transported via ferry to the island of Vieques. What occurred at
the port in Fajardo, Puerto Rico and in Vieques was an outstanding demonstration
of solidarity, humanity, and love

Three days later I brought her back. The most beautiful, it wasn’t beautiful
because it is not beautiful. The most beautiful experience was when I was
calving on the ferry in the afternoon. We arrived in Fajardo first to
transport her on the ferry and so we were waiting for the funeral car so
that I could travel with her. The funeral car had an accident in Luquillo
and so we had to wait until they switched her to another funeral car. The
ferry was leaving for Vieques and all the Viequenses that were at the port,
the truck drivers said that the ferry was not going to move until my
daughter arrived, even if they had to wait until the next day. They really
supported me. I felt that I was going to be all right. When we arrived here,
all the town of Vieques was waiting for me. I traveled in the funeral car to
La Esperanza. When we were driving through the embankment I told the
driver, “Conde, why there are so many cars here in La Esperanza, what is
going on?” And he stared at me. You understand it was the support not
only from my family, it was the support from all Vieques that was there
with me. Do you understand? That’s something about Vieques that you
don’t see in other places. Nobody leaves you alone, you know

Currently, support comes from Patna’s interactions with the people from
the community that visit the civil disobedience camp. She keeps her mind
occupied by supporting the struggle to remove the Navy from Vieques. The
interactions with people in the community at the civil disobedience camp and in
her neighborhood give her strength to overcome her pain from the loss of her
daughter

This struggle has helped me a lot. I think of my daughter but I don’t have
much time because, you see, I am in this struggle. If I would be at home, I
would be all depressed. It helps me being here with these friends. They
don’t realize it but they are helping me. If I would have lost her in
California, maybe I would have decided to commit suicide or something.
Do you understand? People are too cold there. Since I lost her in Vieques I
have had the support of the community and that helps enormously. Here
you feel the strength that the community gives you. It is not that they say,
“1 am sorry.” They look at you and with their eyes they tell you, “I am
here”, without saying a word

Patria’s support came not only from her family (meso- and exosystems), but
from the entire community of Vieques and even from people who were not from
Vieques but were waiting to transport their merchandise on the ferry
(macrosystem). Even with the obstacles she had to overcome, such as the lack of
emergency services in Vieques, lack of transportation to the metropolitan area,
and limited options to transport her daughter's body back to the island of Vieques,
she felt supported and protected by the community. Rhodes and Hoey (1994)
found that when community members celebrate an individual’s accomplishments
It helps promote resilient or wellness qualities for that individual. In Patra’s situation, the community collectively joined her to mourn the loss of her daughter.

The same situation occurred during my visit in Vieques. A little 5-year-old girl died of malignant tumors she developed in her brain. As I attended her funeral, hundreds of people from all over the island were at the funeral home, at church, at the civil disobedience camp, and at the cemetery. The schools closed early so that people, adults, and children, could attend the funeral. The lessons of community alliance, social support, and solidarity are extraordinary in Vieques.

The cultural values of solidarity and support demonstrated by the community of Vieques represent a lesson to the young population and an affirmation to the adults that the values inherent in their community are still important and are practiced. These values of solidarity and support promote personal, collective, and relational wellness (Prilleltensky, 2001). Personal wellness was promoted for Patra because the community’s response was so healing for her during that difficult time. The collective and relational wellness of individuals in the community enhanced the enduring beliefs that support everyone’s sense of participation, belonging, and wellness.

The Power of Believing

Religion and faith in God are common values for the families and community members that I interviewed. For some of the community members, faith in God is the most important value and second is the family. They feel it is...
their responsibility to instill Christian values in their children. Pablo, the father of a preschool child attending the Head Start Program, defines his Christian values:

Important components in a family include having Christian principles. To search for God, which is the most important thing. To guide our children through God’s path with fear and teaching them that God is what is most important and after that the family. God is above everything.

Outcomes are perceived as lessons from God. Their faith in God gives them the strength to face adversity without falling into despair. Lourdes, a mother of a preschool child at the Head Start Program, describes how her faith in God supported her belief that things were going to be fine and gave her strength to accept a different outcome. When she was pregnant with her last child, genetic tests determined that the baby was Mongoloid. She had support from her husband, her family, and church to accept the news and carry the child through birth.

Supposedly my child was Mongoloid. When they gave me the news, news that is not easy to take, I was five months pregnant. And they did some tests and sent them out and the tests were positive. And the truth is that my child was Mongoloid because my baby was not moving. And thanks to God I had the support of my entire family and my husband’s family. And my child was born normal. That’s my testimony. But my child was coming that way and God made a miracle. You know, I needed a lot of support because it was not easy to take that kind of news alone. And I had the support from my husband from the beginning, the support from church, from my family, and that’s what gave me strength to face it. And my child is now a pistol.

[Que supuestamente venia Mongoloide. Y en el momento que me dan la noticia, una noticia que no es fácil. Yo tenía pa 5 meses de embarazo y me hicieron unos análisis y lo enviaron allá afuera y salió positivo. Y en verdad el nene era mongoloide porque el nene no se me movía Y gracias]
a Dios pues yo tuve el apoyo de toda mi familia más la de mi esposo. Y mi nene nació sano. Ese es mi testimonio. Pero el nene venía, y el Señor obró. 

Tú sabes que necesite bastante apoyo porque no era fácil tu sola recibir esa noticia. Y tuve el apoyo de mi esposo desde el principio, de la iglesia, de mi familia, y eso fue lo que me dio esa fuerza para yo poder. Y el nene hasta ahora, candela.

Other community members claim to possess acquired characteristics, such as self-empowerment, determination, and a vision of a positive outcome that have helped them move forward in conjunction with their faith in God. Luis’s spiritual strength comes from within, from what he believes he can do to benefit the people of Vieques.

First I am Catholic, I believe in God. I do not actively participate at church. What moves me is not material things. In other words, I don’t have any material interest in all this, my interest is for the humanity. I believe that just by thinking that I am fighting for this town that possibly I will benefit from its development. To think that I can contribute to bring some stability to this town, at least I think that gives me spiritual strength.

Fela’s strength comes from within. She is a very strong woman who has always fought for what she believes is right and fair for her family and her community.

That’s the way my life has been, trying to mend one situation or another. I look for a solution to everything, to everything in life. And always have a happy face during hard moments. If things get difficult, I pray to God. I am a person with a lot of faith, and I pray to God to give me love directly.
from Jesus’s heart. To give me from the love that Jesus had because God is love.

[But as I live my life, I am trying to mend one situation with another. I turn to Jesus for a solution, for all my life and always at the same time because it is good and because if the things are difficult, I ask God, I am a person of much faith, and I ask God to give me love directly from Jesus. That love Jesus had, because God is love.]

These individuals demonstrate personal characteristics, similar to those presented by the four families interviewed, which are critical in the development of wellness. They are intelligent people who demonstrate self-efficacy. In other words, they believe they can change things. Opportunities and resources within the environment have allowed them to exercise their power and control (Prilleltensky, et al., 2001). They have a positive outlook on the future, determination, and are sensitive, compassionate individuals. From the biocological model, the personal characteristics (Brondenbrenner & Morris, 1998) these individuals have developed support their interactions with individuals from different environments, therefore promoting the development of stronger resilient characteristics.

*My Favorite Schoolteacher*

Education is another common value shared by the four families I interviewed, as well as of people from the community. Education is perceived as a tool for success and self-sufficiency, but it is also perceived as a tool individuals can use to attain social justice and equality. Luis’s mother made sure that all four of her children finished school. In his household, going to school was a very
important value. In fact, when I asked Luis about one positive experience that he remembered, he quickly thought of his graduation day because he was able to reach his goals. His mother’s influence on her four children was so strong that they all passed the value of education on to their children.

In my family, in terms of my brothers, they have followed a pattern. I have a brother, the oldest one; his oldest son is an engineer. His second son is an engineer, the other one is a therapist and his daughter is studying psychology at the university. Or I think that she finished it. My second brother although he had a son with disabilities because he was born deaf, he tried to guide him. But his older daughter studied something related with tourism and she is well-prepared. My third brother has five daughters and all of them have studied in college. They all have a social vision of this struggle. They have no interest in taking advantage of people but rather in being just common people. And my children are following the same pattern. And we have learned that from our mother.

I interviewed two schoolteachers who were recommended by two of the children interviewed from the families presented in Chapter Four. The children selected these teachers because they enjoyed their classes and because of the teachers’ effectiveness in their classrooms. According to the two schoolteachers that I interviewed, their goal of education is that “they hope that through education children can develop their skills to the maximum potential for their own
good and for the good of the society." In order to accomplish this goal, one of the things they need is to keep children in school.

Ms. Torres, a middle school teacher encourages students to enter the classroom even if they are late. The time she spends in the classroom teaching individual students stretches far so that she can do many things. The process she employs to accomplish this goal of helping children stay in school is that, although she has one hour of class per group, she spends half an hour working on that day’s lesson, and the rest of the time supporting what they have learned and working individually with students.

Another support available to middle school students is the school counselor. She is the right hand or support for everything. The school counselor organizes baseball teams for children in the community. In addition, the ninth grade teacher’s team is very united and she feels compelled to look out for the students, as it is the last year they will be at the middle school.

For Ms. Rodriguez, a high school teacher, support for keeping children in school comes from the structure the school has in place. The school supports different organizations, such as the honor society, a youth group from the commerce division, and a youth group from the government office. These organizations provide opportunities for leadership, competition among groups, and social experiences with students from the island of Puerto Rico. Tutoring classes are offered for students after class. The school purchased a dictionary program for the computer in her classroom; she bought the encyclopedia program
Students use these programs because there is one computer available for them in the classroom. There is also a computer lab in the school.

After my interview with Ms. Torres, I summarized the characteristics and teaching practices that make her a good teacher. Perhaps without realizing it, she is an incredible source of wellness for her students.

1. She recognizes and values each student as an individual.
2. She uses humor to turn kids around and to encourage them to stay on task.
3. Once the student comes to her class, she starts working with them during the entire academic year, supporting them and giving them opportunities.
4. She is able to adapt her tasks and responsibilities to the school’s new schedule. Although there is more work for her, she can see the benefits of it. The essence of being a good teacher is to maintain a balance.
5. She promotes hope and encourages kids. It is very important for her to promote hope and encourage every student to finish high school. She tells her students that she wants to go to their high school graduation. It’s a way to stimulate and encourage them to stay in school.
6. She acknowledges every kid in her classroom. Every single young person that comes through her classroom is her neighbor. She feels that she has supported them in some way, even with a word. If in the future she sees that the young person takes the wrong path, at least she
has the peace of mind that she gave that person at least something, that
she planted something there. She knows that they didn’t go through
life without being noticed. For her this is very important. It is very
clear as one of her goals.

7 She listens to students. She has learned that listening to students is
very important. This is how she learned this lesson.

Every little head that you see in this classroom has a need. A month ago I
had an experience with a student who kept interrupting me while I was
teaching my class. I told him, “You have to wait. When I finish I will
listen to you, but you have to wait.” When I finished I went over to where
he was, and he wanted to say something related to what I was explaining.
And he told me, “You are like my mother, you never listen to me.” When
that child told me those words, words of wisdom for me, I felt horrible. I
don’t even know how to describe it. I sat next to him and told him, “Look,
the next time you want to say something, say, “Ms., listen to me.” And he
told me, “Thank you, Ms.” Two or three days later he called and told me,
“Ms., I am this way because my mother never pays attention to me.” And
then we talked about some personal things and I understood that I have to
listen.

[Cada cabezita que usted ve en el salón de clase tiene una necesidad. Yo
tuve una experiencia hace un mes de un estudiante que yo dando la clase y
el me interrumpía. Yo le digo “tienes que esperar, cuando yo termine
yo te escucho pero tienes que esperar.” Cuando termino voy donde él y él
quería decir algo de lo que yo estaba explicando. Y el me contesto a mi
“ usted es como mi mamá, que nunca me escuchas.” Cuando ese niño me
dijo esas palabras, palabras con luz para mí, yo me sentí horrible. Bueno
no sé lo puedo describir. Yo me senté al lado de él y le dije “mira la
próxima vez tú me vas a decir miss, escúchame.” Y él me dijo “gracias
miss.” Y como dos o tres días después me llamo a mi pupitre y me dijo
“miss, yo soy así porque mami no me atiende.” Y entonces conversamos
unas cosas personales y entendí que tengo que escuchar.

8. She feels responsible for her students’ well-being. She talks with the
school counselor and tries to look after the kids who are getting into
drugs.
She encourages parents. She recommends that parents let their kids go away from Vieques once they are done with high school because otherwise that child will not grow.

She uses her time wisely. She feels that teachers from Vieques give everything they have when it relates to teaching, and use their time wisely.

She removes herself from negative influences. She uses a strategy of removing herself from the teachers that are promoting conflict. In the morning she shares some time with one teacher friend and they don’t talk about negative issues. She goes to her classroom early and gets the books and everything ready for her students.

The literature on resilience (Doll & Lyon, 1998; Garmezy, 1983, Masten & Coastworth, 1998, Rhodes & Hocy, 1994, Shapiro, 1996) states that school environments can promote self-efficacy, academic competencies, self-control, and autonomy; they also encourage children to acquire and apply these tools more effectively in their environment, therefore supporting their wellness. An adult, such as a teacher or a counselor who interacts with the child frequently, can promote the development of positive personal characteristics, a sense of hope for the future, a feeling that someone cares about them, self-esteem and empowerment. These qualities can create a turning point in building a foundation of wellness in the life of that child. These positive resources, such as Mrs. Torres, from the mesosystem level, exert an incredible influence on the way children
perceive themselves and their environment, thus promoting the development of resilient characteristics that help them succeed in the future.

The Power of Resistance

The civil disobedience movement has served as an instrument of internal strength for many Viequenses. Becoming involved in the struggle to get the Navy out of Vieques has caused many divisions but also strong alliances between the residents of Vieques. This alliance has created networks of support, such as the Alliance of Women from Vieques and the Alliance of Fishermen. The Alliance of Women from Vieques supports women who have been diagnosed with cancer and their families.

During my visits to the civil disobedience camp, it was common to see people bringing food to share. Others stopped by to help with construction jobs, such as working with cement blocks for building a new camp site, painting, cleaning, or answering the telephone. In fact, the night before I left the island, I brought some food items to one of the civil disobedience camps. Those items were received with much gratitude.

The civil disobedience movement in Vieques has incorporated lessons of peace and justice from other countries. It represents a peaceful alternative that supports the wellness of an entire community. Luis explains his point of view regarding the peaceful movement.

I think that after Gandhi and Martin Luther King, this struggle presents as an alternative, as a different perspective for conflict management. It is a violent world where people solve things by shooting others. Like the other day someone killed a lot of people. And see, the solution was to kill that
person And so the fact that people can see other ways to resolve problems, that violence is not the only alternative, I think that that is our contribution, especially for other places.

Luis feels satisfaction that although he has not been recognized that way, he was the person that initiated the civil disobedience movement in Vieques. He started the first civil disobedience in 1964 with a group of college students. He has been arrested several times and has organized groups to participate in civil disobedience. He feels satisfaction that his youngest son has joined him in the fight to get the Navy out of Vieques. In fact, his son has been arrested for civil disobedience as well.

According to Luis, women from Vieques are a source of strength for the civil disobedience movement. His wife can easily get a group of 30 women together when they can hardly find ten men. In his view, women from Vieques are more conscientious, sensible, and sensitive to the abuses from the Navy than men are. Women also demonstrate more solidarity. Once again in this chapter, women are recognized as the energy and strength that support wellness for the community.

The value of justice is intertwined with religious beliefs. Lessons from Fela's father, who was a church minister, have helped her understand some of the
reasons she is fighting to get the Navy out of Vieques. Her interpretation of those lessons was not necessarily in agreement with her father's view of the military activity in Vieques. However, she used the same tools her father gave her, and taught her father how to see things from a different perspective. The process of wellness comes full circle as Fela teaches her father her points of view about the military practices in Vieques and how those practices go against the lessons he taught her from the Bible.

Fela: You taught me to always go by what the Bible says.
Father: No, no you cannot be against the Americans.
Fela: Dad, you taught me to have faith and to believe in God. The Bible tells me that the person that commits suicide will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. If we allow the bombing to continue and to contaminate us, we are co-conspirator of a suicide. We are going to die because if we commit suicide then we cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. Now, you know that and you allow for continued bombing which continues making us ill. There is nothing against Americans, I have two sons in the Army. And the Bible says that God doesn't take for innocent the guilty one and doesn't take as guilty the innocent one. And now you are not innocent because now you know it. You used to teach me before and now from what I have learned I have some wisdom to teach you. If you allow them to continue bombing and to continue poisoning us then you are committing suicide and the one who commits suicide won't inherit. Therefore you are going to have a surprise when you go to heaven. They are going to tell you, "Get away from me, I don't know you."
Father: I haven't thought of it that way.

[Yo le dije usted me enseño a mirar siempre por la Biblia. Y él decía “no, no puedes estar en contra de los americanos.” El fue ministro de la palabra de Dios. Yo le dije “papi usted me enseño a tener fe a creer en Dios y entonces la Biblia me dice a mí que el suicida no hereda el reino de los cielos. Si nosotros permitimos que esos bombazos sigan y que nos sigan contaminando, nosotros somos cómplices de un suicidio. Vamos a morir por culpa de que entonces si nosotros nos suicidamos no heredaremos el reino de los cielos. Ahora eso usted lo sabe y usted deja que sigan bombardeando y nos siga enfermando. No es en contra de los americanos, yo tengo dos hijos en el ejército. Yo tengo dos hijos en el army.” Porque al mas pequeño le ofrecieron más dinero si se metía en la]
manna y dijo que no Y yo le dije a mi papa “y la Biblia dice que Dios no
da por inocente al culpable ni por culpable al inocente Y ahora usted no
es inocente porque ahora usted lo sabe Usted me enseñaba a mi antes y
pues yo ahora de lo que he aprendido pues tengo esa sabiduría para
enseñarle a usted Y le dije “si usted permite el que sigan bombardeando y
el que nos sigan envenenando usted está suicidándose y los suicidados no
hereda así que usted va a tener una sorpresa cuando llegue al cielo. Que le
van a decir apártate de mí, no te conozco” Y se fue con ese pensamiento
fijate Me dijo “yo no lo había pensado de esa forma.”

The civil disobedience camp has helped to support people in the
community. It has also promoted the development of close bonds among
participants, complementing the support they get from their families at a
microsystem level. Participation at the camps promotes feelings of efficacy and
empowerment as participants support each other while working toward a common
goal. The camp has also helped heal some personal wounds. Patna describes how
being part of the civil disobedience movement and visiting the civil disobedience
camp almost every night has helped her become stronger emotionally:

This camp is like an outlet. This camp is where you can let go all the rage
that you have inside and that all people in Vieques have. Some of them
stay at home fighting on their own. And here I am thinking, “Dammit,
they are not going to let the children have a Three Kings Day in peace.”
Because they have done it. During Holy Week, they don’t care, that’s
when they throw more bombs. To me is to let this rage out and be able to
scream. Then when I go home I am more relaxed. Here [at camp] I can
relax, I feel good. When I don’t come I feel tense. Now I watch my
grandchildren but when there are military practices I cannot take care of
them because I am not in the house. Then they come here to see me
Because that’s the way it is. It’s to be able to let that rage out of your
system without having to kill a gringo. Let it go

[Pero esto es como un outlet. Campamento es cuando uno puede sacar el
coraje que uno tiene adentro y que tienen todos los viequenses. Algunos se
quedan en la casa a pelear solos. Y aquí yo estoy pensando cuando van a
comenzar las maniobras y me digo “coño no le van a dejar celebrar el paz
los reyes a los nenes.” Porque lo han hecho. En semana santa, a ellos no

249

The civil disobedience movement developed and established by the community in Vieques has the primary goal of social justice. The goal of social justice has promoted social actions which, according with Prilleltensky (2001), are constructs that promote wellness in society. Adults, youth, and children participate in various activities at the civil disobedience camps, establishing the communal values of justice, equality, and love for their land across generations, contexts, and time.

*Forever Vieques*

The love for Vieques is a value expressed by the four families I interviewed. For the community, their love for Vieques implies that they need to protect and fight for their land. In doing so, they are bringing peace and justice to their land and creating a better future for their children and grandchildren.

Although the negative forces of the United States Navy are very powerful, the community has been able to express and represent their voice in the local and international community. This desire to recover their land, to cleanse their environment of disease-causing contaminants, and to bring peace and progress to Vieques, has been cultivated for more than sixty years.
Luis’s mother identified with these patriotic values and taught them to her children. She was very proud of the Puerto Rican flag and identified with the Spanish language, as she didn’t like it when people spoke to her in English. For Luis, his family is Vieques. He loves his community and wishes that his children would develop a love for their country as well.

Patna remembers that when she was a child her grandmother used to comb her long hair every afternoon. She didn’t like her grandmother to comb her hair, because while doing so she used to tell her stories about the Navy’s abuses. Her grandmother said, “So that you never forget the experiences they have made us live through.” Her grandmother was passing on the stories of the injustices and difficulties that she, her family, and the community of Vieques in general have gone through, so that the younger generation becomes aware of and fights for their rights. That is, in fact, what Patna has done. She has been in the civil disobedience movement for many years and has been arrested as well. Patna would like her daughters to love and fight for Vieques with even more strength than that with which she and her grandmother fought.

We are fighting for them and they have to fight for our grandchildren, for those who are coming behind.”

[Estamos luchando para ellos y ellos tienen que luchar para los nietos, para los que vienen detrás.]

Although her daughters are scared for Patna’s safety when she is at the civil disobedience camp or on rallies, they support her one hundred percent. Her grandchildren don’t stay at the camp for safety reasons, but when she sees her
granddaughter she always says, “God bless you.” A little later her granddaughter says, “Navy out, grandma." Patria is teaching and preparing her grandchildren little by little. She teaches them facts about the history of Vieques and about the ecological damage that the Navy has done. “I keep teaching them little by little like my grandmother taught me.”

Zaida’s ideas are similar to those of Patria. Her reason for participating in the civil disobedience movement is because of her love for her land and her sense of responsibility for her children’s future. Daniel feels that being at the civil disobedience camp is part of his responsibility and duty to Vieques. “And I know I will be in this struggle until they [the Navy] return our land.” His children also support him one hundred percent. One of his daughters lives in the United States, is in the military, and is always listening to news about Vieques. She loves her family, loves her land, and hopes to return to live in Vieques soon.

The love for Vieques is represented in people’s feelings of civil responsibility to support the Mayor of Vieques in keeping the island safe and clean. Mrs. Torres states that every corner in Vieques has a memory or story for her. She still lives in the same house where she was born. People from Vieques are very regionalist, from small towns. She feels it is also her responsibility to help the Mayor “clean the town.” She, as a resident of the island, has tried to set up an appointment with the Mayor of Vieques to demand more action regarding services and resources for the youth and homeless people of Vieques. Ms.
Rodriguez summarizes the sentiment of all Viequenses on their love for the island: "I love Vieques, this is where my life is, and this is everything for me."

The value of love for their land as a protective factor that supports the unity and strength of the community is unique to the people of Vieques. Lessons of difficult times and events are taught to children as evidence of the injustices that have supported and strengthened the cultural value of love for their land. Lessons passed down through generations and the bidirectional interactions that occur at the civil disobedience camps and between adults and children promote the development of the value of love for Vieques.

Summary

Values are intrinsic processes that guide the actions of individuals (Prilleltensky, 2001) In this chapter, community values that support the family nucleus, such as being raised by a caring adult in an environment where affection is demonstrated, having a sense of belonging, and having home rules or a structure, are shared among the families interviewed in Chapter Four.

One factor that is more evident from the community perspective is the power and strength of women. Women are seen as the primary source of strength and support for the family and community. Women’s lessons of determination, kindness, protection, self-determination, problem solving, understanding, and self-sufficiency permeate all generations, the children learn to develop these positive qualities from their mothers and neighbors, schoolteachers, social workers, and friends. Wellness is supported not only at a microsystem level, but
also at the meso-, exo- and macrosystem levels. The community has brought in individuals from the exosystem, such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents, to support their resilient capacities within their microsystem.

At the community level as well at the family level, it is seen that the force and support of siblings determines the paths the younger ones take. Young siblings feel supported, accepted, loved, and appreciated by their older siblings. From the perspective of the bioecological construct, the support of younger siblings' wellness by their older siblings demonstrates the intensity, continuity, and complexity of this dimension as described by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998). This interaction supports the development of intrinsic personal characteristics in the young child and, because the interactions are multidirectional, they influence the wellness of protective factors of the older siblings as well.

The value of education has been presented here as a description of the processes within the classroom environment that support intrinsic characteristics and competencies for each child. It also supports the development of protective factors, as teachers are perceived as a source of support that is not always found in the home environment. A teacher's ability to overcome obstacles presented by the school environment, such as difficult class schedules and limited access to the computer labs, reflects a genuine effort to promote education and success for all children. As schools become part of the children's protective environments, they
have the opportunity to learn protective skills that will support their success in a variety of contexts.

Community members also perceive education as a means to reach social justice and equality. This concept was not expressed as such during the family interviews, where education was primarily perceived as a way to improve their employment opportunities and financial status.

Support from the community was an intricate component of psychological and physical wellness. The community's demonstrations of solidarity, especially during difficult times, has fostered a unique relationship between people. There is a proverb that says, "Actions speak louder than words." This is true for the community of Vieques, as the entire town goes out to support their neighbors and work toward a common goal.

Another action that has supported community wellness is participation in the civil disobedience movement. Despite the obstacles at a macrosystem level, represented by local and federal government restrictions and judicial injustice, the people have found internal strength as they become united while working toward a common goal. To remove the United States Navy base from Vieques, people have created incredible transactions at micro-, meso- and exosystem levels in order to make an impact on the negative forces they encounter at the macrosystem level. In working toward this common goal at an exo- and mesosystem level, the people of Vieques have developed a stronger sense of solidarity as they work to attain social justice for the entire community. Children are involved in the entire
process as they attend vigils and rallies and visit the civil disobedience camps where family members and friends are working. From the bioecological perspective, influences from all systems and all levels interact in concert to support and maintain protection for all.

In the next and final chapter of this journey, I will combine and analyze the information gathered from the families and community of Vieques. The bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1993) will be incorporated into my analysis of how the process of wellness (Cowen, 1994) is developed and promoted across generations, and how the values intrinsic to the people from the island of Vieques have supported that process.
CHAPTER VI

Lessons From Vieques

I always say that whatever your goals are you can attain them. You have to fight for it and have the will to make it happen.

Maruza

Personal View

I initiated this investigative journey with many uncertainties about myself, the people I would meet, and the entire process. Despite all those fears of the unknown, I welcomed this experience with an open heart and an enthusiasm founded on the belief that I can make a contribution to the body of knowledge on wellness and resiliency. I also felt empowered and honored to be able to present the voices of my people to the community of the world.

During the four months I lived on the island of Vieques, I felt welcomed by the people I met. It was very difficult for me to listen to people’s stories about their experiences living on the island. I felt very distressed about the social injustices and the adversities people from Vieques have faced over the years. Some of those experiences were related to the influence of the Navy on the island and others were related to their life experiences in general. I felt moved and saddened by the incredible struggles these people had to face. In spite of these struggles, they are still standing tall, strong, and with an incredibly positive outlook on the future. I had to remind myself that the adversities were one
component of this study, but that the essence of it was to identify the virtues and strengths of people who have overcome so many obstacles in life

I often found myself analyzing my own life, my struggles and victories, and comparing it with the experiences of the people of Vieques. This study has given me the opportunity to learn more about myself, my family, my values, and my personal and professional "treasures." The people of Vieques have taught me so much about the essence of life, the uniqueness of our cultural roots, and the courage and humbleness of my people. They have taught me that "wellness is not only what you are but what you want to make of yourself." The lessons I learned about the power of perseverance, faith, family, and community strength will stay with me forever.

Professional View

In this study I explored the values and processes that nurture the development and maintenance of wellness for the families and community members of Vieques. Wellness is defined as a dynamic process in which the person adapts to daily challenges in life in order to maintain a balance between their daily physical, emotional, social, and environmental demands (Cowen, 1994, 1996). The promotion of wellness is dependent upon the values established by the individual's family system as well as those established within the community. According to Prilleltensky (2000), values should guide the process toward a state of wellness. However, in order for that to occur, the values should complement each other and work in concert to promote personal and collective wellness.
Three primary values were found to be vital in promoting the development and maintenance of relational wellness for the families and community members from Vieques. Those primary values are Family unity, community support, and patriotism. These values and those presented in Chapters IV and V have created a support or shield that helped this community heal from the many wounds it has suffered, and has provided enduring support systems to help them stand tall with a stronger desire to move forward.

*Value of Family Unity*

The community of Vieques has faced many external risk factors, such as expropriation of the land, poverty, high rate of unemployment, poor health services, violence and abuse of civilians, and high levels of biological contamination. These risk factors have been created and maintained at a macrosystem level for over 60 years (see Figure 10). Despite this, the families I interviewed have found ways to overcome most of them.

When looking at wellness we must consider the external factors, across systems, which directly or indirectly influence the individual’s development and behaviors (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, Kelly, 2000). These risk factors at a macrosystem level have affected the wellness and integrity of the families of the Vieques community. Many families have immigrated to nearby islands or to the United States in search of improved socioeconomic status. The immigration of primary caregivers from Vieques left children to the care of relatives or people in the community.
The combination of these risk factors was counter-balanced with the support of a caring adult who provided love, a feeling of safety, attention, structure, and a sense of belonging for those children. For all these children, the combination of those negative and protective factors created an environment in which they established a concrete idea or model of the kind of family they wanted in the future. Early in their lives, it prompted the desire to have a united family.

The process of developing family unity (see Figure 10) is practiced and taught by parents by maintaining open communication among family members, establishing home rules that are flexible and equitable, teaching moral concepts of right and wrong, developing a sense of cooperation for the good of the entire family, and maintaining family celebrations and activities in which all family members share and participate. Some families have incorporated resources from other outer systems (exo- and mesosystems) into their family systems in order to support the wellness of their children.

This is illustrated by the Flamboyan Family (Family #3), who have incorporated additional resources into their microsystem from which their children learned how to develop close attachments. This process expanded opportunities of growth for their children and added support for their family values. The external resource of childcare provider families was incorporated into the children's microsystem, providing, and continue to provide, guidance and support for them as teenagers and young adults. This family has also incorporated the paternal uncle and his family as intricate components of their microsystem.
When families incorporate people from outer contexts or systems into their microsystem or family context, they create opportunities for children to interact meaningfully with new attachment figures, thus expanding the nucleus of support whereby children build resilient characteristics. By incorporating these people into their microsystem, the families expand the number of strategies available to support family values and the development of protective factors in their children. This is an example of the strength of the community of Vieques as they support each other in raising and teaching children a path to wellness.

The day-to-day interactions and guidance from older siblings is another component of the value of family unity that provides an opportunity for children to develop protective characteristics. This process takes place when siblings get together and talk about life events and the concerns they experience on a daily basis. Older siblings provide advice related to problem-solving strategies for use in school, with peers, and at home with parents. Siblings protect and respect each other. Older siblings are seen as mentors and models who help the younger children build a foundation while creating adaptive strategies to become stronger.
Family Unity

Exercised by

1. Promoting a sense of collaboration
2. Incorporating extended family
3. Promoting children's "islands of competencies"
4. Grandma's cooking
5. Family celebrations
6. Teaching moral concepts of right and wrong
7. Maintaining open communication
8. Caring adults
9. Flexible and equitable home rules
10. Support from caregivers
11. Adult supervision
12. Older siblings as mentors
13. Teaching children to become independent (self-efficacy)

Built upon the values of

1. Family unity
2. Religious faith
3. Respect
4. Love for Vieques

Figure 10: Process of wellness to maintain family unity

Value of Community Support

Community support (see Figure 11) is a value instilled across generations.

Adults and sometimes children gather in the neighborhoods to listen to and tell stories, sometimes while sharing a cup of coffee. These actions support community values that promote a sense of unity, social justice, collaboration,
caring, and respect for others. In doing so, community values and rules are passed on to the younger generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercised by</th>
<th>Built upon the values of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Storytelling</td>
<td>1. Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Listening</td>
<td>2. Social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sharing</td>
<td>3. Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Attending events</td>
<td>4. Caring for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Visiting others</td>
<td>5. Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gathering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Feeding the hungry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Establishing networks of informal supports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 11* Community support process

Informal social networks (Dunst, 2000, Jack, 2000) have been the strongest support for the community of Vieques. These informal supports or ecological niches (Bronfenbrenner, 1993) include friends, co-workers, church groups, childcare providers, community organizations, such as the Alliance of Woman from Vieques, and the civil disobedience camps, schools, and neighbors. These contacts have supported individuals’ wellness potentials and continue to sustain the developing ones. Values that support the community are built from the
family unit at a microsystem level and expand to the outer layers of the system, creating a community supported and nourished at a macrosystem level.

*Value of Patriotism*

The value of patriotism, or love for Vieques, has brought the community together and promoted the development of many networks that support wellness. One of those support networks is the civil disobedience movement. The civil disobedience movement and camps in Vieques have served as a place for the community to gather, and to feel they are working toward a common goal of attaining social justice for all. Lessons of wellness are practiced and taught by family or community members when people visit the camps, during community activities to protest the presence and military practices of the United States Navy in Vieques, during demonstrations of solidarity, when someone loses a family member as a result of the US Navy military practices, or as a result of the contamination produced by military practices on the island.

Community participation in the protest against the military presence and practices of the United States Navy has created a unique force in which people collaborate to attain social justice. This community involvement has also been a source of collective wellness. The civil disobedience camps have become a source of energy that has promoted personal and community growth, consequently creating an effect on their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)
Figure 12 Family process of teaching and promoting patriotism

*Value of Religious Faith*

The meaning of values varies according to people's experiences. The values of religion and perseverance were significant in all the families and community members I interviewed. These strong values of religion and perseverance are related to an individual's intrinsic characteristics, developed either through bidirectional interactions with primary caregivers or other significant individuals. Faith in God is perceived as a strong force that motivates their actions in life. Events occur because of God's will, therefore, situations are approached with a calmer and more positive attitude. This outlook on life
demonstrates their hope that faith in God will provide them with the internal strength to overcome future adversities. The value of faith in God is complemented by personal characteristics, such as self-empowerment, determination, and the vision of a positive outcome in life (see Figure 13). These traits continue to support individuals' capacities to maintain their wellness and to overcome difficult situations.

*Value of Perseverance*

The value of perseverance, an attitude of "never give up," was very strong in all the participants in this study. For some participants, this value was exercised almost daily by their parents or other significant adults who had to overcome so many challenges. Ecological transitions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that represented challenges for their grandparents included losing their land, losing their homes, having to start all over again, and dealing with the U.S. Navy’s military practices. For parents, perseverance means having had to deal with the Navy for over 60 years, experiencing a lack of health and social resources, a lack of employment, geographical isolation, the death of a parent, and limited educational resources. For the generation of their children, perseverance means having to deal with the influence, fear, and risk of contamination from the U.S. Navy’s military practices, and limited educational and recreational resources that promote positive occupational and recreational interests. It also means having to deal with the ecological transition of separation from their families in order to complete a
college degree on the island of Puerto Rico, which is needed in order to improve their financial status.

![Diagram]

Religious Faith and Perseverance

Exercised by

1. Bidirectional interactions with primary caregivers or other significant adults
2. Situations faced with calm and positive attitude
3. Self-empowerment
4. Determination
5. Planning ahead
6. Keeping close contact with children
7. Never giving up (internal strength)

Built upon the values of

1. Faith in God as a strong force that motivates actions in life
2. Protecting the family
3. Support from the community
4. Justice
5. Patriotism
6. Education
7. Hard work
8. The individual’s intrinsic characteristics

Figure 13 Processes that support the development of perseverance

Families from Vieques have developed many processes to surmount their ecological challenges. Some processes have been more effective than others. Grandparents have drawn on the value of hard work and community support to overcome the land expropriation. Parents drew on the values of justice and patriotism to fight the marines and military soldiers when they were young. Later
on, their strategy was to use peaceful civil disobedience, and to educate the local, national, and international communities about the violations of their rights as citizens of Vieques. This process resulted in the exit of the U.S. Navy in May, 2003.

For children, the value of education has helped motivate them through the transition from Vieques to the island of Puerto Rico to achieve their goal of a college education. Parents’ support, “grandma’s cooking,” constant communication and visits home on weekends, and having a network of students from Vieques on Puerto Rico, are the ecological niches that support the transition process. Despite all these risk factors, the cultural values of the individual people of Vieques have created an umbrella of protection that allows its children to face and overcome these challenges. The processes of wellness and transactions across systems are represented and summarized in Figure 14.
Figure 14  Summary of findings.

Next steps

The results from this study represent the strategies and processes that supported families’ wellness on the island of Vieques. Some of the protective factors and processes are similar to those found in the resilience and wellness literature. However, there are some protective factors and processes unique to the
Community networks have proven to be a strength for the community of Vieques. Taking that into consideration, as well as the families’ preference for using informal sources or ecological means to promote and sustain their wellness, action plans should focus on the utilization of formal systems. Formal systems can be used to strengthen informal systems. Consequently, as informal systems develop accessible strategies and resources, the need for formal systems will decrease (Bronfenbrenner, 1993), thereby increasing the community’s sense of empowerment, competency, and self-actualization.

In doing so, communities are empowered to identify the cultural values they consider vital to sustaining their wellness, not only at the family but at community and government levels as well. Community members can then create strategies and identify the resources they need to accomplish their goals. When the path toward a state of wellness is delineated by the community, the roots of the society, or the family unit, the strength of its origins can influence higher-level systems. When the macrosystem is influenced by the power of the community, it increases opportunities for creating changes in policies and regulations that support equality and the provision of resources for all members of the community.

The educational system represents one of the most important community systems that can establish direction and influence changes that improve children’s and families’ wellness. Schools are the environments in which children spend
many hours of the day. It is thus important for school administrators, teachers, and parents to ensure that the school environment provides a culture of acceptance, familiarity, respect, and support. In this environment, children develop the academic, social, and emotional competencies that form and support the intrinsic personal characteristics that are fundamental to their wellness. Teachers need to assume the role of mentor and nurturer for the child.

School administrators and teachers must identify, rediscover, and celebrate their own "treasures of competencies." By identifying what they are doing well and what they value as educators, they make the first steps toward identifying their needs and dreams as educators. A carefully considered wellness plan can be created in which strategies and policies are designed to support what teachers do best. "Teach for the love of teaching while developing their students' highest potential." In creating an environment of support, schools that promote social bonding among administrators, faculty, students, parents, and community systems are more effective at building a community of wellness.

Schools must incorporate clear and consistent boundaries that are equitable and fair for all individuals co-existing in that environment. High standards and expectations at all levels of the school system instill a sense of responsibility, accountability, and pride in what has been accomplished. It also provides opportunities for meaningful participation across all levels of the system. The teaching practices of Ms. Torres should be used as a model of wellness strategies that consider and value students as unique individuals.
This study has been a journey of wellness affirmation for me as well. I feel honored that the families and community members of Vieques opened not only their homes, classrooms, and gathering places to me but also their hearts as they shared their life stories. The strength, perseverance, and love of the people of Vieques are unique. I feel very proud that I had this one-of-a-kind opportunity to conduct this study on the beautiful island of Vieques and with these beautiful people. Returning to Vieques and to the island of Puerto Rico has strengthened my love for my land and my pride in being a Puertorriqueña. Thank you, Vieques!
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Appendix A

Letter Soliciting Collaboration from the “Gatekeepers”

May 12, 2002

Justice and Peace Camp
Vieques, Puerto Rico

Dear Nilda, Ismael, Ernesto and Ludana

I am Puerto Rican, born and raised in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico but I am currently living in Colorado, United States. I am currently taking courses at the doctoral level in the area of education, at the University of Denver, Colorado. I am planning on conducting my research work in the island of Vieques during next semester, from August through December 2002.

I consider you key members of the community in Vieques and because of that I would like to request your assistance identifying or recommending some strong families from Vieques. For my research proposal, I would like to interview and observe the dynamics and interactions of the members of 4 to 6 families. This include visiting their homes, having frequent conversations with family members, interviewing the parents or caregivers as well as children from each family and in some cases interviewing extended family members that live closed by. The purpose of this study is to identify which are the values and strengths that help the families from Vieques maintain their strength and determination to move ahead despite the problems that life brings to them. The risk factors that can affect families include poverty, unemployment, illness, death of a central family member, domestic violence, and lack of resources as well as the influence of the conflict between the USA Navy Base and the community of Vieques. Studies indicate that despite the risk factors, which in some cases are a cluster of factors, some families have the strength or protective factors which parents use to help their children move forward in life.

The purpose of this study is to identify and promote the strengths that the families from Vieques have developed despite the adversities of life and also how life lessons have been passed on from generation to generation. I will greatly appreciate any support that you can offer me. I understand that first you will need to talk to the families, explain the purpose of the study and determine if they are interested or not. I will be traveling to Puerto Rico early in August. After families have been identified by key people in Vieques, I will conduct an initial interview where I can explain more in detail the purpose of the study and then decide which families will qualify for the study. My telephone number at home is 303-795-8320 and the Fax number at work is 303-399-1419 and my email address is casasyoyo@cs.com. Thank you very much.

Cordially,

Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR
PhD Candidate, University of Denver
Apéndice A
Carta Solicitando Colaboración a los “Gatekeepers”

Domingo 12 de Mayo del 2002

Campamento Justica y Paz
Vieques, Puerto Rico

Estimados Nilda, Ismael, Ernesto y Lidana


Por ser ustedes residentes clave en la comunidad de Vieques quisiera solicitar su ayuda identificando o recomendando algunas familias de Vieques. En mi propuesta de trabajo investigativo quisiera entrevistar y observar las dinámicas e interacciones de los miembros de 4 a 6 familias. Esto incluye visitar los hogares, diálogos frecuentes con miembros de la familia, entrevistar a los padres o encargados y entrevistar a niños(as) en la familia y en algunos casos entrevistar familiares cercanos. El propósito de este trabajo es identificar cuáles son los valores y fortalezas que mantienen a las familias viequenses fuertes y con deseos de seguir adelante a pesar de las vicisitudes que la vida les presenta. Los factores de riesgo que pueden afectar a las familias incluyen pobreza, desempleo, enfermedades, muerte de un miembro central en la familia, violencia doméstica, falta de recursos, y también la influencia del conflicto de la marina de los Estados Unidos y la población viequense entre otros. Estudios indican que pese a los factores de riesgo, que en muchos casos son un conglomerado de aspectos, las familias tienen unas fortalezas o factores protectivos los cuales los padres utilizan para ayudar a sus hijos a seguir adelante.

Este estudio intenta identificar y resaltar las fortalezas que la familia viequense ha desarrollado a pesar de las adversidades de la vida y como estas lecciones de vida son pasadas o aprendidas de generación en generación. Les agradezco inmensamente el apoyo que me puedan ofrecer. Entiendo que primero ustedes necesitarán hablar con los padres de familia y explicarles el propósito del estudio y determinar si ellos estarían interesados en participar. Yo viajaré a Puerto Rico a principios de agosto. Luego de identificadas las familias por diferentes personas claves en la isla yo haría una entrevista inicial donde explicaré mas a fondo el propósito de mi estudio para entonces decidir las familias que podrían participar en el mismo. Mi número de teléfono residencial es el 303-795-8320 y el número de Fax en el trabajo es el 303-399-1419 y mi correo electrónico es casasyoyo@cs.com. Gracias anticipadas.

Cordialmente,

Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR
Estudiante Ph D University of Denver
Appendix B
Guiding Interview Questions for Adults

Introduction: I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. You have been contacted by _______ first to explore your willingness in volunteering your time in this study. You have been selected for the strengths that you have displayed throughout the years in dealing with difficult life situations and being able to conquer them and move on in life.

Purpose: This study embraces the opportunity to learn from the children and families from Vieques about the factors that have supported them in maintaining their wellness while living in an environment that constantly challenges their ability to maintain a healthy balance. The purpose of this study is to learn from the people of Vieques what values are important for families. Also, this study intends to expand the knowledge about the process of how wellness is maintained within the family, what are the protective factors that support wellness and what are the risk factors that compromise wellness for the families in Vieques. In learning more about family’s strengths and virtues, we can expand and use the knowledge in developing programs that support wellness for the entire community.

Consent Form: Let’s review the Consent Form because it will help in providing a clear and more specific description of the study. After we review the Consent Form, you can decide if you like to participate in the study by signing the form. Do you have any questions before we begin this interview?
Guiding Interview Questions for Adults

General Information

1. Participant’s Name

2. How long have you lived in Vieques?

3. How old are you?

4. Which family members currently live with you?
   - What are their names?
   - What are their ages?
   - What role they have in the family?

5. Which annual income bracket fits your household?
   - Lower than $5,000
   - $5,000 - $11,000
   - $12,000 - $24,000
   - $25,000 - $30,000
   - $31,000 or higher

Content – Wellness Questions:

1. Tell me about your family
   - How many adults live in your house?
   - How many children?
   - Anybody else you want to mention?

2. As a parent/caregiver, what things you feel are important in a family?
   - How members in the family express their feelings and needs?
   - How are responsibilities shared?
   - What activities are shared as a family unit?

3. Tell me about your family history
   - Where you grew up?
   - How would you describe your parents?

282
• What lessons of how to be strong and move on in life (wellness) your parents or family have passed on to you?

4 Tell me about your favorite memories

5 Think about a difficult situation you have experienced in life
   • How did you feel about the situation and how did you handle it?
   • What helped you overcome that situation?

6 What health looks like in your family?
   • What do you do to stay healthy?

7 What kind of support you feel is available for you and your family?
   • Who do you go to when you have a problem?
   • What resources (agencies, someone in the community, church, etc.) can you count on if you are experiencing a difficult situation?

8 How has the presence of the US Navy has influenced your family's life?
   • Can you give me some examples?

9 Tell me about your work.
   • What things do you like about your job?
   • What things are difficult to handle at your job?
   • What do you do about it?

10 Some people go to church, others meditate, talk to a priest or to other people they feel are important to them. What do you do to nourish your spiritual life?

11 What lessons of life would you like your children to learn from you?
   • What you feel is important for your children to succeed in life?
Introducción: Quiero darle las gracias por aceptar participar en este estudio. Usted(es) se comunicó primero con el cual investigó si usted tenía interés en ofrecerse de voluntario para este estudio. Usted ha sido seleccionado por las fortalezas que ha demostrado a través de los años y en su habilidad de sobrellevar situaciones difíciles y en su habilidad de seguir adelante en la vida.

Propósito: Este estudio aprovecha la oportunidad de aprender de los niños y familias de Vieques sobre los factores que los han apoyado para mantener su "salud" a la misma vez que viven en un ambiente el cual está constantemente retando sus habilidades de mantener un balance saludable en la vida. El propósit o de este estudio es el de aprender de las personas en Vieques cuales son los valores más importantes para las familias. También este estudio intenta expandir el conocimiento sobre el proceso de cómo la salud es mantenida en la familia, cuales son los factores de protección que apoyan la "salud" y cual son los factores de riesgo que afectan la "salud" de las familias en Vieques. El conocimiento que se adquiera sobre las fortalezas y virtudes de las familias ayudará a expandir el uso y conocimiento aprendido y ayudará en el desarrollo de programas que apoyen la "salud" para toda la comunidad.

Formulario de Consentimiento: Vamos a revisar ahora el formulario de consentimiento pues nos ayudará a tener una idea mas clara y una descripción mas detallada del estudio. Luego que revisemos el formulario de consentimiento usted puede decidir si desea participar en el estudio y puede firmar el formulario. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de que comencemos la entrevista?
Información General

1. Nombre del Participante: ____________________________________________

2. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha vivido en Vieques? ____________________________

3. ¿Cuántos años tiene usted? ____________________________

4. ¿Qué miembros de la familia viven con usted actualmente?
   • ¿Cuáles son sus nombres?
   • ¿Cuáles son sus edades?
   • ¿Qué rol tienen en la familia?

5. ¿Cuáles de las siguientes categorías de ingreso anual se acerca más al de su hogar?
   - Menor de $5,000
   - $5,000 - $11,000
   - $12,000 - $24,000
   - $25,000 - $30,000
   - $31,000 - o más alto

Preguntas de Contenido Relacionadas con "Salud"

1. Hábleme sobre su familia
   • ¿Cuántos adultos viven en la casa?
   • ¿Cuántos niños viven en la casa?
   • ¿Hay alguien más que quiera incluir?

2. Como padre / responsable de los niños, ¿qué cosas usted considera importantes en una familia?
   • ¿Cómo los miembros de la familia expresan sus sentimientos y necesidades?
   • ¿Cómo son compartidas las responsabilidades?
   • ¿Qué actividades comparten como familia?

3. Hábleme sobre su historial familiar
• ¿Dónde usted se crió?
• ¿Cómo usted describiría a sus padres?
• ¿Qué lecciones de vida le han enseñado tus padres o familia en relación a cómo mantenerte fuerte y seguir adelante en la vida?

4 ¿Me puede relatar alguno de sus recuerdos (memorias) favoritas?

5 Me gustaría que pensara en una situación difícil por la que usted ha pasado en la vida
   • ¿Cómo usted se sintió en esa situación y cómo actuó?
   • ¿Qué la(la) ayudó a sobrellevar esa situación?

6 ¿Cómo describiría usted la salud en su familia?
   • ¿Qué hace usted para mantenerse saludable?

7 ¿Qué tipo de apoyo usted siente que tiene disponible para usted y para su familia?
   • ¿Adónde usted acude cuando tiene un problema?
   • ¿Qué recursos (agencias, alguna persona en la comunidad, la iglesia, etc.) usted puede contar cuando está viviendo una situación difícil?

8 ¿Cómo la presencia de la marina de los Estados Unidos ha influenciado la vida de su familia?
   • ¿Me puede dar algún ejemplo?

9 Hableme sobre su trabajo
   • ¿Qué cosas le agradan de su trabajo?
   • ¿Qué cosas o situaciones son más difíciles de sobrellevar en su trabajo?
   • ¿Qué usted hace al respecto?

10 Algunas personas asisten a la iglesia, otros practican meditación, hablan con un sacerdote o con personas las cuales sienten son importantes para ellos. ¿Qué usted hace para fortalecer su vida espiritual?

11 ¿Qué lecciones de vida usted quisiera que sus niños(as) aprendan de usted?
   • ¿Qué usted entiende es importante para que sus niños(as) tengan éxito en la vida?
Appendix C
Guiding Interview Questions for Children

Introduction: Hi, my name is Wanda. I am working on a project from the University of Denver. I like to learn how living in Vieques looks like for parents and children. Your parents/caregiver have mention that you might be interested in helping me.

Purpose: I like to learn what things are important for children and how you deal with situations that are hard for you. I also like to know what things you have learned from your parents/caregiver that help you do well in school, at home and in other places. I like to know what you think about the navy/military base here in Vieques. In order to make sure I don’t missed anything, I will write down what you say and what you do, in other words I will be writing a story about you and your family.

Consent Form: In order for me to write about you and your family I need permission. Your parents/caregivers have agreed to participate in this project and I was hoping that you would too. Your parents/caregivers have read this paper already so let me explain to you what it says (I will review the Consent and Assent Form). If you like to participate I will need you to write your name here. Do you have any questions?
Guiding Interview Questions for Children

General Information

1. Child's Name ____________________________

2. How old are you? ____________________________

3. What is the name of your school? ________________

4. Which grade are you now? ________________

Family

1. Tell me about your family
   - Your parents/caregivers
   - Siblings
   - Any other people in your family that you feel are important for you?

2. What things do you like to do with your family?
   - Tell me what you like to do when you are at home?

Self

1. Who do you talk to when you are
   - sad
   - worried
   - happy?
   - Tell me about things that scare you?
   - Can you think of things that make you feel happy?

2. Can you think of a time where you had to do something that was very difficult for you?
   - Tell me the story of what happened
   - What did you do?
   - How did you feel about it?
   - Who did you talked to about it?

3. Tell me about things that you like to do?
   - By yourself
   - With family
   - With friends.

288
4 Sometimes we learn what’s right and what’s wrong from our parents. Sometimes our friends teach us and sometimes we learn things on our own.
   • What makes kids do things that are wrong?
   • What helps kids do the right thing?
   • Tell me what things are OK to do. Who taught you those things?

5 I wonder if you have felt very mad at somebody or at something.
   • Tell me the story of what happened
   • What did you do?
   • Who did you talked to?

6 Tell me about a time when you got in trouble
   • What did you do?
   • Who did you talked to?

School

1 What do you like about school?
   • Tell me about what you like to do at recess time
   • Do you have a favorite teacher?
   • What is special about that teacher?

2 What do you do when there are things you don’t understand in class?

Environment:

1. Tell me what you know about the military base here in Vieques.

2. If someone gives you a magical wand so that you can change things, what would you change.
   • In your home
   • In your neighborhood
   • At school
   • In Vieques?
Apéndice C
Guía de Preguntas Para la Entrevista de Niños

**Introducción:** Hola mi nombre es Wanda. Yo estoy trabajando en un proyecto de la Universidad de Denver. Me gustaría conocer cómo es la vida para los padres y niños en Vieques. Tus padres me comentaron que tú podrías estar interesado en ayudarme.

**Propósito:** Yo quisiera saber qué cosas son más importantes para los niños y cómo bregas cuando tienes situaciones difíciles para ti. También quisiera saber qué cosas tú has aprendido de tus padres que te ayudan a salir bien en la escuela, en la casa y en otros sitios. Yo quisiera también saber qué piensas de la base de la marina de los Estados Unidos aquí en Vieques. Yo voy a escribir todo lo que tú me digas y hagas para así poder recordarme de todo, en otras palabras, yo voy a escribir una historia (un cuento) sobre ti y tu familia.

**Formulario de Consentimiento:** Para yo poder escribir sobre ti y tu familia yo necesito primero permiso. Tus padres han accedido a participar en este proyecto y a mí me gustaría que tú también participaras. Tus padres ya han leído este documento pero quiero explicarte que es lo que dice (revisar el Formulario de Consentimiento con el/la niño(a). Si quieres participar necesitas escribir tu nombre aquí. ¿Tienes alguna pregunta?
Guía de Preguntas Para la Entrevista de Niños

Información General

1. Nombre del Niño ________________________________

2. ¿Cuántos años tienes? ____________________________

3. ¿Cómo se llama tu escuela? ________________________

4. ¿En qué grado estas ahora? _______________________

Familia

1. Háblame de tu familia
   - De tus padres o persona que te cuida
   - De tus hermanos(as)
   - De cualquier otra persona en tu familia que tu sientas que es importante para ti

2. ¿Qué cosas te gusta hacer con tu familia?
   - Dime qué te gusta hacer cuando estas en tu casa

Personal

1. ¿Con quién te hablas cuando te sientes
   - Triste
   - Preocupado
   - Alegre
   - ¿Qué cosas te causan miedo?
   - Puedes pensar en qué cosas te hacen sentir alegre

2. ¿Puedes pensar en algún momento que tu tuviste que hacer algo muy difícil para ti?
   - Cuéntame qué pasó
   - ¿Qué tu hiciste?
   - ¿Cómo te sentiste?
   - ¿Con quién hablaste sobre el problema?

3. Háblame de las cosas que a ti te gustan hacer
   - Cuando estas solo
   - Con tu familia
   - Con tus amigos
4. Algunas veces aprendemos lo que está bien y lo que está mal de nuestros padres. Algunas veces nuestros amigos nos enseñan y algunas veces nosotros mismos.

- ¿Qué es lo que hace que los niños hagan cosas que no están bien?
- ¿Qué ayudaría a que los niños hagan las cosas correctas (cosas buenas)?
- Dime qué cosas están correctas que los niños hagan ¿Quién te enseñó eso?

5. Yo quisiera saber si alguna vez te has sentido bien molesto por alguien o con algo que sucedió.

- Cuéntame qué pasó
- ¿Qué hiciste?
- ¿Con quién hablaste?

6. Cuéntame si alguna vez te has metido en problemas.

- ¿Qué hiciste?
- ¿Con quién hablaste?

**Escuela:**

1. ¿Qué te gusta de tu escuela?

- Dime qué te gusta hacer en la hora de recreo
- ¿Tienes algún(a) maestra(o) preferida(o)?
- ¿Qué te gusta de esa(e) maestra(o)?

2. ¿Qué haces cuando hay cosas que tú no entiendes en la clase?

**Medioambiente**

1. Dime qué tu sabes sobre la base de la marina aquí en Vieques.

2. Si alguien te dijera una varita mágica para que tu cambiaras las cosas, qué tú cambiarías?

- En tu casa
- En tu secundario
- En la escuela
- En Vieques.
Appendix D
Informed Consent Form for Parent/Caregiver Participation

You are invited to participate in a study that intends to identify what are the physical and emotional health factors that support families from Vieques. The study is being conducted to fulfill the requirement for the doctorate degree in education at the University of Denver, Colorado. The study is being conducted by Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR The purpose of this study is to learn from the people of Vieques what values are important for families. Also this study intends to expand the knowledge about the process of how health is maintained within the family, what are the factors that support physical and emotional health and what factors put at risk the health of families in Vieques. The results of the study will be used to learn more about the process of how families develop, and promote health despite stressful circumstances. The study’s chairperson is Dr. Tom Linder, EdD, professor and Director, Child and Family Studies, (303) 871-2472, and the co-chairperson is Dr. Nicholas J. Cutforth, PhD, Professor, Curriculum and Instruction, (303) 871-2477 at the University of Denver, Colorado, 80208.

Participation involves one face-to-face interview, to be conducted in a setting mutually agreed upon. The interview is projected to last approximately 90 minutes. The interview will be audiotape and will include questions related to family practices, and values. Additional contact will include scheduled home visits where informal conversations and observations will take place. Other contacts might include outings with the entire family or with individual family members. The entire data collection will last approximately 5 months. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcripts of the interviews to assure that your thoughts and ideas are documented accurately. Your involvement is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question during the interview and are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

All information gathered for this study will be confidential. This means that only the researcher and the study committee will have access to the information you provide. A code name will be used on all documentation. Only the researcher will have the list that matches this code name with your name, and the list will be kept in a secure setting. While your responses will not be identified by name, it is possible that responses may be quoted exactly in the study and on possible subsequent publications. As such, you may choose to have me disguise your
identity. You will also have the opportunity, if you wish, to read what has been written about you and your family and provide your opinion, ask that changes be made, or choose to withdraw from the study. Audiotapes will be kept in a secure place and erased at the end of the study.

There are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. Any information you reveal concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect is required by law to be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with a court order.

The benefits of being involved in this study include the ability to contribute to improve the knowledge and to improve the development of preventive services that promote wellness for children and families. You may also find it helpful to provide information about your own experience. If you would like a copy of the findings of the study, the researcher will be happy to provide one for you. You will, however, receive no compensation for your participation in the study. Potential risks of participating in this study include the possibility that discussing your experience dealing with factors that put at risk the state of health for you, your family or the community may be upsetting either during the interview or afterward. If this occurs, please talk with the researcher. You may choose to not answer any specific question, take a break from the interview, postpone the interview, or withdraw from the study. The researcher will arrange for a referral to a specific resource, if you would like.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the study, please contact Dr. Jeff Jenson, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-2526, or Dawn Nowak, Office of Sponsored Programs, at (303) 871-4052, or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80208-2121.

You may keep this document for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to participate.
I have read and understood the descriptions of the study called *Exploration of the Meaning and Process of Wellness Among Families in Vieques*. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. I have received a copy of the Informed Consent Form for Parent/Caregiver Participation.

Signature ___________________________________________ Date ___________

Signature ___________________________________________ Date ___________

_____ I AGREE to be audio taped

_____ I DO NOT AGREE to be audio taped.

_____ I would like to receive a summary of results to be mailed or e-mailed to me at the following address
Apéndice D
Formulario de Consentimiento para la Participación de los Padres/Encargados

Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio el cual intenta identificar las características del bienestar físico y emocional en las familias en Vieques. Este estudio se está llevando a cabo con el propósito de cumplir con los requisitos para el doctorado en educación en la Universidad de Denver, Colorado. Este estudio está dirigido por Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR. El propósito de este estudio es el de aprender de las personas en Vieques cuales son los valores más importantes para las familias. También este estudio intenta expandir el conocimiento sobre el proceso de cómo el bienestar físico y emocional es mantenido en la familia, cuales son los factores que apoyan este bienestar y cuales son los factores que afectan el bienestar de las familias en Vieques. Los resultados de este estudio se utilizarán para ampliar los conocimientos sobre el proceso que se lleva a cabo para el desarrollo y promoción del bienestar físico y emocional a pesar de estar viviendo en unas circunstancias difíciles. La directora del estudio es la Doctora Toni Linder, EdD, Profesora y Directora de los Estudios de Familias y Niños, (303) 871-2472, y el co-director es el Doctor Nicholas J. Cutforth, PhD, Profesor del programa Curriculo e Instrucción, (303) 871-2477 en la Universidad de Denver, Colorado, 80208

La participación en este estudio conlleva una entrevista, cara a cara, la cual se llevarán a cabo en un lugar determinado bajo consenso mutuo. La entrevista está programada para durar aproximadamente 90 minutos. La entrevista será grabada e incluirán preguntas relacionadas con las prácticas utilizadas para mantener el bienestar físicas y emocionales y sobre los valores de la familia. Otros contactos adicionales incluirán programar visitas al hogar en la cual conversaciones informales y observaciones serán conducidas. Otros contactos incluyen salidas con la familia o con algunos integrantes de la familia. La duración para la colección de datos tomará aproximadamente 5 meses. Usted tendrá la oportunidad de revisar las transcripciones de las entrevistas de esta forma se asegura que sus pensamientos e ideas han sido documentados correctamente. Su participación es completamente voluntaria. Usted puede decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta durante las entrevistas y esta en la libertad de retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento.

Toda la información obtenida en este estudio será mantenida confidencial. Esto quiere decir que solamente la investigadora y el comité de investigación tendrán
acceso a la información que usted provea. Un nombre de código será utilizado en todas las documentaciones. Solamente la investigadora tendrá la lista que parece su nombre de código con su nombre, y esa lista será mantenida en un lugar seguro. A pesar de que sus respuestas no van a ser identificadas con su nombre, es posible que algunas respuestas sean redactadas exactamente en el estudio final o en futuras publicaciones. Si esto ocurre usted puede elegir que su identidad sea protegida. Si así lo desea, usted también tendrá la oportunidad de leer lo que se ha escrito sobre usted y su familia, de esa forma puede tener la oportunidad de presentar su opinión, solicitar cambios, o decidir retirarse del estudio de investigación.

Hay dos excepciones a la promesa de confidencialidad. Cualquier información que usted declare relacionada con suicidio, homicidio, o abuso y negligencia a niños es mandatorio por ley que sea reportado a las autoridades pertinentes. En caso de que cualquier información obtenida en este estudio sea sujeta a orden de la corte, la Universidad de Denver no podrá evitar acceder a una orden de corte.

Los beneficios de participar en este estudio incluyen la oportunidad de contribuir a mejorar el conocimiento y a mejorar el desarrollo de los servicios de prevención los cuales promueven la salud para niños(a) y familias. Usted también encontrará beneficioso el poder proveer información sobre sus propias experiencias. Si usted desea una copia de los resultados de este estudio, la investigadora tendrá mucho gusto en proveerle una. Usted no recibirá ningún tipo de compensación por su participación en el estudio. Posibles riesgos en la participación de este estudio incluyen la posibilidad de que al discutir sus experiencias enfrentando los factores que ponen a riesgo su bienestar y el de su familia o de la comunidad, puedan crear estados de molestia tanto durante o después de la entrevista. Si esto sucede, por favor comuníquese con la investigadora de este estudio. Usted puede decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta, posponer la entrevista, o retirarse del estudio. La investigadora hará los arreglos para referirlo(a) a las agencias pertinentes si así usted lo desea.

Si usted tiene alguna preocupación o quejas relacionadas a como usted ha sido tratado durante el período de la investigación favor de llamar al Dr. Jeff Johnson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, al (303) 871-2526, o Dawn Nowak, Office of Sponsored Programs, al (303) 871-4052, o escriba a University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S University Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80208-2121.

Usted puede retener esta información para sus expedientes. Por favor firme en la próxima página si usted ha entendido la información presentada y desea participar.
Yo he leído y entiendo la descripción anterior del estudio llamado *Exploración del Significado y del Proceso de Bienestar entre las Familias en Vieques*. Yo he preguntado y he recibido una explicación satisfactoria en relación con el lenguaje escrito el cual no entendía completamente. Yo estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio, y entiendo que puedo retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento sin tener ninguna penalidad. Yo he recibido una copia del Formulario de Consentimiento para la Participación de los Padres/Encargados.

_________________________  ________________
Firma                                      Fecha

_________________________  ________________
Firma                                      Fecha

____  Yo ACEPTO que mis conversaciones sean audio grabadas

____  Yo NO ACEPTO que mis conversaciones sean audio grabadas

____  Yo desearía recibir un resumen de los resultados y que sean enviados por correo regular o por correo electrónico a la siguiente dirección
Appendix E
Parent/Caregiver Consent for Child’s Participation in the Study

An Invitation: We are inviting children to participate in a study that will help us understand how physical and emotional health is taught and passed on from generation to generation, and what are the values of families in Vieques. We are asking you to decide if you are willing to allow your child to participate in the Exploration of the Meaning and Process of Wellness Among Families in Vieques study. The study is being conducted to fulfill the requirement for the doctorate in education at the University of Denver, Colorado. The study is being conducted by Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to identify how families in Vieques develop and maintain physical and mental health despite living and experiencing stressful conditions. To answer this question we need to identify what are the conditions and situations that have helped families and children to adapt as well as what are the conditions or events that put at risk the development of health. In order to understand how health is developed a group of children from various age groups, who are doing well despite the difficulties they have had in life, will be needed for this study.

Description of the Study: If you agree to have your child participate in this study, this researcher will conduct one interview, which will be audio taped. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Some of the questions that will be asked in the interview include the child’s perceptions about their family, about themselves, school and the community at large. In order to have a better understanding of how the process of health is developed within the family and in other places such as the neighborhood or at school, the researcher will schedule a series of home visits, family outings and school visit during the course of five months (from August through December, 2002) at your child’s and family’s convenience. These visits include informal conversations and observations of child’s behaviors and interactions with family members and others.

Potential Risk: The risk of this study appears to be minimal. Some of the questions are about your child’s feelings and his/her views about caregivers, family, and the community in general. Some children might find these questions uncomfortable. It is possible that when your child discusses and remembers his/her experiences dealing with situations that put at risk the health for themselves or for...
their family may be upsetting either during the interview or afterward. If your child becomes upset during the interview, the researcher will offer to discontinue. Your child will have the right to skip questions or to drop out of the study at any time for any reasons without any consequences.

**Potential Benefits:** Your child may enjoy the opportunity to provide information about his/her own experiences. The benefits of being involved in this study include the ability to contribute to improve the knowledge and to improve the development of preventive services that promote health for children and families. If you would like a copy of the findings of the study, the researcher will be happy to provide one for you. Because all the answers are confidential, you will not get individual information about your child’s thoughts, feelings and ideas, but you will have a summary of the overall findings.

**Confidentiality:** The information that children provide is private and will be used for research purposes only. In fact, your child’s name will not appear on any of the documents. Instead your child will be assigned an identification number. Only the researcher will have the list that matches this code name with your child’s name, and the list will be kept in a secure setting. While your child’s responses will not be identified by name, it is possible that responses may be reported exactly as stated by your child in the study and possible subsequent publications. As such, you may choose to have me change your child’s identity. Only group results and general trends will be reported so that your child cannot be identified.

There are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. Any information your child reveals concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect is required by law to be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the court order.

**Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw:** Participation of your child is voluntary. You or your child have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, your child has the right to skip questions during the interview without penalty.

**Future Questions and Concerns:** If you have any concerns or complaints about how your child was treated during the study, please contact Dr. Jeff Jensen, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-2526, or Dawn Nowak, Office of Sponsored Programs, at (303) 871-4052, or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80208-2121.
I have read and understood the descriptions of the study called *Exploration of the Meaning and Process of Wellness Among Families in Vieques*. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to have my child participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of the Parent/Caregiver Consent for Child’s Participation in the Study.

Parent's or Guardian's Signature

Date

Parent’s or Guardian’s Signature

Date

Printed Name

Telephone Number

Child’s Signature

Date

___ I AGREE to have my child audio taped.

___ I DO NOT AGREE to have my child audio taped

___ I would like to receive a summary of results to be mailed or e-mailed to me at the following address
Ascent Form

My parents have given me permission to participate in a study that looks at how children and families develop and maintain their physical and emotional health despite stressful conditions. The study also looks at what things are important for families and how these beliefs are taught from grandparents to parents and to children. I agree to participate in an interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. On the interview I will be asked questions such as how I feel about my family, about myself, school, and about Vacques in general. I also agree to participate in casual conversations with the investigator and I agree that she will be observing some of my interactions and conversations with my family, friends and people in the community. I agree to have the investigator observe me at school. I understand that I have the choice of whether or not do the interview or have the investigator observe me at home, in my neighborhood and school and that, if at any time, I decide I do not wish to continue participating in the study, I am allowed to stop.

I understand that this study of physical and emotional health will last approximately five months, from August through December, 2002. I also understand that ordinarily what I tell the researcher will be kept in secret unless the investigator becomes worried about my physical or mental well being. If the investigator finds out that someone has been hurting me or that I may hurt myself, then the investigator will have to tell my parents, the authorities or someone else.

Youth Signature

Date

Witness
Apéndice E
Permiso del Padre/Encargado para la Participación de Niños en el Estudio

Invitación: Estamos invitando a su niño(a) a participar en un estudio el cual nos ayudará a entender cómo el concepto de bienestar físico y emocional se transmite y enseña de una generación a otra, y cuales son los valores importantes para las familias de Vieques. Estamos solicitando su permiso para que permita que su niño(a) participe en el estudio Exploración del Significado y del Proceso de Bienestar entre las Familias en Vieques. Este estudio se está llevando a cabo con el propósito de cumplir con los requisitos para el doctorado en educación en la Universidad de Denver, Colorado. Este estudio está dirigido por Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR.

Propósito: El propósito de este estudio es identificar cómo las familias en Vieques desarrollan y mantienen su bienestar físico y emocional a pesar de las condiciones y experiencias de vida devastadoras. Para contestar esta pregunta necesitamos identificar cuales son los factores que han permitido que las familias y los niños(as) puedan adaptarse a las circunstancias de estrés y cuales son los factores que bloquean el desarrollo de ese bienestar. Este estudio incluye la participación de un grupo de niños(as) de varias edades con el propósito de observar el desarrollo del bienestar mental y físico y como han desarrollado destrezas para seguir adelante a pesar de las vicisitudes en la vida.

Descripción del Estudio: Si usted esta de acuerdo en que su niño(a) participe en este estudio, esta investigadora conducirá una entrevista la cual será audio grabada. La entrevista tomará aproximadamente 60 minutos. Algunas de las preguntas que se incluirán en la entrevista estarán relacionadas con la percepción que tiene su niño(a) acerca de su familia, de si mismo(a), de la escuela y de la comunidad en general. La investigadora acordará con usted, y a su conveniencia, un número de visitas al hogar, salidas con la familia y visitas a la escuela durante un curso de cinco meses (desde agosto hasta diciembre del 2002). El propósito de estas visitas es el de entender cómo el proceso de bienestar de el niño(a) se desarrolla en la familia y en el resto de la comunidad. Estas visitas incluyen entrevistas informales (conversaciones) y observaciones de las interacciones del niño(a).

Potencial de Riesgo: El riesgo en este estudio es mínimo. Algunas de las preguntas en la entrevista incluyen preguntas personales acerca de los
sentimientos de su niño(a) y acerca de su punto de vista relacionado con los
padres o encargados, la familia, la comunidad y acerca del ambiente donde vive
en general. Algunos niños(as) podrían encontrar estas preguntas no agradables. El
relato de experiencias que puedan ser consideradas desagradables o que le
recuerde momentos en que el bienestar del niño(a) o de su familia se hayan visto
en riesgo puede ser que le cause incomodidad durante o después de la entrevista.
Si su niño(a) muestra incomodidad durante la entrevista, la investigadora le
ofrecerá la opción de descontinuar la entrevista. Su niño(a) tiene el derecho de no
contestar cualquier pregunta o de descontinuar el estudio en cualquier momento y
razón sin recibir ninguna consecuencia.

**Beneficio Potencial:** Es posible que su niño(a) disfrute la oportunidad de proveer
información sobre sus propias experiencias. Los beneficios de participar en este
estudio incluyen la habilidad de contribuir a ampliar el conocimiento y a mejorar
el desarrollo de servicios de prevención que promuevan el bienestar mental y
físico para niños(as) y sus familias. Si usted desea una copia de los resultados de
este estudio, la investigadora estará complacida de proveérsela. Debido a que
todas las respuestas obtenidas son confidenciales usted no recibirá información
específica sobre los comentarios, sentimientos e ideas de su niño(a), pero recibirá
un resumen de los resultados en general.

**Confidencialidad:** La información que proveen los niños(as) es privada y será
usada únicamente para propósitos del estudio. De hecho, el nombre de su niño(a)
no aparecerá en ninguno de los documentos. En lugar del nombre se le asignará
un número de identificación a su niño(a). Solamente la investigadora tendrá la
lista que parece el nombre de su niño(a) con el del código, y esa lista será
mantenida en un lugar seguro. A pesar de que las respuestas de su niño(a) no van
da ser identificadas con su nombre, es posible que algunas respuestas sean
redactadas exactamente en el reporte final del estudio o en futuras publicaciones.
Si esto ocurre usted puede elegir que la identidad de su niño(a) sea mantenida de
forma confidencial. Solamente los resultados del grupo y las características
generales serán documentados de esta forma la identidad de su niño(a) no podrá
ser identificada.

Hay dos excepciones a la promesa de confidencialidad. Cualquier información
que su niño(a) declare relacionada con suicidio, homicidio, o abuso y negligencia
es mandatorio por ley que sea reportado a las autoridades pertinentes. En caso de
que cualquier información obtenida en este estudio sea sujeta a orden de la corte,
la Universidad de Denver no podrá evitar aceder a una orden de corte.

**Participación Voluntaria y Derecho a Descontinuar en el Estudio:** La
participación de su niño(a) es voluntaria. Usted y su niño(a) tienen el derecho a
descontinuar su participación en el estudio en cualquier momento. Además su
niño(a) tiene el derecho a no contestar cualquier pregunta durante la entrevista sin atenerse a ninguna penalidad

**Preguntas y Preocupaciones Futuras:** Si usted tiene alguna preocupación o quejas relacionadas de cómo su niño(a) ha sido tratado durante el período de la investigación favor de llamar al Dr. Jeff Jenson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, al (303) 871-2526, o Dawn Nowak, Office of Sponsored Programs, al (303) 871-4052, o escriba a University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80208-2121
Yo he leído y entiendo la descripción anterior del estudio llamado *Exploración del Significado y del Proceso de Bienestar entre las Familias en Vieques*. Yo he preguntado y he recibido una explicación satisfactoria en relación con el lenguaje escrito el cual no entendía completamente. Yo estoy de acuerdo en que mi niño(a) participe en este estudio, y entiendo que puedo retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento sin estar sujeto a ninguna penalidad. Yo he recibido una copia del Permiso del Padre/Encargado para la Participación de Niños en el Estudio de Investigación.

__________________________  ______________________
Firma de los Padres o Encargados  Fecha

__________________________  ______________________
Firma de los Padres o Encargados  Fecha

__________________________  ______________________
Nombre de los Padres o Encargados  Número de Teléfono

__________________________  ______________________
Firma del Niño(a)  Fecha

______ Yo ACEPTO que las conversaciones de mi niño(a) sean audio grabadas

______ Yo NO ACEPTO que las conversaciones de mi niño(a) sean audio grabadas

______ Yo desearía recibir un resumen de los resultados y que sean enviados por correo regular o por correo electrónico a la siguiente dirección.
Formulario de Consentimiento para Jóvenes

Mis padres/guardianes me han dado permiso para participar en este estudio el cual examina como los niños(as) y las familias desarrollan y mantienen su bienestar físico y emocional a pesar de estar pasando por experiencias muy difíciles. El estudio también investiga qué cosas son más importantes para las familias y cómo estas creencias son transmitidas de los abuelos a los padres, y a los niños(as). Yo estoy de acuerdo en una entrevista la cual durará aproximadamente 60 minutos. La entrevista incluye preguntas sobre mis sentimientos acerca de mi familia, de mi mismo, la escuela, y sobre Vieques en general. Yo también estoy de acuerdo en participar en conversaciones informales (casuales) con la investigadora y estoy de acuerdo que ella me observe cuando interactúo y converse con mi familia, amigos(as) y con personas en la comunidad. Yo estoy de acuerdo que la investigadora me observe en la escuela. Yo entiendo que tengo la opción de participar o no en la entrevista o de que la investigadora me observe en mi casa, en el vecindario y en la escuela y que si en algún momento yo decido no continuar participando en el estudio, yo puedo hacerlo.

Yo entiendo que este estudio de bienestar físico y emocional durará aproximadamente cinco meses, desde Agosto a Diciembre del 2002. Yo también entiendo que todo lo que yo hable con la investigadora se mantendrá en secreto a menos que la investigadora esté preocupada por mi salud física y/o emocional. Si la investigadora encuentra que alguien ha estado agrediéndome o de que yo mismo(a) podría hacerme daño, la investigadora lo tendrá que notificar a mis padres, a las autoridades u otras personas.

Firma del(a) joven

Fecha

Testigo
### Appendix F

**Observation Guideline – Protective Factors**

#### Adults

1. Competence  
2. Loving  
3. Patience  
4. Goal oriented  
5. Accepting  
6. Sets realistic expectations and goals  
7. Responsible  
8. Help child experience success  
9. Establish rules  
10. Supportive

#### Parent/Caregiver & Child Interactions

1. Compatible (connectedness)  
2. Values are expressed and practiced  
3. Meaning (appraisal of the situation)  
4. Cultural beliefs  
5. Spiritual beliefs  
6. At least one adult serves as the primary support for the child
### Appendix G
Protocol for Unstructured Interviews and Observations

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Appendix II
Informed Consent Form to Participate in the Focus Group

You are invited to participate in a study of health. The study is being conducted to fulfill the requirement for the doctorate in education at the University of Denver, Colorado. The study is being conducted by Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR. The purpose of this study is to learn from the people of Vieques what values are important for families. Also, this study intends to expand the knowledge about how the physical and psychological health is maintained within the family, what are the factors that support health and what are the factors that put at risk the health of the families in Vieques. The results of the study will be used to learn more about how families develop, and promote health despite stressful circumstances. The study’s chairperson is Dr. Toni Linder, EdD, professor and Director, Child and Family Studies, (303) 871-2472, and the co-chairperson is Dr. Nicholas J. Cutforth, PhD, Professor Curriculum and Instruction, (303) 871-2477 at the University of Denver, Colorado, 80208.

Participation involves one face-to-face focus group, to be conducted in a setting within your neighborhood. The focus group is projected to last approximately two hours. The conversations will be audio taped and will include questions related to what families do, and what are their values. You will be given the option to review the transcript of the focus group session to assure that your thoughts and ideas have been recorded accurately. Your involvement is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question during the focus group and are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

All information gathered for this study will be maintained confidential by this investigator. This means that only the researcher and the study committee will have access to the information you provide. A code name will be used on all documentation. Only the researcher will have the list that matches this code name with your name, and the list will be kept in a secure setting. While your responses will not be identified by name, it is possible that responses may be quoted exactly as reported in the study and subsequent publications. As such, you may choose to have me disguise your identity. You will also have the opportunity, if you wish, to read what has been written about you and provide comments, ask that changes be made, or choose to withdraw from the study. Audiotapes will be kept in a secure place and erased at the end of the study. Confidentiality can not be guaranteed by members of the group. However, members will be asked to not
share the information that other members of the group have presented in the focus group.

There are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. Any information you reveal concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect is required by law to be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the court order.

The benefits of being involved in this study include the ability to contribute to improve the knowledge and to improve the development of preventive services that promote health for children and families. You may also find it helpful to provide information about your own experience. If you would like a copy of the findings of the study, the researcher will be happy to provide one for you. You will, however, receive no compensation for your participation in the study. Potential risks of being involved include the possibility that discussing your experience dealing with factors that put at risk the state of wellness for you, your family or the community may be upsetting either during the focus group or afterward. If this occurs, please talk with the researcher. You may choose to not answer any specific question, take a break from the interview, or withdraw from the study. The researcher will arrange for a referral to a specific resource, if you would like.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the focus group, please contact Dr. Jeff Jensen, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-2526, or Dawn Nowak, Office of Sponsored Programs, at (303) 871-4052, or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S University Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80208-2121.

You may keep this document for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to participate.
I have read and understood the descriptions of the study called *Exploration of the Meaning and Process of Wellness Among Families in Vieques*. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. I have received a copy of the Informed Consent Form to Participate in the Focus Group.

______________________________  ____________________________
Signature                                              Date

_____ I AGREE to be audio taped

_____ I DO NOT AGREE to be audio taped

_____ I would like to receive a summary of results to be mailed or e-mailed to me at the following address.

312
Apéndice II

Formulario de Consentimiento para Participar en el Grupo de Foco

Usted está invitado(a) a participar en un estudio sobre el bienestar de los niños(as) y sus familias. Este estudio se está llevando a cabo con el propósito de cumplir con los requisitos de el doctorado en educación en la Universidad de Denver, Colorado. Este estudio está dirigido por Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR. El propósito de este estudio es el de aprender de las personas en Vieques cuales son los valores más importantes para las familias. También este estudio intenta expandir el conocimiento sobre el proceso de cómo el bienestar es mantenido en la familia, cuales son los factores que apoyan el bienestar y cuales son los factores que ponen en riesgo el bienestar de las familias en Vieques. Los resultados de este estudio se utilizarán para ampliar los conocimientos y entender el proceso que se lleva a cabo en el desarrollo y promoción del bienestar en las familias en Vieques a pesar de estar viviendo en unas circunstancias difíciles. La directora del estudio es la Doctora Toni Linder, EdD, Profesora y Directora de los Estudios de Familias y Niños, (303) 871-2472, y el codirector es el Doctor Nicholas J Cutforth, PhD, Profesor del programa Currículo e Instrucción, (303) 871-2477 en la Universidad de Denver, Colorado, 80208.

La participación en este estudio conlleva una entrevista en grupo, la cual se llevará a cabo en un lugar cercano a su área de vivienda. La entrevista de grupo está programada para durar aproximadamente dos horas. La entrevista de grupo será grabada e incluirán preguntas relacionadas con las prácticas y los valores de la familia. Usted tendrá la opción de revisar la transcripción de la entrevista de grupo de esta forma se asegura que sus pensamientos e ideas han sido documentados correctamente. Su participación es completamente voluntaria. Usted puede decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta durante las entrevistas y está en la libertad de retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento.

Toda la información obtenida en este estudio será mantenida en forma confidencial por esta investigadora. Se pedirá a todos los participantes que no divulguen fuera del grupo la información que los miembros del grupo de foco han presentado. Aún así la confidencialidad no puede ser garantizada por los miembros del grupo. Solamente la investigadora y el comité investigativo tendrán acceso a la información que usted provea. Un nombre de código será utilizado en todas las documentaciones. Solamente la investigadora tendrá la lista que parece su nombre de código con su nombre, y esa lista será mantenida en un lugar seguro. A
pesar de que sus respuestas no van a ser identificadas con su nombre, es posible que algunas respuestas sean redactadas exactamente como han sido expresadas tanto en el estudio final o en futuras publicaciones. Si esto ocurre usted puede elegir que su identidad sea mantenida en forma confidencial. Si así lo desea, usted también tendrá la oportunidad de leer lo que se ha escrito sobre usted y su familia, de esa forma puede tener la oportunidad de presentar su opinión, solicitar cambios, o decidir retirarse del estudio de investigación.

Hay dos excepciones a la promesa de confidencialidad. Cualquier información que usted declare relacionada con suicidio, homicidio, o abuso y negligencia a niños es mandatorio por ley que sea reportado a las autoridades pertinentes. En caso de que cualquier información obtenida en este estudio sea sujeta a orden de la corte, la Universidad de Denver no podrá evitar acceder a una orden de corte.

Los beneficios de participar en este estudio incluyen la oportunidad de contribuir a mejorar el conocimiento y a mejorar el desarrollo de los servicios de prevención los cuales promueven el bienestar para niños(a) y familias. Usted también encontrará beneficioso el poder proveer información sobre sus propias experiencias. Si usted desea una copia de los resultados de este estudio, la investigadora tendrá mucho gusto en proveerle una. Usted no recibirá ningún tipo de compensación por su participación en el estudio. Posibles riesgos en la participación de este estudio incluyen la posibilidad de que al discutir sus experiencias enfrentando los factores que ponen a riesgo su salud y la de su familia o la de la comunidad, puedan crear estados de molestia tanto durante o después de la entrevista. Si esto sucede, por favor comuníquese con la investigadora de este estudio. Usted puede decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta, o retirarse del estudio. La investigadora hará los arreglos para referirlo(a) a las agencias pertinentes si así usted lo desea.

Si usted tiene alguna preocupación o quejas relacionadas a como usted ha sido tratado durante el estudio favor de llamar al Dr. Jeff Jenson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, al (303) 871-2526, o Dawn Nowak, Office of Sponsored Programs, al (303) 871-4052, o escriba a University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S University Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80208-2121.

Usted puede retener esta información para sus expedientes. Por favor firme en la próxima página si usted ha entendido la información presentada y desea participar.
Yo he leído y entiendo la descripción anterior del estudio llamado *Exploración del Significado y del Proceso de Bienestar entre las Familias en Vieques*. Yo he preguntado y he recibido una explicación satisfactoria en relación con el lenguaje escrito el cual no entendía completamente. Yo estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio, y entiendo que puedo retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento sin tener ninguna penalidad. Yo he recibido una copia del Formulario de Consentimiento para la Participación en el Grupo de Foco.

______________________________  __________________________
Firma                                      Fecha

_____ Yo ACEPTO que mis conversaciones sean audio grabadas

_____ Yo NO ACEPTO que mis conversaciones sean audio grabadas

_____ Yo descaría recibir un resumen de los resultados y que sean enviados por correo regular o por correo electrónico a la siguiente dirección
Appendix I
Focus Groups Guiding Questions

I. Introduction

A. Welcome Welcome and thank you for coming to this session. Each of you has been selected because your opinions and feelings about the topic we are about to discuss is very important to me. This discussion session should be approach as an opportunity to express your ideas knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Because of that you might agree or disagree with the opinions of others and that is OK keeping in mind to respect each other's. This discussion session will also be audiotape to maintain the integrity of your answers. Once the session is transcribed I will assign numbers or false names to all of you in order to protect your anonymity. After the data is analyzed the tapes will be destroyed.

B. Purpose of the Focus Group This study embraces the opportunity to learn from the children and families from Vieques about the factors that have supported them in maintaining their wellness while living in an environment that constantly challenges their ability to maintain a healthy balance. The purpose of this group is to have an opportunity to explore what are the values that you share as an individual and as a community in Vieques. In addition I would like to learn what you do to keep your family and community strong, and to be able to deal with every day problems and crises. I am interested in knowing how the military activity here in Vieques has influenced you and your family's life.

C. Guidelines to follow I would like to go over some guidelines that I would like you to follow during this group discussion. First, you do not need to speak in any particular order. When you have something to say, please do so. Second, please do not speak when someone is talking. When the discussion gets too emotional it is very common to talk to the person next to you because you can’t wait to share your ideas, experiences or opinions. Please, wait until the person is talking finishes and then you can share with the group. Third, remember that there are many people in the group and that it is very important that we hear everybody’s point of view. Fourth, you do not need to agree with what everyone or anyone in the group says, but I need to ask you to state your point of view without making any
negative comments or ‘put downs’. Finally because we have limited time together, I may need to stop you and to redirect our discussion. Does anyone have a question?

II Warm-Up
   A Set the tone and set participants at ease
       1 Tell us how long have you lived in Vieques and tell us a little bit about your family

III. Clarification of Terms
   A. When you hear the word wellness, what comes to your mind?
   B. For the purpose of this study health is defined as the combination of certain characteristics such as good physical, emotional, cognitive, and social skills necessary to be able to adapt and to deal with life adversities and stresses in a successful manner.

IV Easy and No threatening Questions
   1 Describe how these health components are represented in your family
   2 As a parent/caregiver, what things you feel are important in a family?
   3 Think about a situation at home where you feel support was demonstrated.
   4 Think about a situation in your community where support was demonstrated.

V. More Difficult Questions
   1 Tell me about your favorite memories as a child and as an adult.
   2. What things make it difficult to maintain health for you and your family?
   3. Think about a difficult situation you have experienced in life. How did you feel about the situation and how did you handle it? What helped you overcome that situation?
   4 How the presence of the US Navy base here in Vieques has influenced yours and your family’s life?
   5 What lessons of life would you like your children to learn from you?
      • What would you like your children learn from you?
VI  Wrap-Up
    As the moderator I will identify the major themes presented in the
discussion and summarize it for the group. I will acknowledge if we did not have
enough time to discuss some questions more extensively.

VII  Member Check
    I would like to identify the key points or issues discussed in this group. I
would like to find out how each one of you feel about them not as another
discussion but more as a hand checking. First, how many of you?
    I will count how many participants agree on each of the issues or key
points discussed.

VIII  Closing
    I like to ask you not to share the information that other members of the
group have presented here. It is important to respect the right of each member to
remain anonymous. Do you have any questions? I like to thank you for coming
here and helping me learn more about your community and about Vieques. Your
information will be of incredible help for future studies and programs.
Apéndice I
Guía de Preguntas para el Grupo de Foco

I. Introducción.

A. Bienvenida. Bienvenidos y gracias por asistir a esta sesión. Cada uno de ustedes ha sido seleccionado porque la opinión y el sentir que ustedes tienen acerca de este tema es muy importante para mí. Quisiera que esta sesión la consideren como una oportunidad para expresar sus ideas siempre teniendo en cuenta que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Por tanto a veces usted podrá estar de acuerdo o no con otros integrantes de este grupo y eso está perfectamente bien. Debemos mantener presente sobretodo el respetarnos unos a los otros. Esta sesión va a ser grabada para así mantener la integridad de sus respuestas. Una vez que se haya transcurrido la sesión yo asignaré números o nombres falsos a todos ustedes para así proteger su anonimato. Después que la información haya sido analizada la grabación será destruida.

B. Propósito del Grupo de Foco: Este estudio aprovecha la oportunidad de aprender de los niños y familias de Vieques sobre los factores que los han apoyado para mantener su bienestar a la misma vez que viven en un ambiente el cual está constantemente retando sus habilidades de mantener un balance saludable en la vida. El propósito de este grupo es tener la oportunidad de explorar cuáles son los valores que ustedes comparten como individuo y como comunidad en Vieques. También es mi interés aprender qué ustedes hacen para mantener su familia y su comunidad fuertes, para así sobrellevar los problemas y las crisis diarias. Estoy interesada en saber cómo la actividad militar aquí en Vieques ha influenciado a ustedes como individuos y a su vida familiar.

C. Guías a Seguir. Primero quisiera describir unas guías que quisiera que siguiéramos durante la discusión de grupo. Primero, ustedes no necesitan hablar o expresar su opinión en ningún orden en particular. Cuando usted tenga algo que decir, por favor digálo. Segundo, por favor no hable cuando otra persona está hablando. Cuando las discusiones se tornan muy emocionales es muy común comenzar a hablarle a la persona que está sentado al lado pues es a veces uno no puede esperar y quiere expresar sus ideas, experiencias y opiniones. Por favor espere a que la persona que está hablando termine para que entonces usted pueda compartir su opinión con el grupo. Tercero, recuerde que hay muchas personas en el grupo y es bien importante que escuchemos el punto de vista de todos. Cuarto, usted no tiene que estar de acuerdo con lo que el grupo o con lo que alguien dice, pero yo necesito pedirles que presenten su punto de vista sin hacer comentarios negativos o denigrar a nadie. Finalmente, como el tiempo para esta discusión es
limitado, algunas veces yo necesitaré interrumpir o dirigir la discusión
¿Alguien tiene alguna pregunta?

II Inicio

A Promover un ambiente para que los participantes estén a gusto
  I. Díganos cuánto tiempo ha vivido en Vieques y díganos un poco sobre su familia

III Clarificación de Términos

A Cuando usted escucha el término bienestar, ¿qué viene a su mente?
B Para el propósito de este estudio bienestar se define como la combinación de ciertas características tales como salud física, emocional, cognoscitiva, espiritual y social necesarias para poder adaptarse y sobrellevar las adversidades y estrés de la vida diaria de una forma positiva.

IV Preguntas Fáciles y No Amenazantes

1. Describa cómo las características de bienestar son reflejadas en su familia
2. Como padres o encargados, ¿qué cosas usted considera son importantes en una familia?
3. Puedes pensar en una situación en su hogar donde usted sintió que tuvo el apoyo que necesitaba
4. Puede pensar en una situación en su comunidad donde usted sintió que tuvo el apoyo que necesitaba.

V Preguntas Más Dificiles

1. Cuéntanos algún recuerdo favorito de cuando eras niño(a) y ahora de adulto(a)
2. ¿Qué cosas impiden o hace difícil el mantener el bienestar para usted y para su familia?
3. Piensa en una situación difícil que has tenido en la vida ¿Cómo se sintieron en esa situación y cómo bregaron? ¿Qué le ayudó a sobrellevar esa situación?
4. ¿Cómo la presencia de la Marina de los Estados Unidos aquí en Vieques ha influenciado su vida y la de su familia?
5. ¿Qué lecciones de vida usted quisiera que sus niños(as) aprendiera de usted?
   - ¿Qué usted quisiera que sus niños(as) aprendieran de usted?

VI Resumen

Como moderadora del grupo yo identificaré los temas principales presentes en la discusión y lo resumiré para el grupo. Yo reconoceré si no hubo tiempo suficiente para abundar en la discusión de algunas preguntas.
VII. Cotejo de Miembros del Grupo

Quiero señalar los puntos más importantes discutidos en este grupo. Quisiera saber cómo cada uno de ustedes se sienten con respecto a esta información con el propósito de que mis impresiones de lo discutido sean ciertas. Primero, cuántos de ustedes...?

Yo contaré cuántos miembros del grupo están de acuerdo con cada tema o punto clave discutido.

VIII. Cierre

Quisiera pedirles que la información discutida en este grupo no se comparta fuera del grupo. Es muy importante que respetemos el derecho que tiene cada miembro del grupo a pertenecer anónimo. ¿Tienen alguna pregunta? Quiero darle las gracias por haber venido y por ayudarme a aprender más sobre su comunidad y sobre Vieques. La información que ustedes han compartido hoy será de inmensa ayuda para estudios y programas en el futuro.
Appendix I  
Informed Consent Form for Teachers

You are invited to participate in a study that looks at people’s ability to maintain physical and psychological health. The study is being conducted to fulfill the requirement for the doctorate in education at the University of Denver, Colorado. The study is being conducted by Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR. The purpose of this study is to learn from the people of Vieques what values are important for families. Also, this study intends to expand the knowledge about the process of how health is maintained within the family, what are the factors that support health and what are the factors that put at risk the health for the families in Vieques. The results of the study will be used to learn more about the process of how families develop, and promote physical and emotional health despite stressful circumstances. The study’s chairperson is Dr. Toni Linder, EdD, professor and Director, Child and Family Studies, (303) 871-2472, and the co-chairperson is Dr. Nicholas J. Cutforth, PhD, Professor Curriculum and Instruction, (303) 871-2477 at the University of Denver, Colorado, 80208.

Participation involves permission to observe a child already identified as participant for this study. Parents/caregivers and child have already agreed to participate in this study. Participation includes observation of the child in the school setting for a short period of one hour. Visits will be scheduled upon common agreement and will be scattered throughout a period of five months (from August through December, 2002). Participation also involves a one face-to-face interview with the child’s teacher, to be conducted in a setting mutually agreed upon. The interview is projected to last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be audiotaped and will include questions related to family practices, values and child’s behaviors and attitudes in the school. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcripts of the interviews to assure that your thoughts and ideas are documented accurately. Your involvement is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question during the interview and are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

All information gathered for this study will be maintained confidential. This means that only the researcher and the committee will have access to the information you provide. A code name will be used on all documentation. Only the researcher will have the list that matches this code name with your name, and the list will be kept in a secure setting. While your responses will not be identified.
by name, it is possible that responses may be documented exactly as you stated them in the study and in possible subsequent publications. As such, you may choose to have me disguise your identity. You will also have the opportunity, if you wish, to read what has been written about you and provide your opinion, ask that changes be made, or choose to withdraw from the study. Audiotapes will be kept in a secure place and erased at the end of the study.

There are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. Any information you reveal concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect is required by law to be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the court.

The benefits of being involved in this study include the ability to contribute to improve the knowledge and to improve the development of preventive services that promote health for children and families. You may also find it helpful to provide information about your own experience. If you would like a copy of the findings of the study, the researcher will be happy to provide one for you. You will, however, receive no compensation for your participation in the study. Potential risks of being involved include the possibility of discussing your experience dealing with factors that put at risk the state of health for you, students or the community may be upsetting either during the interview or afterward. If this occurs, please talk with the researcher. You may choose to not answer any specific question, take a break from the interview, postpone the interview, or withdraw from the study. The researcher will arrange for a referral to a specific resource, if you would like.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the sessions scheduled for this study, please contact Dr. Jeff Jenson, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-2526, or Dawn Nowak, Office of Sponsored Programs, at (303) 871-4052, or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80208-2121.

You may keep this document for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to participate.
I have read and understood the descriptions of the study called *Exploration of the Meaning and Process of Wellness Among Families in Vieques*. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. I have received a copy of the Informed Consent Form for Teachers.

______________________________   __________________________
Signature                                      Date

___ I AGREE to be audio taped

___ I DO NOT AGREE to be audio taped

___ I would like to receive a summary of results to be mailed or e-mailed to me at the following address

324
Apéndice J
Informe de Consentimiento Para los(as) Maestros(as)

Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio de salud. Este estudio se está llevando a cabo con el propósito de cumplir con los requisitos del trabajo de investigación para el doctorado en educación en la Universidad de Denver, Colorado. Este estudio está dirigido por Wanda Figueroa-Rosario, MS, OTR. El propósito de este estudio es el de aprender de las personas en Vieques cuáles son los valores más importantes para las familias. También este estudio intenta expandir el conocimiento sobre el proceso de cómo la salud es mantenida en la familia, cuáles son los factores que apoyan el desarrollo del bienestar y cuáles son los factores de riesgo que afectan el bienestar de las familias en Vieques. Los resultados de este estudio se utilizarán para ampliar los conocimientos sobre el proceso que se lleva a cabo para el desarrollo y promoción del bienestar familiar a pesar de estar viviendo en unas circunstancias difíciles. La directora de la investigación es la Doctora Toni Linder, EdD., Profesora y Directora de los Estudios de Familias y Niños, (303) 871-2472, y el co-director es el Doctor Nicholas J. Curtforth, PhD., Profesor del programa Currículo e Instrucción, (303) 871-2477 en la Universidad de Denver, Colorado, 80208.

La participación en este estudio conlleva observar a un(na) niño(a) el cual ya ha estado identificado y aprobado por su familia para participar en este estudio. Los padres/encargados y el(la) niño(a) han accedido a participar en este estudio. La participación incluye observación del(la) niño(a) en la escuela por un periodo de una hora. Las observaciones serán programadas tras un acuerdo común y serán programadas por un espacio de cinco meses (desde Agosto a Diciembre, 2002). Participación también incluye una entrevista con la(el) maestro(a), cara a cara, la cual se llevará a cabo en un lugar determinado bajo consenso mutuo. La entrevista está programada para durar aproximadamente 60 minutos. La entrevista será grabada e incluirá preguntas relacionadas con las prácticas y los valores de la familia y con la conducta y actitudes de los niños(as) en la escuela. Usted tendrá la oportunidad de revisar las transcripciones de la entrevista de esta forma se asegura que sus pensamientos e ideas han sido documentados correctamente. Su participación es completamente voluntaria. Usted puede decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta durante la entrevista y está en la libertad de retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento.
Toda la información obtenida en este estudio será mantenida confidencial. Esto quiere decir que solamente la investigadora y el comité de investigación tendrán acceso a la información que usted provea. Un nombre de código será utilizado en todas las documentaciones. Solamente la investigadora tendrá la lista que paree su nombre de código con su nombre, y esa lista será mantenida en un lugar seguro. A pesar de que sus respuestas no van a ser identificadas con su nombre, es posible que algunas respuestas sean redactadas exactamente en el informe investigativo o en futuras publicaciones. Si esto ocurre usted puede elegir que su identidad sea mantenida en forma confidencial. Si así lo desea, usted también tendrá la oportunidad de leer lo que se ha escrito sobre usted, de esa forma puede tener la oportunidad de presentar su opinión, solicitar cambios, o decidir retirarse del estudio de investigación.

Hay dos excepciones a la promesa de confidencialidad. Cualquier información que usted declare relacionada con suicidio, homicidio, abuso y negligencia a niños es mandatorio por ley que sea reportada a las autoridades pertinentes. En caso de que cualquier información obtenida en este estudio sea sujeta a orden de la corte, la Universidad de Denver no podrá evitar acceder a una orden de la corte.

Los beneficios de participar en este estudio incluyen la oportunidad de contribuir a mejorar el conocimiento y a mejorar el desarrollo de los servicios de prevención los cuales promueven la salud para niños(a) y familias. Usted también encontrará beneficioso el poder proveer información sobre sus propias experiencias. Si usted desea una copia de los resultados de este estudio, la investigadora tendrá mucho gusto en proveerle una. Usted no recibirá ningún tipo de compensación por su participación en el estudio. Posibles riesgos en la participación de este estudio incluyen la posibilidad de que al discutir sus experiencias enfrentando los factores que ponen a riesgo su salud, la de los(as) niños(a) o la de la comunidad, puedan crear estados de molestia tanto durante o después de la entrevista. Si esto sucede, por favor comuníquese con la investigadora de este estudio. Usted puede decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta, posponer la entrevista, o retirarse del estudio. La investigadora hará los arreglos para referirlo(a) a las agencias pertinentes si así usted lo desea.

Si usted tiene alguna preocupación o quejas relacionadas a como usted ha sido tratado durante el periodo de la investigación favor de llamar al Dr Jeff Jensen, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, al (303) 871-2526, o Dawn Nowak, Office of Sponsored Programs, al (303) 871-4052, o escriba a University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S University Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80208-2121.

Usted puede retener este documento para sus expedientes. Por favor firme en la próxima página si usted ha entendido la información presentada y desea participar.
Yo he leído y entiendo la descripción anterior del estudio llamado *Exploración del Significado y del Proceso de Bienestar entre las Familias en Vieques*. Yo he preguntado y he recibido una explicación satisfactoria en relación con el lenguaje escrito el cual no entendía completamente. Yo estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio, y entiendo que puedo retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento sin tener ninguna penalidad. Yo he recibido una copia del Formulario de Consentimiento para la Participación de los(as) Maestros(as).

_________ ____________
Firma Fecha

___ Yo ACEPTO que mis conversaciones sean audio grabadas.

___ Yo NO ACEPTO que mis conversaciones sean audio grabadas

___ Yo desearía recibir un resumen de los resultados y que sean enviados por correo regular o por correo electrónico a la siguiente dirección:
Appendix K
Guiding Questions for Teachers

1. Tell me about your experience as a teacher
   - How long have you been working as a teacher?
   - How long have you been working as a teacher in Vieques?

2. Tell me your believes about education
   - What education means to you?
   - What education should look like in Vieques?

3. Tell me in general terms, about the children and families you have in your classroom
   - What are the families believes about education?
   - How children approach academic work?
   - What are children attitudes about asking questions or looking for help (resources) within the classroom or school?

4. How the school promotes wellness for the student population?
   - What kinds of activities are organized to support student's learning and success?
   - What kinds of resources are available for students?

5. What are the environmental factors that promote or serve as obstacles of wellness here in Vieques?
   - Unemployment level
   - The US Navy base.
Apéndice K
Guía de Preguntas para los(as) Maestros(as)

1. Háblame de tu experiencia como maestro(a).
   - ¿Por cuánto tiempo has trabajado como maestro(a)?
   - ¿Cuánto tiempo has trabajado como maestro(a) aquí en Vieques?

2. Háblame sobre tu filosofía de educación?
   - ¿Qué significa para ti la educación?
   - ¿Cómo debería ser la educación en Vieques?

3. Cuéntame, en términos generales, sobre los(as) niños(as) y familias que tienes en tu salón de clase
   - ¿Cuál es la filosofía de las familias con respecto a la educación?
   - ¿Cuál es la actitud de los(as) niños(as) con relación al trabajo académico?
   - ¿Cuál es la actitud de los(as) niños(as) con relación a hacer preguntas o buscar ayuda (recursos) en el salón de clase o la escuela?

4. ¿Cómo la escuela promueve salud para la población estudiantil?
   - ¿Qué clase de actividades son organizadas para apoyar el aprendizaje y el éxito de los estudiantes?
   - ¿Qué tipo de recursos hay disponibles para los estudiantes?

5. ¿Cuáles son los factores ambientales que promueven o que son obstáculos para el desarrollo de la salud aquí en Vieques?
   - El nivel de desempleo
   - La base de la Marina de los Estados Unidos
### Appendix L
Analytic Memo - Sample

#### Analytic Memo: Nora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Extended family, father, stepmother and brothers, live closed by</td>
<td>1. Children could not be delivered in Vieques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Unity of the family</td>
<td>2. Was not raised by her mother, she divorced her dad and left them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cooperation among family members</td>
<td>3. Got married at 19 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The help from each others.</td>
<td>4. Was fearful of her dad Didn’t feel comfortable talking or sharing things with her dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Moral, social and religious values</td>
<td>5. Has never had a good relationship with her biological mother. Does not feel maternal love for her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Education</td>
<td>6. Does not trust the resources available in Vieques, The Health Center for Families, because confidentiality is not honored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Likes to live in an environment that is organized and clean</td>
<td>7. The US Navy has blocked the progress of Vieques If where you live there is no progress, then the family won’t progress either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When she was young it was expected that she do the laundry, clean the house and many other chores They have to help grandmother.</td>
<td>8. Vieques has given so much to the USA, has given its land. Why there isn’t support to have good health services, a hospital here? They have been bad neighbors to us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Paternal grandma raised her And after she died with her dad and stepmother.</td>
<td>9. Lived limited because of the fear of the fights with the soldiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. God is a fundamental part of the home. Marta and her daughters attend church together on Sunday</td>
<td>10. We have always lived in this island like if we are strangers, like prisoners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. If God helps you, you can do anything you want Without His help nothing can be done</td>
<td>11. Fear that her daughters become contaminated and develop cancer Have seen family and friends die of cancer here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Mother goes to college to become a Spanish teacher Goal oriented</td>
<td>12. Drug addiction problems are big in Vieques The young people don’t have a place to go or things to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Keeps a positive attitude about the future and plans things ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Has a flexible and positive outlook in order to keep options open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Takes risks that support future goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Faith strengthens confidence She prays, sings and listens to Christian music “God guide and protect me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mother raised her daughters alone after her divorce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Her father helps whenever she needs it. Now that she is an adult, father is always looking for her and helps her. Helps and cares for granddaughters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Grandmother spoiled her a lot. Made sure she always goes to school. Was very loving and affectionate. Was always looking for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Marta taught her grandmother to write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Grandma was a strong woman. She raised all her kids and grandchildren by herself despite being a widow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>As a child used to listen to stories from the elders. Neighbors opened their doors to others and shared coffee and stories to the young ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Expresses pride in academic accomplishments, graduating from high school and was accepted in college. Loves to read and learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Raised her three younger brothers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Easy going and loving temperament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Has the strength to make tough decisions, divorcing her first husband, with confidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
27. Strength comes from her faith in God and her sense of responsibility (obligation) to raise her children.

28. Has a sense of commitment and responsibility with the church.

29. Uses resources such as wedding godmother, paternal grandmother, church, friends and her husband when in need of help and/or advice.

30. Good listener and friend.

31. She feels a sense of solidarity and support from her classmates at the university.

32. Adaptable, flexible. Encourages classmates to keep going.

How wellness has been promoted from parents to children?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mother helps daughters with school homework after she comes home from college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mother feels that's her responsibility and obligation to help and prepare daughters through their education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Help is expected to be in two ways from parents to children and from children to parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Understanding of children responsibilities according to age level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>There is an expectation that at certain age children have to go on in life by themselves. Mother feels her responsibility goes to when her children reach a college degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It is the parent's responsibility to teach children a foundation of what is right and what is wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Respect, feel love and help the elders. Mother was baking a cake for a neighbor who had a religious meeting at her house and asked Maria if she could help her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mother attend church with daughters on Sunday. Mother sings in the church choir and older daughter serves as a reader during mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>To help others, to be good persons and to study and become professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Financial responsibilities are shared between parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Couple supports each other promoting individual, professional growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Go as a family to the beach, fishing, to the Justice and Peace Camp, to the girl's volleyball competitions and band presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Marta likes to spoil her daughters at times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Share what you have with others, feed the people who ask for food and...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Be good to others because, in time, God will reward you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Expresses and demonstrate love for her daughters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mother taught religion to children at church. Now she is minister of Eucharist and sings in the choir. The younger daughter has helped in mass and the older one reads the liturgy. Daughters are following mom’s steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Gather as a family to discuss issues, everything is discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mother talks to her daughters a lot. Ask about how things are going in school. Mother also has “community contacts” that keep her updated of what is going on with the girls. Daughters are honor students. Encourages daughters to aspire for higher goals as she demonstrates by studying her bachelors’ degree in education and wants to study her masters afterwards. Encourages daughters to study and offer them to rent an apartment in PR so that they don’t have to go through what she has.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Daughters have a good relationship with the school counselor in case they have a problem or need some advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Strong sense of having a presence at home with her daughters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Anything that happens to you in life is no reason to be stuck. If you fall, you can stand up and keep going. Don’t give up, persevere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Education will open doors to a better life and will give you the power to overcome difficult situations. If one door closes, another one will open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Keep your faith in God and everything will come through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Be proud of whatever work you do (cleaning windows, at a bakery, whatever) but it is important to work. To have a job that helps you move on in life with dignity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Don’t allow any man to abuse or degrade you. Move on in life, you won’t die because of a bad experience with a man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Don’t feel sorry for yourself. If you are sad and have to cry do so but afterwards move on in life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix M
Categories and Themes - Sample

Map Illustrating the Process of Wellness for Families in Vieques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Parents as responsible caretakers</td>
<td>a- Feeling abandon b- Fear c- Limiting independence</td>
<td>a- House rules b- Parents share parenting responsibilities c- Second parents’ role.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Expression of feelings/communication</td>
<td>a- Parents as fearful figures b- Never felt loved c- Families are divided d- Nothing special to celebrate</td>
<td>a- Mother is mother, regardless b- Tough love c- Family celebrations d- Grandma’s cooking, the best in the island!</td>
<td>a- Raising kids with love and tenderness b- Love for Vieques</td>
<td>a- Yeah, sister is here!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Home responsibilities</td>
<td>a- Too early for adult-like work When is it my turn to be a kid? b- Balancing responsibilities in the marriage. c- The cost of having self control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4 Social rules | a- Prejudice of skin color  
|               | b- Prejudice because of religious believes  
|               | c- Social status  
| 5. Connected with the community |  
| 6 Religion | a- Perseverance  
| 7. The island of Vieques, a geographical challenge |  
| 8 Health services | a- Medical facilities  
|               | b- Confidentiality  
|               | c- They have been bad neighbors  
| 9 Alcohol abuse/psychiatric illness |  
| 10 Drugs |  
| 11 What to do in Vieques? | a- Special family times  
| 12 Youth Teen Pregnancy | a- To empower children to use their capacities to make decisions  
| 13 Education | a- Influence of the Navy  
|               | b- Make-up of student population  
|               | c- Teenage pregnancy  
|               | d- Non-supportive parents  
|               | e- School is not for
| 14 School environment | a- Class dynamics  
b- Physical environment  
c- Teacher’s damaging practices  
d- You must have parents, where are they?  
e- Noise contamination  
f- School is not for you |
| 15 To finish a college degree | a- Curriculum  
b- Financial situation  
c- Difficult transition  
d- Civil disobedience vs school  
e- No support from parents |
| 16. Influence of the Navy on the Economy: Unemployment - Poverty | a- Only the trash to feed you  
b- And after high school  
c- Scars from welfare  
d- Barely making it  
e- Will I be able to return to Vieques? |
| 17. Work environment | a- Stressful  
b- Violation of employee’s rights  
c- Get your college degree first  
d- Cohesion  
e- Resources  
f- Physical and emotional |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 Influence of the Navy on the economy. Use of the land</td>
<td>g- No support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Influence of the Navy: Division among people.</td>
<td>a- Losing the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b- Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Influence of the Navy Contamination</td>
<td>a- Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b- Animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c- Cancer and other illnesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d- What are we doing here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e- What if I have a child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Influence of the Navy Life in Vieques from the 40's through the</td>
<td>a- Violence/alcohol/sexual abuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present. Safety of the living space</td>
<td>b- Prostitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c- Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d- Humiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e- It's a business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f- Killing of civilians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g- Commitment to go to jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h- Emotional tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i- Safety of the living space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Salud

¿Cómo logramos la paz con la paz de la paz para poder vivir tranquilamente?

La vida es única y hay que saber vivirla en paz.

Cancún

El Seminario

Appendix N

Children's Artwork
Appendix O
Letter of Land Expropriation

La casa y terreno que Ud. ocupa en el lote del Municipio de Vieques fue adquirida por los Estados Unidos el 1 de septiembre de 1917. Se le ha comunicado el derecho de posesión permanente.

Esta escritura es en conformidad con la ley de dicho lote.

En caso de que Ud. desee retirarse de esta propiedad, debe comunicármelo por escrito en el término de un año desde el día de la escritura.

Atentamente,

[Signature]

por el

[Name]

Captán (USC) USN

Form WB (Spanish)

[Signature]

No. 154 - 13
Appendix P

Map of Puerto Rico and Vieques
EXPLORATION OF THE MEANING AND PROCESS OF WELLNESS
AMONG FAMILIES IN VIEQUES - A QUALITATIVE STUDY

An Abstract of a Dissertation
Presented to
The College of Education
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Wanda Figueroa-Rosario
August 2003
The island of Vieques, located 18 miles southeast of the island of Puerto Rico, has been a United States Navy military training site since 1941. The presence of the Navy has had multiple negative effects on the people of Vieques, including socioeconomic, emotional and physical health problems, and has resulted in numerous violations of fundamental civil rights. The purpose of this qualitative study was twofold. First, it identified the values that determine and shape the process of wellness for four resilient families and community members from Vieques. Second, it identified the processes that are intrinsic to the development and maintenance of wellness within these families.

A bioecological model was used to analyze the cultural values that support the process of wellness on Vieques. This study’s findings revealed characteristics that were unique to the families of this island. Family members incorporated resources from their exo- and mesosystems into their microsystem in order to promote and maintain a cohesive wellness status for their children; in doing so, resources from other contexts became part of the family.

Three primary values were found to be vital in promoting the development and maintenance of relational wellness for the families and community members of Vieques. Family unity, community support, and patriotism. Additionally, religious values, faith in God, and perseverance were held in common by all the interviewed families. These values relate mostly to the individuals’ intrinsic characteristics, i.e., those developed either through interactions with primary care givers or with significant individuals in their lives. These cultural values form the foundation of certain developmental processes that support wellness for the
families and the community in general. Identification of these values and processes, and the life lessons gleaned from people who have been able to overcome so many challenges for over sixty years, can be used as a model for developing community programs that support wellness for all.