

“UNCHARTERED” TERRITORY: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE ON
ESTABLISHING GEORGIA’S FIRST PUBLIC TWO-WAY IMMERSION SCHOOL

by

DELL PERRY GILES

(Under the direction of Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor)

ABSTRACT

Spanish/English Two-Way Immersion Education (TWI) is a type of bilingual education in which Spanish-speaking and English-speaking students are taught together and both languages are used for classroom instruction. Despite all the empirical evidence documenting TWI as a viable and successful way of educating minority- and majority-language children to be bilingual and biliterate citizens (Center for Applied Linguistics [CAL], 2008a; Christian, Montone, Carranza, Lindholm, & Proctor, 1996; Howard, Christian, & Genesee, 2004; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002), there are relatively few programs in operation, and up until 2006 there were no public TWI programs in Georgia. Prior to 2006, TWI did not exist in Georgia’s public schools, yet schools were struggling to meet the needs of the rapidly increasing Spanish-speaking population, and businesses were challenged with finding employees who were equipped with the linguistic and cultural knowledge to work in the international community (Etheridge, 2005). Why were there no public TWI programs in operation in Georgia? What were the reasons? Had anyone ever tried it before? What were the obstacles to starting a public TWI program? Indeed, we have yet to gain a clear understanding of the process by which a person develops a TWI

program, overcoming barriers and garnering support at the level of the community, district, and state.

This study is an autoethnographic account of the process and challenges of starting a public TWI school in Georgia. It gives an emic perspective of the procedures, struggles, strategies, and emotions involved in creating an educational program that defies the monolingual norms that dominate public education in the United States in general and in Georgia in particular. In this study I used self-reflection and interactive analysis to document the process of starting a public TWI school in Georgia in order to understand the personal and professional challenges involved.

INDEX WORDS: Two-way immersion, Dual language education, Pragmatism, Autoethnography, Action-theoretical framework, Charter schools

“UNCHARTERED” TERRITORY: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE ON
ESTABLISHING GEORGIA’S FIRST PUBLIC TWO-WAY IMMERSION SCHOOL

by

DELL PERRY GILES

B.S., Texas A&M University, 1994

M.S., Georgia State University, 1996

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2010

© 2010

Dell Perry Giles

All Rights Reserved

“UNCHARTERED” TERRITORY: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE ON
ESTABLISHING GEORGIA’S FIRST PUBLIC TWO-WAY IMMERSION SCHOOL

by

DELL PERRY GILES

Major Professor: Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor

Committee: Linda Harklau
Pedro Portes

Electronic version approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2010

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Collier and Peggy Perry, who model compassion, generosity, justice and responsibility in every aspect of their lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
1	Introduction.....1
	Prologue.....1
	Background of the Study.....9
	Research Questions14
2	Theoretical Perspectives15
	Pragmatism and John Dewey15
	TWI and John Dewey.....20
3	Methods.....38
	Prologue.....38
	Autoethnography39
	Data Collection.....49
	Note on Identity Masking.....53
	Data Analysis and Reporting.....54
4	My Story62
	Inspiration.....62
	Dear [REDACTED],.....62
	What Can I Do?.....64
	I Said, “Charter Schools are <i>Public</i> Schools!”72

	No Stone Left Unturned	80
	What Goes Up.....	86
	Some Things You Simply Can't Explain.....	87
	It's a Lonely Place to Be	92
	Blinded by Love	93
	Monumental Firsts.....	95
	Is the Egg Golden or Rotten?	99
	The Cardinal Sin.....	102
	Letting Go.....	104
	Pins and Needles	108
	I'm a Duck.....	109
	Media Frenzy.....	117
	Hurry Up and Wait.....	123
	My Dream, My School, <i>My Story</i>	126
5	Interpretations	128
	For Jerónimo and Félix.....	128
	So What?	130
	Personal Implications	130
	Professional Implications	137
	Autoethnography and This Research	143
Epilogue	Today	146
	The Road Goes on Forever.....	146
	Quick Stats	146

Not <i>My</i> School.....	147
REFERENCES	149

Chapter One

*May you have the hindsight to know where you have been,
the foresight to know where you are going,
and the insight to know when you have gone too far.*

Irish blessing (Thinkexist.com, n.d.)

* * *

Introduction

Prologue

I never would have thought that writing this dissertation would be as arduous a task as it has turned out to be. I remember sitting in my graduate advisor's office during the first semester of my doctoral program when we began to toss around the idea of an autoethnographic study. My knowledge of autoethnography at that time was very limited. I had recently read Tracy Kidder's book, *Old Friends* (1993), in which the author delicately and eloquently tells a story about the lives, both present and past, of residents in a nursing home. He spent a year observing the residents of Linda Manor and listening to them tell stories, observing as they lived out the final moments of their lives. And although a story about the lives of nursing home residents could possibly draw lengthy yawns from a crowd, Kidder manages to weave a tale that captivates the reader— a yarn that evokes empathy, understanding, and silliness all at the same time. *Old Friends* is not an autoethnography, but Kidder's ethnographic research methods are very much aligned with autoethnographic methodologies. He uses a literary research method to study a topic very close to his heart and then shares what he learned, through his lens, with a wider

audience – readers who might have found themselves in similar situations. In his words they might find encouragement and unexpected insight into their own lives. I wanted to do the same thing.

I had been a full-time doctoral student for less than a semester in 2003, but I already knew two things for sure. First, that my path through academia would not lead to a much coveted professorial position at a “Research I” institution. My heart would not take me there. When I left teaching in public schools, even ever so briefly, a part of me stayed behind. I would have to go back and retrieve it. Second, I had a new calling. I experienced a life-changing, mind-altering, paradigm-shifting epiphany when I took a course in bilingual education. I discovered my niche. And since Georgia schools did not offer bilingual education, I would have to create a brand new place for myself. I would start my own school.

Autoethnography seemed like the perfect way to blend the requirements of my doctoral program with my real life goals – my subject with my soul. I could study and write about my experience opening Georgia’s first public Two-Way Immersion (TWI) school while I was doing it. What could be more real than that? An autoethnographic study would be the vehicle for me to make a contribution to academic research while, at the same time, build a product that would carry me back into public schools upon completion. It was seamless. Of course! Why hadn’t I thought of this sooner? Why had I spent hours agonizing over my two seemingly disparate objectives? It would be easy! I wouldn’t be one of those doctoral students who lost interest in her study because it was no longer applicable to her real life. No way! Autoethnography – what a perfect solution!

Now, over six years later, I think back, with tears in my eyes, about how naïve I had been. I began this essay with the words, “*I never would have thought that writing this*

dissertation would be as arduous a task as it has turned out to be.” When I use the word *arduous*, I don’t mean physically demanding, tiring nor laborious, although there have been times I’ve felt all those things. No. When I say that writing this dissertation was arduous, what I mean is that it was emotionally grueling. My journey during the years that it took to open the school was filled with moments when I felt like I had won the lottery, negotiated world peace, and eradicated poverty all in the same day; yet, there were many more days when I just wanted to walk away from the whole idea, curl up into a ball, and insulate myself from the ignorance and selfishness of our society. I did not predict that telling my story would be so hard to do.

In fact, I thought just the opposite. When I determined I would conduct autoethnographic research, I expected that my story would flow through the tips of my fingers onto the computer screen effortlessly; but years have passed since my data collection ended, since my story theoretically finished, and I’m only now nearing the end of telling it. I can make up all kinds of excuses: the school opened and I didn’t have time nor energy to write; I got married and a wedding takes a lot of time to pull together; we built a house and there were all kinds of decisions to be made. These are all legitimate justifications, and they certainly played a role in delaying the final product, but they are not the primary reason my story has taken so long to write. The truth is that the actual experience, the real process of starting the school, was not a happy time for me. In fact, parts of it rank as the most depressing and daunting times in my life, so the act of avoidance, the act of not writing my story, was an act of self-preservation.

Every time I opened my computer to write the next chapter (and finish this “damn dissertation,” as it came to be known), which I’ve done countless times in recent years, it was like ripping open a festering wound. Even in public forums, I was unable to contain my tears. In 2007, I presented my research at the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE)

conference and fell apart in front of my audience when I had to read the xenophobic email messages sent to me following the school board approval. Another time, in the fall of 2008, I was asked to sit in on a university class and share my work with the students, my contemporaries. I crumbled again, especially when I related the important role that my mom played in the story. Even as recently as two days ago, my husband came home to find me weeping over my keyboard as I was making final edits. It never got any easier. Each time I picked it back up, hoping to bring closure to that episode of my life, I tore open an internal wound.

“So why put yourself through all of that?” one might ask. Don’t think that it didn’t cross my mind more often than I am willing to admit. I was tempted on innumerable occasions along the way to simply forget about it, to set it aside, to let bygones be bygones. My life had moved on. My school was open and the students were thriving. My “real life objective” was well on its way to fulfillment. It was ever so appealing. But I had come too far to quit now. Although the school was open, I had yet to formalize my contribution to academic research and to the field of bilingual education. As I reflect on my experience, I appreciate, now more than ever, the merits of TWI education, and I believe that it would be a disservice to the bilingual education research community if I did not share my experience with others. I am on the verge of completion now, and my most sincere hope is that my story will inspire and inform other dedicated, similarly hard-headed and ambitious educators to take those steps down the thorny path of educational reform.

In the end, in order to put this task behind me, I went on a week-long, private writing retreat. Except for a few deer, squirrels and spiders, I didn’t see another living thing the whole time I was there. It was silent. I was alone. No internet. No television. No excuses. It was

only under those circumstances that I was ultimately able to open the wound, re-live the experience and write it all down. I cried every day. The emotions are still raw. The injury is ever-present, but perhaps the healing can begin. Here is my story.

In a popular U2 (1988) song called “Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For,” lead singer Bono sings about climbing the highest mountains and scaling city walls in search of a perfect love, but never quite finding exactly what he is looking for. Although I do not equate the love for which Bono searches with the fondness I feel for my profession, I still find these words fitting in terms of describing my journey in search of the perfect job for me. It is one in which the place, time, and set of circumstances come together in such a way as to create a job that is meaningful, fulfilling, and economically feasible. I suspect that this “just what the doctor ordered” combination does not exist for very many people, but perhaps with perseverance I can come pretty close.

My background as a classroom educator is in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL). I did not study education as an undergraduate student, but when I graduated from college I knew that I wanted to live and work abroad. My sense of adventure had been sparked when I spent a semester in Spain. It was there that I became aware of the field of English teaching and I realized then that if I were to study ESL education, I would have a better chance of getting a job abroad. I had found a way to support both myself and my adventurous spirit. So that’s what I did. I moved to Georgia and began taking graduate level courses to obtain all the credentials I needed to become a professional ESL/EFL instructor.

While taking courses in applied linguistics, I had an opportunity to work as an assistant in a middle school ESL class in which most of the students were recent immigrants, of very modest means, from Mexico and Central America. That was my first experience working one-on-one

with immigrant children and their families on a daily basis and I knew, without a doubt, that there was something about working with these families that fulfilled me. I treasured the occasions when I was able to spend time with the children, attend their family birthday parties and have dinner in their modest homes. I enjoyed bringing the kids over to swim in the pool at my apartment complex and taking them with me to high school soccer games. For the first time in my adult working life, I felt rewarded. I felt like I was making a difference in people's lives.

While I loved my work that year, it was not financially feasible to continue, so I took a job as a middle and high school Spanish teacher for two years while I completed my master's degree. Teaching Spanish to American students was as disappointing as working with immigrant families had been gratifying. It was terribly disheartening to see how little value the American students seemed to place on knowing another language and learning about the cultures of the people who speak that language. My sense was that these students only associated Spanish with the men and women who landscaped their yards, cleaned their houses and washed their dishes. I never saw them interacting socially with Spanish speakers. I did not know how to help them learn to appreciate the rich cultural and linguistic histories of Spanish-speaking people and their contributions to American society, nor the value of being able to communicate in Spanish. As a young, inexperienced teacher, I did not feel equipped to take on this challenge, so I left the foreign language classroom, vowing never to teach Spanish to American students again.

In 1997, I moved to Barcelona, Spain. There, I taught English to students of all ages from mostly upper-income households. These students were very different from those I had known in the ESL class in the U.S. They were not members of working-class, immigrant families with limited schooling who struggled daily to pay their bills and feed their children. Instead, they were well-educated, mostly upper class Spaniards who were studying English in

order to increase their academic and employment opportunities. My students in Spain were gracious and generous people, but, while living abroad for me was a life-changing and meaningful experience, something was missing. My heart was not in it as it had been when I was working with those middle schoolers and their families in the United States, so after two years, I decided to move back home to Texas.

I spent a year teaching in an intensive English program at a local university on the Texas-Mexico border. As in Spain, my students were well-educated, upper-income kids who were preparing to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam to enter universities in the United States. They were looking forward to high-paying jobs where knowing how to speak English was a bonus, but not a requirement. They had all the advantages and privileges that the wealthy have all over the world. While they were wonderful people, I still did not feel the sense of fulfillment that I had before. I was closer, but I still hadn't found what I was looking for. I knew that I had to get back into the classroom with kids and families who really *needed* me. Or was it I who needed them?

For the next three years I worked as an ESL teacher in an urban middle school in Georgia. I loved my job and I cherished the kids. These students, mostly from Spanish-speaking families, came to my class an hour each day, and during that time we would work together on acquiring the academic language that they needed to be successful in U.S. schools. It was very satisfying watching them learn, some through more effort than others, but during the entire time I was teaching ESL, I could not ignore the nagging sense that I was participating in a larger injustice. I remembered learning, back when I was studying second language acquisition as a graduate student, that trying to teach a child to read and write a second language when they were not even fully literate in their first language was like trying to keep an ice cream cone from

melting away on a sweltering summer day. No matter how fast you lick, the sticky drips keep on dribbling down your fingers. It didn't matter what hot-off-the-press program or strategy we tried; the kids with interrupted schooling and a poor literacy foundation in their native language never seemed to be able to catch up with their English-speaking peers. I saw it every day. Students who entered my classroom with solid academic backgrounds in their home countries flew through the ESL classes and into the American school system, while those who entered with limited schooling and low literacy in their native languages would get stalled out because they could not acquire the necessary English skills fast enough to be successful in the academically demanding, high-stakes testing-oriented American schools. It was extremely disheartening for me and for them.

In 2003, knowing that something needed to change, but unsure as to what that change could be, I left the classroom to study full time in a doctoral program. It was in one of the first classes I took that I discovered what I thought would be the answer to my call for reform. In that course, I finally learned about TWI as an alternative to ESL for language acquisition. TWI is “a distinctive form of dual language education in which native English speakers and native speakers of another language are integrated for academic content instruction through both English and the partner language” (CAL, 2008b). In a TWI program, the partner language, sometimes referred to as the “minority language,” is the language of instruction at least 50% of the time for all students. Unlike many traditional foreign language and ESL/EFL programs, in which language is taught as a separate subject, in TWI programs, language is taught through the content areas, i.e., math, reading, language arts, science and social studies. Apart from academic achievement, a primary goal of TWI programs is bilingualism and biliteracy for all students.

When I first read about TWI, it seemed too good to be true, but as I continued my research I learned that TWI was happening all across the nation, even in my home state of Texas (CAL, 2009b), I just had not known about it. Then, it dawned on me, in that moment, how I would make a difference. I would bring Georgia schools in line with other school systems across the country, like the San Francisco Unified School District, the District of Columbia Public Schools and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina, by introducing TWI to Georgia. It seemed simple enough. Neither teaching ESL/EFL nor Spanish as a foreign language had fulfilled me. With TWI, perhaps I had finally found what I was looking for. In 2003, I set out to climb the highest mountain of my professional journey: I began the process of establishing Georgia's first public TWI school.

Background of the Study

Americans often refer to this country as a nation of immigrants. The largest wave of immigration occurred between 1901 and 1910, when over 8.8 million immigrants arrived in the United States (Gibson & Lennon, 1999). Immigration during the latter 20th and early 21st centuries, however, has topped that previous record, and the numbers are steadily rising (A. Portes & Rumbault, 2001). In 1996, there were close to 26 million immigrants living in the United States, documented and undocumented. In less than 10 years, by 2007, that total had increased by over 30%, bringing the total of immigrants in the U.S. to more than 37.9 million – the highest number ever recorded in American history – and accounting for almost 12% of the nation's total population (Camarota, 2007). Since 2000, 10.3 million immigrants have arrived – the highest seven-year period of immigration in U.S. history (Camarota, 2007). There is no doubt, as witnessed by the current heated political debates, that immigration policy is on the national radar (P. Portes & Smagorinsky, 2010).

The Southeast has recently faced tremendous immigrant population growth as well, with Georgia being among the states most affected. According to the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce,

The Hispanic population grew faster in Georgia than in any other state in the nation from 2000 to 2002, at 17%, with 102 Hispanics moving to Georgia each day...Metro Atlanta experienced the most rapid Hispanic growth rate among the nation's 20 most populous metro areas...[and] between 1996 and 2000, the number of Hispanic students in Georgia public schools rose by almost 98 percent. (2005)

In 2008, the Hispanic population in Georgia was estimated at 770,816 and estimated to rise to 974,390 by 2012 (Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, 2008). These statistics have meant changes in school demographics, as well. In 2007, nearly one in 10 students in Georgia public schools was Hispanic (Georgia Department of Education, 2007). These growing numbers have been challenging schools and educators as they try to figure out the best way to educate the increasing numbers of ethnically and linguistically diverse students in U.S. schools and in Georgia, in particular. The Georgia Department of Education currently offers six approved program models for serving English Language Learners (ELLs):

1. Pull-out model outside the academic block: students are taken out of a non-academic class for the purpose of receiving small group language instruction,
2. Push-in model within the academic block: students remain in their general education class where they receive content instruction from their content area teacher along with language assistance from the ESOL teacher,
3. A cluster center to which students are transported for instruction: students from two or more schools are grouped in a center designed to provide intensive language assistance,

4. A resource center/laboratory: students receive language assistance in a group setting supplemented by multimedia materials,
5. A scheduled class period: students at the middle and high school levels receive language assistance and/or content instruction in a class composed of ELLs only,
6. An alternative approved in advance by the Department of Education through a process described in Guidance accompanying this rule. ("Language Assistance: Program for English Language Learners (ELLs)," 2006)

Although TWI could fall into category number six described above, it is not explicitly recognized in Georgia. TWI is missing from this list; yet, studies have shown that it is among the most effective models for long-term academic achievement for ELLs (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002).

TWI is a type of bilingual education in which minority- and majority-language students are taught together and both languages are used for classroom instruction. The first U.S. TWI programs were started in the early 1960s in Dade County, Florida when schools were formed to develop bilingualism for Cuban refugees. Cuban exiles, believing that their time in the United States would be temporary, started a TWI school in Coral Way as a way to maintain their heritage language (Baker, 2001). The number of TWI programs rose slowly through 1994 to 75 programs throughout the United States. Then in 1995, coinciding with the reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act Title VII which funded TWI programs, numbers began increasing dramatically and by 2008 there were 346 programs in 27 states across the nation (CAL, 2010). For 320 (93%) of those programs, Spanish and English are the primary languages of instruction (CAL, 2009a). California has the largest number of TWI schools in the United States, with 107

schools in operation, followed by Texas and New York with 53 and 29 schools, respectively (CAL, 2009b).

In Chapter 2, through a comparative analysis of TWI and progressive education, I will go into greater detail about TWI. However, it is fitting at this time to offer a brief, be it somewhat formulaic, overview. There are different methods for establishing a TWI program, but in any educational program of this type, the minority language is used for no less than 50% of all instruction, and minority language- and majority language-speaking children (usually English-speaking in the U.S.) are taught together for all or most of the school day. What distinguishes TWI from other types of bilingual education is that there are equal numbers of minority and majority language-speaking children learning together in both languages.

TWI is a type of “additive” bilingual education, meaning that children *add* a language to their existing linguistic repertoire (Valenzuela, 1999). As Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan (2000) write,

additive bilingualism [is] a process by which individuals develop proficiency in a second language subsequent to or simultaneous with the development of proficiency in the primary language, without loss of the primary language; where the first language and culture are not replaced or displaced (p. 203).

Baker (2001) classifies TWI among the “strong” forms of bilingual education. He points out that, unlike “weak” language education program models such as Submersion and Transitional in which the language outcome is monolingualism, the aim in language outcome for TWI is bilingualism and biliteracy. In TWI programs, minority language-speaking children continue to learn their heritage language and *add* English skills, while English-speaking children continue to learn English while adding minority-language skills. Thus, a goal of TWI is to teach all students

in the program to read, write, and speak both languages while they acquire the same math, science, social studies, and language arts skills that other students their age are learning. With TWI, then, not only do all students learn the second language better than they would in a regular foreign language class, but they also develop attitudes of respect for cultures that are different from their own (August & Hakuta, 1997; Corson, 2001; Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

Despite all the empirical evidence documenting TWI as a viable and successful way of educating minority- and majority-language children to be bilingual and biliterate citizens (CAL, 2008a; Christian et al., 1996; Howard et al., 2004; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002), there are relatively few programs in operation, and up until 2006 there were no public TWI programs in Georgia. Prior to 2006, TWI did not exist in Georgia's public schools, yet schools were struggling to meet the needs of the rapidly increasing Spanish-speaking population, and businesses were challenged with finding employees who were equipped with the linguistic and cultural knowledge to work in the international community (Etheridge, 2005). Why were there no public TWI programs in operation in Georgia? What were the reasons? Had anyone ever tried it before? What were the obstacles to starting a public TWI program? Indeed, we had yet to gain a clear understanding of the process by which a person develops a TWI program, overcoming barriers and garnering support at the level of the community, district, and state.

This study is an autoethnographic account of the process and challenges of starting a public TWI school in Georgia. It gives an emic perspective of the procedures, struggles, strategies, and emotions involved in creating an educational program that defies the monolingual norms that dominate public education in the United States in general and in Georgia in particular. In this study I used self-reflection and interactive analysis to document the process of starting a

public TWI school in Georgia in order to understand the personal and professional challenges that are involved.

Research Questions

This study will address the following questions:

1. What personal and professional challenges does the researcher face as she goes through the process of establishing a public TWI school in a state where none exist, and how does she work through them?
2. How can the experience of this researcher inform others who want to take a similar path toward educational reform?
3. What is the value of the autoethnographic methodology in this research?

In Chapter Two, I demonstrate how the theoretical framework of Pragmatism, as interpreted through John Dewey's notion of knowing through doing, informs my work in both theory and practice. I also attempt to show, through an "interview" with Dewey, how the tenets of TWI education are aligned with the major ideas of progressive education. The structure of the invented interview between myself and the deceased John Dewey's public writings allows me to interweave a review of bilingual education and the place of TWI in U.S. schools. In Chapter Three, I outline the components of autoethnography as a methodology for studying myself in the process of opening Georgia's first public TWI school. In Chapter Four, I tell my story, from the moment that I learned about TWI education to the day that the State Board of Education (henceforth referred to as simply "the State") approved the charter, and finally, in Chapter Five, I review the personal and professional challenges that I faced along the way in an effort to highlight some of the obstacles that others may encounter if they choose to implement a similar educational reform.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Perspectives

Pragmatism and John Dewey

Pragmatism is the theory that frames my work. Pragmatism is an intellectual movement which started in the United States in the 1870s with the Metaphysical Club (Menand, 2001). At the heart of pragmatism is an “intimate connection between knowledge and action” (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 6). William James (1907), one of the founders of the Metaphysical Club, poses four questions central to the philosophy of pragmatism:

Grant an idea or belief to be true, what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms? (p. 200)

What James seems to be asking is: What good is one's research if it is not applied and cannot pass the what-difference-does-it-make test? What is the good of *knowing* something if one does not *do* anything with it? This question goes hand-in-hand with the ever present conundrum of the gap between theory and practice, where I interpret the value of any theory as directly related to its value in terms of application.

James' pragmatism is but one of many¹. Biesta and Burbles (2003) write that “not only did the pragmatists cover a wide range of philosophical topics – from logic, methodology, and metaphysics to ethics, politics, and education – there are also important differences among their

¹ Other philosophers whose work is often included in the pragmatic tradition are Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles Pierce and Richard Rorty. For the purposes of this study, however, I do not draw heavily upon their interpretations.

ideas” (p. 4). Pragmatism, by the very nature of the way it has developed as a philosophy, is always individually interpreted. Therefore, there is no one pragmatism. For this study, I have chosen to focus on Dewey’s pragmatism. Dewey was an educator who worked closely with children and spent time in classrooms, and central to his philosophy of pragmatism is the notion of *knowing as doing*. Given the action-oriented focus of my research (starting the first public TWI school in Georgia), I draw upon Dewey’s pragmatism to theorize my material practices.

In *Democracy and Education* (1916a), Dewey shares some thoughts about the nature of experience and the relationship between *learning* something and *doing* something. He writes:

The nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and passive element peculiarly combined....When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return; such is the peculiar combination.

The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness or value of the experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience....When an activity is continued *into* the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance. We learn something. (p. 139)

Here, Dewey suggests that one has to act and be acted on by an experience, and one must reflect on that experience in order to learn and understand as well as to inform theory. For my research, I worked to create a school within a system, an alternative to monolingual education within a largely monolingual school system, and I reflected on the experience of personal and social change in order to understand the process and challenges involved in establishing bilingual education in Georgia.

In terms of Dewey's pragmatism, there is no gap between theory and practice. Rather, knowing and doing are one; therefore, theory and practice are one. Researchers Biesta and Burbules (2003) note that,

If we take a Deweyan perspective it becomes clear...that the difference between theory and practice is only a functional and gradual distinction. What we refer to as theory and practice are, in fact, two different practices. It is not that the practice called "theory" only concerns itself with knowing while the practice called "practice" is only about action. Both practices contain a mix of knowing and action, the only possible difference being one of emphasis. (p. 87)

In other words, the relationship between theory and practice within a Deweyan perspective is *not* the commonly assumed, top-down relationship in which theory only informs practice.

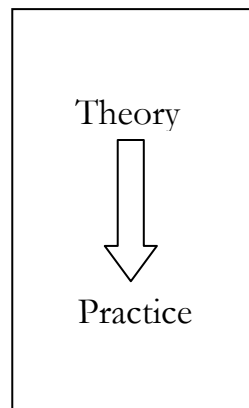


Figure 1. Top-down theory-practice relationship.

Instead, the relationship is a recursive one such that the *practice* of theory informs the *practice* of practice, and vice-versa. It is a relationship of "cooperation and coordination" (p. 108).

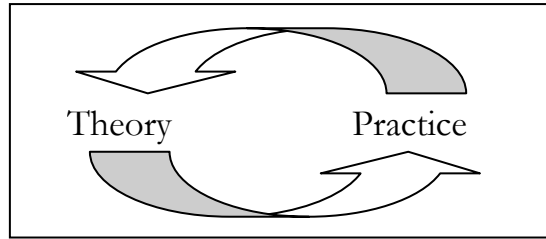


Figure 2. Recursive theory-practice relationship.

Biesta and Burbules (2003) name this aspect of Dewey's pragmatism his *action-theoretical framework*. They explain:

Dewey's action-theoretical framework does away with the idea that there is an epistemological difference between theory and practice. It is not that theory can tell us how things are and that practice merely has to follow. If, as Dewey argued, knowledge is indeed a factor in human action, then theory no longer comes before practice, but emerges from and feeds back into practice. (p. 105)

Thinking about theory and practice in this reciprocal way has implications for the relationship between educational research and educational practice. A central theme of Dewey's pragmatism is the notion that knowledge obtained through educational research - what could be called scientific knowledge or theory - is a tool that can help inform those who engage in the practice of education to solve problems, or perceived problems, yet research does not provide the only answers for those problems. In turn, the practice of education, working toward the resolution of a problem, can inform educational research (p. 88).

Dewey's action-theoretical framework described by Biesta and Burbules (2003) is closely linked with the tenets of Freire's (1970/2000) *praxis* and Lewin's (1948) *action research*.

Theory and practice are often contrasted, with theory as the abstract idea, set on a lofty pedestal, with nothing tethering it to the ground. Practice, on the other hand, is often seen as rooted to the

field. Practice is what people do. Depending upon one's community of practice, one or the other is privileged. Like Dewey, for Freire, practice and theory do not exist as a binary, in contrast to one another. Rather, Freire poses that there is a relational understanding reached through reflection, and "reflection ...is essential to action" (p. 53). Freire's *praxis* is "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p.51).

Like Freire's *praxis*, Lewin's (1948) action research parallels Dewey's (1938/1997) learning from experience and ties in closely with the methodologies of this TWI research project in that it is driven by self-reflection. Action research, as described by Lewin, is a series of steps, "each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action" (p. 206). Lewin describes the cycle as follows,

The first step then is to examine the idea carefully in the light of the means available.

Frequently more fact-finding about the situation is required. If this first period of planning is successful, two items emerge: namely, "an overall plan" of how to reach the objective and secondly, a decision in regard to the first step of action. Usually this planning has also somewhat modified the original idea. (p. 205)

As with Dewey's action-theoretical framework, theory and practice are inseparable. What Lewin adds through action research is the dimension of self-reflection.

In terms of the research for this study, I use autoethnographic methodologies to produce knowledge that informs how I approach and address the problem of the lack of public TWI education in Georgia. Dewey's action-theoretical framework is applicable to my autoethnographic research because the nature of my research is a recursive theory-practice relationship. That is, I began this adventure with a theory about bilingual education, nested within the problem, or context, of the lack of bilingual education in the state of Georgia. From

this theory-problem, my practice has become that of establishing a bilingual school, a practice that is informed by Dewey's notion of learning through doing. What I have added to the mix is the autoethnographic method of self-reflection.

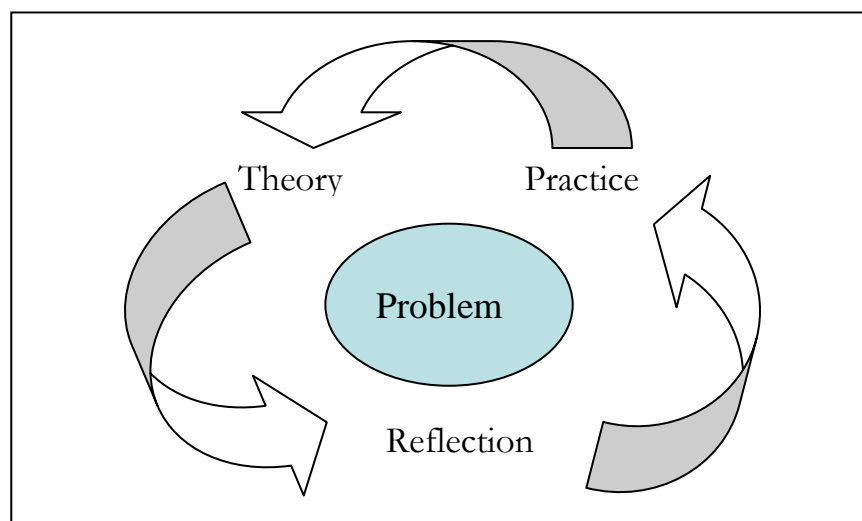


Figure 3. Recursive theory-practice-reflection relationship

All of these components including the problem, the practice, and the theory are, in turn, informed through the self-reflective practices of autoethnography. I do not start out with a theory to be tested through experiment; rather, I start out with a theory-problem that, through application of theory, practice, and self-reflexivity, results in the opening of a TWI school in Georgia, a process that weaves together theory, practice, self-reflection to lead to social change.

TWI and John Dewey

Prominent among the claims of TWI advocates is the contention that students in TWI programs benefit educationally, referring to the high levels of academic achievement and language proficiency that students in TWI programs may attain. In fact, studies have shown increased academic and linguistic achievement for students in TWI programs as compared with

students in other types of language education models (Alanís, 2000; Cazabon, Lambert, & Hall, 1993; Cazabon, Nicoladis, & Lambert, 1998; Christian, Montone, Carranza, Lindholm, & Proctor, 1996; Coy & Litherland, 2000; de Jong, 2002; Gómez, Freeman, & Freeman, 2005; Kirk Senesac, 2002; Lindholm & Fairchild, 1990; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Stipek, Ryan, & Alarcón, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). While the empirical evidence related to academic achievement is convincing, I am equally compelled by the potential for social and cultural enrichment in TWI programs for language-minority *and* language-majority students.

In 2004, I was reading John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916a) when I came across these words: "It is the aim of progressive education to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them" (p. 119). The first time I read this, I was struck by how aligned this aim of progressive education is to the tenets of TWI as related to social and cultural issues (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Cloud et al., 2000; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Soltero, 2004). Intrigued, I researched to find out more about progressive education and came across one particular source that seemed to sum up the progressive education movement and John Dewey's involvement quite succinctly.

During most of the twentieth century, the term "progressive education" has been used to describe ideas and practices that aim to make schools more effective agencies of a democratic society. Although there are numerous differences of style and emphasis among progressive educators, they share the conviction that democracy means active participation by all citizens in social, political and economic decisions that will affect their lives. The education of engaged citizens, according to this perspective, involves two essential elements: (1). *Respect for diversity*, meaning that each individual should be recognized for his or her own abilities, interests, ideas, needs, and cultural identity, and

(2). the development of *critical, socially engaged intelligence*, which enables individuals to understand and participate effectively in the affairs of their community in a collaborative effort to achieve a common good.. . . .

The term "progressive" arose from a period (roughly 1890-1920) during which many Americans took a more careful look at the political and social effects of vast concentrations of corporate power and private wealth. Dewey, in particular, saw that with the decline of local community life and small scale enterprise, young people were losing valuable opportunities to learn the arts of democratic participation, and he concluded that education would need to make up for this loss.

Led by Dewey, progressive educators opposed a growing national movement that sought to separate academic education for the few and narrow vocational training for the masses. During the 1920s, when education turned increasingly to "scientific" techniques such as intelligence testing and cost-benefit management, progressive educators insisted on the importance of the emotional, artistic, and creative aspects of human development.

. . . . In the 1950s, during a time of cold war anxiety and cultural conservatism, progressive education was widely repudiated, and it disintegrated as an identifiable movement. However, in the years since, various groups of educators have rediscovered the ideas of Dewey and his associates, and revised them to address the changing needs of schools, children, and society in the late twentieth century. (John Dewey Project on Progressive Education, n.d. para. 1-4)

Progressive education, as described above, spoke to me almost as clearly as TWI, and I began to wonder what else Dewey's progressive education and TWI might have in common.

The exploration was fruitful, and it led me to using Dewey's action-theoretical framework (Biesta & Burbules, 2003) as a component of my theoretical framework for this study. In order to do that, however, I felt like I needed to understand more about Dewey's philosophy of progressive education and how it might relate to TWI. I therefore explored the question, "What would Dewey say about TWI?" through the creation of a fictional conversation between Dewey and myself. I first considered the conversation approach as a means of deepening my understanding of Dewey's perspectives, looking for clues in his writings that would help me fictionalize his voice for the contemporary issue of bilingual schooling. I had just finished reading Ellis and Bochner's (2000) chapter in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* in which they question using the traditional style of handbooks for their chapter about autoethnography, and much of their chapter is written as a dialogue between the co-authors. In modeling this style, they write,

[Bochner:] We want to show, not just tell about autoethnography. Look at any handbook on your shelf and what you'll find is that most chapters are written in third-person, passive voice. It's as if they're written from nowhere by nobody. The conventions militate against personal and passionate writing. These books are filled with dry, distant, abstract, propositional essays.

[Ellis:] That's called academic writing, darling....

[Bochner:] Why should we take it for granted that an author's personal feelings and thoughts should be omitted in a handbook chapter? After all, who is the person collecting the evidence, drawing the inferences, and reaching the conclusions? By not insisting on some sort of personal accountability, our academic publications reinforce the third-person, passive voice as the standard, which gives more weight to abstract and

categorical knowledge than to the direct testimony of personal narrative and the first person voice. It doesn't even occur to most authors that writing in the first person is an option. They've been shaped by the prevailing norms of scholarly discourse within which they operate. (p. 734)

Upon reading this excerpt from a scholarly handbook about qualitative research that had been written as dialogue, I began to think about my own work and why I had chosen to explore Dewey's position on TWI. Upon consideration, I determined that I have tremendous respect for the ideas and work of Dewey, so before I could go forth with using a theoretical framework based on his work, I felt that he and I needed to sit down together and really flesh out how our two passions, TWI and progressive education, fit together. I wanted to investigate whether or not there was congruence between what Dewey thought about progressive education and my own thoughts on TWI.

Therefore, what follows is a conversation that I invented between John Dewey and me, based on selections from Dewey's writings (1902, 1910/1997, 1915, 1916a, 1916b, 1916/1976, 1922, 1923, 1927, 1937, 1938/1997, 1939, 1989). The conversation is set up as a National Public Radio (NPR), *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross-style interview, with me, Dell Perry Giles (DPG) playing the part of radio host and John Dewey (JD) as himself. In an attempt to give actual voice to Dewey, I have used direct quotations from his works for most of the conversation, and I have paraphrased only minimally when directly quoted text did not flow with the conversational style of the interview. The "transcript" has been formatted so as to align with traditional radio interview transcript protocol, i.e. single spaced except when changing speakers, in order to make it easier for the reader to follow. Aspects of the interview which are entirely

invented or paraphrased are right-aligned; whereas direct quotations are either enclosed with quotation marks or block-indented, depending upon length.

Dewey did not have an opportunity to write or reflect on TWI because he died in 1952 and the first TWI school did not open in the United States until 1962. However, through his work in progressive education, Dewey wrote about many practices that can be aligned with the social and cultural aims of TWI including: the enrichment potential of diversity in schools and society (1916/1976), equitable education (1939), approaches to curricula (1916a), importance of community (Dewey, 1902; 1916a), assimilation (1916/1976), and the role that schools might play in eliminating discrimination and unfair privilege and preparing students to be full participating members of democracies (1916a). Through this imagined conversation, it is my aim to leave the reader with an understanding of the most fundamental and salient characteristics of TWI, Dewey's views on progressive education, and how they work in tandem.

The conversation.

DPG: My guest today is Dr. John Dewey, whose more than 40 books, 700 articles and countless lectures and letters in the areas of psychology, politics, philosophy, and education make him a leading figure in American intellectual history (Ecker, n.d.). Among Dr. Dewey's most notable works is his contribution to the development of the curriculum that was used to teach education courses at the University of Chicago in the late 1890s, a program that was considered "the most rounded and comprehensive in the country" (Dykhuisen, 1973, p. 91). Dr. Dewey's extensive writings and research in the educational arena "made him the acknowledged leader in American educational philosophy" (Ecker, n.d., para. 15).

In light of the recent immigration issues challenging our national leaders and policy makers, Dr. Dewey has joined me to bring some perspective to the situation, especially as education and immigrant issues overlap. Today we are particularly interested in a type of bilingual education called two-way immersion.

In 2007, the National Center of La Raza published a statistical report about the state of education for Hispanics in the United States. The authors write,

Hispanics have become the largest and fastest-growing minority group in the U.S., rising from 12% of the population in 2000 to 14% of the total U.S. population in 2004.¹

While in some areas there has been improvement in the status of Latino education over the past decade, the data continue to show that Hispanic educational attainment does not match that of non-Hispanics. Participation in all levels of education continues to be low, while dropout and retention rates are still high. Insufficient financial aid and inadequate

access to rigorous courses and educational resources are among the challenges in improving the educational status of Latinos. Also, as immigrant and English language learner (ELL) students become a growing segment of the Latino student population, educational gaps between Latinos and other U.S. students have become increasingly apparent. From early childhood through higher education, Latinos continue to be underserved by educational programs designed to help the most disadvantaged students. (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007)

As the authors point out, with the tremendous rise in Latino immigration comes a greater need for schools to determine the best ways to educate their increasingly multilingual and multicultural student populations. Consequently, some educators are looking at two-way immersion as one solution.

This is not, however, the first time in U.S. history that schools and society have faced this challenge. Between 1890 and 1914, more than 15 million immigrants, mostly from Austria-Hungary, Italy, Russia, Greece, Romania, and Turkey came to the United States (Hansen & Schlesinger, 1940), and it was during that time that Dr. Dewey was conducting and publishing some of his most inspiring research and profound writings. Dr. Dewey, the man who Louis Menand (2001) claims has “helped change the way children are taught” (p. 316), joins us today to help us understand some of the connections between progressive education reform of the early- to mid-20th century and two-way immersion today. Welcome, Dr. Dewey.

JD: Thank you. I am by no means an expert in two-way immersion, but from what I do understand, I believe that progressive education and two-way immersion share some fundamental characteristics that I can help to flesh out, especially in terms of how language and culture are valued, or devalued, in our public school system.

I submit that the American nation itself is complex and compound. Strictly speaking, it is interracial and international in its make-up. It is composed of a multitude of people speaking different tongues, inheriting diverse traditions, cherishing varying ideals of life. This fact is basic to *our* nationalism as distinct from that of other peoples. Our national motto, “One from Many,” cuts deep and extends far. It denotes a fact which doubtless adds to the difficulty of getting genuine unity. But it also immensely enriches the possibilities of the result to be attained. (Dewey, 1916/1976, p. 204)

DPG: It is interesting that you use the word “enriches,” because two-way immersion advocates believe that two-way immersion is “enriched education,”(Cloud et al., 2000). Some have defined enriched education as programs that adopt “instructional approaches that will result in strong bilingual and biliteracy development among its students” (p. xi). Programs such as these invariably value diversity and the resources that their students bring with them to the classrooms.

JD: Yes, diversity can be enriching. For me, the concept of uniformity and unanimity in culture is rather repellent; one cannot contemplate in imagination that every people in the world should talk Volapük or Esperanto, that the same thoughts should be cultivated, the same beliefs, the same historical traditions, and the same ideals and aspirations for the future. Variety *is* the spice of life, and the richness and the attractiveness of social institutions depend upon cultural diversity among separate units. (Dewey, 1916/1976, p. 288)

DPG: When you mention cultural diversity in social institutions, you mean institutions like schools, I assume.

JD: Yes, like schools.

DPG: Two-way immersion educators, like Calderón and Minaya-Rowe (2003) contend that public schools “are being transformed by an increase in the number of English learners who bring the richness of linguistic and cultural diversity with them to school” (p. 14). So, what do you think about schools as agencies for building community feeling among linguistically and culturally diverse groups?

JD: I believe that “the intermingling in the school of youth of different races, different religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment” (Dewey, 1916a, p. 21). In an address at the National Council of Education in Minneapolis, I spoke with educators about my views of the school as a social center. I offered to them that schools are places where

There is a mixing up of people with each other; a bringing them together under wholesome influences, and under conditions which will promote their getting acquainted with the best of each other....What we want is to see the school, the public school, doing something of the same sort of work that is now done by a settlement or two scattered at wide distances through the city. We all know that the function of such an institute as Hull House has been primarily not that of conveying intellectual instruction, but of being a social clearinghouse. (Dewey, 1902, p. 84)

DPG: You just made mention of Jane Addams’ Hull House. Can you tell our listeners, who may not be familiar with Hull House, what it was about?

JD: Certainly. Hull-House was a social settlement founded by Jane and Ellen Gates Starr in 1889.

Social settlements began in the 1880s in London in response to problems created by urbanization, industrialization, and immigration. The idea spread to other industrialized countries. Settlement houses typically attracted educated, native born, middle-class and upper-middle class women and men, known as “residents,” to live (settle) in poor urban neighborhoods. Some social settlements were linked to religious institutions. Others, like Hull-House, were secular. By 1900, the U.S. had over 100 settlement houses. By 1911, Chicago had 35.

In the 1890s, Hull-House was located in the midst of a densely populated urban neighborhood peopled by Italian, Irish, German, Greek, Bohemian, and Russian and Polish Jewish immigrants. During the 1920s, African Americans and Mexicans began to put down roots in the neighborhood and joined the clubs and activities at Hull-House. Jane Addams and the Hull-House residents provided kindergarten and day care facilities for the children of working mothers; an employment bureau; an art gallery; libraries; English and citizenship classes; and theater, music and art classes. As the complex expanded to include thirteen buildings, Hull-House supported more clubs and activities such as a Labor Museum, the Jane Club for single working girls, meeting places for trade union groups, and a wide array of cultural events. (Brown, n.d., para. 2-3)

It is not merely a place where ideas and beliefs may be exchanged, not merely in the arena of formal discussion – for argument alone breeds misunderstanding and fixes prejudice; but it is much more a place where ideas are incarnated in human form and clothed with the winning grade of personal life. Classes for study may be numerous, but all are regarded as modes of bringing people together, of doing away with barriers of caste, or class, or race, or type of experience that keep people from real communication with each other. (Dewey, 1902, p. 84)

DPG: Your idea of “intermingling” is also fundamental in two-way immersion, where “language-minority students are integrated with native English speakers in an environment that explicitly values the language and culture of the language-minority student and that treats all students, regardless of language or ethnic background in an equitable fashion” (Lindholm-Leary, 2001, p. 23). Furthermore, two-way immersion is
 an equitable educational program that respects and treats all students as equal members of the school community. It is equitable instruction because it welcomes and challenges all students and staff to do their best regardless of race, national origin, education, language, and culture. (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003, p. 12)

So, equitability is fundamental to two-way immersion. What would you say about progressive education in terms of being equitable education?

JD: Progressive education, a term which, by the way, was not coined by me but that has become associated with my work in educational reform (Ecker, 1997), has various meanings for different people, but for me, the key is that the aim of progressive education is to make schools more effective agencies of a democratic society, and a democratic society means participation by all citizens in social, political and economic decisions that will affect their lives (Dewey, 1916a). “The democratic faith in human equality is belief that every human being, independent of the quantity or range of his personal endowment, has the right to equal opportunity with every other person for development of whatever gifts he has” (Dewey, 1939).

DPG: Since preparation to participate in a democratic society is one of the primary goals of progressive education, please expand on what a democratic society means for you.

JD: For me,
 a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (Dewey, 1916a, p. 87)
 To me, it seems that schools are special places and perform a very unique and critical role in our society. In schools, we have the opportunity to provide educational experiences that develop thinking habits and attitudes that are necessary in a democratic society. In my opinion, that can and should be a primary objective of every classroom experience, to prepare our students to be engaged citizens in a democratic society (1916a).

DPG: Many two-way immersion educators would agree with you that schools and their contribution in terms of developing language competence play an important role in preparing all students for full participation in our democracy. According to Cloud et al.(2000), language competence...is fundamental to personal growth and fulfillment and to full and active participation in a democratic society. The ability to shape one's community and one's place and role within it requires access to information, decision-makers, and community resources. Language is the primary gateway to information, decision-makers, and community resources. Language competence leads to personal empowerment because effective use of language for engagement in society commands respect and attention. Language competence gives voice to individuals' social, political, and economic concerns. (p. 2)

What do you make of Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan's claim that to be a participant in a democratic society, one should have the necessary communicative competence?

JD: I agree. "Participation in activities and sharing in results ...demand *communication* as a prerequisite" (Dewey, 1927, p. 57). Communication is the means by which common interests are formed.

There is more than a verbal tie between the words "common," "community," and "communication." Men live in community in virtue of the things which they have in common, and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding – like-mindedness, as the sociologists say. Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another, like bricks; they cannot be shared as a person would share a pie by dividing it into physical pieces. The communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions – like ways of responding to expectations and requirements. (Dewey, 1916a, p. 4)

However, let me clarify that formation of common interests is not to be understood as an attempt to bring about uniformity in a plural society....Sharing of interests does not necessitate racial amalgamation or melting away of all differences between diverse groups in society. It should be noted that the formation of common interests is to be achieved in a democratic manner....Formation of common interests or values requires participation through interaction and communication. (Arakapadavil, 1982, p. 49)

DPG: The idea of community comes up in two-way immersion, as well. Some researchers contend that two-way immersion programs have even created special community environments. Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2005) write that "in some communities [two-way immersion programs] have eased tensions between groups who speak different languages. The programs have helped build cross-cultural school communities and cross-cultural friendships among students and parents, relationships that probably would not have developed without the program" (p. xv).

You pointed out that the words "community" and "communication" are more related than we often realize, so let's turn the conversation toward an area related to communication: language education in public schools. You have spoken out about the detrimental effects of isolating subjects in schools. As you are aware, with two-way immersion, language is not taught in isolation. Rather, language is taught in context through integrated curricular units. That is to

say, language and content are interwoven and the subject area is the vehicle for learning language. Students learn, for example, Spanish through instruction in social studies and English through instruction in math. In addition, cross-curricular planning and collaboration is prevalent in two-way immersion programs. Part of the rationale for designing instruction in such a way is that it allows students to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1994), the necessary language skills for academic achievement, in both languages. However, in traditional schools, despite research indicating its ineffectiveness, foreign language and English as a second language instruction are most often taught as separate subjects (August & Hakuta, 1997; Corson, 2001; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Soltero (2004) reports,

for English dominant students, traditional foreign language models have not promoted high levels of proficiency in the second language of study. For language-minority students, educational programs that stress rapid transition to English, and that provide little or no native language development and use, have proven to be detrimental and ineffective for their academic and linguistic attainment. (p. ix)

In two-way immersion programs, however, language taught through thematically planned, cross-curricular content instruction is highly contextualized and therefore more meaningful (Cloud et al., 2000). What is your position on the separation of content areas, like languages, into discrete, unrelated, and often decontextualized subjects?

JD: I am very much against this sort of separation of subjects. This [separating] attitude toward subjects is the obverse side of the conception of experience or life as a patchwork of independent interests which exist side by side and limit one another.... Life presents a diversity of interests. Left to themselves, they tend to encroach on one another. The ideal is to prescribe a special territory for each till the whole ground of experience is covered, and then see to it each remains within its own boundaries. Politics, business, recreation, art, science, the learned professions, polite intercourse, leisure, represent such interests....An ideal education would then supply the means of meeting these separate and pigeon-holed interests. And when we look at the schools, it is easy to get the impression that they accept this view of the nature of adult life, and set for themselves the task of meeting its demands. Each interest is acknowledged as a kind of fixed institution to which something in the course of study must correspond. The course of study must then have some civics and history politically and patriotically viewed: some utilitarian studies; some science; some art; ...some provision for recreation; some moral education; and so on....In the multitude of educations education is forgotten.

The obvious outcome is congestion of the course of study, over-pressure and distraction of pupils, and a narrow specialization fatal to the very idea of education. (Dewey, 1916a, pp. 245-246)

DPG: This is certainly an area in which progressive education and two-way immersion are aligned. Researchers have found that it is essential in two-way immersion programs that all elements of the curriculum be interrelated through thematic teaching (Freeman et al., 2005). Curriculum integration, then, is an elemental and defining characteristic of two-way immersion. Could you elaborate on any other concerns you have about traditional schools?

JD: The way that many traditional schools only work to maintain the status quo in society is something else that alarms me. “It is the aim of progressive education to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them” (Dewey, 1916a, p. 119).

DPG: It is interesting you say that because language immersion programs have historically been only for those who could afford the expense of private schools, some of the most privileged members of society. What is unique about many two-way immersion programs, however, is that they include language-minority students, who very often cannot afford private schooling, thus serving a more diverse population (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Two-way immersion programs strive to maintain a balance of language-minority and language-majority students. It is the notion of perpetuating the status quo that both progressive education and two-way immersion seem to be working to eliminate.

JD: Yes, I agree. “Democracy cannot flourish where the chief influences in selecting subject matter of instruction are utilitarian ends narrowly conceived for the masses, and, for the higher education of the few, the traditions of a specialized cultivated class” (Dewey, 1916a, p. 192). Learning [in traditional schools] means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders. Moreover, that which is taught is thought of as essentially static. It is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future. It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future would be much like the past, and yet it is used as educational food in a society where change is the rule, not the exception. (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 19)

DPG: And considering the demographic changes that are occurring in the nation, especially in terms of the Hispanic population, it would be a mistake not to acknowledge that educators may need to revisit and reconsider the ways students in Georgia are taught.

JD: To my mind the greatest mistake that we can make about democracy is to conceive of it as something fixed....No form of life does or can stand still, it either goes forward or it goes backward, and the end of the backward road is death. Democracy as a form of life cannot stand still. It, too, if it is to live, must go forward to meet the changes that are here and are coming. (Dewey, 1937, p. 47)

DPG: We have talked about some defining characteristics of two-way immersion, including its integrated, thematic approach to curriculum and that minority- and majority-language students learn both language and content together. One characteristic of two-way immersion we have not yet mentioned is its additive quality of bilingualism, a quality that allows for “the addition of a second language and culture [that] is unlikely to replace or displace the first language and culture” (Baker, 2001, p. 58), and, as Lindholm-Leary (2001) has written, “successful language development programs seem not only to prevent the negative consequences of subtractive bilingualism, but also to effectively promote the beneficial aspects of additive bilingualism” (p. 62). In terms of language policy, sociolinguist Fishman (1981) writes,

Language policy involves a vision of America. A multilingual enrichment policy envisages a multilingual America as being in the public good. We support a multiparty system....Our anti-trust laws aim to diversify the economic market place. We can

similarly diversity the cultural market place....There is a vision of American magnanimity involved, but more than that, a vision of American possibilities, opportunities, appreciations, sensitivities, that we all should savour. (pp. 525-526)

I infer from these statements that Fishman and Lindholm-Leary believe in the positive possibilities of a pluralistic society.

There are plenty of other Americans, however, including one of your contemporaries, Samuel Rae, President of the Pennsylvania Railroad System in 1919, who thought otherwise. Rae believed that immigrants

must be induced to give up the languages, customs and methods of life which they have brought with them across the ocean, and adopt instead the languages, habits, and customs of this country, and the general standards and ways of American living. (quoted in Hill, 1919, pp. 630-631)

Rae's comments are still reflected today in the sentiments of modern opponents of bilingual education. Part of the text of California's Proposition 227, a proposition that eliminated bilingual education complains that,

public schools of California currently do a poor job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs whose failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high drop-out rates and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children. (Unz & Tuchman, 1997)

Similarly, English-only advocate groups, like U.S. English continue to oppose bilingual education initiatives on many fronts.

Earlier in our conversation, I alluded to the political challenges related to immigration. One of Georgia's most well known politicians has publically stated his disapproval of bilingual education. In 1995, Newt Gingrich stated that "bilingualism poses long-term dangers to the fabric of our nation" and that "allowing bilingualism to continue to grow is very dangerous" (Associated Press, 2007), and even more recently, Gingrich equated bilingual education with "the language of living in the ghetto" (Associated Press, 2007). The debate, however, is not limited to politics in Georgia. The immigration controversy has heated up in recent years with new legislation being proposed in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. In May 2006, the U.S. Senate approved an immigration bill that included increased border security, a guest-worker program, and stiffer penalties for employers who hire undocumented workers, and that declares English the national language of the United States ("S.2611," 2006). This legislation has been the subject of much debate, and opponents of such legislation suggest that "proponents of English-only policies are threatened by our multilingualism and insist that language diversity should be discouraged since it leads to national disunity" (Lessow-Hurley, 2005, p. 149). What would you say to people such as these who believe that it is the job of schools to help immigrants assimilate and to give up their "languages, customs, and methods of life?"

JD: I would put forth that no matter how loudly any one proclaims his Americanism, if he assumes that any one racial strain, any one component culture, no matter how early settled it was in our territory, or how effective it has proved in its own land, is to furnish a pattern to which all strains and cultures are to conform, he is a traitor to American nationalism...I find that many who talk the loudest about the need of a supreme and unified Americanism of spirit really mean some special code or tradition to which they happen to be attached. They

have some pet tradition which they would impose on all. In thus measuring the scope of Americanism by some single element which enters into it, they are themselves false to the spirit of America. Neither Englandism nor New-Englandism...can do anything but furnish one note in the vast symphony. (Dewey, 1916/1976, pp. 204-205)

DPG: The idea behind two-way immersion is very clear about not wanting to replace the minority language and culture with English and American culture, similar to your concerns about putting one tradition above all others. In fact, some claim that this type of assimilation is quite costly for immigrants, “especially when it means rejecting their language and culture. Forcing newcomers to make personal choices about language and culture often affects their self-esteem, motivation, and ability to learn English and the academic curriculum” (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003, p. 9).

You just used the phrase, “one note in a vast symphony,” which brings to mind another of your contemporaries, Horace Kallen, who wrote “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,” (1915) which includes the now famous orchestra metaphor. I wonder if your use of this phrase is related to your position on the melting pot version of assimilation in which people from various cultures lose their discrete identities and meld together into one, uniform American culture. I would like to know what you think of Kallen’s orchestra metaphor, but before you comment, let me share an excerpt from Kallen’s article:

“American civilization” may come to mean the perfection of “European civilization,” the waste, the squalor, and the distress of Europe being eliminated – a multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind. As in an orchestra, every type of instrument has its specific tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony, so in society, each ethnic groups is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make the symphony civilization, with this difference: A musical symphony is written before it is played; in the symphony of civilization the playing is the writing. (Dewey, 1915, p. 220)

What is your reaction to Kallen’s orchestra metaphor?

JD: When I read Kallen’s article, I was inspired to write to him. In that letter I stated: I quite agree with your orchestra idea, but upon condition we really get a symphony and not a lot of different instruments playing simultaneously. I never did care for the melting pot metaphor....That each cultural section should maintain its distinctive literary and artistic traditions seems to me most desirable, but in order that it might have the more to contribute to others. I am not sure you mean more than this, but there seems to be an implication of segregation geographical and otherwise. That we should recognize the segregation that undoubtedly exists is requisite, but in order that it may not be fastened upon us. (Dewey, 1915 cited in Menand, 2001, p. 400)

In terms of public schools, I believe that they should:

teach each factor to respect every other, and [should] take pains to enlighten all as to the great past contributions of every strain in our composite makeup. I wish our teaching of American history in schools would take more account of the great waves of migration by which our land for over three centuries has been continuously built up, and made every pupil conscious of the rich breadth of our national make-up. When every pupil recognizes all the factors which have gone into our being, he will continue to prize and

reverence that coming from his own past, but he will think of it as honored in being simply one factor in forming a whole, nobler and finer than itself. (Dewey, 1916/1976, pp. 205-206)

DPG: Some might argue that what you just said, “forming a whole, nobler and finer than itself,” is evidence that you would advocate for the melting pot version of assimilation (Gordon, 1964; Ramirez & Castañeda, 1974). In fact, in 1974, Ramirez and Castañeda wrote,

Dewey’s version of the superiority of the melted product over the individual ingredients seems easily inferable from his words “nobler and finer than itself.” This statement clearly seems to say that one’s own cultural heritage is okay, but when it has been blended with others the result is even better. Despite its liberal overtones, the permissive interpretation of the melting pot has carried a hidden message of cultural superiority: the uniquely American cultural form will be better, if not the best. The message to the child who has not yet “melted” is clearly negative – that he is not good enough, there is something “nobler and finer.” (p. 7)

What is your response to their interpretation of your writing?

JD: I disagree with how Ramirez and Castañeda have interpreted that passage. I contend that: the theory of the Melting Pot always gave me rather a pang. To maintain that all the constituent elements, geographical, racial and cultural, in the United States should be put in the same pot and turned into a uniform and unchanging product is distasteful. The same feeling that leads us to recognize each other’s individuality also leads us to respect those elements of diversification in cultural traits which differentiates our national life. (Dewey, 1916/1976, p. 289)

DPG: But even Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of your fellow American pragmatists as well as a man thought to have influenced your work (Menand, 2001; West, 1989) was a proponent of the melting pot version of assimilation. He once wrote,

Man is the most composite of all creatures...As in the old burning of the Temple at Corinth, by melting and intermixture of silver and gold and other metals a new compound more precious than any, called the Corinthian brass, was formed; so in this continent – asylum of all nations – the energy of Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles, and Cossacks, and all the European tribes – of the Africans, and of the Polynesians will construct a new race, a new religion, a new state, a new literature, which will be vigorous as the new Europe which came out of the smelting-pot of the Dark Ages, or that which earlier emerged from...barbarism. (Emerson, R.W., Emerson, E.W., & Forbes, 1909, pp. 115-116)

This view clearly seems to favor assimilation. What is your reaction to Mr. Emerson’s position?

JD: Although I have tremendous respect for Mr. Emerson, this is one point on which we do not see eye-to-eye. I assert that

I will not even inquire whether inter-racialism is not a truer definition of America than that provided by even the most cultivated New England provincialism, or whether the melting pot metaphor is not itself traitorous to the American ideal. It is enough that there is a genuine intellectual and moral problem in connection with the heterogeneously diversified factors of our population.

But the problem is not to reduce them to an anonymous and drilled homogeneity, but to see to it that all get from one another the best that each strain has to offer from its own tradition and culture. If authentic America is not to be a cross-fertilization of our various strains it had better be a juxtaposition of alien elements than an amalgam of the barracks, an amalgam whose uniformity would hardly go deeper than the uniforms of the soldiers. (Dewey, 1916b, para. 3-4)

Indeed, wise observers in both New York and Chicago have recently sounded a note of alarm. They have called attention to the fact that in some respects the children are too rapidly, I will not say Americanized, but too rapidly denationalized. They lose the positive and conservative values of their own native music, art and literature. They do not get complete initiation into customs of their new country, and are frequently left floating and unstable between the two. They even learn to despise the dress, bearing, habits, language, and beliefs of their parents – many of which have more substance and worth than the superficial putting on of newly adopted habits. (Dewey, 1902, p. 78)

DPG: This distress about the costly consequences, both personal and academic, of losing one's culture is another concern that both you and two-way immersion advocates share (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003). So, getting back to the role of schools, proponents of two-way immersion contend that one of the benefits includes the potential to promote tolerance, understanding, and goodwill among diverse ethnic groups (Cloud et al., 2000, Soltero, 2004). Certainly, these outcomes would contribute to the democratic society you speak about, but is this something you believe schools should be doing? For you, what is the role of schools in reducing intercultural conflict and promoting understanding among people with different cultures and backgrounds?

JD: I ask you,
Are we entirely free from racial intolerance, so that we can pride ourselves upon having achieved a complete democracy? Our treatment of the Negroes, anti-Semitism, the growing (at least I fear it is growing) serious oppositions to the alien immigrant within our gates, is, I think a sufficient answer to that question. Here, in relation to education, we have a problem: What are our schools doing to cultivate not merely passive toleration that will put up with people of different racial birth or different colored skin, but what are our schools doing positively and aggressively and constructively to cultivate understanding and good will which is certainly an essential part of any real democracy? (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 42)

DPG: That is a very interesting point, and one that I think two-way immersion educators are addressing through the philosophy of the program and their classroom practices. What else would you like to add to help our audience understand how two-way immersion fits in with progressive education?

JD: Let me conclude by explaining that probably never in the history of the world has society faced the problem of bringing together so many unlike elements and making of them a unified people. I won't say that school has been the only instrumentality at work in transforming this variety, this multitude, of dissimilar elements into something approaching unity of outlook and thought and life.

But I think we can say that no other influence has counted for anything like as much in bringing certain integrity, cohesion, feeling of sympathy, and unity among the elements of our population as has the public school system of this country....I am only calling attention to something with which we are all familiar because the situation has now changed....It was not done because of any program, certainly, nor because of any conscious formulation and control of the curriculum. It was accomplished rather as a by-product by the social influence created by bringing children of different religions, of different traditions, of different races, and of different languages together, and for certain numbers of hours a day having them in contact with each other in common play, study and work. It has been a by-product of the other activities of the school that have brought children and youth together and given them an opportunity to travel the road to learning....This work, then, which the schools have done spontaneously, without much set purpose or intention, in the past, has now got to be done, it seems to me, in a much more conscious and deliberate manner, or it will not be done at all....And the circumstances are such that just at the time when this work of socializing, of creating a real unity of purpose and ideal in the youth of our country, most needs to be done. (Dewey, 1923, pp. 449-450)

We need a program and platform for teaching genuine patriotism and real sense of the public interest of our own community, so clearly, we need a program of international friendship, amity and good will. We need a curriculum in history, literature, and geography which will make the different racial elements in this country aware of what each has contributed and will create a mental attitude toward other people which will make it more difficult for flames of hatred and suspicion to sweep over this country in the future, which indeed will make this impossible, because when children's minds are in formative period we shall have fixed in them through the medium of schools, feelings of respect and friendliness for the other nations and peoples of the world. (p. 452)

DPG: Thank you very much, Dr. Dewey, for your thoughtful commentary. Through this discussion, our audience is able to see the various ways in which progressive education and two-way immersion are aligned. We have seen that both approaches agree on the enrichment potential of diversity for schools and society, their equitable approach to education, and their understanding of the role schools play, particularly in regard to language competence, in preparing students to be full, participating members of democracy. We also explored the ways in which progressive education and two-way immersion are similar in terms of the importance they place on community and the use of integrated, thematic curriculum. Finally, we looked at how both forms of education work to eliminate discrimination and unfair privilege, and we saw that their positions on the melting pot version of assimilation are aligned.

End conversation.

Although John Dewey wrote a century ago, his insights into democratic culture and meaningful education are pertinent in our schools today. I hope this discussion helps two-way immersion educators of the present see how progressive educators of the past, like John Dewey,

approached the challenges of demographic change, in order to better serve the students of tomorrow.

Chapter Three

Methods

Prologue

Bling! The long-awaited chime in my head sounded. If I hadn't known it was physiologically impossible, I would have sworn that a light bulb appeared in a bubble over my head, just like it does in the funnies. I was sitting in bed reading about the social history of Dewey and Dewey's educational philosophy when it hit me. Of course, that's it! I pulled the digital voice recorder out of the drawer of my nightstand (I keep it there to record the thoughts that bounce around in my head at night keeping me from falling asleep). I didn't want to let this moment slip away. After all, it took 18 months for it to finally arrive.

I thought back to the countless hours I had spent in my doctoral courses listening to students, who were obviously much more intellectual than I, talk about their "theoretical frameworks" and "research methodologies," all the time nodding my head as if I understood and could relate to what they were speaking about so eloquently. No one knew, or at least I think I kept it pretty well disguised, that the whole time, in my mind, I was panicking because I didn't see how my own interests fit into the PhD picture. What was I doing sitting there with all those smart people who had their academic acts together? What did I possibly have to contribute to that community of scholars? I was just a teacher with a dream of opening a school. And then I had my "Aha!" moment. Whew, what a load off my shoulders! I wanted to cry. Maybe I did cry. Writing about this now makes me want to cry. Okay, now I AM crying because I am reliving the relief and excitement that swept over me at that moment when I figured out that I

DID have something to contribute to academia. I was about to embark on my journey. I was getting ready to sail out into the uncharted waters of starting the first public TWI school in Georgia. I was going to have a story to tell, and autoethnography was going to be the way to tell it. Snap! That's it!

Autoethnography

Dramatic. Moving. Unpredictable. These are words more frequently used to describe a best-selling romance novel or a box office thriller than a scholarly piece of writing based on scientific research. Qualitative research, however, has been pushing the objectivist scientific envelope, and one of the research methodologies to emerge from a broader view of academic legitimacy is autoethnography. To write a precise definition of autoethnography is complicated because this research methodology combines aspects from various disciplines, including anthropology and literature.

One way to understand autoethnography is to compare it with its close qualitative relative, ethnography. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) write that ethnography is “the attempt to describe culture or aspects” (p. 27). Patton (2002) examines the word's etymology in order to better understand it. He writes, “*ethnos* is the Greek word for ‘a people’ or cultural group” (p. 81). Citing Vidich and Lyman (2000, p. 38), Patton goes on to say,

the study of *ethnos* then, or ethnography, is devoted to describing ways of life of human kind..., a social scientific description of a people and the cultural basis of their peoplehood....Ethnographic inquiry takes as its central and guiding assumption that any human group of people interacting together for a period of time will evolve a culture. (p. 81)

Through extensive participant observation and intensive fieldwork, ethnographers immerse themselves in a culture in order to be able to describe it. Normally, the researcher is not a member of the cultural group being studied. When the researcher starts with or develops a connection with the culture being studied and the focus becomes more inward, the study takes an autoethnographic turn (Patton, 2002). Patton suggests that a new study emerges, that ethnography becomes autoethnography, when the researcher asks her/himself,

What if there is no *other* as the focus of the study, but I want to study the culture of my own group, my own community, my own organization, and the way of life of people like me or people I regularly encounter, or my own cultural experiences? (p. 85)

Autoethnography, then, could be defined as the study of one's own culture and oneself inside that culture.

Reed-Danahay (1997) points out the complexity of autoethnography through a three-pronged approach:

Autoethnography stands at the intersection of three genres of writing... (1) "native anthropology," in which people who were formerly the subjects of ethnography become the authors of studies of their own group; (2) "ethnic autobiography," personal narratives written by members of ethnic minority groups; and (3) "autobiographical ethnography," in which anthropologists interject personal experience into ethnographic writing. (p. 2)

The difficulty of defining autoethnography has caused some practitioners and would-be definers to explain autoethnography through illustration. Ellis and Bochner (2000), in their autoethnographically-written chapter in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) write:

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth, autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. (p. 739)

One does not read Ellis and Bochner's (2000) definition of autoethnography and walk away thinking, "Oh, that's it. Now I understand." The writers, recognizing that defining autoethnography is a difficult task, decide to try to help readers understand by modeling it. In the opening section of their chapter, Ellis and Bochner (2000) explain, "we want to *show*, not just *tell* about autoethnography" (p. 734), and so they write their chapter as a conversation between the co-authors discussing autoethnography.

In a later publication, Ellis (2004) asserts that a simple definition does not sufficiently illustrate the true meaning of autoethnography, so she writes what she describes as a methodological novel. Ellis explains,

The story is set in a class on autoethnography. I showcase the process of doing and writing autoethnography as I teach students about it, thus making pedagogy a part of this book. In showing what happens in the classroom, I want to provoke readers to experience the power of ethnography, to feel its truths as well as come to know it intellectually. (p. xix)

Here, again, Ellis endeavors to define this multi-faceted term, autoethnography, through a writing device that illustrates it.

Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont (2003) approach a definition of autoethnography from a different direction. Rather than illustrate or model it, Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont attempt to define it by situating autoethnography alongside other qualitative research methodologies. They write,

The exploration of the ethnographer's own self is an increasingly visible aspect of contemporary writing. Indeed, this has been combined with newer modes of scholarly writing to the effect that there is a blurred line between the ethnography of "others" and the ethnography of "self." Autoethnography and autobiographical reflection have become a distinctive genre within contemporary ethnographic writing....Of course, sociologists and others have written autobiographical accounts and personal reflections on their fieldwork experience for many years. What is intended to be distinctive about the more recent style is the extent to which authors foreground their own reflections and responses. These are not removed to confessional accounts that are separate from the major publications. Rather, they are integral to the work of analysis and representation. In autoethnographic work, indeed, they form the central focus of attention. (pp. 14-15)

Thus, Atkinson et al.'s explanation of autoethnography falls in line with those of Reed-Danahay (1997) and Ellis and Bochner (2000). They acknowledge that autoethnography transects different disciplines and that it focuses the attention on the author as the research subject.

Denzin (1989) takes a more literary perspective. He depicts auto-ethnography as a biographical method that combines autobiography and ethnography, declaring that

An auto-ethnography is an ethnographic statement which writes the ethnographer into the text in an autobiographical manner (Crapanzano, 1980). This is an important variant in the traditional ethnographic account which positions the writer as an objective outsider in the texts that are written about the culture, group, or person in question (Geertz, 1988; Clifford and Marcus, 1986). (p. 34)

Like others before him, Denzin makes the insider-outsider distinction between auto-ethnography and ethnography (Atkinson et al., 2003).

So, what is autoethnography? I began with Reed-Danahay's (1997) assertion that autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology that cuts across various disciplines: native anthropology, ethnic autobiography, and autobiographical ethnography; so, perhaps a fitting answer to my question would be a definition that combines elements of these three fields. Various explanations have been presented that place autoethnography somewhere on a continuum between ethnography and autobiography, but it is even hard to find consistency in terminology. Different researchers, many of whom describe a very similar methodology, use varying terms, including personal narrative, ethnographic memoir, personal ethnography, auto-anthropology, critical autobiography, and reflexive ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ellis, 2004; Patton, 2002). Despite the apparent confusion, Ellis and Bochner (2000) write that "increasingly... autoethnography has become the term of choice in describing studies and procedures that connect the personal to the cultural" (p. 740). The slippery nature of defining autoethnography, then, might be reason enough for some researchers to avoid or dismiss it altogether. I feel, however, that it is the most appropriate method for my research.

Why autoethnography? One might be tempted to ask me, "With all the variation among 'experts' about the meaning of autoethnography, why would you choose to approach your own

research from an autoethnographic standpoint?" This is a fair question to ask, and the point is well taken, but my response is that I cannot see doing it any other way. It just makes sense, and here is why:

While preparing for this research, I had an opportunity to sit down and visit with Carolyn Ellis (personal communication, February 10, 2005), the author of numerous articles and books about autoethnography (Ellis, 1986, 1995, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 1996, 2000), and she allowed me to record our conversation. In the days leading up to our visit, I was beginning to wonder if my research methodology wasn't really autoethnography, but something closely related. Here is an excerpt from our conversation:

DPG: Let me tell you a little bit about my study and then you might understand my position. One of the things you said yesterday was, "an autoethnography is a sort of study of yourself with others," and it made me start to question my own terminology... if what I'm doing is really even autoethnography because I'm not studying myself with others so much as I'm studying myself with a process.

CE: That's fine. The process involves others, right?

DPG: [Yes,] the process involves others. I'm starting, what is right now, the first two-way immersion school in Georgia. It will open in fall 2006. And what I'm titling my work is, "an autoethnographic perspective of starting a public two-way immersion school in Georgia." So, my idea, when I started this, I thought, "Oh, how easy. This will be great. I can merge my real life with my study and it'll just be perfect." But I'm starting to figure out that there's more to it than just sort of a dry account of this process of starting...

CE: Did you figure that out yesterday, or has it been coming?

DPG: It's been coming. I guess...my purpose is not a therapeutic purpose so much, you know, someone who has been through a trauma and that sort of thing². My purpose is more functional.

CE: That all fits. It all fits.

DPG: That fits autoethnography?

CE: Yeah, yeah. I just happen to do the more personal trauma oriented³. I mean, that happens to be my interest, but it all fits.

DPG: Thank you. Because I was starting to wonder...I feel like I'm doing a type of research that is a little bit off the beaten path. You know, it's a little bit edgy, you know, in terms of qualitative research. And I sort of feel like I'm even on the margins within autoethnography in that I'm not doing something that's more personal and therapeutic.

CE: Well it's not...it's not like a personal trauma, but you know this will be emotional for you and there will be emotional experiences, so you still want to write it in an evocative way so that people can join in and feel what it was like to start the school, and the tensions and the anxieties and everything, right?

DPG: Exactly. And I want people to pick it up when it's all done and be able to learn from my experience...be able to think about what I went through in doing this. I don't want to be the last two-way immersion school. I want to sort of open that door for people, and I would love for someone else to read about what I've done and...

CE: Open their own school

² Ellis and Bochner (2000) assert the therapeutic value of writing about traumatic events in autoethnographic research

³ In *Final Negotiations* (1995), Ellis writes a memoir about dealing with a debilitating chronic illness.

DPG: Yeah, open their own school because, right now, I don't have anything like that to read. I don't have anyone else's experience to learn from. I can talk with people, which I'm doing as part of this process, but I think it would be helpful for the field if that were available to someone. So, that's what I'm doing. I'm documenting this process.

CE: Wonderful!

With Carolyn Ellis' endorsement that my research topic was appropriate for an autoethnographic study, I next set out to find my theoretical framework.⁴ As I mentioned in the prologue of this paper, when other students spoke about "critical theory" and "post-modernism," I pretended like I knew what they were talking about, and I hoped that no one would ask me about my theoretical framework because I didn't know what to tell them. All of that changed, shortly after my visit with Carolyn Ellis, when I read about Dewey's educational philosophy. As I described in the prologue, when "Aha!" moments like that happen for me, I record them as quickly as possible using my digital voice recorder, so that is what I did. The following is a piece of the transcript I recorded that night:

I think that I may have just found my "theoretical framework" or at least I hope that I have found something that is at least along the lines of a theoretical framework because I find myself getting excited about this as I read it and connecting to it and thinking that it makes so much sense, and it seems to guide and fall in line with everything that I'm doing. I'm reading a book by Louis Menand (2001) called *The Metaphysical Club: A*

⁴ It would be remiss of me not to note that additional support for my somewhat non-traditional research and writing style came from my dissertation advisor whose work in poetic inquiry and whose advocacy for alternative formats of academic research (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Cahnmann, 2003) freed me to be creative and to pursue research methods and data analysis and interpretation that fit me as well as my academic and professional goals.

Story of Ideas in America, and it's a historical novel about pragmatism.... We're reading now about Dewey and I can't say enough about how much I connect to what he says.

I continued speaking for several minutes about Jane Addams' Hull House and the Laboratory School in Chicago. I also included quotes from the Menand (2001) book about Dewey's philosophy of education, his concept of "unity of knowledge," and about how Dewey believed that knowing is inseparable from the act of doing. The transcript continues,

This is where I really started to see the connection between what is possibly my theoretical framework and Dewey because maybe my theoretical framework is more "Deweyan" – learning is doing. This is both the philosophy of two-way immersion and it is the philosophy of autoethnography – learning from my own experiences. I am conducting an autoethnography because I want to learn through my experience about this process of starting a two-way immersion school....It ties directly in with my life. It is meaningful. I am learning through doing. I am embodying the Deweyan philosophy....One of the reasons I'm so drawn to two-way immersion education is because it embodies all of these things as well – learning through doing – knowledge is social – learning is social – it all seems to be coming together in this little – in this chapter – in this book. And it makes sense to me, this whole idea of a theoretical framework, so I really, really hope that I can work from this and see if somehow I fit into a framework. (personal recording, February 19, 2005)

Although one cannot physically hear the excitement in my voice, the energy I felt at that moment is, I hope, evident in the transcript.

Later in the course, I was relieved to learn that someone else had already done the work of wrapping Dewey up into a theoretical framework for me to apply to my research. Biesta and

Burbules (2003) write about what they call Dewey's "action-theoretical framework" (p. 99). A theoretical framework, as I understand it, is supposed to answer the question of how knowledge is created. For Dewey, "knowledge is neither objective nor subjective, but it is thoroughly *intersubjective*" (p. 104). In other words, knowledge is social and it comes from the interaction between a person and his/her environment.

Dewey's action-theoretical framework works for my autoethnographic research because the nature of my research is a recursive theory-practice relationship. That is, I began this adventure with a theory about bilingual education, nested within the problem, or context, of the lack of bilingual education in the State of Georgia. From this theory-problem, my practice has become that of starting a bilingual school that is informed by Dewey's notion of learning through doing. All of these components – the problem, the practice, the theory – are, in turn, informed through the self-reflective practices within autoethnography. I am not starting out with a theory to be tested through experiment; rather, I am starting out with a theory-problem that, through application of theory, practice, and self-reflexivity, will result in the opening of a TWI education school in Georgia.

As Denzin (1989) uses the term autoethnography, I am *doing* [auto]biography. Reflection on my actions and emotions is not only my source of data, but my method as well. I journal and dictate about my experiences related to starting the school and I record my emotions throughout the process. Then, I reflect on the things I write and record as they relate to process of starting a school and myself in that process. Thus, I learn from my experiences and my reflection on those experiences – I learn through what I do. This relates to the knowing-through-doing aspect of Dewey's action-theoretical framework.

So when I am asked, "With all the variation among 'experts' about the meaning of

autoethnography and all the criticism it has received, why would you choose to approach your own research from an autoethnographic standpoint?” my response is still the same. “It just makes sense because autoethnography provides the right kind of theory-practice vehicle that will support the work I want to do for students in Georgia.”

Data Collection

This autoethnographic study was conducted over a period of two and a half years, from November 2004 to April 2006. During that time, I collected data that included five-and-a-half hours of audio journals and self-reflection, three hours of recorded conversations between me and close friends and family, two-and-a-half hours of audio-recorded interviews conducted with school and community leaders, and over 300 email messages, sent and received, between me and people ranging from close personal friends to State officials. Additionally, in the process of starting the school, I attended countless meetings with officials, drove all over the State, wrote letters, held community informational sessions, participated in neighborhood and city-wide festivals, and so much more. I took detailed field notes and maintained archival data including tedious logs of agendas and interactions, business cards and contact information from innumerable well-intentioned individuals whose promises rarely materialized, and transcripts from radio and television interviews. Each of these types of data is explicated below.

Journaling and self-reflection. A critical component of autoethnographic research is emotion (Carolyn Ellis, personal communication, February 10, 2005). Not only did I need to record the process I was going through to start the school, but it was imperative that I capture my thoughts and emotions as I experienced the process. I did that through digital voice journals. The overwhelming bulk of my data comes from personal journals and self-reflection. Reflection on my actions and emotions is not only my source of data, but my method as well. I kept an

audio-journal and dictated about my experiences related to starting the school and I recorded my emotions throughout the process. Then, I reflected on the things I said and recorded as they related to the process of starting a school and myself in that process. Thus, I learn from my experiences and my reflection on those experiences – I learn through what I do. Knowing myself and my habits very well, however, I knew that I could not be counted on to keep a written journal as often as would be necessary. Therefore, I employed the use of a digital voice recorder. I carried the digital voice recorder with me at all times and I spoke into the recorder about my experiences and reactions related to this research. Later, I listened to, took notes from, transcribed, and coded the entries.

Recorded personal conversations. An important component of this research is the emotional challenges that I encountered along the way and I was afraid that my dictated journals alone would not suffice for getting at my real emotional state of being. I brought this up in my conversation with Carolyn Ellis (personal communication, February 10, 2005):

DPG I started trying to think yesterday how I could get away from this cut and dry process, you know, me just sort of doing a handbook⁵, kind of, “you do this and this and this,” and how I could get myself to be more reflective of my feelings and my emotions. I keep this little recorder with me all the time and whenever I leave an interview or whatever, I go sit in my car or I go someplace, and I just record....

CE: Wonderful

DPG:So this is, I guess, my method, but I'm not, by nature,...I guess I don't talk out my voice, my feelings, and my emotions that often. I say this [reference to what I just heard

⁵ There are numerous handbook-style texts available (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Cloud et al., 2000a; Soltero, 2004) and they have been invaluable resources for me in terms of planning the logistics of the school, i.e. schedules, professional development, curriculum, etc.. The writing that evolved, however, took on a very different style, becoming a narrative tale of the process of starting a public TWI school in Georgia.

myself say], and I've said it more than once, but is it what I really mean? I am a very sensitive, emotional person, and this school is something that I'm very passionate about, so it really doesn't make sense when say that I don't voice my emotions. What I mean is that I'm not very touchy-feely, especially in public....But I am emotional. Maybe I need to broaden my definition/mental image of emotional. It doesn't have to mean tearful lamenting. It means all the joys and disappointments along the way, too.

CE: Uh hum. Are you an emotional person?

DPG: I *am* an emotional person, but I guess I don't...I'm not a publicly emotional person, and so, like I said, I was trying to figure out a way to get at that...to help me record that, so that I can remember it later on.

CE: Uh hum

DPG: So, I wondered if making my mom, or having my mom be sort of co-researcher with me because she's really smart and she knows what I've been doing. She knows about this process and why I'm doing it. And she's my good friend. I think that I could have conversations with her on the phone and record them, and I think she would be able to pull some of that out of me. [I got teary just talking about my mom and our relationship during my conversation with Carolyn. I tried to hide it, but I don't think that I did, at least not completely. I even think that Carolyn's eyes got a little misty when she saw the effect that talking about my mother and our relationship was having on me. How can I say that I'm not emotional! I cry at everything!]

CE: I think that's a lovely idea. And I would, if that works, use that as part of my method. Yes, I would want to explain all of this in my methods section. I would say, almost exactly what you just said to me, "given that I'm not a person who displays her emotions, but yet I have

a relationship with my mother where I am comfortable talking about emotions and she pulls it out of me. I used her as a way to...”

DPG: And she's in tune enough with what I'm doing...I'm not just her daughter who's in graduate school. She could have a conversation with someone about my work and my school and what I'm doing, so I think that she has enough insight into that to ask me the right questions...

CE: uh hum

DPG: And if she knew the purpose...If she knew that that's why I'm involving her....

CE: Yeah. That's great. I use my husband for that.

So, there you have it. That is why I recorded conversations with my mom, and I expanded the practice to include close friends and other relatives. I knew that with them I would open up in ways that I might not have done had I only dictated to myself. Some of my richest emotional data comes from these recorded conversations. Like the journal entries, I listened to, took notes from, transcribed, and coded the recorded conversations.

Email correspondence. Email, both sent and received, was a way for me to track the progress of starting the school. I had not considered using email as a source of data when I started my research, but when I began to receive hate-email from people who were opposed to what I was doing, I realized then that this type of communication would, in fact, be one of my most important sources of data, especially in terms of tracking the process. I archived every piece of email correspondence related to starting the school and I created a LISTSERV for me to disperse information to anyone who wanted to stay informed. I tagged and “filed” the emails in Microsoft Outlook, and later in Gmail, so that I could find them easily and I read back through them to help create the timeline of events.

Fieldnotes and other archival data. With a nod to ethnography, I began taking copious fieldnotes of everything I did related to starting the school. I recorded and transcribed interviews with elected officials and charter school founders. I created PowerPoint presentations for city council and board meetings. I wrote informational brochures and blurbs for the calendar of events in local newspapers. In the beginning, everything was *data*. But what soon happened was that I found myself paying too much attention to the nuts and bolts of the process at the expense of reflecting on my actions and emotions as I went through the process. Data reduction occurred during analysis when I realized that copious fieldnotes about a meeting that started at 7:30 and ended at 9:00 p.m. did not get at the self-reflective that my research necessitated. Yes, the process, or experience, itself was important. I needed those fieldnotes and other archival data, but just as important was my reflection on those experiences.

What I did, i.e., the process, was not my only data. My purpose in doing this research was not so that I could produce a *How to Start a Two-Way Immersion School* manual. Those books already exist (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Howard & Christian, 2002; Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, & Rogers, 2005; Soltero, 2004). I was conducting autoethnographic research. I wanted to tell *my* story about *my* experiences, and in doing so I would include the process that I went through in starting a public TWI school. This was not a study that could be replicated. My experience will never be replicated. The purpose of my research was to inform others through the telling of my story. For this autoethnography, the process was not the subject of my research. I was the subject of my research, so some of my most significant data consisted of my reflections as I muddled through the process.

Note on Identity Masking

Pursuant to my agreement with my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), except

for using my own name, all individually-identifiable information has been removed. All places, institutions, communities and individuals throughout this document have been given pseudonyms. In one instance, however, when I cite an editorial that was published in a widely-distributed newspaper, the author's name is referenced.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Part one – An attempt at linear qualitative data analysis. Data analysis for this research study is a combination of inductive thematic analysis and creative writing, but it didn't start out that way. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) write the following about thematic analysis:

Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. They do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study, rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together. (p. 6)

In other words, I am not starting with a theory that I want to prove about the process and challenges of starting a public TWI school; rather, I am gathering data to help explain and understand a process and challenges that occur as I conduct my research. Bogdan and Biklen write, "You are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts" (p. 6). It is a bottom up approach.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) write about creating coding systems to organize data, and they walk their readers through the steps involved. They write, "you search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics your data cover, and then you write down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns" (p. 161). They further explain that the words you write become "coding categories" (p. 161) that are later used to sort your data. Bogdan and

Biklen continue by explaining how the researcher might find it helpful to create “families of codes” (p. 161) that the individual codes would fall under, and they are clear in their suggestion that certain codes are likely to fall under multiple families of codes. For my research, the coding families were based on my original research question⁶, “What bureaucratic, political, and emotional challenges does the researcher face as she goes through this process, and how does she work through them?” The bureaucratic, political and emotional challenges became my three *categories*.

When I began data analysis using the inductive method described above, the story that has since become my dissertation was not what I had in mind. When I began my research, I thought that I might end up telling a chronological account of my experience, a sort of “How to” approach to starting a public TWI school. However, once I started working with that idea in the initial stages of the school’s development, I came to realize that a chronological narrative would not get at the heart of the matter. If one of my objectives in studying this process was to *inform others who want to walk a similar path toward educational reform*, then I would have to do more than simply tell the steps I went through to start the school. A simple step-by-step approach would not suffice because no one’s situation and circumstance would be similar enough to the details of my own for my experience to be applicable to theirs. I needed to tell them about the most critical events and challenges in the process of starting the school and how I worked through them so that they could be informed by my experience and be more prepared for their own.

Based on that logic, knowing that my experience would never be duplicated by another person and wanting to focus on the critical events so as to inform the reader in the most efficient and applicable way, I next determined that my “findings” would focus on the three types of

⁶ This particular research question changed as the data evolved, themes emerged, and analysis took place.

challenges that I faced throughout the process: the bureaucratic, political, and emotional challenges. My plan was to break the “Findings” section into those three categories and fill in the details with information that came to light through inductive data analysis. It was linear, nice and neat, well-defined, and structured, just as I like things to be. It sounded great and the plan worked as long as all I did was talk about it. In other words, it worked in *theory*, but not in *practice*. When I tried it out, when I actually started writing about my experiences along the bureaucratic, political and emotional lines that I had defined, the theory fell apart and I had to regroup, once again. Based upon analysis of a limited amount of data, I soon discovered that this latest design for data analysis and reporting was not functional. During that initial analysis, I ran into four primary problems.

First of all, the categories which I thought would be “clearly defined and delineated” were anything but. When I conducted a thematic analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), I found that the categories of bureaucratic, political, and emotional challenges were intricately interwoven and extremely difficult to tease apart. It was nearly impossible, for example, to talk about the media frenzy that ensued after the local school board’s decision to accept the TWI school without also mentioning how the release of information to the media is related to school system bureaucracy as well as the politics of who gets credit or blame for what, not to mention the emotional toll that the press took on me. I found that I could not write about one category, e.g., bureaucratic challenges, without having to fill in all the pieces that were related to the other categories, e.g., political and emotional challenges. They were simply too interrelated.

Secondly, because the challenges I was reporting were very complex, when it came to explaining them in the findings, I found that I would have to do excessive backpedaling to set up each scenario so that the reader could clearly understand the context and intensity of the

challenge I faced. I could not, for example, simply write about the emotional challenge of feeling alone in the journey without going back and explaining the situations in which I felt alone and isolated. If I were to treat each challenge as a discrete event, then I would have to spend just as many words, if not more, setting up the scene as I would telling about the challenge. It was not an efficient system.

The third concern had to do with the fact that, under the “categories” system, I was not addressing the entirety of my second research question, “What personal and professional challenges, i.e. emotional, bureaucratic, political, does the researcher face as she goes through this process, *and how does she work through them?*” I was clearly telling my readers about the challenges I faced, but I was neglecting to tell them how I got past, or didn’t get past, them.

Finally, I was concerned that the format I had chosen was not appropriate for my intended audience. I was neglecting my third research question all together, “How can the experience of this researcher inform others who want to take a similar path toward educational reform?” I felt like, if I stuck with the emotional, bureaucratic and political categories format, then I would lose my audience because the reading would be too tedious and the process too incoherent. There had to be a better way!

Part two – Data analysis that worked. All of this data analysis trial and error took place while I was taking a course called Analyzing Qualitative Data. It was during that course that I finally came across alternative practices in representation of data. I had been starting to feel pretty low about my work, thinking that I had read about all the alternatives, yet none of them seemed to work for me. I was so passionate about my research, yet I felt immensely chagrined that I would not find a way to share that passion with others in a meaningful way. Hope,

however, bounded across the horizon once again when I read *Writing: A method of inquiry* (Richardson, 2000). About autoethnography, Richardson writes,

Autoethnographies are highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experiences, relating the personal to the cultural. The power of these narratives depends upon their rhetorical staging as “true stories,” stories about events that really happened to the writers. In telling these stories, the writers call upon such fiction-writing techniques as dramatic recall, strong imagery, fleshed-out characters, unusual phrasings, puns, subtexts, allusions, flashbacks and flashforwards, tone shifts, synecdoche, dialogue, and interior monologue. Through these techniques, the writers construct sequences of events, or “plots,” holding back on interpretation, asking readers to “relive” the events emotionally, with the writers. (p. 931)

There it was, plain as day, an invitation to write creatively and scholarly at the same time. Richardson suggested a schema for telling my story through critical events, or “plots,” and then for interpreting the implications of those events afterwards. I had been trying to cram too much into one part of my dissertation. I had been fruitlessly attempting to answer all of my research questions in one fell swoop. Richardson’s words, “holding back on the interpretation” (p. 931) freed me to let go of the need to do everything at once and flicked on the light bulb above my head again. Her insight allowed me to see a new way of approaching my data. I could write about the critical events, the *plots* in the “Findings” chapter, Chapter Four, and I could interpret them in the “Implications” chapter, Chapter Five. I freed myself from the restrictive, categorical bonds of bureaucratic, political and emotional challenges and I revised my second research question to be more inclusive. The revised research question became, “What personal and professional challenges does the researcher face as she goes through the process of establishing a

public TWI school in a state where none exist, and how does she work through them?” With this new-found sense of direction, I had finally uncovered a method for analyzing and reporting my data that was academic, efficient *and* evocative. In that moment, I shifted from thinking about my data as fitting into neat categories to thinking of it as *my story*.

The approach to analyzing and reporting my data that ultimately materialized was a combination of inductive analysis and creative writing. Using my data, I created a timeline in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. In the first column, I wrote the date and indicated if there was a particular email of interest on that date. In the second column, I wrote a synthesis of the event and in the third column of the spreadsheet I noted the themes that emerged, like “highs and lows” or “firsts” and I noted whether or not I sensed that it would be a “critical event” in the story.

Table 1

Excerpt from Data Analysis Timeline

DATE	SYNTHESIS	THEME
Aug-05		
1	Mayberry - community meeting - only a few people come	I'm alone
1 (email)	Comeback County - sent in petition	Critical Event - Highs & Lows
5	Mayberry - set up table street festival - got snubbed by council members and friends	wasted time
11	Others want advice – colleague	first instance of other people wanting to do something similar
12	Making contacts/building support - university geography department	no response - wasted time
15	scramble to sign up for Peachtree Atlanta Latino 2005 Festival	wasted time
22	link on other organization’s website	publicity - first
26	Job inquiry	firsts
28	Latino 2005 Festival - was a bust	publicity - first
15	Comeback County - received email requesting additional information	highs & lows
26	First inquiry to do research at school	firsts

Sep-05		
1	Publicity - our first press in major newspaper	possible theme -- exciting first steps -- media, job inquiries, parents, other interested folks
4	Publicity - set up new website account, outgrew our space on the current server	publicity - first
6	first parent inquiry & offer of support	firsts
8	Making contacts/building support – local universities	wasted time
8 (email)	Making contacts/building support – property management	wasted time
12	Finally get information from Lileth Starnes in the form of a charter petition checklist	jumping through hoops
15	Flagship County - still preparing charter for submission	jumping through hoops
19 (email)	Comeback County - received call requesting meeting with superintendent	THIS WILL BE A CRITICAL EVENT - GETTING THE PETITION READY FOR THE BOARD
22 (email)	Comeback County - met with superintendent	highs & lows fear pride
26 (email)	Reviewed other LEA start-up petitions - trying to get on the Oct. Board calendar - revising petition to conform to LEA	hurry up and wait -- bureaucracy
28	Flagship County - scrambling to get the petition copied and submitted - there was confusion about whether or not the offices were open	jumping through hoops
28 (email)	Comeback County - making plans to attend the board meeting in October, organizing support	Fear of letting go Feeling alone
29 (email)	Get a call from Comeback County saying that the grant has to be revised and the petition won't go until November	highs & lows

My next challenge was to figure out how to tell my story in the most meaningful way possible. I knew that the thematic codes that occurred with the greatest frequency would drive the story, but I didn't know how to fit it all together. Should the story be chronological? Should it be more like a do's and don'ts tale? I didn't know. I toiled over a format, trying to come up with a design that would both inform and enthrall my intended audience. The solution finally

came when I re-read my third research question and realized, once again, that the answer had been right there all along. I thought back over the months since my school opened and recalled the countless times when I had presented at conferences, been a guest speaker in classes, spoken to parents who were interested in the school, or answered telephone calls, always responding to the same question, “How did you do this?” Therefore, I determined that I would display my data, Chapter Four, as a series of episodes, or vignettes, written for someone who *wants to walk a similar path toward educational reform*. In those vignettes, I will answer the questions that inevitably come up, again and again when people ask about my school and base my responses on the themes that emerged from the inductive analysis of the timeline of events. By presenting my findings in this format, I am both telling the story and reaching out to my intended audience.

In Chapter Five, I turn to what Richardson (2000) termed the “interpretation” as I delve into the personal and professional implications of my experience as expressed through the vignettes in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I am able to reflect on my experience and discuss in detail how the professional and personal challenges I encountered along the way affected the decisions that I made at the time as well as how I might approach the process differently if I had it all to do over again today.

Chapter Four

My Story

Inspiration

Dear Dell Perry,

Hi, I'm just a proponent of bilingual education and I want to congratulate you on the acceptance of your charter. My name is [REDACTED] and I'm a bilingual educator (Chinese and English). I received my masters degree in bilingual education from [REDACTED] in New York. I worked at [REDACTED] in Vancouver, BC, Canada as program director to try and establish a Chinese-English Bilingual program in their school. Unfortunately, the program never really got off the ground due to the indecisiveness of the board members and the lack of resources. So I took an offer at the Ministry of Education in Taiwan to push Chinese language education in the US. As much as I like research and influencing policy, I feel too far away from the students.

What I would like to do is establish a bilingual school in the greater Seattle, Washington area. I'm hoping that you could provide some information or guidance. I'm sure you are extremely busy, so any assistance would be greatly appreciated. I was wondering if I could maybe have a simple list and time line of the steps you took and are taking? And maybe any pitfalls? Also, I am wondering if I could use and reference some of the information provided on your website?

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED] (personal email correspondence, November 8, 2005)

Dear [REDACTED]

Are you sure you know what you're asking? And are you prepared to change your mind, because the story that I'm going to tell you isn't of the Cinderella variety. I wasn't carried along through my journey in a bejeweled pumpkin while wearing elegant glass slippers. It was more like riding along in a cement mixer with every spin of the machine dropping mounds of wet rock and rubble on top of me while I gasped for breath and tried to keep myself from succumbing to the pressure. My story does have a happy ending, but it is not a fairy tale, I assure you.

This all started when I decided to go back to graduate school to work on my doctorate degree. I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I had faith that I would figure something out. I had been an ESOL teacher just prior to going back to school and I had left teaching because my beloved principal, who knew me well and trusted me to lead our department, was retiring. I had heard rumors about the man who was coming in as his replacement and I knew, based on those rumors and some limited first-hand experience with the new guy, that there was no way in hell we were going to be able to happily co-exist. I also felt, deep inside, that there was more, something better, out there for educating language learners in our public schools. I just didn't know what it was. So, I seized the opportunity to jump ship in search of something new.

In my first semester, I took a course called *Foundations of Bilingual Education*. We were about a month into the course and I was doing my assigned reading for the week when I came across something I had never heard of before – TWI – and something clicked....it all made sense. I was captivated and completely baffled at the same time. From what I read, TWI seemed to be the perfect combination for teaching English language learners most effectively – by promoting first language literacy – and for immersing monolingual English-speaking students in another language in order to become bilingual and biliterate, too. It seemed so obvious that TWI was the way to go, and I couldn't understand why TWI was not an option in Georgia (although now, I have a much more informed perspective). Why hadn't it been an option for me when I was growing up in Texas? I determined, then and there, that I was going to bring TWI to Georgia, come hell or high water. And just to offer a little insight into my personality, once I set my sights on something, you might as well get out of the way. My mind was made up. I was going to start a TWI school in Georgia. It was just a matter of figuring out the logistics.

Since I wasn't working in a school, or even a school system when I decided to do this, I wasn't positioned to operate from the "inside." I had to come up with a way for someone on the "outside" to start a school. As I saw it, I had two options, either private or charter. I was, and am, adamantly against going the private route. I am a product of public schooling and I believe that public schools can and should work for the betterment of our whole society, not just those who are privileged enough to afford it. It disappoints and angers me when people give up on their public schools. If they would re-direct even half their effort, time and money into their local public school, everyone would be better off, but that's another ball of wax. I decided to go the charter route because I wanted TWI to be an option for any child, regardless of socio-economic or immigration status, and I saw charter schools as a way to make that happen. There were two inherent obstacles that I had to deal with right off the bat. First, the political climate in Georgia, especially related to immigrant issues; second, my own limited understanding of charter schools.

What Can I Do?

Georgia doesn't have a reputation as an immigrant friendly state, and while I was going through the process of starting this bilingual charter school, there was all sorts of anti-immigrant legislation floating through the Georgia General Assembly ("H.R. 911," 2006; "H.R. 1238," 2006; "H.R. 1349," 2004; "H.R. 1483," 2004; "S. 529," 2006). Very unfortunate timing for my charter petition.

The first time during the process of starting the school that I remember recognizing the deep-rooted hostility, at least as it related to my school, was as I searched for a place to locate the school. I was following the advice of another charter petitioner who has a partnership with a church to use its educational wing on weekdays when classrooms sit empty. I was going around

to churches that had large buildings and facilities but small congregations. Early in my chartering journey, I was at one such church making a partnership proposal to one of its leaders, an elderly white gentleman who had been a lifelong member of the church. He told me, after I had given my best sales pitch, that the church board had considered hosting a school before, but church members were concerned about the *types of kids* who would be attending. This old, Southern gentleman had mastered the art of speaking through the side of his mouth, and I got the message loud and clear.

In another instance, in a neighboring community in which I focused a lot of my time and energy as I was writing the charter petition, something happened that really drove home for me how systematized and ingrained racist policies and practices were, and still are, in many parts of Georgia. The summer of 2005, when I was in the throes of writing the charter petition, two of my former students, Jerónimo and Félix, showed up on my doorstep. They pulled up in a tricked out Chevy pick-up truck, painted bright, neon blue with fancy rims and dark, tinted windows. You could hear the bass thumping as they cruised down the block. Somehow, they had found out where I lived and wanted to visit their “favorite teacher.” Truth be told, they were among my most memorable students, too.

Jerónimo and Félix were both born in Mexico. Félix came to the United States with his mom and dad when he was in 10 and Jerónimo came with his mom when he was 12. Their parents had made the decision to come to the United States, illegally, in search of better opportunities for their families. I was their middle school ESL teacher. Sadly, however, both boys dropped out of school once they got to high school and Félix already had a daughter with another baby on the way despite being only 17 years old. We reminisced and chit-chatted on my front porch for several hours. I learned that they were both working in the construction industry

and, coincidentally, I had recently determined that all the ceilings and light fixtures in my house needed to be replaced, so we made arrangements for them to do the work.

Jerónimo and Félix got started on the project. Everything was going well. The boys had been working for a couple weeks, in their time off from other part-time, day laborer-type jobs, and it was time for them to get partial payment for the work they had done for me. One afternoon, when they decided to take their lunch break, I went ahead and paid them about \$300 apiece. About 30 minutes after they had left my house to grab some lunch, I got a call from Jerónimo. A panicked voice on the line pleaded, "Can you come....fast? They're going to take my truck because I don't have a driver's license."

Knowing that the "they" Jerónimo referred to were the police, I questioned, "Where are you?"

"*El Tampiqueño*," he whispered hurriedly.

"Yeah, I'll be there," I replied.

"Please come so that they don't take my truck," Jerónimo pleaded as I hung up the phone.

I went to *El Tampiqueño*, but I didn't see the boys or their truck, and there was no evidence of them having been there, either. I drove around the area little bit looking for them, then decided to head over to the police station, since I figured that the police were involved in whatever had happened. I found the local precinct and went in. There was no one at the desk, so I buzzed the intercom protruding from the wall next to a solid, metal door. Shortly, a lady's voice responded, "Yes, can I help you?"

"Yes," I rambled. "My name is Dell Perry. I need to speak to someone. I don't know exactly who I need to speak with. I think some boys that I know may be here or with the police, or something. I'm not sure...."

BUZZZZZ. I guess she had heard enough. The latch clicked and I slowly pulled the heavy, metal, windowless door open toward me. As I entered, I overheard the same woman's voice justifying my inexplicable presence to a person I couldn't see. "There's some lady out there," she explained in an exasperated tone. "She doesn't know who she wants or what she's talking about. She just said that she needs to talk to somebody." From her attitude, you'd have thought that I had sashayed into the police station demanding a burger and cold beer, as if my dilemma had nothing to do with her job.

I entered a dimly lit hallway, and within a few moments, an officer walked toward me through a door at the end of the passage with a puzzled look on his face. Sensing his confusion, I explained, "A boy I know called me a few minutes ago. I think he was with the police. I came here because I'm just trying to figure out what's going on."

I went on to describe Jerónimo, Félix and their truck to the officer, but he continued to look at me questioningly, as if he were thinking, "Hummmm? I wonder what in the world she could be going on about?"

Finally, after I had babbled all the identifying information I could think of, the officer offered, "Well, come back here with me for a minute." I walked with him back through the door from which the officer had entered the hallway. Sure enough! There were the two boys, exactly as I had described them, in a 10x10 cage with six other officers standing around talking. These were clearly the boys I had been inquiring about, yet the officers' body language and facial expressions indicated, "What in the world is she jabbering about?"

I was infuriated! I had just spent 10 minutes describing the boys and what had happened to a T, first to the intercom lady and then to the officer who greeted me in the hallway, but the officers still had the nerve to act like they didn't know who or what I was talking about! "Those

boys right there,” a voice shouted in my head. “The ones locked up 6 feet in front of you. That's who I'm talking about.” Oh, I was so angry! I wanted to cry, but through clenched teeth, in the most polite voice I could muster, I calmly stated, “Yes, these are the boys. Can I talk to them?”

The officers indicated that it was okay for me to speak with the boys. “¿*Qué pasó?*” I asked. “*Porqué fueron detenidos?*” From our “private” conversation, I got two important pieces of information. First, I learned the reason Jerónimo and Félix were arrested was because they were stopped for playing their music too loud, and since neither of them had a valid Georgia driver's licenses, they were arrested.⁷ Second, I also learned that Jerónimo and Félix had not given their real names to the arresting officer, but to complicate matters, I didn't know what names they had given. Jerónimo told me that he used the name "Rigoberto", but the officer wrote down "Rogelio." So, which was it, Rigoberto or Rogelio? And I never got to ask Félix what name he had given.

Our exchange lasted less than one minute, and I could tell by the body language of the officers that our conversation in Spanish was pressing the envelope a little too far. I suspect that it never crossed the minds of those officers when I entered the room and asked if I could speak with the boys that we would speak in Spanish, since my "all-American" facade doesn't let on that I actually speak Spanish very well. In retrospect, as I reflect on the situation, I don't know whether I decided to speak in Spanish because I knew that Spanish was the language Jerónimo and Félix were most comfortable using, or whether my intentions were more covert, that I spoke in Spanish because I didn't want the officers to be privy to our conversation. Whatever the

⁷ In Georgia, there is no legal means for an undocumented immigrant to obtain a driver's license. I've told this story many times since it happened and have gathered that this particular community has a reputation for being particularly tough on undocumented residents. Félix, in fact, was already on probation when this incident occurred for having been arrested twice before, in that same community, for driving without a valid driver's license.

reason, it was a bad decision because it clearly made the officers uneasy. Sensing the officers' discomfort, I asked, "Why were the boys arrested?"

WHOA!!! The response that followed threw me for a loop. Apparently asking questions of the officers was not permitted. I had overstepped my undefined boundaries. "We didn't have to let you back here," the officer reprimanded. "We were just being nice, and then you got all bossy." My time was clearly up as the officer ignored my question and promptly began to usher me from the room.

Yes, "bossy." That was how the officer described my questioning behavior. I'm the first to admit that I can be bull-headed and short-tempered, but on that occasion, I was neither bull-headed nor short-tempered, nor was I "bossy"! I was escorted out for being bossy when I started asking questions. I suspect that the officers had, by that time, put two and two together and realized that I could be a thorn in their side, in other words, that I was clearly capable of figuring out the undertones of what was going on, so they got me out of there as quickly as they could.

But before I left the room, the officer who had confiscated Jerónimo and Félix's belongings (watches, cell phones, wallets, etc...) asked them, "Do you want me just to give your stuff to her?"

"Yes," they replied.

Then, just as I was turning to leave with their things, Jerónimo's cell phone rang. I looked at the caller ID. "Peter," I read aloud from the display.

"Es Peter...mi hermano," Jerónimo called back.

I put the phone in my pocket and prepared to leave. As we exited the room, out of "courtesy" to me, the officer escorting me out told me the boys would be transferred to a jail in a

nearby community because there was no jail in this community. He said that I could go there to see about bonding them out.

When I got in the car, I took Jerónimo's phone from my pocket and hit the call back button to call Peter. Peter answered, clearly caught off guard by the gringa voice muddling through an awkward story from his brother's cell phone. "*Buenas tardes. Soy Dell Perry. Yo era la maestra de Jerónimo en middle school. Tengo el celular de Jerónimo porque está en la cárcel. ¿Puedes ir a la bonding agency en la calle Main? Yo estaré allí.*" I'm sure that was a weird call for Peter to receive...it was a weird call to make. Regardless, Peter met me, along with Jerónimo's mother, at the bonding agency.

If Part I of this story was subtitled "Getting Arrested", then Part II is "Bail Bonding." I had never been in a bail bonding agency before. My background knowledge was extremely limited. *¡Pobrecitos!* All I knew about bonds came from endless re-runs of *Law & Order* episodes and from the Janet Evonovich book series about a bumbling bail bonds(wo)man named Stephanie who always finds herself entangled in deadly criminal sagas. At least the lady who worked at this agency was nice and, from her, I learned a lot about bonding someone out of jail. As it turned out, to get a bond that day, we had two options. Option A was available when someone with a Georgia ID and demonstrated work experience (as proven with pay stubs) could bond another person out of jail for the bonding fee, in this case \$135 each. If you select Option A, you don't get any of that money back. Option B is for people who can't meet the requirements of Option A. With Option B, someone, on behalf of the person in jail, pays a security fee of \$750 per person plus the \$135 non-refundable fee. Nearly \$900! Well, who has that? I certainly don't have \$900 extra dollars just sitting around in case someone I know gets arrested.

One might have thought that Option A wouldn't be a problem for me. I mean, I'm a well-established, law-abiding citizen, right? Wrong! Initially, the bonding agency would not let us go with Option A because I couldn't demonstrate full-time work experience. Since I was a full-time student and part-time research assistant, I was not considered stable enough. I was dumbfounded. I called a friend who worked in the criminal justice system and told him my predicament. He suggested that I could demonstrate to the bonding agency that I outright owned two cars and made regular payments on a house and that that should be sufficient, so I went back inside the agency to try again. I was politely denied again. The bonding agency would not accept anything from my car ownership, but after a bit of haggling, they agreed to accept the warranty deed to my house instead of the pay stubs. What a hassle this had turned out to be, and we weren't out of the woods, yet!

There was one more complicating factor...I didn't know the boys' names, at least not the names they had given the police. If it weren't so tragic, it would be comical. Sheepishly, I explained, "Yes, I'm here to pay bond for two boys. I know them very well, except that I don't know their names. I'm going to pay whatever it takes to get them out of jail. Just tell me what to do." I felt the hole getting deeper and deeper. I'm not very good at lying and I'm certain that the bonding agency lady saw straight through me, but she was kind enough not to give me a hard time.

I left the bonding agency and went back home to look for the warranty deed. By the time I got back, the bonding agency lady had called the jail and found out the names the boys had given at the time of their arrest: Rogelio Benitez and José Félix Sanchez. "Yeah, that's them," I assured her. I paid their bond with money from their wallets (the same money I had paid to them earlier that day.) "Rogelio" and "José" were out of jail an hour later.

The celebration was short-lived. Despite their being out of jail, they still had to pay the fines for playing loud music and driving without licenses, which totaled about \$500 each, and then the towing fees which amounted to another \$200. By the time all was said and done, they were out a huge chunk of change!

What a racket! It's such a vicious cycle....an undocumented immigrant gets arrested for driving without a license....without a license, or a legal State ID, their friends and family can't bond them out of jail using Option A....they don't have the money to bond out using Option B...they sit in jail until their court date arrives (three weeks later)....they lose their job and their apartment because they're stuck in jail....now they're jobless, homeless AND undocumented....it's a brutal system. What can be done about this? What can one person do? What can *I* do?

I Said, "Charter Schools are Public Schools!"

If I thought I didn't know anything about bonding an undocumented seventeen-year-old kid out of jail in Georgia, I knew even less about starting a charter school. I had heard the words tossed around, and some of what I heard wasn't all that flattering. Critics of charter schools claim that more accountability is needed, the common good is undermined when parents are given choices, innovation is lacking, and that charter schools are run for-profit (K12 Academics, 2009; The Center for Education Reform, 2002). I did not then, and do not now, disagree with any of the criticisms of charter schools that I've heard. Just like anything else, what is intended for one purpose can be contorted into something that it was never intended to be. I have seen that happen with charter schools, and it saddens me.

Despite the controversy, I determined to proceed with my research and learn all that I could about charter schools. I learned that the federal Charter Schools Program was first

authorized in 1994 ("Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended, 20 U.S.C. 8061-8067," 2004). Before federal legislation was approved, states including Minnesota and California had already passed their own laws supporting charter schools, but after 1994, when federal funding became available, more states followed suit (U.S. Charter Schools, n.d.). The Charter Schools Program has been amended and expanded over the years, first by the Charter School Expansion Act of 1998, then the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and more recently by Title V, Part B Subpart 1, of ESEA in 2006. The number of charter schools across the nation has risen steadily since the first enactment of the Charter Schools Program, and now, in 2009, there are more than 5000 charter schools operating in 39 states and the District of Columbia (The Center for Education Reform, 2009).

The precise definition of a charter school varies from state to state, but according to federal guidelines, all charter schools must meet the following criteria:

A charter school

- is public
- is eligible to be exempt from certain State rules and regulations (as determined by the State) that inhibit flexibility
- operates according to a specific set of educational objectives
- operates as an elementary or secondary school, or both
- is nonsectarian
- cannot charge tuition
- Complies with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

- is chosen by parents
- complies with Federal and State audit requirements
- meets all applicable Federal, State and local health and safety requirements
- operates in accordance with State law
- Has a written performance contract with the authorized public chartering agency in the State (U.S. Department of Education, 2004)

However, despite the federal government’s attempts to “increase national understanding of charter schools” (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), I’ve found that the general public does not have a solid understanding of what a charter school is. For instance, many people, and I might even venture to say most, still think that charter schools are private schools. I’ve had to battle that misconception since day one! When I would go to speak with mayors and city planners to tell them about my idea, I always had to re-shape their understanding of what it means to be a charter school. One mayor, in a conversation about students who would attend the school, told me, “Take the students you want.” I was flabbergasted. Didn’t she know better?! You can’t do that in a public school! You don’t get to *choose* your students. In fact, it’s just the opposite. “Charter schools are schools of choice. Choice to parents, students, teachers, and administrators. Parents and students get to choose to enroll in a school that may offer a unique learning environment, alternative learning methodologies, etc.” (Chen, 2007). With a charter school, the student, or their parents, have to choose you. I still have to deal with this issue every time I speak with a group of parents who are interested in enrolling their children in my school. A charter school is a *public* school. I say it again and again. It’s even one of my

quiz questions at the end of the presentation: “TRUE or FALSE: Charter schools are *public* schools.” [Take a deep breath]...I have yet to end a presentation with 100% of participants getting the answer correct. [Sigh.]

Charter schools are linked to a school system, but they have more autonomy than a traditional, or “regular” school, and they *should* offer something different from what traditional schools offer. That is why charter schools can be exempt from certain State rules and regulations, so that they can have added flexibility to offer something that traditional schools cannot (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). They might offer an enhanced music or arts program, or perhaps they have a special emphasis on math, science or technology. Some charter schools target at-risk populations, like teen mothers, and offer alternative scheduling. Whatever the charter school is, it should be different from what is available in a traditional school. In our case, what makes us different is that we offer TWI education.

I keep using the word, “should,” because some charter schools are more exceptional than others. This is something that I feel very strongly about. I know of a few schools that don’t appear to offer anything different from traditional schools except that the children wear uniforms. Any school can institute a uniform policy. You don’t have to be a charter school to do that. It’s schools like this that perpetuate the false impression that charter schools are private schools. In Georgia, any child who lives in the school district in which the charter school is located is eligible to attend. There are no academic criteria for admittance. There are no economic criteria for admittance. There are only two conditions that children wishing to attend a charter school must meet: First, they have to live in the school district where the charter is located; and second, they must be the appropriate age for the school (Georgia Department of Education, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Another fact about charter schools that is not well-known is that anyone can start a charter school. In practice, it's more complicated than that. At the time I was starting my school, there were three types of charter schools in Georgia: Conversions, Start Ups and LEAs (Local Education Agency). In 2008, the Georgia Legislature passed legislation adding two more types: State Chartered Special Schools and Charter Systems (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). Conversions are often the least "different" from traditional schools. With conversions, a school community, including parents and teachers, decides that it wants to be a charter school and it writes a petition outlining how it will *convert* into something different from what it currently is. One that I know of, for example, wrote that all of its teachers would become certified in Gifted Education; the school would offer technology classes; and the students would wear uniforms (of course). In my opinion, that's a pretty weak charter. A traditional school can do all of those things without becoming a charter. My perception is that schools – especially in areas of changing demographics where average household incomes are dropping and affluent families are moving away – choose to convert to charters in order to compete with private schools. If parents equate their local charter school with a private school, then they are less likely to pull their children out of the public school. That's my cynical side rearing its ugly head, again.

The second type of charter school in Georgia is called a *start-up charter* (in order not to confuse this type of charter with an LEA start-up charter, I will call them *independent start-ups*.) This is the type of charter in which someone, anyone, who has an idea about a particular educational opportunity that they feel is lacking in traditional schools, can write up their idea, in the form of a charter petition, and pitch it to local school boards until one of them accepts it. This is the charter route I started on, but did not finish. I was just an educator who had a dream

about starting a public TWI school, so I wrote it up and pitched until a local school board finally bought the idea and accepted the petition. It sounds simple enough, but this is the toughest type of charter to be.

The third type is called an LEA start-up, and this is sort of a combination of the other two types. That's what we are, an LEA start-up. The idea is to start a completely new school, like an independent start-up, but it comes from within the local school system, not from an outsider. It's different from a conversion charter because you're not converting something that already exists into something new. Instead, you're starting from scratch, but with the full support of the local school system behind you.

In 2007 the State approved two additional types of charter schools: State Chartered Special Schools and Charter Systems. In my understanding a State Chartered Special School can come into existence if the local board of education denies the charter, but it is approved by the newly formed Georgia Charter Schools Commission. I suspect that this type of charter became necessary when charter petitioners and local boards of education could not work out their differences. Charter Systems happen when a whole local school system applies to become a charter. A local school system might opt for this if it is seeking greater flexibility in determining and meeting the needs of its students. Again, both of these are new, so I don't have any first-hand knowledge about them.

Out of all these options, I believe I ended up with the best one. My school ultimately became an LEA start-up charter school, but it didn't start out that way. I spent the first two years of the process floundering through as an independent start-up. And now that I have the benefit of hindsight, I don't recommend going about it that way until all possibilities for becoming an LEA charter are exhausted. It is extremely difficult to survive as an independent start-up charter

school. I wasted a year in this process trying to be an independent start-up charter school in Flagship County, a school system that really didn't want anything to do with my idea to begin with. I wish that I had been more open to other possibilities from the beginning, but, as I mentioned before, once I get my mind set on something, the blinders go up and it's incredibly hard for me head in a different direction.

Sometimes people wonder and ask me why it's so difficult to be an independent start-up charter school, and there are a number of reasons, but they all basically boil down to a lack of resources and funding. If you think about all the resources that a traditional school receives from the school system – maintenance, payroll, recruitment, food services, transportation, facilities, teaching materials, professional learning, etc....and you take those resources away so that the individual school has to fund them based on the per pupil dollars received from the school system, it is nearly impossible to do. Independent charter schools that survive - and there are a number that do make it - only do so through continual fundraising efforts and generous donations. I know of independent charter schools that were wonderful success stories in terms of meeting their academic goals, but they were forced to shut down because they couldn't pay their bills. Funding is *the* major obstacle to making it as an independent start-up.

When I first started playing with the idea of starting a school, I knew that money would be an issue, but something that I did not anticipate was how much not knowing the figures would hold me back, both physically and mentally. I remember when I first started this process, how fuzzy and discombobulated the financial aspect of being a charter seemed. I just couldn't wrap my head around what it was going to take to be financially sustainable, and that unknown factor alone was holding me back. I couldn't proceed until I knew how much per pupil money I could anticipate from the school system, what resources the school system would provide (it turned out

that there weren't any), or how many students I would need to break even. And then, to further complicate things, since I didn't know how many students to expect, I didn't know how much space I would need or how much I could afford to pay for a facility. There were simply too many unknowns. The key to the whole formula is figuring out the per pupil dollar amount that school systems spend so that you can know how much money to anticipate receiving from the school system.

In Georgia, schools are funded based on what's called the QBE formula. According to the State of Georgia government website, "the Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding formula determines the amount of state funds that are allocated to Georgia's K-12 schools. The formula is based on student population and the demographics and needs of the student population" (State of Georgia, 2004) . It's a complicated, convoluted calculation, one that is currently under legal challenge, but is what the State currently uses to determine school funding. Once you have that, you have to calculate the expenses that you expect to incur. My problem was that, having never worked with a real school budget before, much less one that includes all expenses (most local school budgets don't include facility expenses or payroll, for example), I simply didn't know where to begin.

Then one day, like manna from heaven, an independent start-up charter school in Flagship County shared its budget with me. Halleluia! The financial fog that had befuddled me was finally lifted. It was not that the dollar figures now in front of me were generous, but I was no longer dealing with complete unknowns. With that holy budget model, I was able to start plugging in numbers, specific to my school, so as to have a calculation of what it was going to take to be financially sustainable. What a tremendous day that was. I recorded in my journal, "Tonight I feel better about this endeavor of starting a charter school...it all seems a lot more

do-able now!” For the first time, my dream of a school, which had been disconcertedly nebulous up to that point, began to take shape.

The way I figured things, I needed sixty students per grade level in order to break even. Sixty was the magic number. That number told me how much money I could anticipate, how many classrooms and teachers I would need, how many textbooks I would have to buy, how many mouths I would have to feed...knowing that number put everything else in motion. So, with that, I set out to find a facility.

No Stone Left Unturned

Finding a facility was the next highest hurdle I had to jump. In general, with independent start-ups, it is up to the founders to find a facility that the school can afford. Sometimes, the school system will rent space in one of its existing facilities, but the system is not obliged to provide any support in that way. This issue of facilities is one of the biggest reasons that I encourage people to exhaust the LEA option before trying to be independent. It is so very hard to find an appropriate and affordable place to house a school. Facilities are a major obstacle for independent start-up charter schools.

Undaunted, I set out on my quest, leaving no abandoned building unseen and no deep pocket un-picked. I searched everywhere! I started out looking in churches. I mentioned before that another charter school had shared its budget with me. Over time, I developed a relationship with the founders of that school and they, very generously, took me under their wing and tried to mentor me through the process of becoming a charter school in Flagship County. Ultimately, it didn't work out for me there, but I learned a lot from them. Their charter school, although it continues to struggle with space issues, had formed a mutually beneficial relationship with a local church. Through the years, as white flight to the suburbs took its toll on small, in-town

communities, the churches with once flourishing congregations and Christian education programs ceased to have a use for their spacious campuses. They were, and still are, left with large buildings and small congregations to support their upkeep. One of the solutions has been for charter or private schools to lease space from these churches, and that's what my mentor charter school had done. Both they and the church were very happy with the relationship, so I began looking for a similar setup.

For several months I worked from this angle. I began by visiting with the pastor at the church where the other charter school was located. I shared my plans with her and her response encouraged me. She seemed to understand the TWI concept and thought that I could find another church in the area that would work out for us, so she directed me to speak with a person at the church's central office. Unfortunately, the woman I spoke with at the church's main office did not share the pastor's interest. We didn't get off to a good start because I inadvertently made a critical error in not addressing her as "Reverend." I didn't know when I called that she was a "Reverend," and besides, I come from a church in which titles are not a primary focus. No one had ever used that title in mentioning her name to me before, but she made it clear to me that I had insulted her. The conversation went downhill from there. She told me that she just had too many churches in her area and certainly could not be expected to know if any of them might be interested in working with me. Unfortunately, I let her rudeness and negativity get the best of me and I abruptly ended the conversation by telling her that I wouldn't bother her anymore and hung up. Boy, she made me angry!⁸

⁸ Temper is something I've had to work on. I can be a little short-tempered, especially when I perceive ignorance on the other person's part. I don't recommend it. It rarely leads to the end that I desire, but it's a part of my personality I've had to consciously deal with. Sometimes, I'll be out with my husband when I get irritated with a store clerk or someone else "who should have more sense than that." He'll see it coming even before I do. I'll hear a slight grumble, "Oh, Lord" and that's my signal to step back and re-evaluate my options. Sometimes I make better choices than others, but I really am working on it. It's a constant struggle.

Despite the initial setback, I didn't give up on the church partnership, but I did determine that I would do it without the "Reverend's" help. During those days, I would drive around and get so excited when I stumbled on a church, tucked away in a quiet neighborhood, which looked like it had potential. I took stock of each. Was there enough parking? Where could we build our outdoor classroom? Would they let us use their playground equipment? Next, I imagined what it was like on the inside. Did it have enough classrooms? Could we grow into the space? Would it meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990? What about a kitchen? I would poke around the outside, and every once in a while, find someone there who would speak with me. Usually, though, I would go back home, very excited, and drag a friend or someone with me to go look at it again, their enthusiasm never equaling mine. I would get high on the anticipation but, just as soon as I did, my hopes would come crashing down when, for one reason or another, it didn't work out. It never did.

In the end, this on-my-own approach was fruitless, but I did learn some things about the areas in which I was looking, and I got a preview of some of the ugly social and political issues that I would face head on later in my journey. At one of the churches I visited, I was told that the church board had considered hosting a school before, but church members were concerned about the types of kids who would be attending. Although this elderly white gentleman did not come out and say it, he very eloquently implied that they did not want too many black and Hispanic children in their building. I bit my tongue. Another church board had considered the idea, too, but they wanted more money than we could afford for their "prime" location (note that the building is still sitting empty today). Other churches were just not suited for an elementary school or would require costly renovations to bring them up to code for public schools.

Besides churches, I looked all over the place. Two of the most outside-of-the-box places I considered were an old movie theatre and an abandoned department store in a mall. A friend had given me an article from an architectural magazine about re-purposing abandoned “big box” stores; you know, like deserted Wal-Mart buildings. I went so far as to contact the realtors for the respective properties, but I couldn’t get them to see beyond the bottom line. I was not able to sway them to convince their clients that my proposed corporate-school partnership could be more than a money-making opportunity, to see past the dollar signs. I failed to make them understand, to truly believe in their souls, how their clients could contribute to the greater good of society by renovating their space at no cost to me, then leasing it to me for a price that would afford them a generous tax write-off. I never made any headway with that argument. The optimist in me still dreams that there is hope for a benevolent corporate-school partnership, but if it’s to happen, the argument will need to be refined! That article inspired me to think more creatively, but the reality was that, unless a very generous benefactor decided to donate some big bucks, there was no way we could afford the renovations that it would take to make the spaces school-worthy. It was fun to think about, though.

A more promising and realistic type of facility that I sought out was that of an old, vacant school building. A number of years ago in Flagship County, the school board had implemented a school consolidation plan that involved closing many small elementary schools. Some of the former elementary schools are being used today for child care or community social service centers. Others, however, have simply been deserted. I had heard rumors of one such school, so I decided to check it out. I didn’t have an address, but someone had described to me how to get there. I drove and drove along winding country roads, thinking with each tick of the odometer that there was no way this facility would work because it was too far from civilization. Just as I

was ready to conduct my three-point turn and head back to town I spotted the school in the distance on my right, so I aborted my plan to give up and I drove on to the school.

It was as if the heavens opened again and shone a bright light on the school building in front of me (so I promptly put on my rose-colored glasses). It was perfect. It was a real school, with a real bus lane in the front, with real school doors and windows and a marquee on the brick. Yeah, the parking lot needed some work and the landscaping could use some tending, but I could do that! How was it possible that mere moments before I had considered turning around with this jewel just yards away?

I conducted my newly-perfected peripheral inspection, climbing up to look in grimy windows, careful not to step in ant beds, and tugging on doors in the hope that I might find one left unlocked, and this time I hit the jackpot. Someone had left the side entrance ajar and I didn't think twice about going inside. Now, looking back, that was a tremendously stupid move. I had my cell phone with me in case something happened, but, still, it made absolutely no sense for me to go inside that abandoned school building by myself. If something had happened, no one would have known even where to start looking for me. I hadn't told anyone where I was, and this building was not on the beaten path. And apart from the fact that I was clearly trespassing, it was not a stretch of the imagination to consider that a homeless person might have been squatting in the building (or if this had been a movie, a pair of crafty, merciless criminals would have been hiding out from the law). Lucky for me, and that's all it was, pure luck, I didn't get carted off to jail for trespassing and I didn't uncover anyone's hideout. I didn't fall through a rotten floor into a creepy, earthen basement or discover a dead body. Each of those ends could have easily been met, but instead, I adjusted my rose-colored glasses and explored.

What I found were classrooms painted in bright, cheery colors (holes in walls could be repaired, rodent droppings could be swept up, floors could be cleaned and broken windows could be replaced), long, wide hallways (dangling light fixtures and electrical wires could be fixed) and bathrooms with stick-figure images of little boys and little girls marking the doors (brown, murky water in the toilets would go away with a simple flush, some bleach would take care of that mold and just a spritz of air freshener would eliminate the foul stench). There were even spaces already allocated for offices and a teachers' workroom (a fresh coat of paint would freshen it up and some Round Up would kill the vines growing through the windows). And to top it all off, there was a field in the back for the kids to play soccer and kickball (mounds of garbage that had been dumped there over the years could be hauled away and rocks and thistle could be removed, too). This place was just what I had been looking for. How silly for me to have even considered for a moment that 15 to 45 miles was too far to ask parents to bring their children to and from school.

Those glasses really worked! It's embarrassing to admit today, but I honestly believed I could convert that armpit piece of real estate into a thriving learning center. When you're desperate, there are few options that you won't consider. There was a For Sale sign at the front of the property, so I tracked down the realtor to tell her the good news, that I was ready to take that property off her listings. I was certain that since the building did need *minor* repairs, the price would be just right. When she returned my call and told me that the asking price for the property was 5 million dollars, it was all I could do to not yell out, "Are they nuts?! That property is a piece of crap and will require hundreds of thousands of dollars in repairs. There's no way!" but I didn't. In fact, I was speechless. The asking price was just so far outside of the realm of what I was prepared to hear that I could not respond. I simply thanked her for returning

my call and hung up. That was the end of that! Later, I learned that the property was likely tied up in legal issues with the previous tenants (another charter school that has since lost its charter) and that there were major sewage concerns. Still, it was a good ride while it lasted.

What Goes Up...

The ride I'm referring to is the emotional rollercoaster that I unknowingly boarded when this journey began. The whole experience was such an awesome ride with twists and turns taking me in directions that I never expected to go, and ups and downs when, for a brief moment, I was on top of the world and nothing could stop me, then after a quick rush, I would be in the lowest of lows when the bottom just seemed to drop out of my dreams. Searching for a facility for my school was just a part of the ride. And the frustrating part about it, looking back now, is that it seems like wasted time. I mean, I'm sure that I learned something about the real estate market and human nature, and I'm a more informed, "better" person for having gone through the experience, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah...but still, I spent a year running all over the place looking for a facility, courting communities and attempting to make strategic business connections, and none of it amounted to a hill of beans.

I had one-on-one visits with mayors and city managers. I organized power lunches with representatives from Latino advocate agencies and non-profit businesses. I met with Mexican consular officials. I set up informational booths at local festivals and parades. I held community meetings for people to come and learn about my school. I attended Chamber of Commerce social gatherings. I met with city council members and gave presentations at city council meetings. I spoke and shook hands with local community movers and shakers. I went to neighborhood meetings. I sent emails to school board members. I sat down with Flagship County leaders. I had long conversations with other charter school founders. But none of it,

NONE OF IT, made any real headway in terms of getting the charter approved and the school doors open. I can't tell you how many times time I met people who pledged their support: a mayor who proclaimed, "That sounds so exciting....just wonderful," a community member who said, "I want to send my child to your school," a business leader who promised, "Don't worry. I'm sure that the city council will back you." Did any of that ever happen? Did even one of them come through with tangible support? No. All that each promise did was to raise my hopes for a moment before they came crashing down.

I don't mean to imply that these things are not important. After all, I still keep in contact with some of the people I met during that time and I have since formalized partnerships with several of the agencies and organizations, but too much time and effort was put into that type of network building at the wrong stage in the game. Those things can happen after the charter is approved and the school is open. I was putting the cart before the horse. A person can do all those things, if she has the financial and emotional resources and the time to do them, but, I wish that someone had advised me to redirect all those resources toward developing a relationship with the people in the school system whose support would ultimately make or break my plans. My advice today: Go straight to the top.

Some Things You Simply Can't Explain

Having not had a sage to impart that wisdom to me, I consider it tremendously good fortune that my charter petition ultimately landed in the right hands. My efforts had very little to do with it.

The charter petition was complete and we were ready to submit it to Flagship County. A team of three current and former Flagship County educators, including myself, wrote the 100-page document, careful to follow the guidelines that both the state and Flagship County

provided. We divided up the required content into our respective areas of expertise. I took on all the parts that were specific to TWI; another writer, who had years of school administration experience, focused on the parts that had to do with the nuts and bolts of operating a school; and the third writer, who knew about school law, worked on the student code of conduct and disciplinary procedures. We also read other charter school petitions that had been approved and used them as models. We made sure that we demonstrated in the petition that we had done our due diligence in terms of knowing the community and tailoring the petition to fit Flagship County goals and objectives. We dotted every *i* and crossed every *t*. We were confident that the final product was a solid, well-written, thorough charter petition.

It was August 1, 2005 and, going back to that roller-coaster ride, I was heading towards a serious low. The stress was getting to me. I felt like I had put way too much on my plate. In one summer, I had taken on writing and defending my comprehensive exams, doing major home renovations that affected every single square inch of my house and some time consuming, unanticipated immigrant advocacy in addition to drafting a charter petition and courting mayors, city councils and school board members. I was miserable and near my breaking point. Everything was making me cry. I just wanted it all to be over.

In addition, I had just experienced another setback with Flagship County. Lilith Crumb was the person in Flagship County whose job it was to facilitate charter schools and, in the kindest of terms, she is not very good at her job. I had attempted communication with Lilith since the spring, but her canned response to my questions was always along the lines of having to wait for information from the State or telling me about meetings and timelines that would never come to be. Without a timeline, I had told her that I would submit my charter petition by August 1st so that the review procedures could take place and the school board could make a decision by

the beginning of October. Lilith never advised me that my timeline was not aligned with hers, so I busted my butt in order to get the petition completed and submitted on time. I called her office in the morning on July 31st to advise her that I was submitting the charter petition that day. When I asked how many copies would be required, no one in the office knew the answer. I was advised to just bring one copy, so that's what I did.

Later that same day, I got a call from Lilith, who, in the most casual and syrupy sweet tone, proceeded to inform me that she had just decided that her office would not be accepting any charter petitions until October 1st and that, by the way, I was supposed to submit 25 copies. I was fit to be tied, but, by then I had learned to control my emotions (a little, not completely), so I kept my comments in check. I told Lilith that I felt misled since I had spoken to people in her office that very morning, had given her numerous opportunities to offer guidance, and that she never gave me any indication that I was on the wrong track. In her predictable fashion, she laid the blame on someone else. What bullshit! I was livid. I had neglected my friends, my family, and my exams for weeks, and it was all for naught.

That was July 30th, and then on August 1st, I held a community informational meeting so that people could come and learn about the school. I had put an ad in the local paper and placed a notice in the water bill insert. I put up flyers around the area and sent out a message to my LISTSERV. I prepared a PowerPoint presentation, printed and folded lots of brochures, set up the room, and then waited. Only three people showed up....a couple who are good friends of mine and who already knew everything about the school anyway and one person from the State Department of Education charter schools division, Fiona Simms. What a disappointment, but it is a good illustration of what I was referring to earlier about putting too much effort into activities that didn't matter. I was too overwhelmed with all my other obligations by that to put

up much fuss. All I could do was laugh it off (the other option was to cry, but my mascara would have run). I plowed ahead and gave the presentation anyway.

When it was over and I was visiting with Fiona, telling her about my unfortunate encounters with Lilith, she asked in perky tone, “Well, have you considered submitting your petition in Comeback County?” There was that rollercoaster ride again, taking a quick, sharp turn to the left. No, of course I hadn’t considered Comeback County. Wasn’t Comeback County always in the news for something bad? Weren’t they recently in danger of losing their accreditation, or something like that? I hadn’t heard anything but negative stuff about Comeback County. I really didn’t know anything about them at all. All of my experience, all of my connections, all of my time, money and energy had gone into opening a school in Flagship County. I had been on a one-track train to.....nowhere. Wait a minute, why was I directing everything to Flagship County? What encouragement or hope had I been given? None. Why did I persist? What harm would it do to consider Comeback County? Maybe they had facilities all over the place that were just waiting for an opportunity like mine. There was a large Spanish-speaking population in Comeback County, too. Maybe people there would come to my informational meetings. Why not?!

I had never even considered Comeback County before that moment. It never even crossed my mind. But Fiona told me that, in her dealings with Comeback County, the school board seemed to have its act together, that they were open to charter schools and might take a look at mine. She said that she would make some calls and get back with me. When she called me back around noon, she told me that Comeback County was accepting charter petitions, but that 30 bound copies had to be submitted that day! At first, I thought, “there’s no way.” I didn’t know anything about Comeback County. Everything in my charter petition was tailor-made for

Flagship. There was no way that I could re-write the petition, get 30 bound copies, and take it to the Comeback County Board of Education offices before the close of the day. It was impossible. But then I reconsidered and decided to go for it. What did I have to lose? I wasn't making it anywhere in Flagship County. The worst thing they could do was turn me away, and I already knew how to handle that. I would just use the Find / Replace feature in Microsoft Word, changing every occurrence of "Flagship" in the petition to "Comeback," print it, copy it and turn it in. Why not?

So, that's what I did. I spent the next hour or so converting the charter petition from one written for Flagship County to one that had Comeback County in mind all along. When I finished, I printed out the whole document and ran to the nearest Staples to have it copied and bound. I should have known, though, that it wouldn't be that easy. When I got to Staples it was already after 3:00 and I was told that it would take several hours to produce 30 bound copies. Desperate, I called the only number that I had in my cell phone for Fiona and, amazingly enough, she answered. She gave me the only number she had, the cell phone number for April Wells, the person overseeing charter schools for the Comeback County, and she answered her phone, too. (This may not seem like a remarkable sequence of events to anyone else, but it really was. I have since learned that very rarely does the person you want to speak with answer the phone, much less, have it happen two times in a row. What amazing good fortune!). Once on the phone with April, I explained the time crunch situation and she agreed to let me submit one official copy of the petition that day and to bring in the 29 additional copies the following day.

With renewed hope, I raced to my car hoping to get ahead of the afternoon traffic and crossing my fingers that my MapQuest directions wouldn't fail me. I guess that the stars were in perfect alignment that day because on any other day at 4:00 in the afternoon I would have had to

endure some of the nation's most congested roadways, but not that day. I breezed along without any delays and my MapQuest directions led me straight to the front door. I walked in just before 5:00, the receptionist date/time stamped the charter petition for receipt and I walked back out the door with a nervous sense of accomplishment.

I was cautiously optimistic about all that had just happened because it had been too easy. Less than 24 hours earlier, my charter petition was nonchalantly waived away from Flagship County. I had dedicated a year of my life to creating a concept just for them, but I couldn't get past Lilith, their gatekeeper, and no one was giving me serious consideration. Yet, there I was, in the parking lot of Comeback County Public Schools, a school system I knew very little about, having just completed, in less than five hours, what I had not been able to accomplish working for over a year in Flagship.

My emotions were running rampant and I got in my car and cried. I wasn't shedding tears of sadness; rather, they were tears released from pent-up emotion. I felt like I had been chained to that document for such a long time, and now that it was on someone else's desktop, I was liberated. I remember wondering why I hadn't experienced that same reaction when I submitted the charter petition in Flagship County the day before. Maybe, somehow deep inside, I knew that it was never going to work out. I don't know, but in that moment, I didn't let the doubts linger. I wanted to rejoice and enjoy my new-found freedom.

It's a Lonely Place to Be

I wanted to put on my dancing shoes and party all night long, but I didn't, which brings me to another point I really haven't mentioned up until now. It has to do with being lonely, and it's something that you need to be prepared for if you're thinking about throwing your hat in the ring. I have been described as "starry-eyed," but I am strong – strong-willed and full of self-

confidence. Yet, there were times when the loneliness hit me hard. It's a tricky feeling to explain, because the loneliness doesn't stem from being physically alone. There was not a moment in this process, from beginning to end, that I couldn't, at the touch of a button, have surrounded myself with friends and family who loved and encouraged me in every possible way. I am exceedingly fortunate to have a support network that would do just about anything for me. So, I'm not talking about loneliness in its traditional sense. But, have you ever wanted something really, really badly, so much that you would have done anything to get it, but for all your efforts, you couldn't make anyone else understand how wonderful and necessary that thing was? That's how I felt. The loneliness I experienced was about there being no one else who shared the passion, drive, determination and commitment that I felt. No one else was on the rollercoaster with me. I talk with my mom all the time and probably because we are near clones of one another, she has uncanny insight into how I feel, but even she could only observe. Everyone was watching from the ground, cheering as I chugged my way up to the highest peaks and gasping as I plunged out of sight, but they were not strapped in next to me. I yearned for someone to get on the ride with me, but starting this school was my dream, not anyone else's. And so I rode it alone.

Blinded by Love

The next day, as promised, I delivered the 29 bound copies of the charter petition to April, and I asked if we could sit down for a minute so that I could explain a little about the petition. I always felt like I could sell it better in person than on paper. Now, keep in mind that I had only spoken with April once, the previous day when I called and asked for special privilege in the submission requirements, to which she kindly agreed. Now, this day, our second communication, I hadn't made an appointment to speak with her, but, once again, she obliged.

This never would have happened in Flagship County. Lilith wouldn't return my calls, was 20 minutes late for the only face-to-face meeting I was granted, and she didn't even demonstrate enough professional courtesy to inform me that she had changed the timeline for submitting charter petitions.

But here in Comeback County, April actually sat and discussed the petition with me for nearly an hour. We held a meaningful conversation. She got it. She wasn't just humoring me, catching quick glances at her watch, wondering when her secretary would buzz in to let her know that her next appointment was waiting outside. No. April listened to me. She asked me thoughtful questions. She probed and considered my responses. For the first time since I started working on the school, I had a sense that someone in a make-or-break-it position was opening a door to me, rather than the familiar slamming shut in my face. What a breath of fresh air!

Despite the warm reception, there was still no way for me to know whether or not Comeback County would accept my charter petition. Two weeks after I submitted the charter petition to Comeback County, I got an email requesting some additional information⁹; yet, for the next six weeks, up until I actually heard from the Comeback County superintendent, I kept on jumping through hoops and doing all that I could to win the favor of folks in Flagship County. I set up booths at neighborhood festivals and continued tracking down and following leads for a facility. I finally received a charter petition checklist from Lilith, the inept gatekeeper, in Flagship County and continued to tweak the charter petition and gather information to submit, hoping and praying that I would get it right. No, the only difference was that now, I was courting Flagship County and Comeback County was starting to court me. What was not evident

⁹ In my haste to submit the charter petition to Comeback County, I did not have time for a thorough review of the document before I turned it in, so I didn't catch that I changed a few "Flagships" to "Comeback" that shouldn't have been changed. I had to admit my error and confess to Janice that the petition had been hastily amended for Comeback County. She took the news graciously and allowed me to revise the errors.

to me at the time, like a misguided, blinded-by-love teenager, was that Flagship County never really wanted me. It just led me on, tossing morsels of hope my way, never really seeing or caring who I was. Whereas Comeback County, which I had never given the time of day, stood by faithfully, followed through on its promises and continued reaching out to me. Hindsight is 20-20!

What was even more pathetic was that I held on to that hope to the very end. It wasn't until my charter was actually approved by the Comeback County Board of Education that I finally cut the cord.

Dear Flagship County Board of Education and Superintendent,

On September 27th [REDACTED], Inc. submitted a charter petition to the Flagship County Board of Education. I sincerely thank the Review Committee and the School Board for taking time to review our petition; however, at this time I would like to withdraw the [REDACTED] Charter School Petition from consideration. We submitted the petition in both Flagship and Comeback Counties, and on November 7th, the Comeback County Board of Education voted overwhelmingly to accept the petition, so we will be moving forward with Comeback County Public Schools. (Dell Perry Giles, personal correspondence, November 8, 2005)

I don't know why I had held on to Flagship County for so long. They clearly did not share my affection, but like an adoring puppy, I kept on their heels, hoping they would eventually turn around and play with me. They never did. But once Comeback County officially accepted the charter petition, I was finally able to let go.

Monumental Firsts

The next six weeks fell nicely into what was becoming a "hurry up and wait" pattern in the process of opening my school. I had scrambled to produce a charter petition for Comeback County, and now that it was done, I would have to wait to figure out my next move. During that time, though, I could feel the momentum beginning to shift in my favor and I experienced some monumental "firsts." For instance, my name was starting to get tossed around in certain circles

and people began coming to me for advice and information about starting a public TWI school. What a change from my having to implore people to listen to me. This remarkable phenomenon has happened hundreds of times since then, and sometimes the requests for information feel more burdensome than flattering, but nevertheless, back then, it boosted my ego several notches. I was being perceived as an expert. People wanted to hear what I had to say, and I eagerly shared all my pearls of wisdom. This seems funny to me now that I have so much more experience to draw from, but back then, I just let it all pour out as if I had been down the road hundreds of times.

People constantly inquire about how my school came to be. Each time someone asks, I think, “If I could just finish writing my dissertation, they could read the whole story.” There is genuine interest. People *do* want to know how I did it. The email in the prologue is but one example. I really do try my best, especially now, to share what I have learned and what has been accomplished with anyone who expresses interest. I got snubbed, once, when I attempted to visit a well-regarded TWI school in a neighboring state, and the bitterness is still in me today.

Another new experience for me during that time was my first encounter with the media. “Encounter” may be too dramatic a word for this event, because it was more like a favor from a friend, but if there is any way to be eased into the media spotlight, this was certainly a very friendly, gentle push. My good friend is a writer for a local, widely-circulated, weekly paper and, at that time, his column involved covering events around the city, everything from 4th of July parades to sightings of the Virgin Mary. This time, he was covering a large, downtown, Latino festival where I had secured a booth to distribute information about the school. The festival itself, for my purposes, was a bust. My table was sandwiched between the stage with ongoing mariachi bands and ballet *folklorico* and the booth where a DJ from the most popular

Latino radio station in town was shouting through amplified megaphones (picture Ty on ABC's Home Makeover show, but even more annoying) luring festival goers to his booth to spin a Wheel-of-Fortune-type disk for free baseball tickets. No one came to our table. No one could find our table for all the people lined up in front waiting for a spin of the wheel. The only positive aspect of our location was that we had a captive audience. As long as they were waiting in line, we could shout out information about the school (remember that the mariachi band is next door), and they had to listen because they couldn't go anywhere without losing their places in line.

But even if we had had a better location, it wouldn't have made any difference. I made a mistake in deciding to have a booth at that festival in the first place. While there were certainly plenty of Spanish-speaking parents there who might have wanted to send their children to a school like mine, only a handful of the thousands in attendance lived in Flagship or Comeback Counties, so they were not eligible to send their children anyway. I hadn't even thought of that when I rushed to secure a booth at the festival. It never crossed my mind.

The only good thing that came from that festival, apart from a huge Styrofoam cup of yummy *horchata*, was that my friend was covering the festival for the newspaper and he put a blurb about us in his column that week. Our first media coverage! He wrote, "My other favorite booth was the one (wo)manned by teacher/activist/grad student/neighbor-of-mine Dell Perry. Dell was at the festival gathering support for her effort to start a dual-language (Spanish and English) charter school in metro Atlanta" (Nourae, 2005, September 1). I was so excited. Somehow, seeing my plan in someone else's print seemed to make it more legitimate and official. I sent the link to the article out to the school's small, but growing, LISTSERV, and everyone else I knew. We were famous!

There was about a four-week window around that time when a number of other remarkable “firsts” happened. I started getting emails from parents interested in enrolling their children in my school.

Hi, Dell! ([I'm the person] who was going to attempt to meet you at the festival before I completely gave up on finding anyone there). My daughter, [REDACTED], is currently in pre-k in [REDACTED], but I am hoping that we can get the process rolling for next year in your school. I am fully aware that you still do not have a place where you are setting up the school, however, I want everything in place so that I know that she has a place when you do. In the meantime, if there is anything I can do in order to help you, please feel free to contact me. Since I live in this area, perhaps I can scout out locations for you? Let me know!

Thanks! (personal email correspondence, August 6, 2005)

What school? I didn't even have the support of a school district; yet, she believed in me and my dream and she wanted to entrust her child to my care. This was amazingly powerful fuel for my fire.

And the theme of offering to help me also started to emerge from the messages that I received.

Hi Dell,

I just checked out the info on your website and I am overwhelmed. I guess I'll have to buy a house in [Comeback County] or wherever your school will be located (or get a job there, hehe). I really want my son to grow up in a bilingual environment that values both of his cultures. I am thinking about going back to school myself and getting certified to teach ESL. I have a B.A. in History/Anthropology and am a Certified English to Spanish translator. I have a really good handle on Mexican language and culture. Let me know if you might have any ideas for helping you out and if you have any advice for me about pursuing more schooling. My time is a little limited as I have a five month old but I could help out with parent outreach (maybe at a booth at Latino events.)

Hope to hear from you. (personal email correspondence, August 7, 2005)

Offers to help “scout out locations” and with “parent outreach” gave me hope that the movement was growing, that I didn't have to continue this journey alone. Their words of support and encouragement lifted me up, ever-so-briefly, but in the end, never amounted to tangible support.

Something else exciting that happened around the same time. I received my first inquiry from a person looking for a teaching job:

Dear Sir or Madam:

I read about your upcoming school with interest on line toay¹⁰. I have been an advocate of Bilingual Education for years and received my Masters in BE, specialization in ESOL at UTSA 16 years ago and I'm always interested in advances being made in BE.

I am also a child of a woman who started learning English at a kindergarten in NY before ESOL was adopted by all schools (she's 82).

Anyway, good luck with your new school and endeavors with BE!

I'm attaching my resume for your interest.

I have taught ESOL for 16 years..... I left my job in Alpharetta as the number of ESOL students is much lower and I'm looking for a position in the metro area of ██████ where there is a definite need for someone with my experience and knowledge of Spanish and second language acquisition.

Good luck with your new endeavors! (personal email correspondence, August 26, 2005)

That had never happened before. I had never been in a position to offer someone a job, and I still wasn't, but the fact that someone thought my school was real enough to work in was a *huge* big deal. Finally, someone believed my school was the real deal...legit. The person who contacted me never panned out, and perhaps foreshadowing the challenges ahead in terms of staffing a bilingual school in Georgia. But in the moment, I was euphoric.

Is the Egg Golden or Rotten?

My meeting with the superintendent and the weeks that followed rank right up at the top of the most unbelievably thrilling and incredibly scary moments on my roller-coaster ride. On the day of our meeting, I was escorted into the conference room by the superintendent's secretary. I sat alone at the table for twelve, nervously waiting for her to appear and wondering who was going to fill the other eleven seats. My stomach churned. My palms sweated. I wished I had dressed up a little more. I could hear movement outside the door, but couldn't make out what the voices were saying. After several excruciatingly long minutes, April entered the room, with the superintendent close behind. She was taller than I had imagined, with a strong presence and a firm handshake. We were introduced and I sat back down at the monstrous table while she

¹⁰ I have chosen not to use the convention [sic] in email errors in order to maintain the fidelity of the original communication

inserted a VHS tape in the TV/VCR unit mounted on the wall behind me. She pressed play. The video started and what followed was a short promotional/informational video about a language immersion school. I felt a little silly and didn't really know why we were watching the film. The superintendent beamed as it broadcast sounds and images of students and teachers using Spanish in academic contexts. Why was she showing me this video? Didn't she read my charter petition? Didn't she realize that I already knew quite a bit about language immersion schools?

When the video ended a few minutes later, I learned that the school in the video was in a district where the superintendent had previously worked. It was a one-way immersion school, which concerned me at first because, unlike the TWI school I was proposing, the one in her district was a school for language-majority students to be immersed in a second language. There were no native Spanish-speaking students in the school. My initial concern, however, was quickly addressed as the superintendent explained what a positive presence the school in the video had been for her previous district and she had faith that a TWI school, for Spanish-speakers and English-speakers, would be just what Comeback County needed to make its mark in Georgia.

What ensued was a conversation I had not anticipated nor even considered in my wildest dreams. Before I realized what was happening, the superintendent proposed that my school, MY school, become an LEA start-up charter school. And just to refresh your memory, an LEA start-up charter school is one that is born and grown within a school district. I wasn't a part of Comeback County and never had been. My school wasn't the brainchild of Comeback County; it was my idea. I had spent years planning and researching and writing about it, not them. This was MY precious baby, not theirs. I was caught completely off guard and I felt small and powerless.

April and the superintendent must have sensed my anxiety, but before I could snatch my charter off the table and run from the room screaming “THIEVES, THIEVES!” together they weighed in with the ways in which being an LEA start-up charter could be good for the school (and the school district). What they were proposing was for Comeback County to take on my school as part of its school system. It wouldn’t be an unwanted appendage as some independent start-up charter schools are perceived. It would be as much a part of the school district as any other elementary school in the system and would be treated as such. They made the offer devilishly appealing. Unlike for independent start-up charter schools, Comeback County would be fiscally responsible for my school. That meant all the financial aspects of opening and operating a school would be taken care of by the school district. This revelation was huge. The financial challenges associated with running an independent start-up charter school can be insurmountable. As an LEA start-up charter school, Comeback County would provide it all: a facility that met all federal, state and local requirements for schools (no need to convert movie theatres or shopping centers); transportation for our students (parents wouldn’t have to drive 15 miles twice a day); food services (no boxed lunches brought in from a local caterer); furniture, textbooks and teaching materials (no begging nor borrowing from surplus sales); and payroll and benefits (our teachers would be paid on the same scale, with the same benefits, as other teachers in the school district). It sounded too good to be true, but the question on my tongue and in the pit in my stomach was: Where did I fit in to the plan? If this was going to be the district’s school, then they could hire whomever they wanted to make it happen. Where did this leave me?

So I asked, “What about me?” They both appeared a little puzzled by my question, but then quickly responded, “Well, you’ll be the principal.” My mind flashed back to hours spent in a school leadership course reading about shared governance. Based on what I learned in that

course, I had fashioned a leadership team for my school that only vaguely resembled the traditional Principal – Assistant Principal model. Even though I had the paper credentials to be the principal of a school, I didn't have the experience. I didn't know how to run a school. In my shared governance fantasy school, I was the Dual Language Coordinator and someone else with loads of experience as well as passion about TWI equal to mine would be the principal. Status would be thrown out the window. We would be experts in our respective domains – she in school administration and I in TWI – and we would work together in harmony (cue the sappy music). “But I don't want to be the principal,” I responded. “I want to be the Dual Language Coordinator and I want to hire a principal who believes in TWI and has experience running a school.” There. It was out. I had said it. The words never left their lips, but I could see them in their eyes, “The what?” They shared a quick, skeptical glance with one another, then agreed with my proposal.

The Cardinal Sin

I didn't recognize it at the time, but that simple negotiation was only a preview of what lay ahead. The advantages of being an LEA start-up charter school are very, very real. I have little doubt that without the offer from Comeback County, I would still be looking for a facility today and my school would not have become a reality. However, despite the benefits, I have had to compromise, time and time again. I have had to pick my battles on everything from personnel to playgrounds and curriculum to copiers. I have walked away from some encounters unscathed, while others have left me broken and weary.

I left that first meeting with the superintendent in a dizzy haze. I had accepted her offer to work with Comeback County toward opening my school as an LEA start-up charter, but I felt disparate sensations pulsing through my body and unstoppable questions racing through my brain.

I was elated, yet terrified. Hopeful, yet disheartened. Anxious, yet eager. Had I made the right decision? Could it be as seamless as it sounded? Had I sold my soul to the devil? The weeks that followed left me even less certain of my decision.

One of the most difficult obstacles to overcome along this journey has been my own, personal pride. I have swallowed it more than I care to remember, sometimes more convincingly than others, but it has never gotten any easier. And it didn't take long for pride to rear its ugly head as soon as I started working with Comeback County. I immediately felt like the school district was getting too greedy in terms of taking credit for *my* idea, *my* petition, *my* school. I tried to persuade myself I didn't care who got credit for the school, but it was a sorry attempt. I struggled to convince myself that it was more important to me that the school opened, one way or another, and that I could be satisfied with simply knowing I was a contributor to that, but it was a load of crap. I had a mantra, "It's not about me, it's about the school. It's not about me, it's about the school," but that was bullshit, too. It was about me and my pride ached, no matter what I told myself.

On one occasion, shortly before the school board was to vote on the charter petition, a reporter from a leading newspaper called me for a story. Prior to the call, I was prepped by the school district as to what I could say and what I should steer clear of. For instance, if the reporter asked me where the school would be located, I was to tell her that the location had not been finalized, which for all I knew was the truth. I was nervous. I didn't want to cause any trouble or do anything that could jeopardize the school. I also got the impression during my brief prep session that the reporter might think I had been collaborating with Comeback County about this charter school longer than we had. And, in fact, when the reporter called me, that's what she had been led to believe, that this school was the brainchild of the superintendent. Not true! And

I was not prepared to let her continue to think that way (pride, pride, pride, pride, pride), so I told her I was the one who brought the petition to Comeback County. I was concerned, when the interview ended, that the superintendent would be angry about my response, but at the same time, I was not prepared to start a lie. I knew that anyone who investigated the school would see clearly I was the one who wrote this petition.

When the story ran in the paper, the reporter acknowledged that I approached the school system, but then it made it sound like the school system and I wrote the charter petition together. That didn't happen. We collaborated, some, but only in the few weeks leading up to the story, not from day one, as the story implied. With that one interview, the political reality started settling in. I never knew that schools were so political. *Who* gets credit for *what* is very important. And I didn't even realize how important getting credit was to me until it didn't work in my favor. I was angry and I felt muzzled. The only consolation was the promise of my school. I calmed and comforted myself by saying, "Okay, fine. Whatever. As long as they let me run the school." And since they had agreed, I was prepared to give them the credit they wanted. At least that's what I told myself.

Letting Go

Apart from contending with my pride, I had to come face-to-face with what was, and still is, one of my greatest fears...loss of control. I sometimes exhibit a number of the over-generalized, "typical Type A" personality traits that often include entrepreneurship, perfectionism, aggression and control-seeking (Friedman & Rosenman, 1975). So, when Comeback County proposed to absorb my charter petition, sirens sounded. The warning bells clanged more than concern about my role in the endeavor. This time, they signaled that I could lose control. If my school became an LEA start-up charter, it became the legal property of

Comeback County. It no longer belonged to me, and that was exceedingly frightening. I'm certain that my uneasiness at the time was not unique to me in that particular situation. I'm sure any person who dedicates all of her time, talent, heart, soul, mind and money to something, or someone, over such a long period of time, as I had done with the charter petition, would suffer the same way. It wouldn't matter whether the focus was a business endeavor, a piece of music or a child, the investment she feels is deep and wide. So, when it comes time to let that precious thing go, to release it into the care of another, anxiety settles in. Do they understand it the way I intended? Will they support it like I would? Will they protect it from those who wish it harm?

This terror of letting go played itself out, as if on cue, in the weeks leading up to the school board decision. Just ten days before the charter petition was set to go before the Comeback County Board of Education for approval, I received an email from an insider, and advocate, at the State saying, "Dell, there is much discussion going on about the make-up of an LEA start-up. I may know more by the end of the day and I will share it with you" (personal email correspondence, October 27, 2005). The question had come up, raised by the Comeback County attorney, as to the legality of an LEA start-up, and when he posed his question to the State, it stirred up a hornet's nest. I recognized that the attorney's job was to protect Comeback County from all present and future legal challenges, but it seemed to me that he was creating problems where none existed. Georgia charter school law clearly stated that LEA start-ups were legitimate.

His legal challenge to the law stemmed from the word *autonomy*, and like many of the world's problems, fell back to a question of money. In Georgia, *start-up* charter schools could apply for a \$400,000 implementation grant that was intended to offset some of the initial costs of getting the new school off the ground. The implementation grant for *conversion* charter schools,

on the other hand, was significantly less, only \$200,000. Comeback County, of course, wanted to apply for the larger grant awarded to start-up charter schools, but in order to qualify for the \$400,000 implementation grant, there had to be demonstrated autonomy from the school district. And therein was the rub. The implementation grant amount was not an issue as long as the charter was an *independent* start-up school, like what I had initially proposed to the school district. An independent start-up charter school had its own governing board, independent of the school district's school board, and that governing board was the overseer of the charter school. Clear autonomy. From the attorney's perspective, however, there was no way that an LEA start-up charter school could be autonomous from the school district; therefore it was not eligible for the \$400,000 implementation grant. By its very definition, an LEA start-up charter school came from the school district. However, the law, as written, stated otherwise.

So, what does this have to do with *letting go*? Once it was agreed that Comeback County and I would work together to submit an LEA start-up charter, certain revisions had to be made to the charter petition. One of the adjustments the attorney required was that the makeup of the school's governing board be modified. This set off warning sirens again: "DANGER. DANGER. UNKNOWN ENTITIES ARE TAKING OVER. DANGER. DANGER." I had foreseen this risk, so in an effort to perpetually maintain control over the school, I had intentionally written into the charter that a member of my original governing council – me – would always be on the new, LEA start-up charter school governing board. For me, this was a way to ensure that my voice would be ever-present. I would forever be there to make certain that the school was run in accordance with the way I had intended. I would be there to protect and defend it for eternity. Disregarding the safeguards I had put in place, the Comeback County attorney proposed that all references to my original governing council (that is, all references to

me) be removed from the charter petition. I panicked. I could feel it slipping away. I was losing control. Comeback County was stealing my baby, tearing it from my calloused fingers, and there was nothing I could do about it.

Desperate, I sought the advice of an advocate at the State. I sent her an email, describing my situation, pleading for guidance.

I met with April Wells yesterday to go over the charter revisions that [redacted] [the school district attorney] is requesting, and among them is the removal of all references to my non-profit corporation, and this concerns me. He seems to think that there is a conflict if [Comeback] County Public Schools submits the petition "in Partnership with" [redacted], Inc. [the non-profit I formed to start the charter school]. I don't understand the conflict. It seems to me that other LEAs have partnered with non-profits, including the [redacted] County charter and the [redacted] charter.

There are two primary reasons that I want to keep my corporation in the charter. The first has to do with being sure that the voice of the founders (including myself) will always be present. I assured this by including in the petition that one voting member of the school's Governing Council will be someone from the [redacted], Inc. Board of Directors. He took this out. Secondly, I think that in terms of receiving grants, we are more likely to receive them if they are written by a non-profit corporation in partnership with the school, so I want my corporation to be able to write and receive grants on behalf of the school.

I don't want to keep this from going forward. That is not my intention at all. I recognize that one of the hardest things about the chartering process for people like me is to start letting go, but I feel like if my corporation is totally removed from the petition, then so am I, and I was the one who brought this to [Comeback] County in the first place. Can you advise? I've requested to speak with [redacted] [the attorney], but I don't know if it will happen before this goes before the school board.

Thanks for your help! (personal email correspondence, November 1, 2005)

I asserted my worries. I didn't want my voice to vanish. I didn't want to come back ten or fifteen years later, when the school was working and operating without me, and have it not be the school that I intended it to be. I was terrified. I could see all of my efforts and all the work that I had done over the two previous years leaving me behind.

When she responded to my plea, it wasn't the defense that I had wished for. By that time, the mess that the Comeback County attorney started at the State had everyone confused, so she wasn't able to give me any guidance. She could only advise that I stand by and let the big

boys work it out. Talk about tough. My stomach was in knots for weeks. I cried silently every day. The extreme loneliness set in again.

In the end, the Comeback County attorney lost his argument. LEA start-up charter schools were eligible for the \$400,000 implementation grant and there was no conflict with a member of my original governing council being on the LEA start-up charter school governing board. The petition was revised and ready to go before the school board. The battle was won. Put a giant check tally mark in my column. The war, however, was just getting under way.

Pins and Needles

Dear Dell,

We just talked over the telephone -- I'm a writer for The Associated Press here in Atlanta and I'm very interested in all issues concerning Hispanics in Georgia and the Southeast. I look forward to talking with you tomorrow afternoon. Should you wish to call me, my number is ■■■ - ■■■ - ■■■■

Please email us tonight with the result of the school board vote – not at this address but at ■■■■@ap.org. That will be to the attention of the desk supervisor at that moment. They'll be waiting for news on this.

Thank you very much. (Personal email correspondence November 7, 2005)

Everyone was awaiting the school board's decision. This was an important night. If approved, not only would my school become the district's first LEA start-up charter school, it would be the State's first public TWI school. Monumental, right? Recognizing that an epic, precedent-setting, history-making event was about to unfold, I sent out a mass email to all of the school's backers, calling on them to come out to the school board meeting en masse and demonstrate their tireless, limitless, undying support for the school when it went before the Board. Six people showed up: two long-time friends, my aunt and her two friends, and my boyfriend. (I still had not learned my lesson. No one cared as much as I did.)

The meeting started promptly at 7:00 PM. The agenda was distributed and I was pleased to see that we were only a few items from the top. Little did I know that a few items from the top could mean hours later.

Finally the moment arrived.....Drum roll, please.....the school board voted eight in favor, zero against and one abstention. The Comeback County Board of Education had approved my charter petition. Let the celebrating begin! Where are the balloons? Horns? Confetti? Cheering crowds? No, none of that. I've said it before and I'll say it again, the times when I felt most alone were not when I needed to commiserate with someone over a setback. The loneliest, most empty moments happened alongside the greatest triumphs. This was one of those times. You might have thought that this clear, life-changing victory would be the highlight of the story, but it wasn't. After the decision was announced that the charter petition was approved, there weren't any trumpets or marching bands. No one whooped nor hollered. In the room, there was only silence. In my heart, there was jubilation. But, who else could experience the elation I was feeling? No one. Who else could savor the victory? No one. Who else really understood the pain and suffering I had endured to make this happen? No one. No one could feel what I was feeling. I was alone. We left the boardroom and got into our separate cars. It was nearly 10:00 PM, too late for a celebration on a Tuesday night. All I could do was cry. I sat in my car, alone, and wept.

I'm a Duck

The next day, November 8, 2005, changed my life, changed *me*, forever. I got up at 8:15 a.m., prepared a pot of coffee and casually proceeded to wake up my computer and check emails. The night before I'd shot off a quick message on our school LISTSERV letting folks know that the school board had approved our charter petition, and within hours of the school board's decision, it was all over the news. The Associated Press put out a report:

Georgia's first bilingual public school approved

██████████, *Georgia (AP) -- A school board has voted to open a public elementary school where students will be taught to be equally proficient in English and Spanish by fifth grade.*

████████████████████ School, which is scheduled to open next fall, is believed to be the first of its kind in the state.

It won't target the immigrant community by teaching English as a second language, but aims to teach both languages together to classes equally divided between English- and Spanish-native speakers.

"They're able to learn a language in very natural ways," said ██████████, the ██████████ County schools English teacher who reviewed the petition. The board voted Monday night.

Hispanics make up nearly 8 percent of students enrolled in the state's public schools this year, according to a report released last week by the National Council of La Raza, the largest U.S.-based Hispanic advocacy group....(Associated Press, 2005, November 8)

It ran as a ticker-tape along the bottom of the screen on CNN. It was posted on Salon.com. The first email messages I read that fateful morning were from folks congratulating me on the board's decision:

November 8, 2005

8:36 a.m.

Great job Dell!!!! I couldn't be happier.

10:21 a.m.

I want to congratulate all of the teachers, administrators and parents for making this school a bilingual school. At that early age children will learn quickly. Both of my children (████ 33 and ██████ 27) learned spanish while in school in hte Panama Canal Zone, they are both 100% (Speak, Read & Write) bilingual. Por este medio quiero felicitar a los profesores, administradores y padres por hacer esta escuela una escuela bilingue que facilita a las dos culturas el aprendizaje de un idioma nuevo. Se que van a tener mucho exito.

10:30 a.m.

Dell, This is ██████████ from ██████████ Elementary School-..... I am so excited for you! Best wishes.

This was going to be a terrific day. *¡Por fin!* I could sit back and bask in the joy. The glorious aromas of freshly brewed coffee wafted through my house, the warm and familiar voices from

NPR's *Morning Edition* followed by soothing melodies of classical music echoed from the living room, and pride filled my heart. All was right with the world.

Then, just as my invincibility cloak started to have that natural, worn-in feeling, my crystal-perfect world shattered. It started with a rumble, off in the distance....

10:52 a.m.

Just as the Romans conquered the barbarians and the barbarians then conquered Rome... and today how the African and Arab immigrants in France¹¹ who have refused to assimilate into French culture are now tearing France apart...

you now celebrate a dual language school where Hispanic immigrants are encouraged to avoid participation as full American citizens.

Up to now, ALL immigrant populations in the history of America have assimilated into American culture, and the primary and most important way they have done that is by learning and using the English language. By promoting dual language, you are condemning the future of America itself by encouraging immigrants to stay separated and wallow in their own culture. These immigrants will (are already) setting up "Little Mexico's" all over the country and these areas are tomorrow's ghettos. People who don't assimilate don't become Americans; they just live here for the free ride. As much as they can, if they aren't assimilated into American culture, they will live exactly as they did in the country from which they came, i.e., fled.

The result is that they will live and vote in a way that will lead to more separation of Americans, as Americans, to a level that has never been done before.

If you live long enough to see the Hispanic riots caused by a people who still think Mexico owns Texas, know that it was you and your misguided policies of separation that caused it.

I see dead people in the future... and you will be the one with the bloody hands when it happens, just as it is happening in France today.

As usual, a "feel good" Liberal policy leads to more destruction of society.

The rumble grew louder...closer. Dishes in the cabinet began to rattle.

10:59 a.m.

I find it sad that a bunch of hispanics attempt to cloak their efforts to erode away at the anglo-saxon culture in this country, with claims of "enlightening" children by teaching them the language of a group of people whose culture has accomplished nothing. The logic behind it is the same as cultural darwinism, our culture works better and has more positives therefore it produces a superior state, aka a state that can feed its people

¹¹ Violent riots broke out in a suburb of Paris in late October 2005 sparked by the deaths of two teenagers of Malian and Tunisian descent who were electrocuted while fleeing from police. The riots and demonstrations went on for several weeks, spreading to other parts of France. At the core of the unrest were claims "involving social and economic exclusion, [and] racial discrimination" (Social Science Research Council, n.d.).

and cloth them, you know, a nation that isn't dirt poor, unlike EVERY hispanic nation to be found.

PS- people like you are why people like me give money to organizations like the KKK, smile I'm about to donate \$200 and ten feet of rope to the KKK on your behalf. Don't like it? Remember your place and keep your joke of a culture¹² where it belongs...in mexico.

Doors flew open....dogs barked....radio signals turned to static....

11:25 a.m.

dear mr. perry

are you nuts? paris is burning because the elites of france believed in multiculturalism. to succeed in any culture people must be assimilated. please drop this ill-fated idea of a bilingual education. the immigrants to the us deserve a better chance than the poverty stricken immigrants of france

Bilingual, Biliterate, Multicultural? Wow, you folks really know how to get around this "No Child Left behind" program, if the Mexicans are holding down the tests scores, just make everyone else learn Spanish, Indian, Japanese and other languages so they all fall behind as well.

Sirens screamed....children cried....

2:55 p.m.

IDIOTS like you and this School will surely divide this Nation into two Countries. What advantage is there to learning a third world language? If Spanish is such a good idea why would MILLIONS FLEE? UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL! Your NARROW, RACIST Agenda make most of us RESENTFUL at this INVASION by MEXICO! FUCK YOU & YOUR CORRUPT BRAINWASHING BULLSHIT!

Windows shattered....and the walls came tumbling down...

4:58 p.m.

As a mexican american I can see how stupid is as stupid gets when it comes to selling out the sovereignty of this country. I had no real problem in adjusting to english speaking grammer schools as a young boy here in Arizona, nor did I feel belittled that my mexican culture was not pushed within school programs. You've not only compromised the assimilation of a people that are "ILLEGALLY" here but with a bleeding heart stupidity has accepted all of this as the dawn of a new and wonderful era. I think not.....Oh and by the way, I could not care less if you consider me to be racist, bigoted, severly handicapped, crazy or small minded. On the contrary. It is what I think of you that is important to me.

¹² Notice the author of this email refers to *my* joke of a culture referring to what he presumes is my Hispanic heritage. I am not Hispanic. My family lines go back to England and Scotland, yet more often than not, people who associate me with two-way immersion assume that I have some generational link to Hispanic culture.

And the walls came tumbling down. I was completely unprepared for what had just happened. I froze, unable to type, unable to speak, unable to process what I had read. Baffled. Incensed. Threatened. I felt like I would vomit. Who were these emails from? Did I know them? Did they know me? Panic. What do I do? How do I respond? Confusion. What did I do to them? How had I offended them so deeply that they could write such hateful things to me? Emptiness. Where is everyone? Who else knows about this? Did I need protection? Should I tell someone....the police, the school district, my mother?

I gathered my composure, as best I could. This was not the first time my school, my idea, had been criticized. Just the week before, following that first story in a major newspaper, an opinion piece was printed. It read,

Are [Comeback] County school leaders out of their minds? Spanish adds another burden on our poorly performing school systems. Reading, writing, arithmetic and Spanish? And it will retard the assimilation of non-English-speaking immigrant schoolchildren into our society. English is the language of commerce; if you want a good job, learn it. And do we really want a dual-language America? (Savage, 2005, November 2)

The person who wrote that letter and I certainly have contradictory views about education, but the email messages in my personal inbox this day were different. The person who wrote the letter that appeared in the newspaper was simply sharing his opinion about bilingual education. That's what editorial sections are for. The emails I received this morning, however, were dangerous and personal. There was disgust in their tone ("*people like you*" and "*Your NARROW, RACIST Agenda*"). There was hatred in their wording ("*FUCK YOU*"). There was racism at their core ("*I'm about to donate \$200 and ten feet of rope to the KKK on your behalf*"). And unlike the editorial, this attack was aimed directly at me ("*It is what I think of you that is*

important to me”). I wanted to talk to my mom. I needed someone to comfort and assure me that everything was okay and that I would be okay and that the school would be okay. I forwarded the message I had received about donating money to the KKK to her email account and waited for what seemed like days. Finally, around 5:00 p.m., she called.

“Did you get the message I sent?” I questioned, anxiously.

“Your Dad did, I hadn't. He said he had responded. What did it say?” she asked.

I had hoped that she had already read the message. The thought of having to tell her what it said sent me into an endless sob. “I just...I got my first hate mail and I don't know how to respond to it,” I cried.

“Okay,” she said, and then paused for several moments as I broke down. “Let me read your mail first.”

There was a lengthy pause as she read the email message. “Do you see it?” I asked, wondering if she had read to the bottom.

“I'm reading it,” she replied.

“It's the last part that bothers me.” I could barely get the words out as I tried to catch my breath. “Other e-mails....this isn't the first e-mail, but the other ones have been, you know, ‘are you stupid....this is this... this is this’ and it's mostly based on misinformation and misunderstanding and based on fear...fear of diversity and so forth. But I've been able to respond to them politely with an e-mail, ‘Thank you for your concerns. I gather from your e-mail you may be misinformed. Please visit our website...’ etc....But this one, it's just hateful.”

My mom listened as I babbled and wept until she sensed that I was calmed down and could listen again. “We saw *Gandhi* recently,” she began, “Did I tell you about it?” Then she told me about a friend of hers whose son-in-law would be the type to write such hate mail. She

continued, "My only point in telling you this story about my friend is to let you know that people like this are there and I don't know that there's any way to respond to them except with a peace that comes from outside yourself. And I think you would have to be in a position that you are in right this minute to fully understand that."

"Where does this serenity come from?" I wondered. "How can she be so calm and be thinking about peace?" I wasn't ready to hear about peace and love, yet. I needed something more concrete. I needed for her to tell me what to do, not ramble about her friend's son-in-law and *Gandhi*. "Do you think the thing to do is just not respond?" I asked, hoping for clarification of her point.

"I don't know," she responded. "I think to me the answer's obvious; the hard part is how do you get there, and that is to have the peace to love this person, forgive this person, to have an armor, like the stuff on a duck, that allows you to shake your tail feathers and keep on going."

I guess all her talk about *Gandhi*, peace, love and forgiveness worked. By this time, I had calmed down and could think and speak more rationally. "My inclination," I began, "is to, like you said, try to build up that armor, but not to respond. Sometimes I feel like responding just fuels the fire, and especially with someone who is, as in this case, just so over the top. I just don't think that a response from me would change anything. I don't think it would make any difference to someone like this." I was back.

"Let me say some things that you might say and see what you think," she suggested. "You might say, 'Dear Mr. S. It seems obvious to me that there is a wide gulf between me and you that is not likely to be changed by anything we might say to each other. I hope that in some time and in some way we will find a way to be friends with each other. Sincerely yours, Dell Perry.' Do you like that? Do you want me to write it and send it back to you?"

“Yeah,” I replied.

“I’ll do that,” she offered. “Have I ever told you about getting hate mail?”

“Yeah, I think so,” I said, trying to remember what she had told me.¹³

“And I can’t say that it ever stops hurting but it certainly never hurts as much,” she comforted. “And I think that one of the benefits of the wound is to increase your sensitivity to when other people who feel wounded when you don’t. So, you know, this is going to make you a lot stronger, and you’re gonna need it.”

“Yeah, it is,” I agreed. “And it’s only through things like this, like this school and efforts similar that maybe someday there won’t be as many people like Mr. S out there.”

“Yeah, and, you know, I really recommend that you get *Gandhi* and watch it,” she added as her final plug.

“Okay,” I laughed.

“Really,” she insisted. “Because it will inspire you and when you see the scenes where people are being beat with clubs, you know, you’re doing it too. And it will give you strength and it will give you courage. Get your prayer book and read some prayers for your enemies and read St. Francis prayer, and I’ll write you a reply, and we’ll talk later.”

“Thank you,” I sighed with relief.

She had done it again. She put things in perspective. She soothed me. She encouraged me. She gave me confidence. She loved me.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;*

¹³ Several years ago, my mother received an “anonymous” letter accusing her of inappropriate behavior with young men. She knew who had sent the letter and suspected that it was probably taking off from the fact that she had tutored some high school boys, who had trouble passing the standardized high school graduation test in Texas, all of whom were either black or Hispanic. She usually tutored them in the high school cafeteria, but on occasion, they did go to her house.

*where there is doubt, faith;
 where there is despair, hope;
 where there is darkness, light;
 where there is sadness, joy;*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
 to be understood as to understand;
 to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive;
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

(St. Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226) (The Catholic Community Forum, n.d.)

5:47 p.m. My response to Mr. S.:

Dear Mr. S,

I suspect that the chasm that exists between us is so wide that we would not communicate even if we were shouting. Regardless, I appreciate your taking the time to write. It's important for everyone to speak his/her heart.

Thank you.

I never heard back from him, so I used the same words, over and over, any time I needed to respond in a similar situation.¹⁴

Media Frenzy

The events of November 8th and the days that followed are a muddled mess in my mind now, over four years later. It's almost as if the shock of that nasty email induced a semi-amnesiac state from which I've never completely recovered. The days that followed spiraled into a public frenzy. I was inundated with calls from reporters who wanted interviews and reactions to the school board's decision. I spoke with a reporter for a local Spanish-language newspaper. I gave a television interview for the local ABC affiliate. I conducted a live, on-the-air telephone conversation with an area AM radio host. And, although I have absolutely no

¹⁴ An interesting fact to note is that none of the hateful emails I received, as far as I could tell, actually came from people in Comeback County or Georgia, for that matter. It seemed as though the national headline that morning set off a flurry of fear among people who are keyed in to English-only issues across the nation. The fact that none it came from close to home was some consolation for me.

recollection of the conversation, apparently I was interviewed on the local NPR station, too. Honestly, I don't remember that conversation at all. As I've tried to piece together events, the best I can come up with is that the station called me early that morning, before I woke up, and I spoke with them from bed. I never heard the interview, but several of my friends commented that they listened to it on their way to work that morning¹⁵. I don't know how anything I said during that time made sense whatsoever. I was in a puffy-eyed, red-faced fog; yet, somehow I made it through.

Another media episode that happened just days following the school board's decision was a little more disconcerting. I think about it today, and laugh nervously, but at the time, it was daunting. A few days after the school board decision, when things appeared to be settling down a little bit, I was going about my business when I received a call on my cell phone (while I was driving on the highway) from an "Unknown" caller. Figuring it was probably about the school, I answered.

"Hello?"

"Hi. This is _____ with Fox News. We heard about the school and want to cover it."

"No big deal," I thought. By this time I considered myself pretty seasoned with reporters. I assumed that she was with the local affiliate, so we continued our dialogue.

When we got to the part about arranging a date and time for the interview, she said, "We'll do this at 4:48 tomorrow afternoon."

"4:48? That's an odd time for an interview," I thought to myself. So I probed, "4:48? Is this a live interview?"

¹⁵ Once things had settled down, I contacted the radio station about getting a copy of the audio, but I was told they didn't keep it.

“Well, yes,” she responded, as if *of course* it was a live interview even though she had failed to make any mention of that, “We’re going to do it live.”

“Oh,” I replied, with eyebrows raised and skepticism in my voice. “In that case, can I get some more information so that I can be prepared for the interview?”

“We’re going to be debating the language issues,” she nonchalantly replied, but I interrupted before she could finish.

“Whoa, wait a minute” I cautioned. “You didn’t say anything about this being a debate. You mean this is a live *debate*?”

“Yeah,” she continued in her carefree tone. “It’s just going to be a debate with this guy...”

“Wait, wait, wait,” I interrupted again. “Back up a minute. I need more information. I’m not sure that I’m ready to go into a debate with someone. So who would I be debating?” She told me the man’s name and I asked, “Well, who is that? Tell me more about him. What’s his deal?”

“Well, he’s with U.S. English¹⁶,” she replied.

Upon hearing the words, “U.S. English” I nearly swerved into oncoming traffic. Not only had she failed to mention that the interview was *live* and that it was a *debate*, now she’s throwing me to the English-only wolves and their powerful, professional, paid pundits in a nationally-televised debate on Fox News. Not my little local affiliate of Fox, but the Big Daddy.

“Stop! No, just stop,” I told her. “And he’s with U.S. English? There’s no way you could engage me in a debate with this guy.”

¹⁶ “U.S.ENGLISH, Inc. is the nation's oldest, largest citizens' action group dedicated to preserving the unifying role of the English language in the United States” (U.S. English, n.d.).

Who did she think she was? Where did she get off calling me the day before a debate and then not being forthcoming with the highly important details? She was setting me up to get slaughtered! I mean, even before she told me who the debate would be against, I knew that I wasn't going to take part in a debate with *anyone*. I'm not a debater. I'm too emotional. I would cry!

"You know, all you're doing is creating controversy," I charged. "We don't have a controversy here. The school district is happy. The Comeback County residents are happy. This isn't a problem here and you're just making it into one. And I'm not going to put our school out there for this man to defile."

"We're going to do the story anyway," she retorted, "and we'll have U.S. English on. We'll just say that no one from the other side was available for comment."

I could imagine the commentary making us sound small and weak, and I was afraid, so I grasped the only bit of hope I had and replied, "I'll see if I can find someone to do debate and I'll get back with you."

I hung up the phone and dialed the first person who popped into my head, the instructor for the bilingual education course that set me on this journey. She had since become my advisor, friend and confidant in all matters related to my school. She was one of my greatest sources of support, so with fingers crossed, I called her.

I recounted the whole conversation and how it played out. Her reaction caught me off-guard. I expected her to be a champion of my cause and come to my defense, but I didn't anticipate the anger that ignited. She fumed about the arguments that would be debated and she was enraged by their tactics. She envisioned how they had trapped me and it infuriated her. In

the end, she agreed to do the debate¹⁷. She didn't feel like she was the best-equipped person to handle it, but we both agreed that I certainly wasn't. Besides that, I didn't want the debate to be between my school and U.S. English. Debating the issues related to bilingual education was one thing, but I didn't want my school to be directly in the middle of it.

Throughout the day, we exchanged text messages and voicemails. She proceeded full speed ahead, preparing for the contest. She got in touch with a debate coach at the university to give her some pointers. She reviewed literature and contacted James Crawford (Crawford, n.d.), one of the nation's leading bilingual education researchers and proponents. She frantically spent the entire morning and afternoon rising to the top of her game.

I called her around 5:00 that afternoon to check in and see if there was anything I could do to help her get ready. I felt tremendously guilty, yet relieved at the same time, that she was doing this for me. When she answered, she had just gotten off the phone with the Fox representative.

"You're not going to believe this," she told me. "U.S. English doesn't want to debate us anymore."

"What?" I exclaimed. I was hoping she would tell me that Fox didn't want the debate because, once they found out that they wouldn't be debating me, they got scared and reneged, but that wasn't the case.

"There's apparently a Senator in Florida who is proposing legislation that all Kindergarten through 2nd graders study Spanish and they think that's a bigger story and better debate," she explained, "so they dropped us" ("S. 522," 2006).

¹⁷ As I write, read, reflect, re-write, re-read and reflect some more about the tumultuous days following the charter petition's approval by the school district, I am ever-amazed at how my colleagues, friends and family rallied around, giving me just what I needed – just when I need it – to make it through. My mom, through her grace, gave me the words and prayers to keep my heart from hardening. My advisor, through her passion, rescued me from the being torn apart, limb-by-limb, by the English-only advocates. I'm so grateful.

Apparently, the way Fox News viewed it, the children in Florida would be *forced* to learn another language, whereas with our charter school, it was a *choice*. Being forced to learn was a much greater injustice. Although I felt a humongous sense of relief when she told me, and I knew that she did, too, I also perceived a slight disappointment in her tone. She had really researched and prepared hard that day. She had come to terms with the task and was ready for her opportunity to add another perspective to the conservative, anti-bilingual education discourse, so when it got pulled so abruptly, I think she felt somewhat saddened.

Later that evening, I called my mom and described the events of the day. Together, we tried to make sense of why Fox News would come after me, why they would want to create controversy. My mom has made many profound statements in our discussions about the school, as evidenced in our dialogue about the nasty email, and she came through again that evening. About Fox News, she commented, "It's easier to find fault with an idea than to have a good one. It takes more courage to try for a "yes" than to settle for a "no." And then, apart from that, they are operating from a fear base. You are operating from a hope base. It's easier to engender fear than hope, but regardless, you've chosen what you're going to do. This is sort of another thing that you're going to have to be strong by being weak -- by being humble and by being peaceful and quiet. You can't wage war and talk peace. But I think you've had another day where you've done great, and a number of people know more than they used to -- that reporter does, your advisor does, you do....now you have something else to share." Thanks, Mom.

After the Fox News debacle, my encounters with the media became less and less frequent, and as quickly and unexpectedly as the circus started, things calmed back down. It was a flash in the pan.

Hurry Up and Wait

The time that spanned between the Comeback County Board of Education's approval my charter petition on November 7, 2005 to when the charter finally went before the State in April of 2006 was among the most frustrating stages along the way. Getting approval from the local school board is only the first official approval a charter school needs before it can open its doors. It also must be approved by the State. We knew we were in a time crunch. If the school was going to open in August, then we needed the State's seal of approval as quickly as possible in order to have everything in place. There was a building to get ready, furniture, textbooks and teaching materials to find and purchase, staff to hire and students to recruit. We couldn't afford to waste a single minute. We had been advised that the charter would be reviewed by the State and that we would receive feedback for any necessary revisions. Our goal was to make any necessary revisions and have it back to the State in time for it to go before the State at its February meeting.¹⁸

As soon as the Comeback County Board of Education approved the charter, we shuffled it over to the State, and then we waited...and waited....and waited. It was agonizing. I couldn't imagine what was taking so long. I knew that the charter petition guidelines used by Comeback County were aligned with those of the State, so I simply could not figure out why we had not received any feedback. I debated scenarios in my mind..."Maybe it's the holidays? People are busy with Thanksgiving and Christmas. They just haven't had time to review it.".... "It got lost. It's sitting under a pile of Christmas cards on someone's desk.".... "There's something wrong with it. Oh, no! What should I do? Will I have to start all over?" You know the expression, "An idle mind is the devil's playground." That's exactly what was going on with me while I

¹⁸ The basic guideline is that any agenda item requiring a vote from the members of the State Board of Education must be submitted a month before the meeting at which the vote will take place.

waited. Everything had been rush-rush-rush for so long that now, when there was nothing to do but wait, my mind played evil tricks on me.

We finally received our feedback in mid-January, much too late for any hope of getting on the February agenda. The revisions were minimal. I was disgusted, however, that the State had eaten up two months of our precious time to suggest such miniscule modifications. What entitlement! Once more, we frantically rushed to make the changes and re-submit the petition so that it could go before the State in March. Again, we waited....and waited...and waited. And while I waited, all I could do was squirm as if I were tied to a chair with my wrists and ankles bound and my mouth taped shut. There I was, my life on hold. All I could do was sit idly by and watch the sand crystals drain from the hourglass. I felt weak....powerless....completely vulnerable. The evil mind games played on, “No one has as much at stake in this decision as you do. They really don’t care.”.... “What will I do if they don’t approve the charter? I don’t have a job. I won’t be able to finish my dissertation.”.... “I’ve dedicated the last two years of my life to this school. I’ve neglected everything...my friends...my family....my finances. What will I do?”

On February 3, 2006, I got the phone call that just about landed the final blow, knocking me out of the ring. Not once before that day had I ever seriously considered quitting, but that day, I did. The call was from Fiona Simms, who was helping guide my charter through the State. She called to say that charter would not be voted on at the March meeting. I completely fell apart. I had done everything, EVERYTHING, that had been asked of me; yet, the hoops, the roadblocks, the hurdles, the obstacles, whatever you want to call them never seemed to end. Why was my charter receiving more scrutiny than any other I had known of? Other charter

schools hadn't had to go through this. My charter was more solid in every way than many of the charters that had breezed through the State. Why were they picking on me?

And then it became painfully clear as I recalled her gingerly-delivered advice, "We have to be cognizant of the whole political context." Wham! We finally acknowledged the giant elephant in the room. What she indirectly was referring to was the overwhelming anti-immigrant sentiment running rampant in Georgia and proposed legislation in the Georgia Legislature ("H.R. 911," 2006; "H.R. 1238," 2006; "S. 522," 2006; "S. 529," 2006). The timing of my charter petition was horrendous. It could not have gone to the State at a worse time. All the delays and over-securitization were due to fear of political fallout.

I ranted and wept until I wore myself out. It didn't seem fair. Wasn't it the State's job to ensure quality education for the children of Georgia? All the research was there under their noses. How could anyone with a brain think that my proposed TWI school wasn't in the best interest of children? It was maddening. What else would I have to do to convince them? It didn't make any sense. It was unfair...unjust....unreasonable! How could I go up against such ignorance? I didn't have any more artillery and my armor was breaking down. They seemed too powerful and protected. I didn't think I could win this battle. I couldn't do this anymore. I wasn't cut out for this. I didn't *ask* for this!

I breathed deeply and gathered myself back together. "We've come too far to quit now," I told myself, "and I imagine that even if I did stop now, it would still go forward without me." I reflected on how amazingly political my school had become. How had I not foreseen it? I recalled a conversation I recently had with a friend. We discussed how I was in one place politically and other people, like the ones who wrote those horrible email messages, were in another, and that it was just impossible for me, because of who I am and where I come from, to

understand their perspective. My school and what it stood for was so much a part of me and my core beliefs that I couldn't even imagine why it was causing such problem for other people.

In that moment, I felt nothing but disdain for the politicians who were dissecting my charter petition. To me, it seemed like they had complete disregard for my time and they didn't understand, nor care, what waiting another month for approval from the State would mean to me. It was another whole month lost. With the phone call that day, we were looking at April as the next opportunity to go before the State. Time was being utterly wasted. We couldn't hire teachers. We couldn't hold meetings. We couldn't enroll students. They were setting us up for failure by not giving us the time needed to open a school.

My Dream, My School, My Story

As disheartened as I was that day in February, I got over it. I almost always do. One of the lessons I learned through this process was actually becoming part of my practice. Somewhere along the way I learned that I needn't pull my hair out over things I couldn't control. It was pointless. I had shed innumerable tears over the past two and half years, some tears of joy, but mostly tears brought on by frustration and loneliness. After that day in February, though, something changed. A strange serenity settled over me. My concerns did not go away. I continued to fret about having a job and being prepared to open a school in August, but somehow I shifted gears in my mind. I just let things be. I was at peace in my heart, and I knew that things would work out, certainly not as quickly and easily as I would have liked, but they would be fine in the end.

The day of the vote from the State finally arrived, April 13, 2006. It had been two-and-a-half years since I sat alone in my graduate advisor's office and declared that I was going to open Georgia first, public TWI school. This was the day I had been waiting for. With a vote of

approval from the State, my school would finally be a reality. As I try to build up the excitement and recount that day to you, my reader, I realize that I simply can't do it. I can't do it because there was no drama that day. The tragic twists and turns, the comical curveballs and miscues, the mysterious and magical moments had ended. The final scene of the show was an anticlimactic letdown.

On that day in April 2006, I sat alone again. By that time, though, I was used to it. The charter school sub-committee of the State had actually met the previous day and made its recommendation to the full Board to accept my charter petition. So, on April 13th, as the chairperson read the name of my school from the consent agenda, along with twenty or more other items, you could have easily missed it. "All in favor..." and it was over. That was it. Once again, no whoops nor hollers, no whistles nor tambourines, although, this time, I didn't expect any. I no longer expected throngs of supporters to come to my side. I didn't walk out to my car, alone, and cry. Not this time. Even though that was the day, the singular event that I had been working toward for so long, it didn't sadden me that no one else was there. I understood by then that it had nothing to do with me; yet, everything to do with me, at the same time. Those celebrations didn't happen, but not because I wasn't loved, or understood, or supported. It wasn't that at all. I recognized, by that time, that those celebrations didn't happen because the fact of the matter was that this was my dream, my school, *my story*.

Chapter Five

Interpretations

For Jerónimo and Félix

I sat on the sofa, across the room from my dear friend as she read the final pages of my story. “Who would do this?” she asked. “You need to answer that question. Why would anyone go through this?”

My parents were among the first group of Peace Corps volunteers when they served in India from 1969 to 1972, so perhaps my conviction that people can make a difference – can make the world a better place – is something that I come by honestly. I was brought up to believe that if someone needed help, you gave it to them, whenever you could. We would go on vacation, driving from California to Texas, when I was young. My family piled in the van we borrowed from my grandparents and set out through the night. Along the way we picked up hitchhikers and we stopped along busy highways to assist stranded motorists. Today, people scoff, thinking that those sorts of actions are simply too dangerous.

I also remember, on other occasions, riding in the passenger seat of my dad’s truck. It didn’t matter where we were going or what we were doing, if someone ahead of us threw garbage out the window, my dad would chase them down, forcing them to the side of the road, and insist that they go back and pick it up. He wasn’t a police officer or elected official, he just didn’t think anyone had the right to trash our shared environment. As his teenage daughter, I was mortified when the “popular” kids at school would tell me that my dad had pulled them over and made them pick up trash.

I was taught that I had to take responsibility for my actions. My neighbors across the street from where I grew up had a swimming pool that they let us use. One day, my friends and I broke something; I think it was a trashcan. We tried to cover it up, but my parents found out and I had to face my neighbors. I had to admit to them that not only did I destroy their property, but I had tried to obscure the damages. I had to replace the broken trashcan and I had to face my victims to acknowledge my wrongdoing.

My grandfather was a golfer. One of the highlights of my childhood growing up with him living in my hometown involved hours spent driving his golf cart around the municipal golf course searching for abandoned golf balls. We picked through weeds and around the edges of murky ponds, plunking the balls into a ten-gallon bucket in the back of the cart as we found them. His unspoken outlook on life was that you always leave a place better than you found it.

Maybe some people, like the ones who sent me hateful emails, would consider my family as a bunch of “do-gooders.” But, I carry into the present – into all of my personal and professional interactions – a sense of responsibility, whether that means picking up a plastic bottle dropped carelessly in a parking lot, offering someone a ride, or starting a school. I do what I can to make the world a better place.

What I feel like my school is doing is offering an educational opportunity that can make a difference, not only in the lives of kids, but in their families. Jerónimo and Félix didn’t choose to move to Georgia and go to school there. It was a choice made for them by adults; a choice no doubt influenced by the larger political economy. Yet, they have to live with that decision and make the best of it. It’s not fair that, because of a decision made by other people in a much larger socio-political context, they have to live a life in which their choices are circumscribed, or limited.

So, to answer your question, “Why would anyone go through this,” I respond that this is where my cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993) - my education, my upbringing, my positionality – render me capable of doing what I did. I started a school.

So What?

Now I go back to William James (1907) and my pragmatic roots and ask, “So what?” Does my research cut the pragmatic mustard? Does it pass the what-difference-does-it-make test? I have already established that my purpose in conducting this autoethnographic research to tell *my* story about *my* experiences in starting a public TWI school in Georgia so as to inform others with similar ambitions. The school is started – that work is done. The school, itself, can carry on the work of empowering the disempowered, but what difference does my autoethnographic research make? What have I gleaned through the recursive theory-practice-reflection process of starting the school that can *inform others who want to take a similar path toward educational reform?*

Now that my story has been told, in this chapter I will reflect on my journey and some implications of this work. I will not seek to offer advice nor suggest what others should do. That is not the purpose of autoethnographic research. Rather, through the sharing of my story, my desire is that readers will reflect on what I went through and let it inform their own experiences. I will begin with the personal implications (because they are still the most raw and trigger tears each time I read or write about them) followed by the broader professional implications.

Personal Implications

There is loneliness. The first time loneliness really knocked me out was while I sat in my car and cried after submitting the charter petition to Comeback County on August 1, 2005. That

afternoon it dawned on me how absolutely alone I was on the journey. Before that day, there had been numerous occasions when I was disappointed at the perceived lack of interest or enthusiasm on the part of others, including those closest to me....when only three people came to my informational meeting in Flagship County....when I had to drag my boyfriend (who has since become my husband) to admire the potential in the latest facility I had found. While sitting in the car with tears rolling down my cheeks, watching others get in their pick-up trucks and mini-vans headed home without a clue about the critical milestone I had just passed, I realized that no one cared as much as I did.

In telling the story about when the Comeback County Board of Education voted to accept my charter petition, I wrote, *the loneliest, most empty moments happened alongside the greatest triumphs*. Before embarking on this path toward opening Georgia's first, public TWI school, those words would not have made any sense to me. How can one feel such sadness in times of joy? Now, however, I get it. The foremost moments of triumph along the way, beginning with submitting the completed charter petition, then winning the vote at the Comeback County Board of Education meeting, and ultimately getting approved by the State, rather than growing in intensity, actually decreased my enthusiasm. That's not the way I expected things to happen, but they are what they are.

By the end, I had come to terms with the reality that no one else shared my passion, determination, or investment, and that was okay. Through my Deweyan pragmatic lens, I recognized that my theory, my actions, and my experiences were mine alone. If I had had a partner with me the whole time, someone who had set the goal with me, who believed in it as strongly as I did, who would risk as much as I would risk, who would go as far as I would go,

then perhaps the journey would have been less frightening and more fun. If that had been the case, though, I would have a different story to tell.

There are highs and lows. I never liked roller-coasters. When my church youth group would pile into borrowed vans in the wee hours of the morning to travel to Six Flags over Texas in order to have the maximum minutes of amusement park excitement, I would go along, but not for the rides. I derived far more pleasure from the shows. I'd prefer the enchanting magician, amusing musical or dynamic dance number any day! My feet were much happier on the ground. So, the metaphorical emotional rollercoaster ride full of sharp curves and stomach-turning loops, slow, anxiety-building inclines, and dramatic descents was no fun for me.

The metaphorical curves, loops, inclines and descents started on day one and continued through to the end. The curves were times when I expected one thing and got another, like when I fully anticipated that the *Reverend* at the church offices would provide the information I sought, but then didn't, so I had to re-group and continue without her aid. When I received the hateful email messages, those were loops. They made me physically ill and hurt me to my core, so much so that I can't read them without weeping, even today. The inclines were the times I plugged along, meeting after meeting, revision after revision, deadline after deadline, when I held on to faith that if I just pushed myself a little harder and hung in there a little longer, my prize would be waiting at the top. The inclines were almost always followed by dreadful descents, when the prize at the top never materialized and I was cast down deeper and lower than I had ever been before. The worst of those times was the day when I considered quitting, when I wanted to tell the ride's operator to stop and let me off, when I had had enough.

I still don't like roller-coasters. I would be completely satisfied if I never had to ride another rollercoaster and could watch the shows eternally. That's not life, however. If that's all

I did, I wouldn't be living life to its fullest, and it would probably be pretty lonely, too. I know that roller-coasters are an inevitable and integral part of life's journey and through the experience of starting the school, I've become more adept at dealing with them. I can better anticipate the curves, recover from the loops, overcome the inclines and rise from the descents, ready to start the ride over again.

There is delusion. Stubborn. Obstinate. Strong-willed. Admittedly, I can be all of these things. It's like when the cuckolded spouse senses that something in her marriage isn't right, yet, she ignores the late nights, the lipstick-stained collars, and the lingering scents of unfamiliar perfume. She makes up excuses. Looking back, it was completely obvious that Flagship County never had any intention of giving my charter petition real consideration. Their representative neglected to pass on key information to me. She showed up late for our one and only meeting and took days, sometimes weeks, to return my phone calls and email messages. She made me jump through hoops to meet her deadlines and submission guidelines. And, I suspect, she never even read my charter petition.

The question becomes, then, why couldn't I see it? Why did I continue to act like the doting wife, going back to Flagship County, over and over, when I never received even a hint of adoration from them? In considering this question, I have come to believe that it was because my single-minded approach to starting the school would not allow me to recognize the truth. From the very beginning, I was focused on Flagship County and Flagship County, alone. I invested all my time, all my energy, all my efforts into making my school work in Flagship County. It took a real slap in the face, when only three people showed up for the mass-advertised informational session in Flagship County, for me to finally listen to the voice of reason, "Have you considered submitting your petition in Comeback County?"

No. No, I hadn't. I hadn't considered any other options. I had spent a year chasing after Flagship County. I learned and followed all their rules. I lost sleep. I made up excuses. What a waste of time and affection. Looking back, I wish that I had been open to other options sooner. But one can't force a paradigm shift.

There are issues of self-effacement. I have mixed feelings as to how to approach the challenge of pride. On the one hand, I see pride as a natural, healthy emotion to have. Shouldn't I be proud? After all, I was starting Georgia's first, public TWI school. I wrote a terrific charter proposal. I had done the research. I knew my stuff. I knew more about TWI education than just about anyone else in the state, at that time. According to Fiona, I had become the poster child for TWI at the State (personal communication, February 3, 2006). I had worked hard to get to where I was. My school was going to open. It won the approval of the local as well as State. Don't I have reason to be proud? I believe I do.

On the other hand, pride has made me bitter. I swallowed my pride as I sat in my first meeting with the Comeback County superintendent while she explained immersion education to me. I swallowed my pride when the reporter credited the district for coming up with the idea of starting a public TWI school. I swallowed my pride when I had to ask my advisor to fight the battle with Fox News for me. I am bitter because *my pride* tells me that I should not have had to put up with any of that.

I do not believe, however, that my pride, neither the up nor the down side of it, interfered with starting the school. It certainly contributed to some uncomfortable moments, but it never stymied nor derailed the process. When I contemplate how I was able to keep my pride in check, I think it was, at least in part, because of the John Dewey-inspired autoethnographic research methods I was using to conduct my research. The recursive theory-practice-reflection

relationship that I employed throughout my research, in which I reflected on what was happening, why it was happening and what my relationship was to it all, afforded me a level of perception that made it possible for me to recognize when my pride was getting in the way. With this heightened self-awareness, I could take a step back and make decisions that would more likely lead to the desired outcome.

There is fear.

Converts [former oppressors]...truly desire to transform the unjust order; but because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation.

They talk about the people, but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 60)

Letting go is so terribly hard to do. This fear plays itself out in life all the time. You see it in sappy commercials when doting parents take their precious daughter to college and then drive away, and when a child reluctantly allows his younger brother to play with his most cherished toy. What will happen to it? Will he take care of it? What if it breaks? Who will be there to put it back together again?

That's how I felt about my charter petition. I had conceived it, nurtured it, groomed it, protected and defended it. No one knew it better than I did. No one understood it more. No one loved it as much as I did. When Comeback County proposed that my charter petition become *our* (i.e., *their*) charter petition, I panicked. My first instinct was to pull it back into my arms and run away where no one could find us. All those familiar fears raced through my mind. How could she be proposing that I give her my charter? She doesn't get it. She just made me watch a video about immersion education that doesn't look anything like my school. They don't know how to run a TWI school. It isn't like other schools. There's a different philosophy behind it.

Would they hire the right teachers? How would they ensure a balanced language population? Would they make it too small? What about me? I was terrified.

Of course, we all know the ending of the story by now. I didn't run out of that room and I did agree for my school to become an LEA start-up charter school. Today, I am more certain than ever that I made a good decision. Again, though, I credit that informed decision to the recursive theory-practice-reflection relationship that was my research. Because of the systems in place, journaling and talking with my mom to reflect on the situation, i.e., my practice, I was able to recognize that the offer in front of me was the most positive development yet. It was going to be the vehicle for my theory of a charter school to become a reality. I was able to see that I had to let go, release it. I had to trust and I had to have faith that I was placing it into devoted, kind, supportive hands. So that's what I did.

There is a need for self-protection. Boy have I built up my armor! By armor, I'm referring to two things. First, I've got masses of artillery in my TWI arsenal. They include all the contacts I've made, all the research I've read (and written), and all the experiences I now have to draw from. I am well-armed if, and when, I come under the attack of misinformation and ignorance. I can ward off the school board member who questions the educational value of TWI. I can counter attack the politician who claims *they'll never assimilate*. I can comfort the parent afraid that his daughter won't learn English. I can handle all of that now. It has taken years of study, trial and error, and contemplation (there's that recursive theory-practice-reflection relationship, again). It takes a long time to fill an arsenal sufficiently, and once the arsenal is full, you have to sharpen blades that become dull, replace pieces that no longer perform adequately, and develop new strategies to win the battle.

The second type of armor refers to what I wear on my body to protect my heart and soul. Unlike the first, which could be acquired through study, this armor can only be worn after healing from a near fatal wound. It's like what my mom referred to as "the stuff on a duck," the repellant feathers that won't let the chilling water penetrate. I was gravely injured during the process of starting the school, but what I've come to understand is that none of it was ever about me. None of the hateful remarks, like those in the emails, nor undermining tactics, like the constant delays from the State, were about me. They arose from fear, misunderstanding, and differing sets of values, but they were not aimed at me personally. I fell in the crossfire of a political battle that has been brewing for ages. What I've learned is to see it for what it is and not take it personally. Having armor doesn't mean that the attacks don't hurt. They are agonizing, but I have acquired the body armor to protect myself through self-assurance, calm, peace and forgiveness. I can "shake my tail feathers" and waddle away.

Professional Implications

There is bureaucracy. I endured immeasurable heartache and pain along the journey to start the school. You just read 17 vignettes about the loneliness, fear and frustration I experienced, but the single-most maddening aspect of whole entire saga that ever made me seriously consider throwing in the towel was the bureaucracy. I could handle constant battles with ignorance when it came to the general public's understanding of TWI. I could teach them. I am an educator, after all. The personal attacks from fundamentalists who believed that I single-handedly was dismantling the stability of the United States by teaching children to read, write and speak Spanish only fed fuel to my fire. I built up my armor and wouldn't let the hate penetrate me. But the bureaucracy nearly did me in.

It's the little things – or at least the things that seem little until you put them all together – that wore me down. Dealing with school district chain-of-command and never getting to communicate directly with the real decision makers; having to provide 30 copies of a charter petition, knowing that only three, maybe four, people will read it; submitting and re-submitting the charter petition over and over again every time a board member or department chair thinks that something needs to be amended, each time knowing that the delay is costing you precious time; checklists; Roberts Rules of Order; unspoken and unwritten deadlines. And, just when you think that you've seen and done it all, something else comes up.

It was never-ending. And one of the most frustrating challenges in dealing with bureaucracy was that I felt powerless against it. I couldn't barge my way past the gatekeepers. I couldn't change the checklists. I couldn't force people to work together and see the bigger picture. I couldn't make up my own rules and deadlines. I had to work within a broken down, inefficient, mismanaged, contradictory, uninformed and disorganized bureaucratic system. The problem with bureaucracy *is* bureaucracy.

There is misinformation. Correcting misinformation is one of my current crusades. As I was starting the school, there were two areas in which I recognized rampant ignorance and misunderstanding: TWI education and charter schools. In considering TWI, the first fundamental misconception many people have is not realizing that TWI is not just for minority-language students or just for majority-language students. In the case of my school, more often than not, people assume that it is a school strictly for Spanish-speaking children. I can't tell you how many times I've introduced myself to people in relation to the school, even in my own school district, and the response has been, "Oh, yeah. You're that Spanish school, right?" They just don't get it, so I have to explain, time and time again, that while indeed part of our

instruction is in Spanish, our student body is actually balanced with native English- and native Spanish-speaking children. Similarly, but on the other side of the coin and less often the case, is the misunderstanding that TWI is for majority-language students, or native English-speakers. When the superintendent proudly showed me the one-way immersion video from another school district, I realized that I had a long road ahead of me.

It is evident every time I speak to the general public about my school. Many people confuse TWI with other models of bilingual education, like transitional and heritage language programs, or they have picked up and held on to pieces from ugly political debates across the country, like the ones surrounding Proposition 227 that severely limited bilingual education in California (Baker, 2001). There is misunderstanding even among educators who often think that all the teachers have to be fully bilingual.

The biggest misconception I have had to combat in terms of TWI, however, deals with a lack of understanding about its goals. I can't count how many times I've had to clarify that it is the goal of TWI that *all* students learn to read, write and speak *English* as well as Spanish. The same day that I received all the hateful emails, I received others, too, that were less threatening. This example illustrates my point:

....Why are you not spending time and money to teach those people who speak only Spanish and choose to come to the United States ENGLISH. Wave after wave of people from all over the world have come before and all have learned ENGLISH. Why not the people from Mexico...(personal email correspondence, November 8, 2005)

The person who wrote this message sounded (somewhat) reasonable. Clearly he just didn't know that the goal of TWI is that students learn to speak English. This was among the emails that I received earlier in the day, before I had my breakdown, so I responded:

Mr. [REDACTED]. I appreciate your sharing your feelings with us about students learning to speak Spanish. I gather, however, from your e-mail that you may be misinformed as to the goals and intent of dual language education [TWI], as well as the research that

supports this type of instruction. The goal of dual language education is NOT that students not learn English. In fact, the goal is that all students learn to read, write, and speak English in addition to Spanish, and a tremendous amount of research indicates that dual language education is a terrific way to meet that goal. I encourage you to visit our website, www.██████████.org as well as the Center for Applied Linguistics website, www.cal.org/twi/ to gain a better understanding of what dual language education is really all about. Thank you.

But, then he wrote back,

Thank you for answering my email. Looking at your bio, I can see that you have alot more education then myself. I followed your request and read the information in both your web site and the Center for Applied Linguistics. I am impressed with your educational background and your goals. After reading the information in both sites I do not believe however that I am mis-informed. I believe that the role of dual language is for people who do not speak ENGLISH, to learn it. As with all other nationalities that have come to the US we do NOT need to learn their language they need to learn to speak ours. I can see a limited use for your school for those whose jobs will need Spanish--border patrol, customs etc but for the general public it is not needed--why--we speak ENGLISH. Here in California it has gotten so bad with people not speaking ENGLISH that many times when one goes into a Wal Mart the public messages are only given in Spanish-- We have Spanish TV, Spanish radio, Spanish newspapers, everything for advertising is bi-lingual. So what is the incentive to learn ENGLISH???. If I learn Spanish and they speak Spanish why learn ENGLISH. Even your school name is partly in Spanish and I do not understand the word. Question, what will you do when a person who wants to teach comes to your school and you turn them down because they do not speak Spanish? And this is in the US. How many time everyday are qualified people turn down for a job in this country because they speak Spanish. Please note that it is not because they do not speak any other language just Spanish. My answer to all of this is to make ENGLISH the official language in this country. And if you come here to live you have to learn ENGLISH

By the way, please explain to me why "In fact, the goal is that all students learn to read, write, and speak English in addition to Spanish, and a tremendous amount of research indicates that dual language education is a terrific way to meet that goal."? Who are "all students" and whose "goal" is this???. and who did all of this "research" and why was it done? I know I repeat myself but the one thing that needs to be remembered is that our language ENGLISH is the ONE and ONLY thing that ties this great country together. If this country become bi-lingual it will come apart.

Thanks for listening

Sometimes I feel like I'm banging my head against the wall.

The second broad area of misunderstanding has to do with charter schools. I have to admit that when I started this process, I didn't know much about them, either. I had to inform myself, through research and exploration, about what charter schools really were. As a strong

proponent of public schooling, I was skeptical. The first thing I did to educate myself was to have an informal meeting with Fiona, the representative from the charter school office at the State. After that, I visited with other charter school founders. Next, I read reports and scoured websites, learning all that I could. *I* did all of those things, but not everyone can or will do them. It is my lingering perception that most people do not understand charter schools

So how do I proceed with my crusade against such (perceived) ignorance? I use my position, whenever I can, to spread seeds of *truth*¹⁹, to set the record straight. I go to conferences and give presentations about my school. I conduct monthly community informational sessions. I speak to classes of students at universities and shoppers in the aisles at supermarkets. I use every forum at my fingertips to disseminate information. At every presentation, I make sure participants understand that TWI education is not just for English language learners. To the parents at informational sessions, I proclaim over and over that charter schools are federally- and state-funded public schools that are held accountable to the same standards (if not higher) as all other public schools in the state. In every lecture hall I seek for my audience to realize what our society risks when children, parents and grandparents cannot communicate. I am aware that all I say and all I do is but a drop in the bucket; nevertheless, I contribute as many drops as I can with faith and hope that one day, the bucket will overflow.

There is a context, and it matters. When my mom read a draft of this dissertation for the first time, she questioned the placement of the vignette about Jerónimo and Félix. She suggested, perhaps, that it shouldn't be the first story my readers experienced. "You didn't have a political agenda when you started the school, right?" she questioned. "Putting that first makes it seem like starting the school was a political act," she pressed. She was correct, but I left the vignette's placement alone. I didn't have a political agenda when I started my journey. I had an

¹⁹ I know fully well that *my* truth is through *my* lens.

educational agenda. I wanted to bring what I considered an equitable form of education to Georgia in the form of a TWI school. What I have come to recognize along the way, however, is that opening a bilingual school is an inherently political act and that context does matter. By telling the story about Jerónimo and Félix first, I set the stage, or the context, in which my story took place.

As my vignettes illustrate, much of the story about starting my school was less about opening a *charter* school than it was about starting a *TWI* school. In “The cardinal sin” vignette I wrote about how hurt my pride had been when I was not given (sufficient) credit in the newspaper for coming up with the idea of starting a TWI school. I understood, then, that political posturing was a necessary part of how school systems operated and that giving credit to the school district for starting the school, was a way to ensure that the school board was credited for having done something innovative. It was a way to make Comeback County look good at a time when it was in desperate need of positive publicity.

In “I’m a Duck,” “Media Frenzy” and “Hurry up and Wait,” I wrote about being thrust up against English-only and other, more general, anti-immigrant attitudes. Given my experience as an EFL teacher in Spain, teaching English in an international context, and knowing that debates are held and books are written about the spread and dominance of English around the world (Phillipson, 1992), I was not adequately prepared for the outcry against starting a bilingual school. Indeed, in the years leading up to starting the school, my preoccupation with the ways in which I perceived school systems were under-educating non-native English-speaking students led to a lack of awareness of the political climate around me. First, this naïveté led me to be crushed, but then to begin to think more critically. I have learned by being in the line of fire that the links between bilingual education and peoples’ personal politics run deep. While I am only

beginning to explore the wider political ramifications of promoting TWI in terms of fundamentalist perceptions, I would caution others to be ready for backlash. If anything, a clear implication of my experience is that a person considering opening a TWI school should not be taken unawares when others, outside of the field of education, have strong, often polemic, reactions.

Autoethnography and This Research

Finally, I respond to the question, “What is the value of the autoethnographic methodology in this research?” To me, the answer is evident. I know for certain that the quality of my product, whether referring to this written dissertation or the school that I established over this course of this research, has been markedly improved due to the nature of the recursive theory-practice-reflection process.

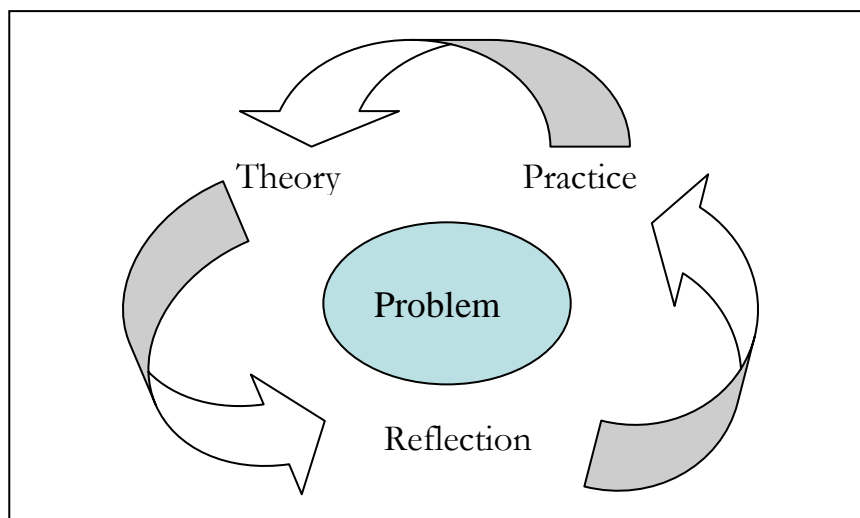


Figure 4. Recursive theory-practice-reflection relationship

Before ever entering the marbled halls of academia to begin work on my doctoral degree, I perceived a problem with foreign/second language education in public schools. I didn't feel

effective as a Spanish teacher because, among other things, my instruction lacked authenticity that meaningful and lasting learning requires. As an ESL teacher, I felt like I cavewoman trying to push a boulder up a steep hill in a cart with a square wheels. I could never reach the top. Not only were my tools and methods archaic, but my task was futile. My students with interrupted schooling and limited first language literacy, despite all our best efforts, were not achieving at the levels of their native English-speaking peers. I also saw the distance between them and the cultural heritage of their families growing wider and wider. I perceived a problem, but I didn't know the answer.

When I started my doctoral coursework and took that first class in bilingual education, I thought I had found the answer to my problem: TWI. My theory: TWI was the solution to the perceived problem of ineffective foreign/second language education in Georgia. TWI would resolve the dilemma of lack of authenticity of foreign language instruction for native-English speakers by teaching language through content-area instruction. Language learning would be instantly applicable and meaningful for students. TWI also addressed my concern in regard to English language learners by building strong first-language literacy foundations as well as respecting and building cultural connections.

With a problem and a theory about how to solve it in hand, my practice became the act of establishing a public TWI school in Georgia. The process took more than two years, from when I formalized my theory and began the work of establishing the school to when the State approved the charter petition. The stories you read in Chapter Four chronicle the *critical events* I defined through reflection on the process and myself in that process. As I plugged my way through the tasks associated with starting the school, I recorded my actions as well as my thoughts and emotions, though the use of audio recordings, recorded conversations with family and friends,

and written correspondence. Throughout the process, as I listened to and transcribed the audio recordings, read and re-read them, and as I reviewed and continued to receive written correspondence, my theory and practice evolved. For instance, my theory at one stage of the game was that I needed to establish a TWI school in Flagship County, but as I proceeded through the practice of establishing that school and reflected on that practice, my theory and practice changed. The autoethnographic methodology of reflection on the practice of starting a TWI school in Flagship County – hurdle-after-hurdle, heartbreak-after-heartbreak – and reflection on myself in that process led me to modify my theory and practice. My new theory became that I needed to establish a TWI school in Comeback County, and from there, the revised practice of starting that school followed. The recursive theory-practice-reflection relationship drove the process.

So, I come back to the question again, “What is the value of the autoethnographic methodology in this research?” The autoethnographically-driven recursive theory-practice-reflection relationship that I employed throughout the process, without doubt, has everything to do with my success in establishing the first public TWI school in Georgia. It brought the process to life, so that it could grow and evolve and not become stagnate. Without it, I would probably still be banging my head against the wall, taking sucker-punch after sucker-punch, and my school would be no closer to reality than it was when I left my teaching classroom with a problem, but no solution.

Epilogue

Today

The Road Goes on Forever

As I think about how to bring closure to this work, I am reminded of the words of a song by Texas musician, singer-songwriter Robert Earl Keen, “The road goes on forever and the party never ends” (1989). As a researcher and a storyteller, I have struggled with how to end this story. Like the words of that song, this road, this journey, this process of establishing Georgia’s first public TWI school can go on forever, and the party, the plots, the tales that evolve never end. For the purposes of this product, this dissertation, however, I had to find a logical stopping place and I chose to end this research and the tale that you’ve read when the State approved the charter petition. I recognize that I may have left many of my readers hanging, wondering, “What happened to the school?” That is another story, another party, that I’ll have to tell about some other time. It’s kind of like a cliff hanger ending that I hope will, some day, lead to a sequel. For now, I leave you with a few “quick stats.”

Quick Stats

- Year that school opened: 2006-2007
- Number of students: 420
- Number of staff: 50
- Number of classrooms: 20, grades Pre-K through 4th

- Demographics:
 - Racial/Ethnic breakdown: (self-identified) 50% Hispanic, 43% Black, 5% Multiracial, 2% White
 - Socioeconomics: 82% free or reduced lunch
 - Linguistic balance: approximately 50% English-dominant, 40% Spanish-dominant, and 10% Bilingual
- Anticipated growth: For the 2010-2011 academic year, the school is expected to expand to full capacity, Pre-K through 5th grade, with approximately 500 students

Not My School

Today, out of curiosity, I “googled” the name of my school and over 3000 results came up on the screen. I was pleased to see that the very first hit was a direct link to the school’s official homepage. What surprised me, though, was that just a few results further down the page was a link to blog that started in June 2009 and stopped as recently as October 2009. I hadn’t known anything about the blog or the back-and-forth debate it entailed about the merits, or lack thereof, of my school. It hit me, then, that my school had taken on a life of its own. There was no reference to me anywhere in the dialogue. It was no longer *my* school; it was *the* TWI school in Comeback County. It really wasn’t about me. It never was. What was even more interesting as I read the blog was that although the issues were still the same, i.e. documented vs. undocumented, compulsory vs. choice, English-only vs. multilingual, this debate was happening in Georgia. Was this dialogue happening before I started the school? I wonder how many more blogs and articles are bouncing around in cyberspace that I don’t know about. It doesn’t matter. The school that I started has played a role in bringing attention to larger socio-political and

educational issues and it has sparked discussion. I hope it will be a contribution, in some small measure.

REFERENCES

- Alanís, I. (2000). A Texas two-way bilingual program: Its effects on linguistic and academic achievement. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 24 (3), 225.
- Arakapadavil, G. (1982). Multicultural education and the democratic theory of John Dewey. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- Associated Press. (2005). Georgia's first bilingual public school approved. Retrieved November 8, 2005 from <http://www.cnn.com>
- Associated Press. (2007). Abolish bilingual education, Gingrich urges. Retrieved March 31, 2007 from <http://www.cnn.com>
- Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., & Delamont, S. (2003). *Key themes in qualitative research: Continuities and changes*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- August, D., & Hakuta, K. (1997). *Improving schooling for language-minority children: A research agenda*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Baker, C. (2001). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (3rd ed.). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Biesta, G., & Burbules, N. C. (2003). *Pragmatism and educational research*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brown, V. B. (n.d.). About Jane Addams. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from <http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/newdesign/ja.html>
- Cahnmann-Taylor, M., & Siegesmund, R. (Eds.). (2008). *Arts-based research in education: Foundations for practice* (1st ed.). London: Routledge.
- Cahnmann, M. (2003). The craft, practice, and possibility of poetry in educational research. *Educational Researcher*, 32(3), 29-36.
- Calderón, M. E., & Minaya-Rowe, L. (2003). *Designing and implementing two-way bilingual programs: A step-by-step guide for administrators, teachers, and parents*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Camarota, S. A. (2007). *Immigrants in the United States, 2007: A profile of America's foreign-born population*. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from Center for Immigration Studies website: <http://www.cis.org/node/117>
- Cazabon, M., Lambert, W. E., & Hall, G. (1993). *Two-way bilingual education: A progress report on the Amigos program*. Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.
- Cazabon, M., Nicoladis, E., & Lambert, W. E. (1998). *Becoming bilingual in Amigos two-way immersion program* (No. 3). Santa Cruz, CA and Washington, DC: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.
- Center for Applied Linguistics. (2008a). Directory of two-way bilingual immersion programs in the U.S. Retrieved June 23, 2008 from <http://www.cal.org/twi/directory/index.html>

- Center for Applied Linguistics. (2008b). Two-way immersion. Retrieved June 23, 2008 from <http://www.cal.org/twi/index.htm>
- Center for Applied Linguistics. (2009a). Languages of instruction in TWI programs. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from <http://www.cal.org/twi/directory/language.htm>
- Center for Applied Linguistics. (2009b). Number of districts and schools by state. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from <http://www.cal.org/twi/directory/state.htm>
- Center for Applied Linguistics. (2010). Growth of TWI programs, 1962-present. Retrieved February 11, 2010 from <http://www.cal.org/twi/directory/growthtable.htm>
- Chen, G. (2007). What is a charter school? Retrieved June 23, 2008 from <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/3>
- Christian, D., Montone, C., Carranza, I., Lindholm, K., & Proctor, P. (1996). *Two-way bilingual education: Students learning through two languages. A final report.* Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language.
- Cloud, N., Genesee, F., & Hamayan, E. V. (2000). *Dual language instruction: A handbook for enriched education.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Corson, D. (2001). *Language diversity and education.* Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Coy, S., & Litherland, L. (2000). *From a foreign language perspective: A snapshot view of a dual language program in two inner-city high poverty elementary schools:* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 446450).
- Crawford, J. (n.d.). Language policy website & emporium. Retrieved February 13, 2010 from <http://www.languagepolicy.net/index.html>
- Cummins, J. (1994). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In California Department of Education (Ed.),

- Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University.
- de Jong, E. J. (2002). Effective bilingual education: From theory to academic achievement in a two-way bilingual program. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 26(1), 65.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dewey, J. (1902). *The School as Social Center* (3): The University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, J. (1910/1997). *How we think*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Dewey, J. (1915). *John Dewey to Horace M. Kallen*. Cincinnati: Horace M. Kallen Collection, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.
- Dewey, J. (1916a). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: The Free Press.
- Dewey, J. (1916b). Universal service as education. *The New Republic*. Retrieved April 15, 2010 from <http://www.expo98.msu.edu/people/dewey.htm>
- Dewey, J. (1916/1976). Nationalizing education. In J. A. Boydston (Ed.), *The middle works, 1899-1924* (Vol. 10). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1922). *Human nature and conduct: An introduction to social psychology* [Google books Electronic Edition]. Retrieved April 17, 2010 from <http://books.google.com/books?id=Ws0RAAAAYAAJ&dq=dewey+nature+and+conduct+full+text&pg=PP1&ots=nJm0N6Sgqz&sig=nv1Y1cmqPfbwBKHmws1HMGm1FI&hl=en&prev=http://www.google.com/search%3Fsourceid%3Dnavclient%26ie%3DUTF-8%26rls%3DDKUS,DKUS:2006->

35,DKUS:en%26q%3Ddewey%2Bnature%2Band%2Bconduct%2Bfull%2Btext&sa=X&oi=print&ct=title&cad=one-book-with-thumbnail#PPP9,M1

- Dewey, J. (1923). Future trends in the development of social programs through the schools. *Proceedings of the National Conference on Social Work, 50*, 449-453.
- Dewey, J. (1927). *The public and its problems*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Dewey, J. (1937). The challenge of democracy to education. In J. Dewey (Ed.), *Problems of men* (pp. 46-56). New York: Philosophical library.
- Dewey, J. (1938/1997). *Experience and education*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Dewey, J. (1939). Creative democracy - The task before us. *John Dewey and the Promise of America, Progressive Education Booklet No. 14*. Retrieved April 17, 2010 from <http://www.beloit.edu/~pbk/dewey.html>
- Dewey, J. (1989). *Freedom and culture*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Dykhuisen, G. (1973). *The life and mind of John Dewey*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Ecker, P. (1997). John Dewey and Progressive Education. Retrieved May 18, 2005 from <http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/acs/1890s/dewey/educ.html>
- Ecker, P. (n.d.). John Dewey: 1859-1952. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from <http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/acs/1890s/dewey/dewey.html>
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended, 20 U.S.C. 8061-8067 (2004).
- Ellis, C. (1986). *Fisher folk: Two communities on Chesapeake Bay*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

- Ellis, C. (1995). *Final negotiations: A story of love, loss, and chronic illness*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (1996). *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Emerson, R. W., Emerson, E. W., & Forbes, W. E. (1909). *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, with annotations*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Etheridge, N. (2005). Low language skills hurt international business in Georgia. Retrieved December 7, 2005 from <http://www.globalatlanta.com/newsmanager/templates/custom2.asp?articleid=1295&zoneid=1>
- Fishman, J. A. (1981). Language policy: Past, present, and future. In C. A. Ferguson, S. B. Heath & D. Hwang (Eds.), *Language in the USA* (pp. 516-526). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, Y. S., Freeman, D. E., & Mercuri, S. (2005). *Dual language essentials for teachers and administrators*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Freire, P. (1970/2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Friedman, M., & Rosenman, R. H. (1975). *Type A behavior and your heart* (1st ed.). London: Wildwood House.

Georgia Department of Education. (2007). 2006-2007 report card. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&StateId=ALL&T=1>

Georgia Department of Education. (2008). Frequently asked questions about charter schools. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/pea_charter.aspx?PageReq=CIIAPCharterFAQS#q1

Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Statistics and information on hispanic population and market. Retrieved May 17, 2005 from <http://www.ghcc.org/statistics.html>

Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. (2005). Statistics and information on hispanic population and market. Retrieved May 17, 2005 from <http://www.ghcc.org/statistics.html>

Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. (2008). Statistics and information on the Hispanic population and market 2007. Retrieved June 23, 2008 from <http://www.ghcc.org/Statistics.html>

Gibson, C. J., & Lennon, E. (1999). *Historical census statistics on the foreign-born population of the United States: 1850-1990*. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from U.S. Bureau of the Census website: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/twps0029.html>

Gómez, L., Freeman, D., & Freeman, Y. (2005). Dual language education: A promising 50-50 model. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(1), 145-164.

Gordon, M. M. (1964). *Assimilation in American life: The role of race, religion, and national origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.

H.R. 911, Georgia General Assembly(2006).

H.R. 1238, Georgia General Assembly(2006).

H.R. 1349, Georgia General Assembly(2004).

H.R. 1483, Georgia General Assembly(2004).

Hansen, M. L., & Schlesinger, A. M. (1940). *The Atlantic migration, 1607-1860: A history of the continuing settlement of the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hill, H. C. (1919). The americanization movement. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 24(6), 609-642.

Howard, E., & Christian, D. (2002). *Two-way immersion 101: Designing and implementing a two-way immersion education program at the elementary level* (Educational Practice Report 9). Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

Howard, E., Christian, D., & Genesee, F. (2004). *The development of bilingualism and biliteracy from grade 3 to 5: A summary of findings from the CAL/CREDE study of two-way immersion education* (Report No. 13). Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

Howard, E., Sugarman, J., Christian, D., Lindholm-Leary, K., & Rogers, D. (2005). Guiding principles for dual language education: Draft. Retrieved on April 17, 2010 from <http://www.cal.org/twi/guidingprinciples.htm>

James, W. (1907). *Pragmatism: A new name for some old ways of thinking*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

John Dewey Project on Progressive Education. (n.d.) A brief overview of progressive education. Retrieved April 8, 2010 from <http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/articles/proged.html>

- K12 academics. (2009). Criticism of charter schools. Retrieved November 23, 2009 from <http://www.k12academics.com/alternative-education/charter-school/criticism-charter-schools>
- Kallen, H. (1915). Democracy versus the melting-pot. *Nation*, 100(2591), 217-220.
- Keen, R.E. (1989). The road goes on forever. On *West textures*[CD]. Houston: Sugarhill Recording Studios.
- Kidder, T. (1993). *Old friends*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kirk Senesac, B. V. (2002). Two-way bilingual immersion: A portrait of quality schooling. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 26(1), 85.
- Kohler, A. D., & Lazarin, M. (2007). Hispanic education in the United States. *Statistical Brief*. Retrieved June 24, 2008 from <http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/download/43582>
- Language Assistance: Program for English Language Learners (ELLs), O.C .G.A. § 20-2-156 C.F.R. § 160-4-5-.02 (2006).
- Lessow-Hurley, J. (2005). *The foundations of dual language instruction* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Lewin, K. (1948). *Resolving social conflicts: Selected papers on group dynamics*. New York: Harper.
- Lindholm, K., & Fairchild, H. H. (1990). Evaluation of an elementary school bilingual immersion program. In A. M. Padilla, H. H. Fairchild & C. M. Valadez (Eds.), *Bilingual education: Issues and strategies* (pp. 126-136). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lindholm-Leary, K. J. (2001). *Dual language education*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Menand, L. (2001). *The Metaphysical Club* (1st ed.). New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.

- Nourae, A. (2005, September 1). ¡Viva La Raza! y el espía también. *Creative Loafing*. from <http://www.creativeloafing.com/>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Portes, A., & Rumbault, R. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Portes, P., & Smagorinsky, P. (2010). *Static structures, changing demographics: Educating teachers for shifting populations in stable schools*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Ramirez, M., & Castañeda, A. (1974). *Cultural democracy, bicultural development, and education*. New York: Academic Press.
- Reed-Danahay, D. (1997). *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. New York: Berg.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 923-946). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- S.2611, 109th Congress (2006).
- S. 522, Florida Senate (2006).
- S. 529, Georgia General Assembly (2006).
- Savage, J. (2005). *Are [Comeback] County school leaders out of their minds ("[Comeback] may get bilingual schooling?" Atlanta Journal Constitution, Nov. 1)* [Newspaper Editorial].
- Social Science Research Council. (n.d.). Civil unrest in the France suburbs, November 2005. Retrieved February 13, 2010 from <http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/>

- Soltero, S. W. (2004). *Dual language: Teaching and learning in two languages*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- State of Georgia. (2004). Governor Purdue forms QBE task force. Retrieved November 23, 2009 from http://gov.georgia.gov/00/press/detail/0,2668,78006749_92321069_92337333,00.html
- Stipek, D., Ryan, R., & Alarcón, R. (2001). Bridging research and practice to develop a two-way bilingual program. *Early Childhood Quarterly*, 16(1), 133-149.
- The Catholic Community Forum. (n.d.). *Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi*. Retrieved April 9, 2010 from <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pray0027.htm>
- The Center for Education Reform. (2002). Charter schools: Six common criticisms from opponents - and proof that they are unfounded. Retrieved November 23, 2009 from http://www.edreform.com/Archive/?Charter_Schools_Six_Common_Criticisms_from_Opponents_and_Proof_That_They_are_Unfounded
- The Center for Education Reform. (2009). *5000+ charter schools already help students race to the top*. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from Center for Education Reform website: http://www.edreform.com/Issues/Charter_Connection/?_Charter_Schools_Already_Help_Students_Race_to_the_Top
- Thinkexist.com. (n.d.) *Irish blessing quotes*. Retrieved April 8, 2010 from http://thinkexist.com/quotation/may_you_have_the_hindsight_to_know_where_you-ve/172094.html
- Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (1997). *School effectiveness for language minority students* (NCBE Resource Collection Series, No. 9). Retrieved November 24, 2009 from National Center for Bilingual Education on the Education Resources Information Center website: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>

- Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement: Final report from http://crede.berkeley.edu/research/llaa/1.1_final.html
- U2. (1988). I still haven't found what I'm looking for. On *Rattle and hum* [CD]. New York: Island Records, Inc.
- U.S. Charter Schools. (n.d.). *History* Retrieved April 17, 2010 from http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/o/history.htm
- U.S. Department of Education. (2004). *Non-regulatory guidance - Title V, part B - charter schools program*. Retrieved June 26, 2008. from <http://www.ed.gov/programs/charter/legislation.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2006). Part B - public charter schools. Retrieved April 17, 2010 from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg62.html>
- U.S. English. (n.d.). About U.S. English. Retrieved February 12, 2010 from <http://www.us-english.org/view/2>
- Unz, R., & Tuchman, G. M. (1997). English Language Education for Children in Public Schools. Retrieved May 22, 2005 from <http://www.onenation.org/fulltext.html>
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Vidich, A. J., & Lyman, S. M. (2000). Qualitative methods: Their history in sociology and anthropology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 37-84). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- West, C. (1989). *The American evasion of philosophy: A genealogy of pragmatism*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.