GATEKEEPING, ADVOCACY, AND OTHER DILEMMAS OF TEACHING ESL

LEARNING SUPPORT IN A PUBLIC TWO-YEAR COLLEGE IN NORTH GEORGIA

by

SPENCER SALAS

(Under the Direction of Linda Harklau)

ABSTRACT

A five semester qualitative inquiry employed a neo-Vygotskian theoretical framework to understand how, in the setting of a remedial ESL program at a public two-year college in North Georgia, the subject positions of five teachers were mediated by their understandings of and engagement with the multiple and interactive contexts of their professional activity. Ethnographic data revealed a wide variety of tensions that complicated the five women's fluctuating understandings of who they were as teachers. These included (1) the interrelated dilemmas of gatekeeping and advocacy complicated by the institution's simultaneous commitment to open access and high standards and unyielding definitions of literacy and the high stakes assessments whereby such constructs were measured; (2) regional and national discourses surrounding immigrants' right to a postsecondary education; (3) and, the complex and unfolding lives of students and their teachers. While the five participants of this study were able to position and reposition themselves in ways that allowed them to make sense of who they were as professionals, their shifting subjectivities brought with them an emotional toll that was notably apparent at the end of each semester when some students passed and some students failed. That emotional toll came to a climax when anti-immigrant legislation proposed during the last year of data collection threatened to affect undocumented

students' access to the program—leading one faculty member to organize a town hall

meeting. The unintended consequences of that faculty member's activism are theorized,

as is the invisibility of personal dilemmas of the five women as their lives unfolded

during the period of data generation. Implications for teacher education and research are

presented.

INDEX WORDS: Postsecondary remediation, Two-year college ESL, Teachers'
mental lives

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The touchstone for the dissertation was an ethnography by Valdés (2001) that I read during my first semester at the University of Georgia. In her study, Valdés describes how the invincibility with which four Latino youngsters enter middle school slowly erodes in the ESL ghetto into which they are tracked. In an afterward, Valdés (2001) reveals that two of the four graduated from high school and one young woman decided that she wanted to go to college. Valdés recounts how she accompanied the young woman to a public two-year college where she, Elisa, was given a placement test:

> The tiny flaws in her writing that did not prevent her for maintaining a C+ average in high school were nevertheless too much for the sensitivities of community college teachers. Elisa was told that she will not be eligible for enrollment in credit-bearing, college-level instruction in the regular English sequence until she finishes the sequence of ESL courses. Not surprisingly, Elisa was devastated by the recommendation.

This qualitative inquiry begins where Valdés' study ends—in a public two-year college remedial ESL program.

At a two-year college in North Georgia that I call Sweet Water, ESL Learning Support, the College's website explained, was "designed to prepare students whose native language is not American English for success in college credit courses." A four-pronged attack, Sweet Water ESL Learning Support included coursework in communication, grammar/writing, reading, and vocabulary. Of the 10 courses offered, only one bore degree/transfer credit: ESLO 1101 Classroom Communication and College Orientation. The remaining nine non-degree/transfer ESL courses were sequential

prerequisites for the freshman college composition requirement and a range of

degree/transfer credit-bearing "reading intensive" courses at the 100/1000 levels and

beyond.

Statement of the Problem

Collectively, contemporary ethnographic research literature for English learners

brought much critical attention to traditional assimilationist narratives long cited to

justify the "normalization" of minority youth by U.S. systems of education (e.g., M. A.

Gibson, 1988; Olsen, 1997; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valdés, 1996;

Valenzuela, 1999). Problematically, ESL teachers are, for the most part, remarkably

absent in such literature advocating on behalf of English learners. When they do appear,

they are habitually represented as one-dimensional gatekeepers—such as the anonymous

two-year college instructor that bars Elisa from the mainstream—or as self-styled

crusading provocateurs (see, e.g., Canagarajah, 2002a; Lu, 1994, 2004). I argue that more

nuanced representations of teachers working for and with English learners are needed.

To that end, this study examines how teachers navigate an institutional

environment where, potentially, they are compelled to assume multiple, if not conflicting,

roles and constituencies—advocates for the English learners they teach, and gatekeepers

for the college that employs them. I theorize how it is that ESL teachers make sense of

who they are and what they do. I describe how such understandings are complicated by

unyielding institutional definitions of what it means to by ready for college-level work,

by the politics of immigration, by the conundrums of their unfolding lives and those of

their students, and more.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, this dissertation study is aligned with Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) "as if"/figured worlds theoretical framework.

The anthropological construct of cultural models— processes that shape thinking and emotions through repertoires of presupposed and popularly shared knowledge—have since been affiliated to Vygotsky's notion of mediating devices (Cole, 1996; Holland & Cole, 1995; Holland & Valsiner, 1988). Complex sorts of "helping means" (Vygotsky, 1978), cultural models enable individuals to know how, what, and why to do, to think, and to feel in any variety of human situations. They allow, for example, a North American undergraduate to fall in love or a recovering alcoholic to narrate his conversion to a group of likeminded peers (see, e.g., Holland & Quinn, 1987).

Bringing Vygotsky's (1978) understandings of the liberatory and seemingly limitless possibilities of the semiotic mediation of children's play to Bakhtin's (1981) notion of the dialogic self, Holland et al. (1998) theorize a human propensity "to figure worlds, play at them, act them out, and then make them socially, culturally, and thus materially consequential" (p. 280). Accordingly, Holland et al. propose the construct of "figured worlds"—worlds that women and men collectively write and rewrite in "practice" (Bourdieu, 1977).

In the culture of a two-year college in North Georgia, remediation is potentially one such figured world. That is to say, ESL Learning Support is a "stereotypical distillate" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 55) of what constitutes a "fully" educated person and who has the right to be/become one. However, that figured world and others exist "only by the virtue of adherence to the rules that constitute it" (Holland & Quinn, 1987, p. 3). Similarly, "ESL instructor" is potentially variable and interactive; an ESL instructor

potentially "improvises" (Holland et al., 1998) her subject position—i.e., finds spaces to re-describe herself in the figured world to which she has been recruited as a participant.

Research Question

With the Holland et al. (1998) framework as a conceptual lens, I employ participatory ethnographic methods to approach the following research question:

- In the setting of a public two-year college in North Georgia, how are ESL Learning Support faculty members' subject positions mediated by their understandings of and engagement with the multiple and interactive contexts that frame their professional activity?

A "tale from the field" (Van Maanen, 1988), this study responds to calls for an empirical knowledge base for L2 teacher education through situated studies of how teachers construct the realities of their classrooms and how their interpretations of those realities inform their teaching. Such research has been considered a critical first step for extending the knowledge base for informing and, potentially, for reforming existing models for the preparation of women and men who aspire to teach English learners in and outside of the U.S. (see, Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006).

Simultaneously, this study examines the multiple and dynamic contexts that inform the subject positions of teaching professionals in a remedial ESL program at a public two-year college and aims to extend understandings of the complexity of teaching in English learners in postsecondary contexts—remedial and otherwise.

Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter Two, a literature review, considers research for a so-called "new reform" in general education and its relationship to an emerging body of theoretical literature in

TESOL calling for the reconceptualization of the knowledge base of L2 teacher education through empirical study of the highly contextualized, locally situated, and socially constructed activity of teaching English to speakers of other languages. The review examines the various strands of research for postsecondary remediation, postsecondary ESL, and L1/L2 college composition that inform this study. Additionally, I elaborate on the potential of Holland et al.'s (1998) neo-Vygotskian figured worlds construct to frame this study of L2 teachers and, consequently, bring depth to understandings of teachers' mental lives.

In Chapter Three, I articulate the epistemological and theoretical stances that have guided the choice of methodology for this project; and, I specify the methods and procedures of data generation and analysis I have employed.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six constitute the presentation of my findings in relation to my research question.

In Chapter Four, I argue that despite the various contradictions of their institution's established practices and of their own classroom practices, the three teachers who taught ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing in Spring 2006 were able to position and reposition themselves in ways that allowed them to make sense of who they were as professionals and of what it was their work achieved. At the same time, their shifting subjectivities brought with them an emotional toll especially apparent at the end of each semester when some students passed and some students failed.

In Chapter Five, I argue that of the various tensions of being an ESL Learning Support faculty member, the highly contentious issue of immigrants' right to access a postsecondary education in the state of Georgia was central to understandings of who

they were professionally during the final year of data collection. Specifically, the chapter describes a town-hall meeting that Taylor, the Program Chair, and the Students for a Progressive Society organized in March 2006 on the topic of illegal immigration—a public forum whose aftermath included the hazard that her job and institutional funding would be cut and a drunken death threat phoned into the Dean's office that terrified both the instructor and her colleagues. Theorizing the unintended consequences of Taylor's advocacy, I argue that ESL Learning Support was more than an abstract discursive battlefield. Rather, Taylor's activism brought with it a potentially violent backlash intensified by a resurgence of American nativism fueled by fears of limited resources, reverse discrimination, and an unstable national identity (see, Sanchez, 1997).

Finally, in Chapter Six, I inventory what the five ESL teachers perceived as the greatest dilemmas of their teaching. Additionally, I discuss my own reluctance as a researcher to document the various personal dilemmas the teachers and I all lived through during Spring 2006. I theorize the invisibility of the personal in my own data record.

Chapter Seven concludes the study with implications for research and praxis.

Contribution to the Field and Significance to Society

The "dream" of a postsecondary education remains a novelty for English learners, especially U.S. Latinos, for whom a high school diploma was, until recently, the prize upon which the eyes of policy-makers were fixed (see, e.g., Council of Economic Advisors, 2000; United States. President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1996, 2002). Until fairly recently, individuals' decisions to end their formal schooling with high school did not necessarily prevent them from participating actively in the U.S. workforce as productive and taxpaying citizens.

College was one of an array of options. The dinner-table refrain went, "School isn't for everybody."

In a post-industrial U.S. economy, social and economic intergenerational mobility depends more than ever on high levels of education and multiple professional credentials. (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004; Fry, 2002, 2004; President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2003; Swail, Cabrera, & Lee, 2004; The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004; United States. President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1996, 2000, 2002; White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1999). With costs of four-year universities on the rise, the public two-year college has emerged as the first "port of entry" for first-generation college-goers, immigrants, a "new second generation" (A. Portes, 1996) of children of immigrant families, and, in particular, for U.S. Latinos (see, e.g., Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004; Fry, 2002, 2004, 2005).

Comparative analyses of the historical and contemporary community college curriculum indicate a steady increase in two-year institutions offering English as a Second Language: 55 percent in 1999 in comparison to the 40 percent found in an earlier unpublished survey by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges in 1991 (Schuyler, 1999). Furthermore, public two-year colleges in areas with large immigrant populations are also likely have large ESL programs (Schuyler, 1999). As such, public two-year colleges in areas of the country whose immigrant settlements continue to grow exponentially, such as North Georgia, are likely to see their ESL programs expand considerably—if they haven't already.

As more numbers of immigrants and children of immigrants enter postsecondary education via the public two-year college, and as postsecondary ESL programming makes its way into the curricula of such institutions (Schuyler, 1999), ESL professionals in U.S. higher education will play an increasingly pivotal role in the postsecondary trajectories of English learners.

For this reason, empirical research for understanding the relation between teachers' subject positions and their perceptions of and engagement with the contexts surrounding postsecondary interventions for language minority students is critical for national policy-makers "thinking K-16" (Barth, 2003).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this review, I examine the research literatures that inspired and informed a five-semester qualitative inquiry examining how the subject positions of five ESL teachers were mediated by their understanding of engagement with the multiple contexts of their professional lives. I begin by considering research for a so-called "new reform" in general education and its relationship to an emerging body of theoretical literature in TESOL calling for the reconceptualization of the knowledge base of L2 teacher education through the sustained, empirical study of the highly contextualized, locally situated, and socially constructed activity of teaching English to speakers of other languages. Reviewing contemporary sociocultural theoretical frameworks for understanding L2 teacher cognition and their precedents in broader concerns in general teacher education, I comment on various studies of L2 teachers aligned with such calls for "local situatedness" (Canagarajah, 2006) in empirical research for L2 teaching. I articulate the multiple concerns they generated for this study.

This dissertation was about teachers. Simultaneously, the study addressed the specific activity of teaching ESL Learning Support at a public two-year college. I locate that Sweet Water ESL Learning Support in ongoing debates about postsecondary remediation. I comment on existing empirical studies for the teaching of public two-year college ESL and various strands of research for L1/L2 college composition that inform this dissertation.

I conclude with an argument for the potential of Holland et al.'s (1998) figured worlds construct to frame this study of L2 teachers in the setting of a two-year college in

North Georgia and, consequently, bring depth to understandings of teachers' mental lives in postsecondary settings.

Reconceptualizing the Knowledge base for L2 Teacher Education

During my own semester-long ESL teaching practicum in a large public high school in nation's capital in the mid-1990's, I worked under the tutorship of a mentor who had been trained in a language teaching method called "Suggestopedia" by the same Bulgarian who had invented it (see, Lozanov, 1979). He, my mentor, fervently believed that the Baroque music he played during the somewhat hypnotic sessions of watching a subtitled version of Robin Williams and Sally Fields in "Mrs. Doubtfire" was exactly what his—perhaps, all—English language learners needed. While my mentor's allegiance to Suggestopedia was, even by the mid-90's, already somewhat of an anomaly, his conviction that there was one true method out there was one that the discipline had historically shared.

TESOL's Post Method Condition

Little by little, the dogma of method has given way to the informed eclecticism of "the communicative approach." Yet, despite their immense popularity, communicative language teaching and other methodological "innovations" have recently been challenged as a "pedagogical import" (Hu, 2002) potentially at odds with non-Western cultures of teaching and learning (see also, e.g., Li, 1998).

Contemporary frustration with a historical quest for a silver-bullet method that characterized the discipline for decades and the rejection of the transmission models of teacher education that pursuit engendered are equally symptomatic of what TESOL's current "post-method condition" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001). Recognizing that

existing models of L2 teacher preparation lacked an empirical base to support them, prominent figures in TESOL have called for situated L2 research to document and understand the hidden side of teaching, i.e., how teachers construct the realities of their classrooms and how their interpretations of those realities inform their teaching (see, e.g., Freeman, 2002). Increased attention has, thus, been placed on understanding the specific and variable contexts of L2 teaching as a means of creating a "deeper understanding of how language teachers teach and their students learn" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 413) with the idea being that such understandings might eventually form a knowledge base for reforming L2 teacher education.

Shifts in General Teacher Education

While this dissertation is not a teacher education study, per se, it is inspired by research for L2 teacher education dissatisfied with lack of empirical research to support existing models of L2 teacher preparation. Such dissatisfaction is not, however, unique to TESOL. It is also symptomatic of general education. Here, I briefly summarize some of the salient concerns surrounding issues of the knowledge base for teaching that have motivated more recent and specific concerns about the knowledge base for L2 teaching.

To a great extent, concerns about what teachers need to know and know how to do to teach effectively are the longstanding by-product of a not so new "new reform" in research for general teacher education. In the mid-1980's, that reform was motivated by the goal of the professionalization of teaching—one that national entities argued could only be achieved through the establishment of a knowledge base of that activity (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; The Holmes Group, 1986). Or, as Shulman (2004) clarified, the professionalization of teaching was understood to

depend on the existence of a knowledge base for teaching, i.e., "a codifiable aggregation of knowledge, skill, understanding, and technology, of ethics and disposition, of collective responsibility" (p. 222), and the ability of teacher education programs to communicate and transmit that knowledge base effectively to aspiring teachers.

In her examination of the rhetoric calling for a knowledge base of teaching, Schulman (2004) noted, "It does not say what teachers should know, do, understand, or profess that will render teaching more than a form of individual labor, let alone to be considered among the learned professions" (p. 223). To that end, since the 1980's, general teacher education, and, more recently, L2 teacher education have struggled to define the parameters for a knowledge base for teaching and to integrate that knowledge base into models of teacher education (see, e.g., Grossman, 1990; Houston, 1990; Labaree, 2004; Richardson, 2001; Sikula, 1996).

Shulman (2004) has conceptualized the knowledge base of teaching as a combination of content knowledge and "pedagogical reasoning." Others, such as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), have refused more individualist constructions of teacher learning as forms of individual knowledge in favor of a long-term, collective, and democratic understanding of teaching learning framed as "inquiry as stance." Arguing that "schoolteaching is not schoolteaching is not schoolteaching," Grossman and Stodolsky (1994) have rejected the individual teacher or classroom as a unit of analysis and have argued that good teaching depends, in large part, on understandings of the dynamic interplay among multiple layers of contexts that shape teachers and classrooms.

Who Teaches What to Whom, Where?

Growing anxiety about the long-unchallenged knowledge base for L2 teacher education is motivated by what Crandall (2000) sees as four major shifts in general education. These include (1) the ascendance of process-oriented theories of learning, teaching, and teacher learning; (2) a recognition of the persistent failure of teacher education to effectively prepare teachers for the different kinds of classrooms they would encounter; (3) a recognition of the importance of "teachers' mental lives' in shaping their teaching; and (4) concerns for the professionalization of teaching. For others, the lack of significant empirical research to support the models of L2 teacher education was even more alarming (see, e.g., Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

In a now-landmark special-topic issue of TESOL Quarterly, Freeman and Johnson (1998) indexed the disciplines' flagship journal to reveal that from 1980-1997 only nine percent of referred articles had addressed issues of "teacher preparation." For Freeman and Johnson, the want of empirical research to support the discipline's self-styled mission of "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages" was disconcerting. Furthermore, they argued, the lack of research about ESL teachers and ESL teaching suggested that institutional configurations for preparing women and men to teach English learners such as the M.A. TESOL (The Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) were pretty much what they always had been because they had always been so.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) describ the M.A. TESOL, the discipline's alpha-qualification, as nothing more than a sacred ritual consisting of (1) coursework about teaching methods and teaching materials, assessment, and various aspects of the English language system; (2) a practicum whereby teacher candidates activate what they have

learned in coursework; and (3), a first and second year of teaching where that knowledge is supposedly perfected (see, Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Precisely, Freeman and Johnson (1998) frame their proposed reconceptualization of the knowledge base of L2 teacher education in the threefold question, "Who teaches what to whom, where?" (p. 405). Elaborating, they explain, "We as teacher-educators must begin with the activity of language teaching and learning; the school and classroom contexts in which it is practiced; and the experience, knowledge, and beliefs of the teacher as a participant" (p. 413). Freeman and Johnson's driving three-fold question for L2 teacher education resonates strongly with Grossman and Stodolsky's (1994) earlier argument that "contexts matter" (p. 180)—and a larger sociocultural movement in educational research.

The Mind in Society

Heightened attention to the context(s) of teaching English to speakers of other languages is one expression of TESOL's "sociocultural turn"—a theoretical shift "from behaviorist, to cognitive, to situated, social and distributed cognition" (Johnson, 2006, p. 236) propelled by the writings of the Soviet psychologist, L.L. Vygotsky and his followers.

Understandings of Vygotsky vary, as do the names of the various theoretical perspectives he inspired. These include the sociocultural (Wertsch, 1998), the sociohistorical (Moll, 1990), cultural historical activity theory (Cole, 1996), and the neo-Vygotskian (Holland et al., 1998; Holland & Lave, 2001) to name a few.

Sawyer (2002) describes current sociocultural lenses for studying human development as the legacies of Dewey and Mead, multiple derivatives of 20th century

Marxism, and the Soviet school of psychology associated with the translated works of Vygotsky (1986; 1978) and his students (see, e.g., Luria, 1979); Bakhtin and his circle (1981; 1986); the writings of their American translators and scholars (see, e.g., Cole, 1996; Cole, Engeström, Vasquez, & University of California San Diego. Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1997; Cole & Scribner, 1974; Holquist, 2002; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1985, 1998, 2002); and, more recently, critical social theories emphasizing the role of social practices, language and ideological discourses in the (re)production of human interactions (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990; Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; de Certeau, 1984).

Vygotskian frameworks for social research share the notion that cognition is the consequence of the "mind in society" (Vygotsky, 1978). That is, in a fundamental transformation of the interpersonal to the intrapersonal, learning is a process whereby "higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

As such, sociocultural theories for L2 teacher education have challenged theories of science that locate teacher-learning exclusively in the mind of the learner and isolated from the social and physical contexts where such learning is situated and "distributed" (see, e.g., Salomon, 1993).

Contemporary Sociocultural Research for L2 Teacher Education

Critics have argued that Freeman and Johnson's (1998) sociocultural agenda for L2 teacher education pays inadequate attention to what language teachers need to know about language and second language acquisition to teach language (see, e.g., Yates & Muchisky, 2003). The argument goes, if a math teacher needs to know math to be able to

teach it, then a language teacher needs to know language and about language. Others argue that the Freeman and Johnson framework avoids more structural issues of power and domination that created the discipline and continue to sustain it (Ramanathan, 2002). Nonetheless, the Freeman and Johnson framework has become a point of reference for contemporary research examining the complexity of L2 teachers' ways of knowing and the complexity of putting their knowledge into use.

For example, employing a sociocultural framework, Golombek and Johnson (2004) have argued narrative inquiry as a "mediational space" whereby teachers draw upon private journals and peer and "expert" theoretical knowledge to re-write new understandings of themselves as teachers and their teaching (cf., Johnson & Golombek, 2002).

Duff and Uchida (1997) draw from Vygotskian principles to examine teachers' negotiation of institutional and curricular expectations for their teaching of North American culture in a private language school in Japan.

Likewise, with a Vygotskian lens, Sharkey (2004) presents findings from the first year of a three-year qualitative case study of teacher knowledge and "voice" in an ESOL curriculum development project to argue "contextualizing" as a form of teacher praxis. Conceptualizing context as a series of "swirling concentric circles" of classroom, school, community, state, and nation, Sharkey argues that the learning processes of her 10 participants as they negotiate a curriculum innovation can only be adequately documented or understood when situated in the sociocultural contexts where that negotiation process takes place.

Sociocultural research for L2 teacher education such as Golombek and Johnson's (2004), Duff and Uchida's (1997), and Sharkey's (2004) have created a standard for this research effort. Simultaneously, their work generates a number of questions that have informed this dissertation study.

In a North Georgia community college, what sorts of "mediational spaces" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002) exist for instructors to create new understandings of themselves as teachers and of their teaching? How, like the expatriate teachers of Duff and Uchida's (1997) study, did ESL Learning Support instructors negotiate "remediation"? Or, following Sharkey's (2004) argument, what were the "swirling concentric circles" of context that informed the teachers of Sweet Water's ESL program? These are some of the questions that existing empirical and participatory research for L2 teacher education bring to this study of the dilemmas of teaching ESL Learning Support in a public two-year college in North Georgia.

To conclude this portion of my review, unease about knowledge base for L2 teacher education is not something new. Mirroring concerns in general teacher education, the malaise over L2 teacher education surfaced at the end of the 1980's (Richards, 1987). That malaise continues to preoccupy prominent researchers for L2 teacher education (Freeman, 1993, 1998, 2002; Freeman & Cornwell, 1993; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman & Richards, 1996; K. E. Johnson, 1996; Johnson, 1999, 2006, 2000; Richards, 1998).

Research for general teacher education is substantial; and, it has emphasized the "contexts and circumstances of teaching" (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1994). As TESOL Quarterly marks its 40th anniversary, more research for the knowledge base of L2 teacher

education has been generated since Freeman and Johnson's (1998) landmark inventory. However, specifically, how L2 teachers construct the realities of their classrooms and how their interpretations of those realities inform their teaching remains understudied in research for L2 teacher education (for comprehensive reviews, see, e.g., Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002). This is particularly true of research for the public two-year college where the context and circumstances of being and ESL teacher are undeniably complicated by ESL Learning Support's ambiguous position in the continuum of postsecondary remediation.

This dissertation joins ongoing efforts to construct an empirical basis for the reconceptualization of L2 teacher education. However, "Contexts matter" (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1994, p. 180). Therefore, this study examines teachers' understandings of their professional selves in a specific context, namely, that of an ESL Learning Support program at public two-year college in North Georgia.

Remediation, the Public Two-Year College, and ESL Learning Support

Moving to a discussion of what has and hasn't been written about teaching ESL Learning Support at the public two-year college, I continue this review with a broad examination of contemporary debates surrounding postsecondary remediation. I discuss the unstable point of two-year college ESL on that continuum. I comment on existing empirical studies for the teaching ESL in community colleges. I conclude with a discussion of the ways in which research for L1/L2 college composition has informed this study.

The Catch-22 of the Public Two-year College

Ideally, college is for everyone who wants it. Yet, the sheer numbers of remedial courses currently offered by U.S. postsecondary institutions seem to indicate that not everyone is "college material." While remediation has been part of the postsecondary landscape for decades (Phipps, 1998), when the "darling" of the open-admissions movement, the City University of New York (CUNY), began phasing out remedial coursework across its 11 campuses in 1999, the relegation of remediation to the two-year college appeared definitive and irreversible (Lewiecki-Wilson & Sommers, 1999; Reitano, 1999).

In their national survey of community colleges, Jenkins and Boswell (2002) reported that in the fall semester of 2000, public two-year colleges were more likely than any other U.S. postsecondary institution to provide remediation in the form of one or more reading, writing, or mathematics courses. Likewise, once in public two-year college remediation, students remained for longer average periods of time compared to freshmen in remedial coursework in private two and four-year institutions, and public four-year institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

To a great extent, therefore, contemporary discussions about postsecondary remediation are about the public two-year college whose so-called "Catch-22" has been identified as a historic commitment to access and, simultaneously, a desire to maintain high standards (see, Perin, 2006).

What is Remediation?

Merisotis and Phipps (2000) argue that the prevalence of remediation at the public two-year college is not solely a function of the "under-preparedness" of public two-year college students. Rather, students tested for remediation are that much more likely to be

identified as needing it. Thus, one of the potential reasons that so many U.S. two-year

college students are in remedial coursework is simply because procedures for identifying

students for such coursework exist (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

What is Postsecondary Remediation?

As I have mentioned previously, "remediation," "learning support,"

"developmental education," and "basic-skills training" are some of the nomenclature for

what the Educational Commission of the States (2005) defines as, "Coursework offered

at a postsecondary institution (two/four-year institution) that is below college-level work"

(see http://www.ecs.org).

Awkwardly, the Commission's understandings of "remediation" are only as clear

as its understandings of "college-level." Neither enjoys a national consensus. Phipps

(1998) concludes, "In fact, remediation is very much in the eye of the beholder" and

contingent on a definition of "collegiate-level" performance and what fails to meet or

surpasses it.

Definitions of "remediation" are contested; so too are its benefits. Postsecondary

remediation is effective (Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham, 1997; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000); it

isn't (L. F. Johnson, 1996); sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't (Bettinger & Terry

Long, 2005); and no one really can say conclusively (Perin, 2006).

What is ESL Learning Support?

Where ESL falls along the band of postsecondary remediation is as highly

contested as the deficit metaphors that have long dominated the discourse of remedial

instruction (see, e.g., Shaughnessy, 1998). Ignash (1997) explains, "Proponents of ESL

argue that ESL students are not cognitively deficient . . . opponents argue that ESL

courses do not contain college-level material and are therefore analogous to remedial/developmental education" (p. 14). Thus, from the glass-half-full-perspective to which many of my two-year college ESL colleagues adhere, a college ESL course is akin to college French, Spanish, or Swahili courses—all are language learning. From a glass-half-empty perspective, two-year college ESL is remediation and exists as a remedy to the substandard education provisionally admitted freshmen bring with from secondary to postsecondary institutions.

The uneasy relationship between postsecondary ESL and postsecondary remediation that Ignash (1997) describes is mirrored by conflicting data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2001, 2003). Data from the 1995 NCES survey indicated:

- All ESL courses were considered remedial at 38 percent of institutions

- Another 38 percent of institutions considered none of their ESL courses to be remedial.

- The remaining 24 percent considered some of their ESL courses to be remedial.

Notably, the NCES survey does not relay any insight as to the participating institutions' definitions of "remedial."

What's in a Name?

In regards to public two-year college ESL Learning Support, one might ask, "What's in a name?" Calling public two-year college remediation for English learners in North Georgia "ESL Learning Support" is, potentially, a deliberate and thoughtful choice of the college—one, furthermore, supported by a long tradition of activist pedagogy in

college literacy classrooms (for a historical anthology, see, Zamel & Spack, 1998). I honor that choice and tradition here.

However, I also recognize that the overwhelming majority of Sweet Water ESL Learning Support coursework was not for transfer/degree credit. It cost the same amount as if it were. Furthermore, in the vast majority of cases, not-for-transfer/credit bearing ESL coursework was mandated by the administrators of Sweet Water College. Consequently, ESL coursework served, if implicitly, as an institutional gateway for English learners hoping to enroll in degree and transfer credit-bearing coursework to apply to a two-year or four-year college diploma.

On the one hand, remedial models of postsecondary ESL are potentially ghettoizing by their legitimization of the deficit thinking that posits non-native English speakers and writers as inherently inferior to their "native" counterparts (Canagarajah, 2002a; Horner & Trimbur, 2002; Lu, 1994). On the other hand, it has also been argued that first-generation college students are exceptionally vulnerable to misunderstanding the distinction between institutional and degree/transfer credit (see, e.g., Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2006).

One unintended consequence of "stigma-free" remediation is potentially a "delayed recognition" (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2006). That is, students' eventual realization that the coursework in which they are enrolled bears no degree-credit potentially risks making them, already highly vulnerable, even more so. More than half of the nation's two-year college students never complete a postsecondary degree (see, e.g., Fry, 2002).

To conclude this portion of my review, postsecondary remediation is a highly contested, yet robust component of American tertiary education increasingly central to discussions about the mission, failure, and success of U.S. community colleges (McCabe, 2000; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Perin, 2006; Phipps, 1998; Reitano, 1999). The steady growth of ESL programming in public two-year college curricula across the nation (Schuyler, 1999) complicates the already thorny issues surrounding postsecondary remediation. Not all ESL programming at the two-year college level is specifically directed toward degree-seeking students (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004); however, it is logical to assume that should the construct of L2 remediation exist at an institution, then degree-seeking students specifically tested for L2 remediation will increasingly find themselves directed to such programs (see, e.g., Meristosis & Phipps, 2000).

<div align="center">Research for ESL at the Public Two-year College</div>

Although relatively little specific attention has been paid to two-year college ESL Learning Support teachers or other postsecondary L2 remediation professionals, research for L1/L2 college composition is, certainly, substantial. It creates a backdrop for this dissertation study of teaching remedial ESL at a two-year college in North Georgia.

A Drain and a Burden

As mid-20th century English departments struggled to meet growing enrollments of returning veterans, and, later, the masses of open universities, the fledgling discipline of college composition simply lapsed into "a burden and a drain and made mechanical and trivial enough to justify the scorn with which it was usually treated" (Bartholomae, 2000, p. 1952).

Complicating matters, Matusda (1999) explains that the field of college composition took a new turn after 1941 with the opening of the federally funded English Language Institute in Ann Arbor, Michigan. By the late 1950's, the presence of English learners in college writing classrooms had appeared as an issue at the annual spring meetings of the Conference of College Composition and Communication (CCCC).

The Evolution of L2 College Composition

L2 college composition has since evolved as an (inter)discipline with growing historicity and with an accompanying and diverse body of research (Matsuda, 1999; Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland, & Warschauer, 2003; Matsuda & De Pew, 2002; Silva, 1993; Silva, Carson, & Leki, 1997). Research has, among other things, looked at ESL writers in undergraduate settings (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999; Hillenbrand, 1994; Leki, 1991; Zamel, 1995; Zamel & Spack, 2004), in graduate and postgraduate contexts (Canagarajah, 2002b; P. A. Prior, 1998), and the various issues surrounding the teaching of writing to multilingual students (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2006; Zamel & Spack, 1998)—including critical pedagogies (Canagarajah, 2002a).

The critical attention that research has brought to various issues surrounding college composition also informs this study such as the uneasy relationship between part-time/adjunct faculty and their employers (CCCC Committee on Part-Time/Adjunct Issues, 2001; Grego & Thompson, 1996; Murphy, 2000), professional fatigue and renewal (Bishop, 2001; Harris, 2000; Lewiecki-Wilson & Sommers, 1999), and diversity (Bizzaro, 2002; Brueggemann, Feldmeier White, Dunn, Heifferon, & Cheu, 2001; M. Gibson, Marinara, & Meem, 2000; Okawa, 2002; Schell, 1998).

In spite of the vast body of research for L1/L2 college composition, not much of it—be it about writers, teachers, or curricula—has treated community colleges as specific institutional environments or sites of ideological confrontation. But, some research specific to two-year college ESL is out there.

Adult ESL and Community Colleges

Crandall and Sheppard's (2004) recent inventory of the various types of adult ESL programming that exist in U.S. community colleges demonstrates recent concerns about adult English language programming in such institutions. However, it is important to note that Crandall and Sheppard employ an extremely broad definition of adult ESL students: "Learners aged 18 or older who are enrolled in one of the many types of adult ESL programs offered by community colleges and a wide range of other service providers" (p. 2). Consequently, the programming that Crandall and Sheppard examine ranges "from basic ESL literacy and numeracy (for those not literate in their own language and/or who also have limited mathematical education) to very advanced academic ESL (which prepares adults for postsecondary or professional programs" (p. 2).

Perhaps unconsciously, the Crandall and Sheppard (2004) study downplays two-year college ESL's remedial association. Their preference for a broad definition of adult ESL—one shared by other researchers (e.g., Smoke, 1998)—ultimately deflects attention away from the specificity of subcollegiate ESL coursework at public two-year college institutions in favor of a broader dialogue about adult literacy between its many providers.

One contrast to Crandall and Sheppard's (2004) research for the broader domain of adult ESL is Harklau's (2000) ethnographic analysis of the vastly different ways

secondary and postsecondary institutions represent English learners and English learners'

responses to those conflicting representations. Yet, in Harklau's case studies the public

two-year college is something of a synecdoche for the larger experience of undergraduate

English learners. Moreover, Harklau's work (e.g., Harklau et al., 1999) is more often

associated with a so-called "Generation 1.5" than the public two-year college in

particular.

Generation 1.5

A protean and potentially disabling category (see, e.g., Harklau, 1999),

Generation 1.5 encompasses a broad and fluid spectrum of active U.S. educated English

learners, and the category has been used by researchers and practitioners to locate their

identities on a band between first and second generation immigrants (see, e.g., Goen,

Porter, Swanson, & Vandommelen, 2002; Rumbaut & Ima, 1988).

A large part of the two and four-year college Generation 1.5 literature has been

driven by what I characterize as a "best program" paradigm (see, e.g., Destandau &

Wald, 2002; Holten, 2002; Kuo, 1999; Miele, 2003; Noji, 2002; Peterman, 2002; Reid,

1997; Thonus, 2003). For example, arguing that rising numbers of Generation 1.5

students are "unprepared to face the academic and social challenges of higher education"

(p. 12), Goldschmidt, Notzold, and Ziemba Miller (2003) describe a 30-hour summer

intervention for their institution's incoming Generation 1.5 freshmen:

> The 30-Hour Program is not meant to replace or to "teach" freshman courses; it is
>
> meant to emphasize what is important to prepare students for these courses:
>
> organizing time; following directions; understanding assignments; and mastering

math, grammar, and writing skills. Such skills are expected of all students in

higher education. (p. 14)

On the one hand, Goldschmidt, Notzold, and Ziemba Miller's pragmatism resonates with

arguments in favor of institutional interventions to redress historical structural

inequalities immigrants and children of immigrants face in U.S. education (see, e.g., Moll

& Ruiz, 2002; P. Portes, 2005). On the other hand, others might perceive 30-hour

solutions as patronizing, or, even worse, as a postsecondary manifestation of a historic

"subtractive" (Valenzuela, 1999) paradigm of English language teaching in U.S. schools

(see also, e.g., M. A. Gibson, 1988; Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002;

Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Alvarez, 2000; Suárez-Orozco, 2000; Suárez-Orozco &

Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valdés, 1996, 2001; Valencia, 1997, 2002; Valencia & Suzuki,

2001; Valenzuela, 2000, 2002, 2004).

The Conundrum of "Can be able to"

One example of the dissonance between critical and more pragmatic stances such

as Goldschmidt et al.'s (2003), is Lu's (1994) story of how one international (F1 Visa)

student's unorthodox combining of the modal "can" with the idiom "be able to"

repeatedly results in "can be able to." Lu theorizes "can be able to" not as a mistake, but

as a conscious act of resistance to dominant linguistic codes.

Lu's repositioning of "can be able to" is characteristic of the "*conscientizaçaõ*"

(Freire, 2000) of L1/L2 composition studies (see Durst, 2006; Leki et al., 2006) framing

"teachers as transformative intellectuals" (see, Giroux, 1988).

Yet, a handful of researchers within college composition have challenged college

composition's "pedagogy of confrontation" altogether as potentially incongruent with

students' motivations for attending college in the first place (see, e.g., Durst, 1999; 1997).

Smith (1997), for example, argues that the excluded masses that L1/L2 college

composition aims to liberate are the ones that never got into college in the first place.

Those who did get in, Smith speculates, are not motivated by a desire to overthrow a

system. Rather, such students are motivated by the desire to join its ranks.

Looking to the Future

In short, the competing discourses surrounding issues of teaching of English

learners and other non-traditional students at the postsecondary level complicate this

study. In the near future, that complexity is likely to intensify. Two-year institutions

offering English as a Second Language are increasingly dramatically, especially in areas

of the country with large immigrant populations (Schuyler, 1999). More immigrants and

children of immigrants are entering postsecondary education via the public two-year

college—not simply as adult learners, but as young women and men after a two or four-

year degree. At the postsecondary level, full-time and adjunct ESL Learning Support

instructors are increasingly the first individuals English learners encounter. Learning

about the attitudes of the faculty and how they perceive their relationship with this

population is thus important in order to help immigrant students gain access to the

benefits of U.S. society.

Conclusion: "Improvising" ESL Learning Support in North Georgia

To recapitulate, this study is inspired by two concerns. First, it responds to calls

for empirical and situated studies of L2 teachers' thinking-in-use to inform and

potentially re-form configurations for L2 teacher preparation (Canagarajah, 2006;

Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006). Second, recognizing the spread of ESL

programming across the public two-year college, this study responds to the need for empirical and situated research to understand such programming

In this literature review, I have outlined contemporary sociocultural frameworks for understanding L2 teaching and related calls for the reconceputalization of the knowledge base of L2 teacher education. I have examined various studies of L2 teaching indicative of TESOL's developing concern with the "local situatedness" (Canagarajah, 2006) of teachers' mental lives and their practice. I have reviewed current deliberations about postsecondary remediation. I have located public two-year college ESL Learning Support in those debates. I have commented on rarity of empirical studies explicitly examining the institutional peculiarities of teaching of public two-year college ESL. I have argued the need for more situated and empirical research to extend the dialogue between implicated disciplines such as the research and policy literature for postsecondary remediation, and L1/L2 college composition.

"As if"/Figured Worlds and the Teaching of ESL Learning Support

As I have mentioned, to my research question, I bring a Vygotskian lens crafted by Holland et al. (1998). Central to Vygotskian theories is the notion that the human psychological development happens on two planes: first, between individuals in meaning social interaction; and, then, at an internal level. Vygotsky (1978) explains,

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the
> social level, and later on the individual level; first, between people
> (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsycholgical) . . . All the
> higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (p. 57)

At macro level, cultural anthropologists have long argued that how women and men come to be as individuals is largely dependent on their participation in the societies or cultures to which they are born or recruited—or what cultural anthropologists commonly refer to as "cultural models" (Holland & Quinn, 1987).

At the same time, Holland et al.'s (1998) "as if"/figured worlds theoretical framework extends the construct of cultural model through the idea of "improvisation." Introducing the concept of improvisation with an anecdote, Holland et al. tell the story of Maya, an "untouchable" woman in Nepal. Prohibited from entering Holland and Skinner's home through the front door lest she "pollute" the cooking area, Maya climbs up the side of the house and into Holland and Skinner's office for the interview she and they are intent on having. Climbing up the side of the house is her improvisation.

Looking at Maya across Vygotsky (1978), Bakhtin (1981), and Bourdieu (1977), Holland et al. (1998) argue that the subjectivities of women and men, while bounded in social and cultural processes, are, nevertheless, in a constant flux. As such, they conclude,

> Human collectives and individuals often move themselves—led by hope,
>
> desperation, or even playfulness, but certainly by no rational plan—from one set
>
> of socially and culturally formed subjectivities to another. (p. 6-7)

This dissertation aims to understand what climbing up the side of the house might look like in a public two-year college's remedial ESL program.

In North Georgia, ESL instructors inhabit the figured world of "ESL Learning Support." Working for an institution called Sweet Water, they are charged with preparing "non-American English" learners to succeed in college level coursework. Potentially, that

is not all: "Identities—if they are alive, if they are being lived—are unfinished and in process" (Holland et al., 1998, p. vii). In the "landscape of action" (Holland et al., 1998) of a two-year college in North Georgia, "ESL instructor" is possibly variable, multi-vocal, interactive, and unpredictable. It is to the improvisations of five teachers that I turn.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Multiple stands of contemporary social research have argued for transparency not only in the choices of methodologies and methods around which a research proposal is constructed, but also for transparency in researchers' justification for such choices (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). Crotty (1998) proposes four elemental questions for social research design: "What methods do we propose to use? What methodology governs our choice and use of methods? What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question? What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?" (p. 2). In this chapter, I address Crotty's four questions in their reverse order. I articulate the epistemological and theoretical stances that have guided the choice of methodology for this project; and, I specify the methods and procedures of data generation and analysis I have employed.

Methodological Underpinnings

Epistemology

At an epistemological level, this research effort is aligned with constructionism, a theory of knowledge that frames meanings as things constructed by women and men as they participate in the world around them and employ the interpretive strategies available to them. Precisely, Crotty (1998) defines constructionist epistemology as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within a social context" (p. 42).

Theoretical Framework

Constructionist epistemologies have given way to a variety of theoretical perspectives including "social constructivism" and "social constructionism." While social constructivism and social constructionism are often used interchangeably, Hruby (2001) identifies social constructivism as a distinct ensemble of theories about human cognition associated with Vygotsky and related Soviet schools of psychology that give special attention to "the fashioning of internal structures in accordance with the requirements of an individual's surrounding" (p. 48).

Similarly, Crotty (1998) defines social constructivism, in contrast to social constructionism, as "an individualist understanding of the constructionist position" (p. 58). By contrast, constructionism, he argues, "Emphasizes the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things (even the way in which we feel things!) and gives us a quite definite view of the world" (p. 58). For Crotty, Neo-Vygotskian modes of social constructivism are naïvely individualistic and lacking critical chutzpah.

While the tensions between social constructivism and social constructionism that Crotty (1998) describes are similar concerns for Holland et al. (1998), the latter perceive the bifurcation between a "culturalist", i.e., constructionist, position and a Vygotskian, i.e., constructivist, position as counter-productive. Rather than choosing between the two perspectives, Holland et al. advocate a dialogic frame that addresses both culturalist/constructionist and Vygotskian/constructivist positions through the concept of "improvisation." They explain:

> One's history-in-person is the sediment from past experiences upon which one improvises, using the cultural resources available, in response to the subject positions afforded on in the present. The constraints are overpowering, yet not

hermetically sealed. Improvisation can become the basis for a reformed

subjectivity. (p. 18)

The neo-Vygotskian/constructivist theoretical framework that I employ in this

dissertation study is aligned with Holland et al.'s argument caveat against the bifurcation

of constructivist and constructionist frameworks.

Methodology

Methodologically, an important number of contemporary researchers attuned to

Vygotskian theories of "the mind in society" have employed anthropological processes of

ethnographic production to understand the social formation of the individual in an array

of cultural and social contexts (see, e.g., Holland et al., 1998; Holland & Lave, 2001;

Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990, 2003).

This qualitative study of teachers' engagement in the social phenomenon of ESL

Learning Support follows such precedents and employs an ethnographic methodology

fashioned after a humanistic, interpretive, and hermeneutic model of anthropological

scholarship advocated by Geertz (1973) emphasizing the irreducibility of meaning.

For Geertz (1973), ethnographic writings are "fictions"—"In the sense that they

are 'something made,' 'something fashioned' . . . not that they are false, unfactual, or

merely 'as if' thought experiments" (p. 15). Elaborating his understanding of

ethnographic production, Geertz compares ethnographic production to the act of a literary

critic reading an ambiguous manuscript—" (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a

manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and

tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in

transient examples of shaped behaviors" (p. 10).

Geertz's (1973) "literary" approach to anthropology has since been complicated by discussions about poetics and politics of writing culture—who gets to write about whom and how and their sometimes lasting implications for those who are writing and those who are being written about (see, e.g., Behar & Gordon, 1995; Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Or, as Holland et al. (1998) explain, "Twenty years ago, Geertz could get away with analyzing the cockfight in Bali, a solely masculine activity, without paying particular attention to the social significance of its gendered quality, or who participated and who did not" (p. 25).

Furthermore, Clifford (1990) argues that Geertz's (1973) strong association of ethnographic construction with description suggests a "specular, representational relationship to culture" (p. 68). That relationship, Clifford asserts, is impossible to maintain even if an ethnographer were to desire to do so. On the other hand, he argues, "It is possible to be serious, truthful, factual, thorough, scrupulous, referential—without claiming to be describing anything" (p. 68).

While arguments such as Clifford's (1990) have problematized understandings of ethnographic production, Geertz's semiotic concept of culture continues to inform analytic methods in ethnographic research for language and literacy education. In her activist ethnography of the literacy practices of inner-city residents facing eviction from their homes, Cushman (1999), for example, cites Geertz's (1973) work as a central methodological inspiration: "Each artifact and event was analyzed in much the same way that a literary critic might read a text" (p. 254).

Methods

In a Geertzian tradition, this dissertation study is my "reading" of the two-and-a-half-year experience that constituted this study. Specific procedures or methods for fashioning and reading my data followed Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (1995) practical considerations of the processes of ethnographic writing. I elaborate those procedures in the final section of this chapter.

Evolution of the Project

My entry to Sweet Water College followed from the happy coincidence of my running into Meredith shortly after the 2004 New Year. A graduate school classmate of mine and the coordinator of Sweet Water's ESL program, Meredith had been working at the College since Fall 1997. I took advantage of our acquaintance to ask if she might know of an ESL classroom that I might observe. A few phone calls later, she had arranged for me to meet with Taylor, a Sweet Water ESL instructor and friend of Meredith from her graduate school days who, Meredith explained, was "used to" having strangers in her classroom, and, moreover, sympathetic to graduate students in search of a field site.

By mid-January 2004, I had made my first visit to the college, met with Taylor, and arranged for participant observation for duration of her ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing course. Here I define participant observation as a method of qualitative data generation whereby researchers' sustained first-hand participation in initially unfamiliar social worlds leads to the production of written accounts of those worlds drawing upon such participation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Wolcott, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2001).

My travels to Sweet Water continued: Fall 2004, Spring 2005, Fall 2005, and Spring 2006. Participatory data collection shifted as the questions I asked during the semesters evolved. Initially, this project examined how English learners learned the five paragraph essay: the tools they and their teachers employed in that apprenticeship. By the second semester, the focus of my fieldnotes had shifted from teaching and learning the five paragraph essay to the individual complexity of the two-year college teachers I had begun to know. In Summer 2005, I began asking, "Why were degree-seeking students being placed in ESL to begin with and what were its socializing effects on those degree-seeking Latinos?" In Winter 2005, it became clear to me as I read and reread the reams of fieldnotes that the focus of my data had always been Sweet Water's ESL teachers. This study would be, finally, about five ESL teachers and about the ESL teacher who I had once been and am still.

Subjectivities

Who I am as a researcher has undoubtedly colored this research. I preface this description of my research design with a commentary on the various subjectivities I brought with me to the project and continue to impose.

Until my first visit to Sweet Water in January 2004, I had had no professional experience teaching in a community college. Community colleges were, nonetheless, familiar childhood landmarks. A handful of my high school classmates had concurrently enrolled at the Annandale Campus of The Northern Virginia Community College once they had sailed through the Advanced Placement coursework at the high-powered public high school we attended. Otherwise, going to what was more commonly known as "NOVA" was something of a neighborhood joke implying that the individual couldn't get

in anywhere else. Nevertheless, I too eventually went to NOVA where I took some 30 credit hours to complete various undergraduate deficiencies for teacher certification in the mid-1990's. Coursework included one public speaking and one computer graphic course and some 21 undergraduate credit hours in Spanish.

For two summers, I pedaled a second-hand bike from my parents' home to class daily—until the bike collapsed one afternoon on a hill near home. Other outstanding memories of NOVA include the "B" I received in public speaking and the draconian rubric the instructor employed. That same fall, as I continued coursework, I received an "F" on a mid-term in computer graphics—also hard to swallow for a Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Virginia.

A Marriage of Convenience

Ten years later, I found myself once again on the campus of a public two-year college—this time in Georgia. Although one motivation for doing my graduate study in Georgia had been the dynamic of its new Latino settlement and the research opportunities the phenomenon afforded, I had initially thought little of the public two-year college as a research site. The ease with which I received approval from my own university's institutional review board for the Sweet Water pilot was a deciding factor that eventually led me to commit to this project. By the time I had arrived to The University of Georgia, the word around campus was that IRB approval had become exceedingly time consuming when the proposed research involved English learners under the age of 18 in school settings. I was unwilling to pursue a research agenda at a site where IRB approval might be delayed or might never happen.

By the fourth week of the pilot, I had submitted an IRB application for the Sweet Water study—one I later modified but that I continued to renew over the ensuing two years. Admittedly, this dissertation began as a "marriage of convenience." True, I was not initially as passionate about Sweet Water as the proverbial wisdom surrounding the Ph.D. insisted that graduate students should be. Rather, I became so as our familiarity increased. I got used to Sweet Water and Sweet Water to me—to the point that data collection in Spring 2006 also included my teaching two sections of Vocabulary II, an ESL Learning Support course.

My own preoccupation with my relationship with the participating teachers of this study also influenced the evolution of this project. My primary and constant concern leading into the final round of data collection in Spring 2006 was building and maintaining a highly collaborative and professional simpatico with the teachers of this study. Perhaps I placed more value on what they were doing than on what I was doing, researching. Consequently, I hesitated a full semester before audio-taping any classroom instruction or any of my conversations with teachers or students until I felt that all of us were perfectly comfortable with what I was doing in their classrooms. My decision to teach at Sweet Water in Spring 2006 was, in part, a way of returning the favor to the greater Sweet Water community and my hosts for more than two years.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

As I mentioned, Meredith was my initial contact within ESL Learning Support. Meredith introduced me to Taylor, the only other full-time permanent faculty member in the program at the time. Both had an M.A. TESOL from a major TESOL and applied linguistics program in the U.S.

Meredith had been instrumental in developing an ESL program at Sweet Water in the late 1990's, and she had begun as a temporary part-time adjunct in 1997. She transitioned to permanent fulltime in Fall 1998—sculpting the program.

Taylor joined as a temporary full-time instructor in Fall 2002 and transitioned to permanent full time in Spring 2003. During the Spring 2004 pilot, Taylor became pregnant. At the end of the pilot, she announced that she would not return until Spring 2005. Consequently, she and Meredith introduced me to Roberta who, after some hesitation, became the primary participant during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. Joining the college in 2001 as a part-time temporary adjunct, Roberta also had her M.A. TESOL.

In Fall 2005, Meredith resigned. Taylor, subsequently, became the ESL program coordinator. Roberta, who had moved to temporary full-time in Fall 2005 during Taylor's maternity leave, was offered a permanent full-time position in Spring 2006 slated to begin Fall 2006. The offer was one the College postponed to Spring 2007 because of the maternity leave Roberta would be taking Fall 2006.

The final round of data collection in Spring 2006 included the participation of Taylor, Roberta, and the program's three part-time adjuncts: Louanne, June, and Lodoiska.

An Ed.D. in Adult Education, Louanne had been hired in 2003 as a "part-time temporary adjunct" to teach Japanese and ESL College Orientation. June, a Ph.D. in Intercultural Communication, migrated to Sweet Water after the closing of an intensive English language institute at a state university and taught Advanced Grammar and Writing. Lodoiska, a Polish national, earned an M.A. TESOL in 2005. She began

teaching Russian and Learning Support Writing at Sweet Water in Fall 2005. In Spring 2006, Lodoiska taught the third level ESL Reading III and Beginning Russian.

In Spring 2006, I became the forth part-time temporary adjunct—teaching two sections of ESL Vocabulary II.

The Setting

The low, sleek, architecture of Sweet Water College first opened its doors to North Georgia in 1964 with an enrollment of 419 students. As the greater Atlanta metro region crept steadily northeast, Sweet Water College's headcount grew. In Fall 2005, the college's total enrollment was 5,985. Of these, 5,819 were classified as Georgia Residents. The remaining 166 students were categorized as "Out of State" (79) or "Out of Country" (87). Of the 5,985 students enrolled 5,210 students self-identified as White Non-Hispanic, 289 as Hispanic, 235 as Black Non-Hispanic, 145 as Asian or Pacific Islander, 84 as Multiracial, and 22 as American Indian or Alaskan Native.

In Fall 2005, the non-residential two-year college officially became "Sweet Water State College" and with its new name began offering four-year degrees. By Spring 2006, four-year degrees included the Bachelors of Applied Science in Environment and Spatial Analysis, Bachelor of Science with a Major in Early Childhood Care and Education, and the Bachelor of Applied Science with a Major in Technology Management. Still, during the period of data generation, Sweet Water maintained a decidedly two-year college mission with the overwhelming majority of its students pursing Associate (two-year degrees) in the Arts, Sciences, and Applied Sciences or certificate programs in Information Technology, Geographic Information Systems, and Personal Fitness Training.

Admission to Sweet Water

Graduates of accredited high schools who came to Sweet Water fell into two admission categories: Full Freshman Admission and Provisional Freshman Admission. Full Freshman Admission from high school depended on two considerations: the applicant's official college entrance examination scores (489 Verbal and 460 Math on SAT-1; 21 English and 19 Mathematics on the ACT) and a high school transcript indicating that the applicant had successfully completed a College Prep Curriculum (CPC) that the College's website described as the following:

Table 1

Minimum Requirements for CPC Completion

Course (Units)	Instructional Emphasis
English (4)	GRAMMAR AND USAGE
	Literature (American and World)
	Advanced Composition skills
Mathematics (4)	Two courses/units in Algebra (I and II) and one in Geometry
Effective for 2001 High School Graduates. Three units required for graduates earlier than 2001.	*Fourth Math must be higher level than Algebra II.
Science (3)	Physical Sciences
	Laboratory Sciences
	Other Approved Sciences
Social Science (3)	American History

	World History
	Economics and Government
Foreign Language (2)	Skill-building courses (units)
	Emphasizing speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Note. Reproduced from the On-Line Sweet Water Catalogue Fall '06 - Spring '07.

During the Summer of 1997 the University System Board of Regents established a Minimum Freshman Index of 1830—a figured determined by calculating the applicants high school grade point average in college preparatory courses multiplied by 500 and adding SAT-1 scores.

High school graduates not meeting the requirements for Full Freshman Admission were granted Provisional Freshman Admission. Students falling into this category were required to take the appropriate sections of the COMPASS Exam—a pre-packaged assessment technology developed by the ACT and in use across the University System of Georgia—prior to registration in order to determine specific requirements for remediation in reading, English, and mathematics to determine their placement in reading, English, and mathematics Learning Support coursework.

During the period of data generation, The Sweet Water Catalog specified that Specific College Preparatory Curriculum (CPC) deficiencies be remediated in the manner reproduced here:

Table 2

Prescribed Remediation for CPC Deficiencies

Area of Deficiency	Prescribed Remediation
English	THE STUDENT MUST PASS COMPASS PLACEMENT TESTS IN READING AND ENGLISH OR COMPLETE LEARNING SUPPORT READING AND ENGLISH
Mathematics	The student must pass the compass placement test in Mathematics or complete Learning Support Mathematics.
Science	The student must complete SSCI 1100 with a grade "C" or better. Must be taken concurrently with ISCI 1101/1101L.
Social Science	The student must complete HIST 1111 or HIST 1112 or HIST 1121 or HIST 1122 or ECON 1100 with a grade "C" or better.
Foreign Language	The student must complete FREN 1001 or GRMN 1001 or RUSS 1001 or SPAN 1001 with a grade of "C" or better.

Note. Reproduced from the On-Line Sweet Water Catalogue Fall '06 - Spring '07.

Other admission classifications included: (1) Transfers from Other Colleges; (2) Non-traditional Adults; (3) GED Students; (4) Home Schooled Students; (5) ACCEL Program for High School Students; (6) Transient Students; (7) International Students; (8) Special Students; (9) Audit Students; (10), Persons 62 Years of Age or Older; and (11) Persons with Disabilities.

Learning Support

In the University System of Georgia, the Board of Regents first institutionalized postsecondary Developmental Studies programs in Fall 1974, "As a means of bringing the reading, English, and mathematical skills of marginally prepared students up to standard" (Office of Strategic Research and Analysis Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2001). In 1993, Developmental Studies policy and procedures were reconfigured under an umbrella organizational structure of Learning Support.

The Board of Regents allowed individual institutions to set higher regular admission standards and/or higher standards for exiting Learning Support than those set by the Regents themselves—but not lower. Furthermore, the Board of Regents' policy was that only institutional credit and not degree or transfer credit be awarded for Learning Support courses.

Sweet Water Learning Support, thus, served three categories of students: (1) those students who did not meet the Georgia's University System's minimum requirements for placement in "collegiate" coursework (430 SAT-Verbal or 400 SAT-Math or CPC English or CPC Math); (2) those students who met the System's minimum requirements but not those set by Sweet Water College; and (3), those who did meet institutional admission requirements but voluntarily took Learning Support courses. In sum, Learning Support enrollment was a combination of students "involuntarily" placed into the program and a small minority of those who freely choose to enroll therein.

In Fall 2005, the total number of first-time freshmen at Sweet Water totaled 1,567. Of those first-time freshmen, 803 were enrolled in one or more Learning Support courses—a little more than 51% (Office of Strategic Research and Analysis Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2005).

ESL Learning Support

When I began traveling to Sweet Water in January 2004, the ESL program was then housed in Learning Support and Learning Support under the organizational leadership of the Division of Humanities. In Fall 2005, Learning Support became a freestanding Division—directly administrating the mainstream and ESL Learning Support programs.

Meredith explained that Sweet Water ESL coursework was first offered in Fall 1997—"with one or two classes taught by a Spanish instructor with 'supposedly' some linguistics training and a French teacher with one or two of the K-12 ESOL endorsement courses." By Spring 2004, ESL Learning Support was a four-pronged attack of coursework in communication, grammar/writing, reading, and vocabulary. Of the 10 courses offered, only one carried degree/transfer credit: ESLO 1101 Classroom Communication and College Orientation. The remaining nine non-degree/transfer ESL courses were sequential prerequisites for the college's college composition requirement and a litany of degree/transfer credit-bearing "reading intensive" courses at the 100/1000 levels and beyond. Specifically, the ESL program consisted of three Grammar/Writing courses, three Reading courses, two Communication courses, two Vocabulary courses, and one College Orientation course.

Data Inventory

For the two-and-a-half years of fieldwork, the ritualistic 45 mile drive to Sweet Water was something I often dreaded given the state of my hand-me-down Toyota—a commute and repair schedule that intensified during the final semester of data collection.

Arriving some 30 to 45 minutes ahead of a scheduled observation or appointment, I began my Sweet Water visits in the Academic, Computing, Tutoring & Testing Center (ACTT). The ACCT was a computer lab that divided the low square building the ESL program and Division of Learning Support and served as an electronic watering hole between classes. Until I was assigned an office in Spring 2006, the ACCT was where I "hung out" while waiting for Taylor or Roberta to arrive or where I would return to the ACCT after an observation or interview to expand a fieldnote.

My participation during the classroom observations ranged from that of a silent observer talking notes on an Alpha-Smart to that of an active participant helping with small group or individual work. In a number of instances, I willingly substituted for my colleagues.

Sessions typically ended with more conversation with the instructor and students—either in the classroom itself, in the instructor's office, or in the ACCT. Fifteen to 30 minutes later I would make my way back to the parking lot and start the drive home.

Data from the first four semesters of participant observation constituted 160+ hours of site visits as documented in 300 + pages of fieldnotes, 500 + pages of instructional artifacts, 10 audiotaped hours of classroom interactions, and 5 hours of audiotaped conversations with participants. The following table represents data collection from January 2004 to December 2005:

Table 3

Data Collection January 2004 - December 2005

Semester	Participant Observation	Site Visits/Hours	Data Generation
Spring 2004	Taylor's Classroom	10 @ 2.5 hrs 25+ hrs.	Fieldnotes, website, classroom handouts
Fall 2004	Roberta's Classroom	17 @ 2.5hrs 42+ hrs.	Fieldnotes, course books, classroom handouts, audio-taped conversations and instruction
Spring 2005	Roberta's Classroom	16 @ 2.5hrs 40 + hrs	Classroom handouts, writing samples, rubrics, audio-taped conversations and instruction
Fall 2005	Taylor and Roberta's Classrooms	13 site visits 50 + hrs	Classroom handouts, writing folders for focus students, audio-taped conversations and instruction

A springboard for the final semester of data collection, previous rounds of participant

observation formed the basis for my asking and answering the following research

question in Spring 2006,

- In the setting of a public two-year college in North Georgia, how are ESL Learning

  Support faculty members' subject positions mediated by their understandings of and

  engagement with the multiple and interactive contexts that frame their professional

  activity?

Spring 2006 Data Collection

Interview/Observation Schedule Spring 2006

Along with participant observation in Academic II, short and informal conversations with teachers—in the hallway of the Division of Learning Support, in sparsely furnished classrooms, and in yellow office cubicles filled with decorations from around the world, pictures of babies, relatives, and maps—were an ongoing source of data collection during the duration of the project. Informal and ongoing conversational partnerships with the ESL program's instructors touched on broad issues of their professional and personal backgrounds, and more specific questioning concerning aspects of their daily professional routines.

A final and more systematic round of data generation took place in Spring 2006. Teaching Mondays and Wednesdays in Spring 2006, I arrived at the college at 7:30 am. On Mondays, I left the college by 1:30 p.m. and on Wednesdays as late as 8:00 p.m. My visits to Sweet Water increased to include Tuesday, Thursday, or both, depending on what I had programmed with the teachers, the events taking place at the College that week, or a call from one of my colleagues to substitute.

Thus, the Spring 2006 round consisted of over 200 hours at the site included a blend of scheduled, formal, sit-down, audiotaped interviews with participating teachers and a program of participant observation in their individual classrooms.

The Spring 2006 initial interview protocol (see Appendix A) was generated from an inventory of the questions I had posed in my fieldnotes during the previous semesters of data collection with Taylor and Roberta and was guided by research questions I had established at the start of the final round of data collection. After each subsequent round

of programmed participant observation, I followed-up with more questions to individual

teachers—audiotaping these conversations usually in the classroom where the

observation had just taken place or in the office I shared with Louanne and June. The

Spring 2006 exit interview (Appendix B) was based on a review of the data generated

during the semester's initial and follow-up observations/interviews with teachers.

The table below represents programmed observations and interviews Spring 2006:

Table 4

Data Collection Spring 2006

Data/Participant	Roberta	Taylor	Louanne	June	Lodoiska
Initial Interview	02.09	02.13	01.25	02.14	02.22
Observation/Interview	02.13	02.14	02.14	02.14	02.22
Observation/Interview	02.15	02.16	02.16	02.16	03.06
Observation/Interview	02.20	03/06	04.11	04.04	03.08
Observation/Interview	03.20	04.11	04.27	04.11	03.22
Exit Interview	05.05	05.05	05.02	05.05	No Interview

Planned observations were supplemented by informal, spontaneous observations,

substitutions, and less formal—but often audiotaped—conversations with my colleagues

throughout the semester.

Archival Documentation

Data collection also included the examination of electronic and printed articulations of the University System of Georgia's policies for remediation in its two-year institutions and Sweet Water's application of those policies to its ESL/Learning Support Programs. Archival documentation provided clarification as to the academic rules and regulations guiding ESL at the College as informed by the State of Georgia's University System's guidelines for postsecondary remediation. Key documents include (1) the College's website; and (2), the website of the Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia: http://www.usg.edu/. Examination of archival data established a baseline of the policies and procedures for ESL and to determine which policies are (1) the state's, (2) the institution's, or (3) an individual's "improvisation" (Holland et al., 1998).

Data Management and Analysis

In this section, I attempt to make transparent the manner whereby I made meaning of my data—or, following Geertz (1973), the ways whereby I "read" them.

As I previously mentioned, the practical methodological processes of ethnographic production outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) informed the ensemble of the specific data management and analytic procedures. Specific data compression and analytic strategies included: close reading; open and focused coding of fieldnotes and interviews; in-process analytic writing; initial and integrative memo writing; and, content analysis of archival data.

Close Reading, Coding, and Memo Writing

Close Reading

What has become apparent for many qualitative researchers is that meanings do not miraculously emerge from ethnographic data like Aegean goddesses foaming on half-shells. Rather, and in keeping with the theoretical underpinnings of the methodological approach I have adopted, meanings are constructed.

As is typical in ethnographic approaches to qualitative research, data analysis was an inductive, recursive, and ongoing process that accompanied data generation and continued afterwards (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Emerson et al., 1995; Wolcott, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2001).

Central to my analytic process was the reading and re-reading fieldnotes and transcripts generated during the five semesters. These multiple readings were ways of my asking questions—first of the data set as a whole, then of specific pieces of fieldnote data. Accordingly, in the earlier stages of the project, "close readings" directed or, in some cases, redirected subsequent data collection by generating new questions that I pursued as the project unfolded.

Open and Focused Coding

With the conclusion of data generation, close reading continued as a means of data compression that Emerson et al. (1995) compare to "looking to identify threads that can be woven together to tell a story (or a number of stories) about the observed social world" (p. 142). Geertz (1973) cautions that the notion of codes and coding in ethnographic production are potentially misleading—"For it makes the enterprise sound too much like that of the cipher clerk when it is much more like that of the literary critic" (p. 9). I, nevertheless, employed strategies of open and focused coding as a means of working with my data set.

In coding my data, I did not employ a priori categories. Rather, in open coding, I read fieldnotes and transcripts one line at time. For example, using the comment function in Microsoft Word or a pencil, I assigned the following open codes to this Fall 2005 fieldnote—indicated here with brackets:

> Roberta jumps into a review of five-paragraph essay [Five Paragraph Essay]. She explains that no teacher really wants to say how long an essay should be; however, she explains that she's going to talk about what they should be aiming for [Roberta making the implicit, explicit].
>
> Introduction (3 sentences) + closed thesis statement [Closed thesis statement] "Anything smaller than that and the English professor might say this is not really developed . . ." [Roberta second-guessing the English professors]

In focused coding, I reviewed the various tags I had assigned to the complete data set. I then assigned a name to the threads that I saw linking the assorted tags I had previously established in the data through open coding. In the fieldnote above, for example, I collapsed the open codes I had assigned during the initial readings of the entire data set— "Five paragraph essay; Closed thesis statement; Roberta making the implicit, explicit; Roberta second-guessing the English professors"—into the focused category of "The ways ESL teachers talked about high stakes assessment to their students."

Initial and Integrative Memo Writing

The initial theoretical memos that I composed explored theoretical implications of data. Emerson et al. (1995) encourage a degree of flexibility and openness in initial coding and memo writing to entertain a wide range of ideas, linkages, and connections: "At this point, many ethnographers continue to write primarily for themselves, focusing

on putting the flow of their thoughts on paper and maintaining the loose, "note this" and "observe that" style . . . " (p. 162).

During the course of fieldwork, I sporadically embedded initial memos—notes to myself—in my fieldnotes. For example:

- The "pop" quiz that was announced last Wednesday is practice for the pop-quizzes the English 1101 professors will occasionally administer. I don't think I ever had a pop quiz in college. Can't remember one. No, I never did. Pop-quiz and the culture of Sweet Water. Assessment is everywhere. I wonder how the new SAT will impact Sweet Water. Actually, what Roberta is doing seems to be in sync with what I've heard the new SAT will be about.

- Students seem to be familiar with the five paragraph essay format—offering information like "thesis" and where it goes. Salvador especially chimes in during this activity—in a deep southern drawl which throws me off. I wonder how long he has been in living in Georgia.

In contrast to initial memos, Emerson et al. (1995) describe integrative memos as more sustained explorations of relationships between closely read and coded fieldnotes. Thus, integrative memos constituted a more persistent examination of a theme or issues by linking together discrete observations across data.

The following is an example of an integrative memo written in the spring of 2005 after a round of open and focused coding in the fall of 2004:

Although the English professors' courses are also officially designated as "Learning Support" at Sweet Water, in the pecking order of Sweet Water College Roberta's course is nevertheless understood to be supportive than others. The

syllabus of this course is produced by her colleagues and privileges the

remediation given to native speakers of English as the precedent and standard for

her students' remediation. Throughout the lifecycle of Advanced Grammar and

Writing, Roberta consistently frames what she does and what her students do, and

will have to do, in relation to what the English professors want, what the English

professors expect, what the English professors' reaction will be. Noticeably, the

sorts of mistakes that seem to annoy the English professors most are the

conventions a native speaker of "Standard English" (another order of discourse)

would be less likely to violate: articles. The lack of an article or a superfluous one

betrays her students' foreign accents on paper and is ultimately unacceptable for

the English professors, and for the larger hegemonic discourse of "Assimilation."

<p style="text-align:center">In-process Analytic Writing</p>

Emerson et al. (1995) describe "in-process analytic writing" as attempts to

connect on paper something with something else—to establish a relation among things.

In my research process, in-process analytic writing took the forms of asides,

commentaries, and vignette writing.

Asides. Asides were my notes to myself included in my fieldnotes—spontaneous

attempts to interrogate, clarify, or interpret how something means or what was happening

at the site.

Waiting in the two-year college's computer lab, I jotted down the following note

to self in Fall 2005:

Another interesting contradiction. The heart and soul of this building is the ACTT

Center—the computer lab that is always full of students on the Internet and doing

homework. Interesting that the facility should be so modern and "with it" yet ESL

learning support still clings to its old ways. Interesting though that Taylor is

thinking about the role of technology and literacy in ESL. She explains in a

conversation at her office door that perhaps it's time to re-think the use of

technology within the ESL program. I wonder who shares her opinion?

Thus, the use of asides, or notes to myself, punctuated my fieldnotes as did commentaries

and in-process memos.

Commentaries. Like asides, commentaries are forms of in-process analytic

writing. I wrote commentaries throughout my data collection. Emerson et al (1995)

characterize commentaries as more elaborate reflections on a specific event or issue.

Commentaries recorded my own experiences and reactions during fieldwork.

Likewise, commentaries (1) raised issues of what terms and events mean to participants;

(2) made initial connections between a current and prior fieldnotes; (3) and indicated

need for further observation (see, Emerson et al. 1995, p. 103). For example, in Fall 2005,

I included the following commentary in my fieldnotes:

So actually, as a researcher, I still feel fairly close to these students—probably

because of my L2 heritage and also because I am struggling—like they are—to

escape a category I was recently imposed: "Bad writer." So here is a thought. One

way that students take up remediation (like Adolfo for example) is to chalk it up

to their lack of seriousness in high school. I wasn't serious then; but I am serious

now. So remediation is about becoming serious. Doing what you should have

done while you still had the chance.

Vignettes. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) characterize vignette-writing as a less direct, more abstracted way of presenting data. Throughout fieldwork, I turned to vignette-writing as an interpretive strategy. For example:

> Twenty minutes after Roberta's pop-quiz has begun, nineteen-year old Elida, a wisp of a Mexican-American single-mother, glides into the computer lab. She's done—"It would have been easy if I had studied." Skipping in and out of Spanish and English, she explains that she is working two jobs: waiting tables at the Outback Steakhouse where she originally began as a hostess, and working at Home Depot. This money comes on top of her Hope Scholarship—lottery money awarded to residents high school graduates accepted to the state's university system. I ask Elida how she has kept up her Spanish—if she is taking heritage language course. "It would be a waste of time," she tells me in Spanish, "Yo puedo enseñar el curso"—she could teach the course, as she had in high school for her gringo Spanish teacher. Elida continues to explain that she is in Roberta's class because of a low SAT verbal score—which in her opinion was the consequence of being the only native Spanish speaker in her middle and high school in a neighboring county. There had been no one there to help her with her English.

Thus, close reading of the data set combined with in-process analytic writing were the systematic processes whereby I systematically generated the understandings represented in this dissertation. Thus, the stories I tell in the chapters that follow are my reading of Sweet Water in response to the two interrelated questions that drove this research effort. It is true that these tales of the field might have been different had I written them at an

earlier time or should I have waited to tell them. Filtered through my own subjectivities

as a researcher, these fictions are, nevertheless, grounded in my experience of my being

physically present at Sweet Water—of its smell, its classrooms and academic buildings,

its students, and of the dilemmas of teaching ESL Learning Support as they were

articulated and enacted by five women: Roberta, Taylor, June, Louanne, and Lodoiska.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DILEMMA OF GATEKEEPING AS ADVOCACY

In a navy blue Vietnamese *ao-dai*, Roberta leaned across the screen of her PC's keyboard and into her emails. Not Vietnamese, as her traditional costume might have implied, Roberta was Thai, and from the northern reaches of that country. Adopted by Evangelical North American missionaries at three-months-old—hence her Christian name—Roberta commented that she was routinely complimented her on the quality of her spoken English by her Sweet Water colleagues.

Swiveling toward me as I knocked on her door of the yellow cinderblock cubicle in Academic III, Roberta started into the story of how the weekend's violent thunderstorms had knocked over a Bartlett pear tree in the front yard of her house in suburban Atlanta that she was about to put on the market. Dave, her computer-geek husband, hoping it might grow back in the spring, pruned down to a stump. Immediately, Roberta had him remove the "Charlie Brown tree" to the woods behind their house.

"So what's your secret for getting so many to pass the Compass?" I asked—shifting to my researcher role—(To the delight of Sweet Water's Learning Support administrators, 85% of Roberta's students consistently entered the mainstream—passing her course, the English Department's exit essay, and the COMPASS exam in Writing).

"'Cause I'm a MoFo."

Elaborating on the public two-year college's simultaneous commitment to open access and high academic standards, Perin (2005) explains,

Access goals are achieved if all applicants with a secondary education credential are admitted to postsecondary programs. Along with commitment to access, community colleges also wish to maintain high standards, a goal that is threatened by the presence of large numbers of low-skilled entrants. (p. 340)

During the five semesters of data generation and the analysis that accompanied and followed participant observation at the college, Perin's so-called catch–22 was perhaps nowhere more evident than in the program's signature course, ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing. To that end, and responding to my research question—"In the setting of a public two-year college in North Georgia, how are ESL Learning Support faculty members' subject positions mediated by their understandings of and engagement with the multiple and interactive contexts that frame their professional activity?"—I begin the presentation of my findings with this chapter specifically about ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing and the three instructors that taught that course in Spring 2006.

Ethnographic analysis evidenced that despite the various contradictions of their institution's established practices and of their own teaching, the three instructors were able to position and reposition themselves in ways that allowed them to make sense of who they were as professionals and of what it was their work achieved. At the same time, the three women's shifting subjectivities brought with them an emotional toll that was especially apparent at the end of each semester when some students passed and some students failed. I theorize the emotional toll of teaching Advanced Grammar and Writing and its implications for L2 teacher education and research.

The Menu of ESL Learning Support

In Spring 2006, three women taught ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing: Roberta and Taylor in the daytime, and by June in the late afternoons and evenings. Roberta's students enjoyed a success rate on the COMPASS exam in Writing that had hovered around 85% for some years—an average that had given her the reputation of being a very good teacher; Taylor's was an admirable 70%; and, June had not been teaching the course long enough to know for sure.

Taylor, the program director, explained that these numbers were not the unique criteria of "success" as the college defined it—or as she and her colleagues defined that category. At Sweet Water, for example, what students thought of their teachers also mattered a great deal. However, she admitted, the numbers counted; and, they were counted—earning Roberta and Taylor the appreciation of the Division Chair and other Sweet Water administrators. As the ESL program coordinator before her, Taylor was reluctant to assign the course to "just anyone." The stakes, she explained, were too high.

To reiterate from an earlier background section, Georgia residents, non-residents, and international students who came to Sweet Water without SAT-1 or ACT scores, or with SAT-1 or ACT scores lower than the standards set by the College, were (re)tested for preparedness in Math, Reading, and Writing. Those whose Sweet Water in-house placement tests did not meet the College's definition of preparedness were granted provisional freshman admission and funneled into the Division of Learning Support of which ESL was a distinct subcategory.

In sum, Sweet Water's ESL Learning Support coursework was a complex curricular menu designed to redress what the College perceived as the specific deficiencies of individual English learners hoping to enter a postsecondary degree

program. Consequently, the program of ESL study differed, sometimes substantially, from student to student. Fundamentally, the amount of ESL Learning Support coursework students had to complete before they could enroll in a degree program depended on a number of factors. These included (1) the SAT/ACT scores they had brought with them from high school, (2) the scores, as I mentioned before, they received on the College's or ESL program's placement exams, (3) their obligatory writing samples for the English department, or (4) a combination of all of these things.

Placement

Established practices in the program dictated that the lowest scoring English learners were required to follow a ten course sequence of Grammar and Writing, Vocabulary, Reading, and Communication. Enrollment in more than two ESL Learning Support courses also meant that they had to take the ESL version of College Orientation, a course Sweet Water required of its more vulnerable students, i.e., students needing more than two Learning Support courses. Other English learners moved directly into ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing, and some directly into ESL Reading Level III. Some were placed into both.

Every student enrolled in an ESL Reading course was also required to take the program's two academic vocabulary courses. Because these students were enrolled in three courses (Reading III and Vocabulary I and II) they would also have to take College Orientation. Thus, any student tagged for ESL Reading III was obliged to take a total of courses: Level III Reading, Vocabulary I and II, and College Orientation.

In other cases, English learners who had passed the COMPASS exams in Writing and Reading but whose writing sample for the English Department was not up to par

were required to take ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing and to pass the exit essay—but not the COMPASS— again.

Exceptionally, students would take one or both of the Level III courses having already passed both COMPASS exams—of their own volition or at the advice of an ESL or another faculty member.

Level III Reading or Level III Grammar and Writing courses were capstone courses feeding into the respective computerized standard assessment that, for some, had identified their need for remediation in the first place: the COMPASS in Reading, and the COMPASS in Writing. Passing the COMPASS in Writing was an official prerequisite for entering English 1101. Passing the COMPASS exam in Reading became, during the final semesters of data collection, an informal, but widely enforced, prerequisite for degree/transfer-credit coursework in the greater College perceived as "reading-heavy." While both courses were of extreme importance to students in the program, Advanced ESL Grammar and Writing was, arguably, even more so. The signature course of ESL Learning Support, ESOL 0099 was the gate to freshman composition: English 1101.

Enrollment in ESOL 0099 was not, however, a guarantee that English Learners were only a semester away from the freshman requirement and full undergraduate admission to the college. What enrollment in ESOL 0099 did confirm was students' eligibility for the assessment cycle that divided Learning Support from undergraduate coursework. That is to say, the way to English 1101 depended on students successfully navigating a trio of prerequisites: passing the capstone ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing, passing the English Department's exit essay, and passing the COMPASS—a test not normed for non-native English speakers—in writing (in that order). Were a student to

fail any of the three components—the course, the exit essay, or the standardized writing exam—they would be required to retake the course and re-attempt the entire sequence. After three successive failed attempts, students would be ineligible to register for more Sweet Water coursework during three-year quarantine.

The Exit Essay

The exit essay was a three-day affair that ended every semester. On day one, students received a slate of five questions from which they selected one and composed a five paragraph essay in two hours. On day two, students received another five questions, chose one, and composed another essay. On day three, students returned for approximately one hour to choose the better of their two essays to edit and, finally, submit for scoring. The essays were all to be handwritten—double-spaced in ink. Students were allowed to use monolingual English dictionaries. On the editing day, they were also allowed and encouraged to ask "Yes/No" questions to the instructor such as "Do I need a comma here?"

The English department generated the two slates of questions. Topics ranged from the personal, e.g., "All of us have one particular aspect of our personalities that we value most highly. Which of your character traits do you consider most important to your overall personality?" to the political: "What Presidential candidate did you support in the 2004 national election and why?"

Three members of the faculty scored the essays. The first two readers were either (1) a combination of two English professors, or (2) an English professor and an ESL faculty member other than the one who had taught the student whose essay was being scored. The Chair of the Division of ESL Learning Support, Sue Ellen, was

simultaneously an English professor for the Division of Humanities. Traditionally, she was one of the two English professors who read all of the aspiring freshmen's essays. The first two readers—one of whom was often Sue Ellen—assigned a score of Pass, Fail, or Borderline. With one Fail the student failed. In the event of a Pass and Borderline or two Borderlines a third reader's score was taken into consideration. That third reader was always the ESL instructor whose student's performance was under review.

Criteria include organization, paragraph development, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics, spelling, and style and diction. With a passing exit essay, students would be eligible to take the COMPASS in writing skills test. Were they to pass the COMPASS they could then, finally, enter English 1101.

The COMPASS Writing Skills Test

The COMPASS Writing Skills Exam, a pre-packaged assessment technology developed by the ACT and in use across the University System of Georgia, simulated the editing process by presenting several 200-word essays and requiring students to locate and then correct grammar, usage, and style errors. Of five possible corrections, "Choice A" was always the same as the uncorrected segment, i.e., no error was found. Usage and mechanics tested included punctuation (punctuating breaks in thought, relationships and sequence, and avoiding unnecessary punctuation), basic grammar and usage (assuring grammatical agreement, forming verbs, using pronouns, and observing conventions), and sentence structure (relating clauses, using modifiers, and avoiding unnecessary shifts in construction).

Additionally, the test presented one or two multiple choice questions at the conclusion of the editing process that posed global questions related to the passage, e.g.,

"What would be a better title for this passage?" The rhetorical skill questions addressed three areas: strategy, organization, and style. Strategy was defined as making decisions about the appropriateness of expression for the audience and purpose; making decisions about adding, revising, or deleting supporting material; and making decisions about cohesion devices: openings, transitions, and closings. Organization was defined as establishing logical order and judging relevancy. Style was defined as managing sentence elements effectively, editing and revising effectively, choosing words to fit meaning and function, and maintaining the established level of style and tone. Passing the COMPASS in writing required a score of 61 or higher. Anything less and the student would have to repeat the course, the exit essay, and the exam.

The Georgia Regents' Test

Even after English 1101, high stakes standardized testing was not yet over. There would still be the Georgia Regents' Test— a system-wide assessment consisting of a multiple choice, reading comprehension and a five paragraph essay written on a choice of topics. As such, the Regents' was Georgia's reassurance that no degree-seeking student slip through its system without demonstrating what the state deemed as minimal academic competence. Passing the Regents' was a requirement for all of Sweet Water's degree programs.

Sweet Water students were eligible to take the Regents' after completing the twin freshman English requirements (ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102) or 30 semester hours of degree credit. Students who had not taken the Regents' by the time they had earned 45 semester hours of credit had to take the test the subsequent semester of enrollment along with RGTP 0199, a three semester hour Regents' Test Preparation course. Thus, even if

ESL Learning Support students made it out of the program and into the mainstream, they would, again, be asked to write a five paragraph essay to earn a degree.

Sweet Water's assessment procedures, though complex, were not, at a national level, exceptional. Research has emphasized the prevalence of testing at two-year colleges in other regions of the United States. To that end, Merisotis and Phipps (2000) have speculated that the prevalence of public two-year college remediation in and outside of Maryland, for example, is not a function of the "under-preparedness" of public two-year college students who enroll in two-year college institutions. Rather, public two-year college remediation is a byproduct of the public two-year college itself:

> Conventional wisdom would suggest that the percentages would be approximately the same for both higher education sectors because all of the students have completed a state-mandated curriculum . . . . It could be that community colleges, because of their open-door mission, have more structured procedures than four-year colleges for determining which students need remediation. (p. 73).

English learners were not singled out for remediation at Sweet Water. Rather, it seemed, following the Merisotis and Phipps hypothesis, that students tested for remediation—be they English learners or otherwise—were more likely to be identified as needing it. As I indicated in a previous section, in Fall 2005, the total number of first-time freshmen at Sweet Water totaled 1,567. Of those first-time freshmen, 803 were enrolled in one or more Learning Support courses—a little more than 51% (Office of Strategic Research and Analysis Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2005). Thus, Learning Support was not for the few, but for the majority.

<center>Their Ticket Out of Here</center>

Participant observation and interviews indicated that the three women's understandings of the rubric to which their students would be held accountable, the peculiarities of the English Department, and the rigor of the COMPASS dictated the curriculum of Advanced Grammar and Writing. Thus, Taylor, Roberta, and June shared the belief that by breaking writing down into discrete units and by teaching how those units worked together, students would be able to reduce the amount of stigmatizing errors in exit essays and be able to recognize the errors that the COMPASS tested.

Hoping to instill a healthy dose of fear in he students, Roberta shared with all of her ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing students the following rubric she used to score their mock exit essays:

Table 5

Roberta's Rubric for the Exit Essay

+	CONTENT--Add	-	MECHANICS--Subtract
10	Introduction—Minimum 3 sentences; no details; progression from general to specific; connections logical and interesting	10	Fragment
10	Thesis Statement—Closed (If you do not use a closed thesis, you will lose 30 points.)	10	Comma Splice
15	Topic Sentence for each body paragraph (5pts. each sentence)	10	Run-on Sentence
30	Development—Paragraphs of 6 to 8 sentences (minimum); points supported by examples. (10pts. each paragraph)	5	Verb tense/time
10	Conclusion—Connected to content of introduction and body; does not repeat statements previously made.	30	Verb Form
5	Logical Connectors—used when appropriate and necessary	10	Agreement—Subject-verb/pronoun-noun/noun-adjective.
10	Paragraphs—structured properly	3 each	Word Form/Word Order/Spelling/Articles/Punctuation
10	Logical Thought Progression	10	Missing Comma/Introductory

Importantly, however, Roberta was not its author. Rather, the rubric, developed by the former ESL Program coordinator, Meredith, was an informal inventory of what the English Department faculty had reported the minimum of a five paragraph essay should (not) be. It was, more or less, by this rubric that the trio of Sweet Water faculty would "blindly" score the ESL students' exit essay and by which that score would be defended should a challenge arise

In an audio-taped conversation after one of her classes, Roberta described her rationale for focusing on structures—a rationale that her colleagues shared:

I think when you allow them [ESL students] to break down their sentences—
when I ask them to break down their sentences into subjects and verbs they can
then figure out in front of them if they don't have a subject or a verb . . . and that's
sooooo important . . . . Now an ESL student is not going to understand a run on a
comma splice or a fragment unless you explicitly detail why a sentence is
constructed the way it is why it takes a comma or why it does not. . . . It may
seem of course and it is more of a native speaker issue—but at the same time once
they get into English 1101 and 1102, if they don't know how to do something or
why to do it they're not going to do it just automatically. A native speaker is so
much easier to tell them, "Okay this is a run on because you have a sentence here
and a sentence here and there's nothing in between." With an ESL student, you
need to explain exactly why a sentence is a run on: "It's a run on because you
have two independent clauses joined together incorrectly. "

Much of the course's focus was, therefore, on students' learning the meta-language of writing and the specific errors and pitfalls that would fail them on the exit essay and that the COMPASS tested.

Sometime into the fifth week of ESOL 0099, a shift in the course would take place—one marked by the instructor's first mention of the "closed thesis statement" and its distinction from an open thesis statement as exemplified in this fieldnote from Roberta's Advanced Grammar and Writing classroom, Fall 2004:

> Let's stop right here. This is my million dollar question—write this down. I don't see a lot of you writing. You need to write this down. This is called a closed thesis statement. Now in their grading guide, they give this 30 points. Therefore, if you don't have the closed thesis statement you've just failed the essay. What did you just do? You limited yourself to certain sub-topics and this is what they call a closed thesis statement so you can see the difference. Think of closed as limited. This is called a closed thesis statement because you've limited it to this tiny box and all I'm going to talk about is my mom's humility, responsibility, and caring nature."

As Roberta repeatedly explained each of the five semesters to her Advanced Grammar and Writing students, an open thesis statement would result in a deduction of 30 points on the exit essay and most likely be grounds for failure.

For the remainder of the same semester, students and teachers began looking at and trying out the sorts of five paragraph essays they might be asked to write for the exit essay: an argument, a description, a comparison/contrast, etc. Large blocks of time were, consequently, allocated to simulating the exit essay—recycling questions from previous

exit exams as practice prompt, e.g., "Describe you perfect Thanksgiving." The three women did not explicitly correct their students' papers per se. Rather, they identified errors using a system of symbols that they shared with students; and, they asked students to make the appropriate corrections/revisions using the symbol to guide them.

In between the weekly timed writings, instructors presented models of other types of essays the test takers might encounter such as the "Comparison Contrast Writing" that Taylor usually presented to her students in early April:

- The purpose of a comparison/contrast essay is to show how to subjects are related.

- You can focus on the similarities between two things (compare), the differences (contrast), or both similarities and differences (compare and contrast).

- In addition to showing similarities and/or differences, you may also show strengths and/or weaknesses, or advantages and/or disadvantages.

Specific grammar and writing issues that had come up in students' mock exit essays also received focused practice in between mock essays such as the punctuation of restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses: "Kuwait, which is a small country in the Middle East, is rich in oil"; "A medical computer is a machine that analyzes the results of laboratory tests"; etc.

Level I and Level II of Grammar and Writing were exceedingly similar to Level III—with the difference that students were not asked to produce full-fledged five paragraph essays until the Level III course. Thus, the first month and a half of Level III was normally a review of what they had previously studied in the Level I and II courses:

parts of speech, verb tenses, passive and active voice, sentence types, and the three errors

I mentioned before that would surely fail them on the exit essay. Problematically, not

every student in Advanced ESL Grammar and Writing had taken Level I and Level II.

The course design of ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing had not been imposed

on the three instructors. Rather, the "back-to-basics"/"practice-makes-perfect"

pedagogical paradigm was one to which Taylor, Roberta, and June seemed to adhere.

June used her son's experience as a rationale:

> Well I—I'll tell you, my eldest son always got As in English. He couldn't spell.
>
> He was often grammatically wrong but—and I went to one of the teachers and
>
> said, "Why is he getting an A?" And they said, "Because his ideas are so good."
>
> He got to the university and one professor looked at him and said, "You clean up
>
> your act or get out of here." He said, "This is sloppy work and I won't tolerate it."
>
> Well these kids are getting the sloppy work out of the way before they go on to
>
> UGA or where ever they go because—or this crazy idea that your son doesn't
>
> need it 'cause he'll have a secretary. How's he going to get there to have a
>
> secretary if he can't spell? You know this is—I think we've gone a little overboard
>
> on the content. These students—especially the evening class and even some of the
>
> level one class—their content is excellent. It's always excellent. What is the
>
> problem is that interference—you can't get past the grammar to enjoy the content.

Moreover, Taylor explained that in Georgia understanding dependent clauses,

independent clauses, compound sentence, complex sentences, compound/complex

sentences, etc. and the sequence from sentence, to paragraph, to essay, to types of essays

were the standard for teaching two-year college L2 writing.

The three women agreed that teaching the meta-language of basic writing coupled with explicit attention to the types of errors and rhetorical constructs that seemed to preoccupy Sweet Water's 1101 English professors, and plenty of practice in timed-writing, would benefit their ESL students. Not only would ESOL 0099 help them on the exit essay, but also in English 1101 and on the Regent's Exam—another five paragraph essay they would need to write to graduate. In other words, mastering the timed, handwritten, five paragraph essay was less about good writing and more about learning to write the way provisional freshmen were expected to write at Sweet Water. The five paragraph essay was, as Taylor described it, "Their ticket out of here." It was a five paragraph essay that had gotten them out of high school. However, it was because of a five paragraph essay that they were in Learning Support; and, it was a five paragraph essay that would get them out of Learning Support. They would also have to take the Regents' exam to graduate—another five paragraph essay.

The Re-education of Georgia High School Graduates

The five paragraph essay had for some time been a central part of the state's multi-layered requirements for high school graduation—one that had proven to be a significant barrier to student graduation—especially for racial and linguistic minorities, and, in particular, for Latinos (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005). To have gotten out of high school and into Sweet Water, entering freshmen—even those provisionally admitted—would already have had to have passed it. Just as the high school writing exam was a five paragraph essay, so too was Sweet Water Learning Support's exit essay. The sticking point was, however, that high school teachers did not grade the latter exam. Sweet Water College faculty graded the exit essay. That made all the difference.

Certainly, many of the students I had met in Taylor's and then Roberta's Level III classrooms didn't "sound" like English learners at all. In fact, some had apparently grown up in the mountains of North Georgia, had graduated with admirable GPAs, and were able to effortlessly "Yes Ma'am/No Ma'am" Taylor, Roberta, and June as all well mannered North Georgians were expected to do, and, at times, they even engaged in sophisticated word-play with their instructors:

Taylor [to class]:   What is platonic love?

Raul: Out of this world!!!

Taylor: Not plutonic, platonic. [2:09, class ends.]

However, it was not a measure of how students spoke, but how they wrote—and how Sweet Water faculty had viewed their writing—that had landed them in Learning Support. Georgia high school graduates who failed the writing sample placement exam at Sweet Water had learned to write well enough to get out of high school. They had not yet learned, however, to write well enough to enter Sweet Water as full freshmen.

In some cases, students resisted their placement in ESL Learning Support—especially those who had grown up in Georgia and had graduated from Georgia high schools—sometimes with honors. June explained:

They'll always ask me why am I here, and I'll say because you're—it's not because the Americans don't make errors; they make different errors. So, you want to be in a class where the instructor is addressing the types of errors you make. I started to think about that—would an American student make seven or eight comma splices? He would, I guess, if he or she were writing in stream of consciousness.

However, June and the other instructors all shared the insider knowledge that even one comma splices in a composition would be unpardonable in English 1101. Or as Roberta put it,

> There are basic skills that we have to teach our students . . . . Can they write a five paragraph essay at the end of the class under a time duration and with as few grammatical errors, organizational errors, content errors as possible?

For the three women, many of their students were in ESL because they had not been taught the basics in high school—or at least what was generally considered basic at Sweet Water.

Tough Love

Returning to the vignette with which I began this chapter, Roberta was young, young-looking, or, in her words, "What-ever." Consequently, she worried that if she weren't tough her students, many recent U.S. public high school graduates would decidedly disrespect her five-foot Asian-American person. To that end, bravado was one of Roberta's strategies for garnering the respect of the mostly young adults she taught.

Close reading of the data set indicated that to be unyielding was more than Roberta's way of instilling discipline and respect. Rather, Roberta's tough love stance was an integral part of her conception of what it meant to be an advocate for English learners. Namely, preparing her students for the high and exacting standards that she believed the college's English 1101 professors were deeply intent on safe-guarding, and to which, she believed, her students would be subjected should they enter mainstream college coursework was what she could do and did do for her students. Fieldnotes and interview transcripts consistently indicated that Roberta believed in "tough love." Rare

was the day in ESOL 0099, for example, that she did not reference the English professors—what their expectations were; how they would come down hard on certain errors on the exit essay; and, what students might expect of English 1101.

Handing back her students' first attempt at a simulated exit essay, Roberta (Mrs. Ware) explained to the class her not completely accurate motivation for grading their papers so rigorously:

> When you get your essay handed back to you there may be a moment when you feel a little bit depressed. I'm not asking you to—I'm not going to how—How do I put this [pause]? I don't want to—I don't want you to feel that way necessarily . . . . I don't want you to think about this as Mrs. Ware is grading my paper because she hates me and she's giving me poor grades because of this. Think of it this way, when I exit this class my paper will be graded by at least two English professors not Mrs. Ware. And, Mrs. Ware is grading me according to how she believes the English professors will grade my paper. So here's what I need to do to improve for my next paper. I want you to look at it that way.

In an audiotaped interview in Fall 2005, Roberta elaborated on her self-styled bad-ass-ness:

> The English professors grade our exit exams. Now, if I grade at an easy level they might get a B out of my class. Yet, the English professors will grade that final exit essay and perhaps give it a Failure. So I think it's really important for me to keep my grading scale as difficult and hard as it is—very close to what the English professors' rubric or guide is. Another reason maybe for the strictness in my class is that I have A LOT to do in one semester. And, obviously it can't always be

done. But, I'm trying to take the majority of the students through this class. And

to do it successfully I need them to be on their best behavior every time I hold a

class. And that might be another reason why I feel like I have to be very

disciplined—and have them disciplined in my class.

Importantly, Roberta's expectations went both ways. She worked hard to deliver her best

and expected her students to do the same.

As I have explained, however, Roberta did participate in scoring the exit essays.

However, her score was only considered in the event of a combination of the scores of

"Pass" and "Borderline," or a combination of the scores of "Borderline" and

"Borderline." Should the score of "Fail" appear on a student's paper, there would be no

discussion; the student had failed.

Sweet Water is not High School

Participation observation revealed that the other women teaching Advanced

Grammar and Writing did not share Roberta's boot camp bravado and, at least, visually

were Roberta's antitheses. June, a Canadian émigré and long-time resident of Hog

Mountain, was nearly twice her age, and her soft-spoken manner and grandmotherly

looks brought back memories of grade school. Although Taylor considered herself a

freethinker and, indeed, was the faculty advisor for the Students for a Progressive

Society, her whiteness and Southernisms gave her an insider status that was never

afforded Roberta or June.

Differences aside, the three women who taught Advanced Grammar and Writing

shared the belief that teaching the Level III Grammar and Writing necessitated their

being "tough" on their students. Speaking about the students in her evening class, June speculated,

> What's very unique about these students is that some of them have been here since kindergarten—and have gone all the way through. And my first reaction was, What is wrong with the school system—the high school system—that they pass these students?" Well, after I had them for a while [I understood] that these were the students that fooled around a lot and just didn't pay any attention. And it may have been if they had paid more attention they wouldn't have been in ESL.

Playtime was over. Grade inflation and social promotion were most likely the main reasons that so many were in ESL Learning Support to begin with. Their high school teachers had coddled them.

June reiterated in audio-taped interviews and informal conversations that she was certain of her students' enormous potential. However, she repeatedly expressed her belief that public high school teachers had misguided too many of her students into thinking that they were ready for college when various measures of the college indicated that they were not.

She explained that her son's transition from high school to college had been similar. Once in college, her own son was considered under-prepared—and this, again, because of what she considered the facile encouragement of a high school English teachers. To that end, June considered ESL Advanced Writing and Grammar to be something of a "gift" for the naive Georgia high school graduates who entered Sweet Water thinking it would be just like the high schools from which they had come.

Towards the end of the semester the one chap said to me, "You know, I don't know what's going on I was told I was a really good writer in high school." Well, he was a spontaneous writer and there was always a kind of charm to his writing but he's the one who failed—failed because of all comma splices. Really, there was no way—and I read, I read all the second papers just in case they had chosen the wrong one and I could argue on their behalf based on the second paper. But those two students this semester, he and the girl we alluded to earlier, they really were victimized by the high school system.

Like June, Roberta was convinced that her students needed her course; she was, furthermore, able to convince her students that they needed it:

Not all of them, but some of them— a lot of them, I should say—graduated honors from high school. So, when they come back they're not sure of the purpose of the ESL program; and, they don't realize that there are BAAAAASICS that they need—that they did not receive in high school—which is a really difficult concept for someone to understand especially since a lot of them did graduate with honors or with high GPAs from high school. And then, all of a sudden, they're coming to the college level and being placed in the ESL program. But they're not prepared yet—I mean academically speaking as well. I think sometimes in high school they're a little bit easier on the ESL students because they don't have the time or the money to spend on them—or the attention to spend on them. And then when they get here it's—it's difficult for them to be placed in the ESL program. And I say, "Look you don't know everything that you need to know in order to succeed at the higher level"—which can be difficult for them.

As bitter of a pill as Advanced ESL Grammar and Writing was to swallow for those ESL students coming straight out of public high schools—it was for their own good.

None of the women considered ESL Learning Support to be remediation. The argument I heard in its various forms from all three teachers went, "It's not remedial if they've never had it in the first place." Or, as Roberta ruminated,

> It's almost as if we're teaching them something entirely new something they've never seen before . . . . Some of them never took ESL classes in high school or middle school and they said well they had them available but they just never took them they were never placed in them because they SPOKE fluently and I think that's important so in that case it could have been remedial or it could be remedial but it's NOT because they just missed it somehow. . . . Here's what a noun is. Here's a verb. Here's subject-verb agreement here's verb tense. They don't get any of that in high school.

That is to say, remediation implied that students had failed to learn something. However, their students had never been taught to write with precision.

Thus, ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing was not remediation because, the women believed, it was new material:

> Spencer: So if I say— if someone calls ESL remedial how do you feel?
>
> Roberta: I don't really get offended but I know in my head and heart that it's not remedial in the same sense that they're thinking that English and Writing are remedial for native speakers—if that makes sense.
>
> Spencer: Yeah—and how do you think when—how are they thinking like?
>
> Roberta: They're thinking that they're just not at the same level just because,

you know, they've had it all before in high school—and they

can't—they need help to learn it more. And I'm thinking, "This is

brand new. They've never seen it before"—if that makes sense.

For the others, the international students, ESL coursework was, likewise, not remediation. Rather, it was language learning—like French, like Italian, like Russian. It was a process that took time. There was simply nothing, they argued, remedial about ESL—not really.

The Irony of Learning to Write at Sweet Water

In spite of the teachers' adamancy that ESL Learning Support was not remediation and that they, by consequence, were not gatekeepers, the students' transcripts indicated the contrary. ESL Learning Support coursework—with one one-credit exception—counted for institutional credit only. Thus, the three women were unable to will ESL Learning Support into being, at the level of their students' academic records, into something more than what it was.

Curiously, Taylor admitted that it was also possible that once out of ESL Learning Support and in English 1101, those same students who had struggled to master the five paragraph essay would not necessarily be asked to write in the manner that Roberta, Taylor, and June had insisted. Taylor confided,

When they get into—even, even English 1101—depending on the professor—a lot of them immediately try to break them out of that. They want them to be more creative. So they really try to undo what [laughing] what we've done here. I've had them tell me that—you know: "Do not write a closed thesis statement! That's soooo infantile! We'll figure out what your subtopics are!" [laughing].

Taylor did think that in the future she would have to have a conversation with the English professors about what they really wanted ESL students to come into 1101 knowing to do:

> I'm going to prepare them the best I can because that's what the institution wants. And when there's time to discuss it—and I don't know if it will be next year or in five years—I would like to have a dialogue with the English professors about really what they would like the students to be able to do when they get in their classes. Do they really want them to write a five paragraph essay with a closed thesis statement? Or, are they going to try to undo that immediately when they get in there.

Furthermore, it did seem odd to her that although her students were computer-savvy, they were still being asked to hand write the exit essay: no spell check, no grammar check, no nothing. Students were changing. Perhaps, she speculated, Sweet Water would have to change one day too. When or if that would happen, she was not sure.

Of the three teachers, June was the most certain that the five paragraph essay was a worthy exercise in and of itself: "You know, you crawl before you walk." Roberta, however, expressed some frustration with the college's fixation on the grammar and the mechanics the writing. Roberta was bothered by the fact that the "superficiality" of the five paragraph essay and the time crunch to get her students prepared for the assessment cycle didn't allow her students to "truly" write:

> It makes me not have the time—it doesn't allow me to have the time to focus, like I said, on the whole writing process—the critical thinking process. It—it makes me feel like I have to really focus on grammar, grammar, and more grammar— just so that they can write a superficial paper and then get through that

standardized test. And I lose time then to focus on critical thinking—on logic—on

the things that I really want to focus on—and, and what any English professor

also would really expect from them at the higher level. "Don't just spit back"—

you know—"examples to me. Really think about what you're writing." And it

doesn't allow us enough time to delve into that.

Her hands, however, were tied. Sixteen weeks went by quickly. She and her colleagues

had to get their students ready for the tests.

What the three instructors understood, however, was that, for now, their ESL

students weren't in English 1101; and, they believed that their students would never get

out of ESL Learning Support if they wrote an open-ended thesis statement on the exit

essay or if they made more than three comma-splices, fragments, or run-ons. Sue Ellen,

the Chair of the Division of Learning Support, would not tolerate such errors and neither

would the English professors. Even if one of the women wanted to advocate on a

student's behalf, a score of Fail on the part of one of the two initial readers would

effectively marginalize her opinion. With a single Fail there would be no discussion.

In March 2006, Roberta drove down to Tampa to attend TESOL International.

The conference confirmed her back-to-basics position:

I actually heard a researcher talk a lot about community college ESL professors

and what she thought we should be concentrating on grammar wise in our classes.

And one of the things that this researcher said was that we should not pay

attention to such secondary mistakes for example or even on that third level—

tertiary?—What do you call it? [laughing] um the mistakes and errors such as

prepositions, articles, and comma splices—which was just amazing to me because

our English 1101 and 1102 professors will not accept those mistakes in their

papers at all—that would be cause for automatic failure. And [the researcher]

telling us not to concentrate on them or focus on them is telling us to allow our

students to fail the high stakes exit exam at the end of the course.

If a five paragraph essay that had no fragments, comma splices, or run-ons had value this

was because a powerful contingent of Sweet Water College faculty thought that it did;

and, therefore, it did.

Thus, as advocates for their students, Roberta, Taylor, and June all believed that it

was their combined duty to teach Sweet Water writing: how to structure an introduction,

how to compose a closed thesis statement and where that pivotal phrase should be

located, how many paragraphs should follow, how many sentences should be in each

paragraph, how the conclusion should differ from the introduction, and what errors would

fail them. If they didn't tell their students these things, who would? Roberta explained:

In English 1101 they probably wouldn't tell them about closed thesis statements

they would probably say or you need your thesis statement to be more detailed.

And that's not teaching them to how to write a closed thesis statement because an

American student of course would know what that means maybe when a professor

says, "You know your thesis statement needs to be more detailed." You know—

address the points that you are covering in your paragraphs. But you really need

to teach the ESL students how to do this.

They taught to the test. This was, as I perceived it, their advocacy.

Holding Zone or Safe House?

Roberta's tough love and the seriousness with which the other two instructors approached ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing were reinforced by the high stakes nature of the exit essay and COMPASS Exam in Writing. However, close reading of the data set revealed three more phenomena that motivated the women's understandings of the rigor with which the course had to be taught that I address here.

The first, specific to Georgia, was the HOPE Scholarship. The second factor complicating ESL Learning Support was Sweet Water's academic reputation. The third stemmed from the hostile discourse surrounding immigration.

Keeping Hope Alive

The HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) Scholarship Program provided, through monies raised by the state's lottery, Georgia residents who had graduated from Georgia high schools with tuition, mandatory fees, and a book allowance to attend any of the state's public colleges, universities, or technical colleges. The brainchild of the state's former governor, Zell Miller, it was touted as one of the most successful education initiatives in Georgia history. Voters seemed to agree; and, any challenge to the HOPE risked grave political repercussions.

It seemed that in nearly every ESL class I visited during my five semesters at Sweet Water, there was always a student or two or three or more on HOPE among the three to 20 classmates. However, to keep their HOPE scholarships, students needed to maintain a 3.0. Students who had been ineligible for HOPE as entering freshmen could access the program after attempting 30, 60, or 90 semester hours—but, again, only with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0.

While ESL coursework was non-transferable and did not count towards a degree, ESL coursework was factored into eligibility for HOPE. Thus, for June and her colleagues, English learners with or wanting scholarships would be better off getting the most out of Learning Support before venturing off into the mainstream. Their GPAs would be safer there than in the mainstream.

This is not to say that grades were given away in ESL. Nothing at Sweet Water was free. Students had to earn their grades in ESL Learning Support just as they would have to earn their grades in all of their coursework. However, if ESL students prematurely entered English 1101 to be left to the mercy of English 1101 professors, their students' GPAs would suffer; their current or future financial aid would be jeopardized. ESL Learning Support was a safe house.

As I have explained, ESL Learning Support coursework did not count toward a degree. However, it cost as if it did:

Table 6

Sweet Water Tuition Schedule

LOWER DIVISION (COURSES NUMBERED 1000 - 2999)

Resident Tuition

Credit Hours	Resident Tuition	Activity Fee	Technology Fee	Auto Fee	Resident Total
1	68.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	128.00
2	136.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	196.00
3	204.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	264.00
4	272.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	332.00
5	340.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	400.00
6	408.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	468.00
7	476.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	566.00
8	544.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	634.00
9	612.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	702.00
10	680.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	770.00
11	748.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	838.00
12+	802.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	892.00

Non-Resident Tuition

Credit Hours	Resident Tuition	Activity Fee	Technology Fee	Auto Fee	Resident Total
1	268.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	328.00
2	536.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	596.00
3	804.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	864.00
4	1072.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	1132.00
5	1340.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	1400.00
6	1608.00	22.00	28.00	10.00	1668.00
7	1876.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	1966.00
8	2144.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	2234.00
9	2412.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	2502.00
10	2680.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	2770.00
11	2948.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	3038.00
12+	3206.00	42.00	38.00	10.00	3296.00

Tuition and Fees are Subject to Change without Notice

Note. Reproduced from the On-Line Sweet Water Catalogue Fall '06 - Spring '07.

The schedule for Sweet Water tuition and fees for lower division coursework numbered

1000-2999 also applied to ESL coursework. Thus, for those ESL students not on HOPE,

a three-credit course with fees totaled $261.00 for residents of the state. For non-residents, the same three-credits were $855.00:

Despite the money, teachers generally believed that it was better for English learners to stay in ESL—even to begin at the first levels—than to enter the mainstream under-prepared. Paying for ESL Learning Support was a sacrifice; however, Roberta was convinced that the price of non-degree/transfer credit ESL Learning Support coursework was, nevertheless, well worth it:

> It's—it's that sort of "it makes you stronger" cliché [laughing]. And I hate to even say that but it really is. But it pays off though it rrrrrrrrrrrreally does pay off. Again, when they go into 1101 and 1102 and they are making BETTER grades than native born American students or native English speakers they always come back and say "I know more" than these students. "I know what a relative clause is and I know why a comma goes there and why it doesn't go here." And it makes them feel so much better.

Advanced Grammar and Writing leveled the playing field. Without it, she argued, her students wouldn't have a chance in college level coursework.

Although Roberta did see improvement in most students by the end of the semester, she knew that it wasn't necessarily enough:

> You're so thrilled at the end when you see students improve and almost all students DO improve. There are little that DON'T improve and that would you know mainly be a responsibility that is on the student. But most of the time the students do improve but that does not necessarily mean that they'll pass the test at the end. You see improvement and you think oh that's great I've taught them

organization skills content skills grammar skills and there is improvement there

but they still may not perform high enough to pass the high stakes test at the end.

The pressure of high stakes testing was problematic, she explained, because she believed

that students basically defined their success in ESL as to whether or not they passed the

high stakes testing at the end of the sequence—a measure that she admitted was also

important to the college administrators. Yet, her "gatekeeping"—if I insisted on calling it

that—was, on the contrary, to her students' economic benefit.

Sweet Water's Reputation

Besides the dynamics of HOPE and other financial aid packages, the academic

culture of Sweet Water College was another reason why the ESL program was what it

was. The Division of Humanities' high standards had trickled down into the Division of

Learning Support and, by consequence, into the ESL program. June, a Hog Mountain

resident since 1996, explained, "I've known extremely affluent people who have put their

children here so that they could spend the money on further down the road—because

Sweet Water has a good reputation." That reputation was one that Sweet Water faculty

and administrators had worked hard to cultivate. It was a reputation that they were intent

on safeguarding.

Moreover, Roberta and perhaps all of her colleagues at Sweet Water felt that they

had something to prove to four-year universities about Sweet Water, Sweet Water

teachers, and Sweet Water students. Talking about four-year college faculty, she

confided,

 It's not that they're condescending necessarily, but there's that—you know—low

expectation maybe when people hear that you teach at a community college. And

it's not necessarily true though; and, I think maybe we work even harder with are students to get them to certain high standards so that they—you know—carry our reputation on into the four year university.

If four-year colleges were to take their two-year counterparts seriously, Sweet Water faculty had to work hard; and, they make their students work hard.

It was not only what four-year faculty thought of the ESL program that mattered to Roberta, Taylor, and June, but also what Sweet Water faculty thought of the ESL program. Above all, they didn't want English 1101 professors to think they weren't doing their job. Their job, as Roberta understood it, was to clean up their students' writing so that the English professors wouldn't have to "deal" with it in 1101. Or, as Taylor explained, "We're very reluctant to send anybody out there before they're ready. We know that it's going to reflect badly on the students and also on us."

Roberta, herself, had gone to a two-year college. She was immensely proud of the education she had received there, and how well it prepared her for the four-year she went to afterwards:

I attended a community college myself because I could not afford to go to a four year university. I then transferred to a private four year university— after my community college experience. And I think one of the first things I noticed was that I was considered a really good writer at the four year university. And I think that community college experience I had—I think that those professors I had really pushed high standards in their English classes—maybe out of a feeling of—not inferiority necessarily—but out of a feeling of—you know

even though we're a community college we have high standards too. And I

performed really well at the private four year university.

Roberta wanted her students—whether they went to a four-year program or not—to feel

as good about their community college experience as she had and did still. Would they

remember her name as she remembered those of the two-year college teachers who had

taught her so well? Would they talk about her the way she talked about those two-year

college teachers that she had known? Would Sweet Water be a point of reference for

them as her own two-year college experience had become on for her own self? These

things she wanted very much.

In the Shadow of Stone Mountain

The high stakes nature of the assessment cycle, the dynamics of the Hope

scholarship program, and Sweet Water's English Department's reputation all contributed

to the seriousness with which Taylor, Roberta, and June treated Advanced Grammar and

Writing. Racial climate was yet another consideration that shaped the three women's

understanding of the course they taught.

The region was changing. By 2004, of Georgia's 8.5 million, 6.7% were

Latinos—an increase of more than 300% in a short 15 years. Hog Mountain was at the

epicenter of that ongoing demographic shift. Taylor, the program director, could only

guess as to how many ESL students were in the country without papers. However, in

Roberta's opinion, it was a pretty sure bet that if students had graduated from a Georgia

high school and were paying out of state tuition, it was because they were undocumented.

Fundamentally, Roberta explained, Sweet Water was "redneck country." She

speculated that the locals tended to think of all immigrants as illegal—and that, she

considered, was sad. To make things worse, Sweet Water was just a Sunday drive from Stone Mountain, the site of the founding of the second Ku Klux Klan in 1915 (MacLean, 1995). Under the gaze of the Confederate leaders carved into its granite side, white supremacists were still active in the region. Local and regional newspapers reported heinous incidents of racial violence and xenophobia of which immigrants, especially Latinos, were increasingly victim (see, e.g., Moser, 2004).

I asked Roberta how her race informed her teaching:

Roberta: I realize maybe where my push for such high standards come from because I've pushed myself to those high standards and feel that I have to perform at a certain level to get acknowledgment. Very high level. And then I have to push my students to that same level. That's a good question.

Spencer   Because you're a minority--

Roberta   --That's really a good question.

Spencer   Or, because—

Roberta   --right because I am a minority. A double minority: an Asian woman. And it's just hard to be a woman and hard to be an Asian woman at this level if you're not in the math and science department I should say—because everyone expects when you're an Asian that you're going to be in the math or science department. Ummmm my age—my age—I'm old now [laughing]

Spencer   [laughing]

Roberta   I'm old now, but I still look very young. And there are perceptions

                 about me—I think because of my looks and because of my age—

                 and because of my race and because of my gender. So maybe I

                 probably push my students just as hard. . . . They'll encounter

                 barriers and I want them to have an easier time than I did—just

                 like any other parent would want their child to have an easier time.

However, it was difficult, she recognized, if not impossible for non-minorities to

understand the intense and constant pressure she felt to prove herself worthy of anything

she had ever achieved. She, furthermore, complained that white guys such as her

computer-geek husband, Dave, just did not get it:

          I had—I'll just go ahead tell you some more about my husband [laughing]. I had a

          conversation with my husband—not a fight—a long conversation where at the

          end of the conversation he finally admitted he didn't get it. And he kept on saying

          that I had perceptions—I had perceptions and they weren't real. And I said, "You

          won't ever know." And I think some people won't ever know . . . . Everybody else

          will tell you—you know—"Those are just your perceptions those feelings aren't

          really happening." But they don't know it because they aren't you.

Roberta told me how she was still mistaken for a student when she went to make

photocopies in the faculty lounge. She told me how when she had been driving up from

Florida one summer a cashier at a back road gas station had refused to take money out of

her hand. As she had suffered, so too would her students. Making things easier for them

would only make it harder for them in the end. They had to toughen up.

Gatekeeping as Advocacy

In the spring of 2006, I attended "Honors Day" at Sweet Water—a yearly celebration to recognize the academic achievement of Sweet Water's young. The faculty wore their caps and gowns. Under the proud gaze of their families, students filed in: "Pomp and Circumstance." From the podium, Sweet Water's president officially opened the celebration with a metaphor:

> With the dogwoods, azaleas, and other flowers in bloom, the campus is like a large garden. The college provides the "soil" that students need to grow. Faculty and staff are the sunshine and the rain. The college is truly a wonderful nurturing environment . . . There's a country song that goes, "I'm a wildflower that blooms wherever I land." But, we're glad you chose our garden.

Applause reverberated across the basketball courts-cum-auditorium as the president asked the audience sitting in folding metal chairs and the bleachers behind them to recognize the "gardeners" of the college: Sweet Water's faculty.

In their Sunday best, former and current ESL students were among the prize-winners that afternoon: Jesús María, Most Improved ESL Student; Claudio, Students for a Progressive Society Leadership Award; Vladimir, President's Art Award; Rosario, Latino Student Association's Most Active Member, Phi Theta Kappa; Joon, Outstanding Chemistry Student, Outstanding Physics Student, Phi Theta Kappa; and, more. Nine current or former ESL students won an array of honors.

The icing on the cake was when Jacinto received the College's most prestigious academic prize: The Mass Prize. He had been an ESL student; he had been theirs. That afternoon, the choices Roberta, Taylor, and June had made about what sort of teachers to

be made perfect sense. Jacinto had succeeded and so too had they. All was right at Sweet
Water.

Kudos

Ecstatic, Roberta sent an email to Sue Ellen, the Chair of the Division of Learning
Support, naming her current and former students and their awards. The next day, Sue
Ellen in turn forwarded Roberta's note to the faculty listserv:

Good Morning,

I thought that you would like to see how many former ESL students received
honors yesterday. I don't think that most people realize that these students began
in Learning Support/ESL. Roberta Ware compiled this list. It's impressive that
nine of these students earned all types of awards, including the Mass Prize. I'm
proud of these students and their ESL instructors who helped them begin their
pathways to college success.

Sue Ellen's email received one short response:

Sue Ellen and anyone who cares to know:

Of course! Most of these students I presume are international students and they
tend to work harder (and perhaps have better academic foundation to begin with)
than most of our native students. Once they get the language down, they usually
do well. I happened to have two of them in my MATH 2650 Linear Algebra class
so I can attest to that too. Kudos to everyone who helps to nurture these students.

Robert's colleague's assumption—that most of the prizewinners were internationals—
was mistaken.

Taylor explained that actually very few ESL students were on F-1 Visas. Unlike two-year colleges in Atlanta, she told me, few of Sweet Water's ESL students were "internationals." The college didn't have much of an international strategy, in the first place. It was non-residential; there was very little public transportation in Hog Mountain. It was, therefore, difficult for internationals to study at Sweet Water—unless they had relatives in the region. Furthermore, since 2001, F-1 visas were harder than ever to get. Sweet Water's ESL students were mostly Georgia residents who commuted daily.

Roberta's colleague's seemingly supportive email revealed just how difficult it was for some faculty members to imagine that U.S. educated ESL students, especially Latinos, could win such prizes. Jacinto, the Mass Prize winner, was homegrown. Curiously, none of the Sweet Water faculty publicly responded to the insinuation that the natives were lazy and ill prepared, or that if ESL students had succeeded it was because as internationals they had received a sound education before enrolling at Sweet Water— unlike their peers in public high schools in Georgia. Deep down, perhaps everyone agreed. Or, perhaps it wasn't worth fighting over this time. ESL Learning Support students had done well. Maybe that was kudos enough for Roberta and her colleagues.

<center>Love Hurts</center>

Some of Roberta's students did succeed at Sweet Water. Others, however, did not. Over the five semesters at Sweet Water, I had met many of her students—and we continued to see each other in the hallways of Academic III and the ACCT lab early in the morning. Others disappeared and no one seemed to know what had happened to them.

As I have discussed, contemporary descriptions of remedial ESL coursework in U.S. higher education are relatively rare in the research literature for L1 and L2 college

composition. As their names would imply, both disciplines have traditionally focused on writers in degree coursework at the undergraduate (see, e.g., Canagarajah, 2002a; Harklau et al., 1999; Zamel & Spack, 2004) and graduate levels (see, e.g., Canagarajah, 2002b; Casanave, 2002; P. Prior, 1998). ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing at Sweet Water College fit into neither category.

After many semesters of hesitation, I began talking to Roberta about the K-12 literature on English learners that had motivated this study. I wanted to know, I told her, point blank, if she thought of herself as a gatekeeper. Roberta explained that she was and that she wasn't:

> If our students are not up to standards and they can't succeed at the next level, I'm not going to let them out of my class. This—for example, let's just pick something from my composition class that has to do with grammar: verb tense and verb form and word form. You don't get it, you don't get out. Okay, you have non-English problems; I'm sorry you're staying behind. Is it just spelling problems you're having? Are you French and adding an "e" onto to everything or German? Not a problem—we'll let you out. Do you not have any articles in your paper? You're going to stay back in. You know, I *am* a gatekeeper in that sense. If you don't meet the standards and I don't think you can actually go into 1101 with a fighting chance then I'm not going to let you out of my class.

What had most convinced Roberta and her colleagues that tough love was good love was the fact, they told me, that every semester former ESL students—many U.S. high school graduates—returned to thank them; they returned to tell them that English 1101 was a breeze. This, they argued, was proof that their teaching was working.

From Roberta, Taylor, and June's point of view, they had succeeded in teaching many of Sweet Water's ESL students to crack the code of Sweet Water's five paragraph essay and the COMPASS. With a course, an essay, and a standardized test, their students were mainstreamed; and, a two-year college diploma was something they could imagine. For Roberta, Taylor, and June, there was no contradiction between gatekeeping and advocacy. Gatekeeping was advocacy.

However, at Sweet Water it wasn't always so simple. There were no institutional statistics to support the three women's fervent belief that those students who passed through Advanced Grammar and Writing did well in their future coursework, or that they ever even completed degrees. Conflicting interpretations of national statistics about postsecondary remediation are equally ambiguous with some arguing that it is effective (Boylan et al., 1997; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000); it isn't (L. F. Johnson, 1996); sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't (Bettinger & Terry Long, 2005); or, more recently, that no one really can say conclusively (Perin, 2006). What was true was that at Sweet Water College some students passed the exit essay and others did not. Of those who passed the exit essay, some would pass the COMPASS and others would not—even after multiple attempts.

Roberta and Taylor, having taught the course multiple semesters, confided that they could pretty much tell by mid-semester who would probably not pass. That knowledge became all the more poignant at the semester's end when Roberta, Taylor, and June had to make the phone calls home telling their students that they hadn't passed the essay and would have to repeat the course. These were difficult phone calls to make.

The Last Day of School

In her office, waiting for students to return with their scores on the COMPASS, Taylor expressed these and other doubts about what she and her colleagues had achieved, and at what cost. Outside the door, a vacuum moaned:

Taylor: But you—regardless of how analytical you are—you feel like it's your duty to get them through that gate; and, even if you've seen people not apply themselves 100%--you know—why couldn't you inspire them to apply themselves more?—even in those cases.

Spencer: Yeah.

Taylor: So, you know, it's not only "Did I not give them the right tools?" but, "How did I not inspire them?"—what—you know—"Where did I fail?" I always feel that way.

It had been a particularly tough semester. Few of June's students had passed the exit essay. Taylor and Roberta's numbers had also faltered. The backlash from town hall meeting about illegal immigration that Taylor and the Students for a Progressive Society had organized had been intense. It had taken an emotional toll on all of them. Students were afraid and upset. They couldn't, Taylor explained, concentrate on their schoolwork. June's health insurance had been in limbo—another distraction. Roberta's pregnancy had also been difficult. For the first time that anyone could remember, Roberta had cancelled classes. Students who shouldn't have been in Advanced ESL Grammar and Writing had been placed there and they stayed there, unwilling to go down a level. There was only so much you could do in 16 weeks.

Yet, while Roberta, Taylor, and June were all able to individually and collectively rationalize why one student had failed and another had not, their analyses did not

completely relieve them of the pangs of self-doubt that Taylor described and that they too articulated in the interviews and our conversations. The three women made choices they thought were in the best interests of their students; and, they lived with those choices. Inhabiting the "figured world" (Holland et al., 1998) of ESL Learning Support, the three women worked for an institution called Sweet Water; and, all were charged with preparing "non-American English" learners to succeed in what the institution considered college level coursework. Roberta and Taylor's proven ability to guide students through the labyrinthine assessment cycle of which, admittedly, they were a part, and into English 1101 was one of the major references by which the two women told themselves and others who they were. It was also, in large part, how they were understood. They were good teachers. The proof was in the numbers. The proof was in Honor's Day. Their students' success was their manner of "climbing the side of the house" (Holland et al., 1998); it was their "improvisation" (Holland et al., 1998).

At the same time, some students failed. Failure also informed Roberta and Taylor's understandings of who they were not and who perhaps they could never be. June was too new at it to be sure. Maybe one day she too would enjoy the sort of passing rate on the assessment battery that had brought renown to her two colleagues. In the meantime, analysis demonstrated that the multiple and often paradoxical subjectivities the teachers created and re-created for themselves were not necessarily contradictions. Rather, they made sense for them—sometimes.

It seems to me that just as the discipline has slowly come to challenge the notion of a best practice or method (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001), it is perhaps time to rethink the often unequivocal ways whereby teachers and their teaching are categorized and to

look more closely at the sense teachers themselves make of what sort of teachers they are. The ambiguities of teaching ESL Learning Support at a two-year college in North Georgia were such that Roberta and her colleges understood themselves as good teachers, bad teachers, bad-ass teachers, and some thing or some things other along the way. They were teachers; they contained multitudes.

Yes, Roberta shared a degree of complicity in the marginalization of English learners at Sweet Water as did Taylor and June. That said, had Roberta, Taylor, and June had suddenly decided to challenge the rubric that they had inherited for scoring and teaching Advanced Grammar and Writing, or had they chosen to mainstream their students *en masse*, there was little guarantee that the rest of the faculty would have followed their lead. Roberta explained that the English professors simply didn't have time to waste on English learners who were coming out of U.S. high schools or from whatever institution it was that they came from without what the English professors considered a modicum of academic writing skill. Some one else would have to "deal" with them. It was, therefore, up to individuals such as Roberta, Taylor, June to teach U.S. educated English learners and their international peers what it was that the institution into which they were only provisionally admitted would require of them to be mainstreamed. This they did—explicitly—again, and again, and again.

More than that, ESL Learning Support seemed to be something of an initiation into the culture of postsecondary education, and, more specifically, into the culture of Sweet Water—of which the exit essay or the Compass Exam were two representative artifacts. Roberta explained,

The preparation that we put them through is really our way of almost molding them and not just preparing them but molding them in a certain to fit the college student criteria in that sense. These are the things you're going to have to be or do in order to become a mainstreamer in that sense.

A five paragraph essay was not a five paragraph essay was not a five paragraph essay. There was a Sweet Water way to write; and, as Roberta explained, there was a Sweet Water way to be. Handwriting a five paragraph essay in two-hours with a pen, white-out, and a monolingual dictionary was, perhaps, less about a U.S. educated English language learner's mastery of academic writing, and more about a demonstration of loyalty to that local paradigm of what, at minimum, it meant to be an "educated person" (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996). That is to say, whatever the Sweet Water assessment obstacle course was not, it most certainly *was* "literacy" as a powerful contingent at Sweet Water had defined it.

It is true that the sort of standardized high-stakes assessment practices, common but hardly unique to Sweet Water College, appear to constitute what some might consider a long-standing conspiracy to deny English language learners full entry into institutions of higher education. However, in a post-industrial U.S. economy, it is still profoundly important for ethnic, linguistic, and racial minorities to "make it" in and out of higher education. Making it at Sweet Water was largely dependent on set of standardized measures. These measures were unyielding. To that end, Roberta had constructed gatekeeping as advocacy. However, such advocacy came with a price.

On the last day of fieldwork, I met Roberta in her office. We chatted in her yellow cinderblock cubicle in Academic III, and I remembered the many conversations we had

had before. But, this time, the fragility of Roberta's subjectivities as a teacher was painfully evident. Her bravado was spent. I asked her how she felt about the semester. She paused. Then, she told me how one of her own had not passed the course, the exit essay, or the COMPASS. As much as she wanted to be the "professional," as much as she wanted to distance herself from a student's failure, Roberta could not. She told me that in the back of her mind she wondered if she had succeeded or if she too had failed. Roberta told me that she was no longer so sure. She wanted to be sure. She wanted to be a professional. This was the ambiguity of teaching ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing: Roberta's love hurt. It hurt like a motherfucker.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE DILEMMA OF IMMIGRATION IN NORTH GEORGIA

A large part of what Taylor did as ESL program coordinator, she told me, was to "interpret" ESL students to the faculty—"trying to explain to them [the faculty] in a sympathetic way issues that they may have." In Spring 2006, Amparo, for example, was having a terrible time in Psychology because of the amount of videos the professor used. There were no subtitles. She could not take notes fast enough. The final exam would be based exclusively on the information presented in the videos and the professor did not allow them to be checked out. Taylor suspected that her colleague had lost several videos that way, and that he simply did not trust students to take them home. However, Taylor had met the professor. He seemed like a reasonable person. She was sure they could come to some sort of agreement. She would go with Amparo, they would talk to him, and he would understand. Being an advocate for the students she loved was something that came naturally to Taylor. However, in Spring 2006, the consequences of Taylor's advocacy for the welfare of Sweet Water's English learners were such that neither she, nor anyone in the college, could have imagined.

In the previous data chapter, I have described the intersection of gatekeeping and advocacy in ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing as it was understood and enacted by Roberta, Taylor, and June. I have described how that conundrum was fueled, in large part, by the institution's uncompromising understandings of what it meant to be prepared for college and the high stakes testing whereby such readiness was measured. In this second findings chapter, I argue that of the various tensions of being a faculty member of Sweet Water's ESL Learning Support, the highly contentious issue of immigrants' right to access a postsecondary education in the state of Georgia was central to Taylor and her

colleagues' understandings of who they were professionally during the final year of data collection. Specifically, the stance that Taylor took in regards to undocumented students' access to the program defined her subjectivities as a professional—and informed those of her colleagues. I detail the politics of immigration in North Georgia as they concerned issues of postsecondary access—concerns exacerbated by the state's historical alignment with white supremacist ideology. I describe the impasse the politics of immigration and postsecondary access created for Taylor and her colleagues during the final months of data collection. I narrate Taylor's engagement with those politics in the form of a town-hall meeting that she and the Students for a Progressive Society organized in March 2006 on the topic of immigration. I theorize the fallout that ensued and Taylor's responses to its consequences—both intended and unintended

<center>Taylor and the Club</center>

As I mentioned before, Taylor was, by Fall 2005, the ESL program coordinator at Sweet Water. A white Southern woman in her early 40's, Taylor lived in "the city" [Atlanta]. She had married a Dutch national whom she had known when he was a high school exchange student in the U.S. His outspoken manners, she laughingly explained, often put him in trouble with the conservative, highly religious Southerners who shared his office. Taylor, who considered herself and her husband as freethinkers, explained that the "redneck right wing Republicans" bragging in the hallways of Academic II had disturbed her:

> I would overhear like—uh, a couple of years ago the buildup to the war in Iraq . . .
> . Uh I would overhear faculty and staff laughing about it saying how we were
> going to go over and kick Sadaam's ass and—you know—the Iraqis would—

would drop their guns before we even set foot there. And just really, really

ignorant kinds of rhetoric about—you know—A-merica A-merica A-merica's so

great and it frightened me and I thought, "God, there has to be some progressive

thinking people up here."

There were no loss of clubs on campus—and some of these with a large ESL following

such as the Latino Students' Association and the Asian Students' Club. Taylor believed,

however, that these and student-centered organizations at Sweet Water were more

focused on socializing than social issues, and this bothered her. In fact, Taylor explained,

she had been thinking of starting up a something of a progressive club herself. By pure

serendipity, somebody else had had the same idea. In April 2005, an email appeared

announcing the club, and later a flyer in the halls of the academic buildings announcing

its mission and inviting others to join. Taylor attended the first meeting and those

thereafter. She was no longer alone.

Taylor joined the Students for a Progressive Society as a faculty member who

shared the club's mission: "To be socially and politically active; to promote tolerance and

critical thinking; to raise awareness of important social issues; to donate time and

resources to worthy causes; and to make the world a better place in which to live." The

semester after the club was organized, however, the club's official faculty sponsor was

diagnosed with cancer. By Summer 2006, she needed to step down; and, she asked

Taylor if she would be willing to take over. Having attended all the meetings since the

club's inception, and wanting her colleague to know that her support was something she

could count on, Taylor accepted.

Students for a Progressive Society

By Fall 2006, Taylor and the Students for a Progressive Society had organized a number of events for the semester. The first was a donation drive for Red Cross Hurricane Relief co-sponsored by SPS, Student Government Association, and Future Health Care Professionals. The 10 day fundraiser included a concert by a student punk rock band, "Horrible Idea," whose lead singer was the SPS President and veteran of the war in Iraq. The concert alone raised some $250.00 in nickels and dimes for Hurricane Katrina survivors in one single day.

Not long thereafter, on October 18, the club and the Colloquium Series Committee invited a Nobel Peace Prize winner to visit Sweet Water and talk about "The New Nuclear Danger."

The club's next big event was on October 26: "Perspectives of an American Living in a Muslim Society." The invited lecturer, a combat veteran of the Vietnam War, had more recently served as the Peace Corps country director to Kazakhstan. He described how he felt the U.S. had squandered the immediate compassion that the tragedy of 9/11 had generated in the Muslim world by the nation's hasty and seemingly unjustified attack on Iraq. Taylor, remembering the event some six months later, was still excited—"And he was—he's a very conservative former military man that was up there just talking. It was great!"

The dialogue that Students for a Progressive Society hoped to create about the "war on terror" came to a climax on November 7, Veteran's Day. Students for a Progressive Society and the Politically Incorrect Club co-sponsored a panel discussion of veterans who had served in Afghanistan or Iraq. The five men, all students at Sweet Water, had joined the armed forces before 9/11. Each told the story of his military

service. Each discussed his perception of the war on terror, and, more specifically, the U.S.'s handling of the war in Iraq. Taylor explained that three of the student-veterans had a "stay the course" position, while the other two veterans had developed a much less optimistic attitude towards contemporary U.S. foreign policy. Taylor was pleased with the program and the way it had been handled: "We were there to honor what they had done. It was not—it was nothing against them even if we didn't like the policy."

New South Meets Old South

The war in Iraq was not the only issue that concerned the Students for a Progressive Society at Sweet Water College. Immigration was another. Well before I had made my first visit to Sweet Water College in January 2004, the state's demographics had already experienced a tremendous shift.

By the time I had first started driving to Sweet Water, the Latinization of North America had already created an array challenges for public education in the region. Such challenges were all the more acute in a state such as Georgia where, until the 1990's, a settlement of Latinos had been exceptional. In Northeast Georgia the Latino population had grown 348% between 1990 and 2000 (National Council of La Raza, 2005)—what the Southern Poverty Law Center was calling "The Battle of Georgiafornia"(see, Moser, 2004). In a 2005 statistical brief, The National Council of La Raza (2005), counted that of Georgia's 8,581,489 women, men, and children more than 6.7% were Latino—giving the state the 11th largest Latino population in the U.S. However, as of 2004, La Raza reported, Georgia's Latino population was already the 3rd-fastest-growing in the country.

In North Georgia, the poultry plants and carpet mills for which the state was famous had above all benefited from the influx of cheap labor (Slevin, 2006). Several

hundreds of thousands of Latinos had settled in North Georgia communities—an increase of 348% between 1990 and 2000 (National Council of La Raza, 2005; Pew Research Center, 2005; The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, 2004). Hog Mountain's billboards and storefronts bore witness to the changing demographics of North Georgia. State and interstate highways announcing a mega flea-market "Come and Get it Folks!" or a gun dealership competed for attention with enticements aimed at the new settlers and their needs: *Ahora Rentando, Nuevo Manager; Se Habla Español.*

By the fall of 2005, the 2006 November elections were already on the horizon. Immigration was emerging as a pivotal issue for both sides of state and national aisles. Pro-labor CNN commentator, Lou Dobbs, spoke of working middle class outrage and of self-styled "cultural warriors" (e.g., O'Reilly, 2006) securing the southern border.

The New Faces of Sweet Water ESL Learning Support

When I first arrived at Sweet Water, Meredith, the former ESL program coordinator, explained that Sweet Water ESL Learning Support had first started up in the mid 1990's, partly response to the needs of the region's newcomers. Although students I met during the two years hailed from many parts of the world and spoke a number of languages, Latinos were the visible majority of ESL Learning Support. In fact, by Spring 2006, one ESL Advanced Grammar and Writing course that I observed was entirely Latino.

Sweet Water's Latinos came with a variety of previous experiences in U.S. education. Of the 289 self-identified Latinos at Sweet Water, some had been born in Georgia or another U.S. state, some had come with or followed their parents at a very young age, some had come as middle or high school students, and some had just arrived.

Not one of the Latinos I knew or knew of at the college during the five semesters of data

collection was an international student on an F1 Visa "studying abroad."

Georgia Security/Immigration Compliance Act

As I have explained, The Board of Regents Fall 2005 Semester Enrollment Report

pinpointed Sweet Water's enrollment that semester at 5,985. Of these were 5,819 Georgia

Residents. The remaining 166 students were classified into two categories: out of state,

and out of country. Nineteen of 60 out of state students had out of state tuition waived;

another 20 of 60 out of country students had out of state tuition waived. Roberta confided

that if a student came into the ESL program having graduated from a state high school

and was still paying out-of-state tuition, it was fairly certain that he or she was

"undocumented." But then again, no one in the college perceived the immigration status

of entering students as their "business." Students enrolled. If they were in ESL Learning

Support, they could count on their instructors' support regardless of their paperwork.

That said, because of the strong relationship the teachers had with many of their students,

teachers were often aware of students' individual situations—simply because many of

their students confided these things to them.

Yet, in Georgia, legislation was being proposed—what would eventually become

SB 529-Georgia Security/Immigration Compliance Act. As introduced, SB 529 was a far-

reaching proposal that would have, among other things, denied all illegal immigrants in

the state of Georgia access to public services—including postsecondary education in the

state colleges and university. Taylor was extremely concerned and so were the Students

for a Progressive Society:

One of the things that we're really concerned about is issues like social justice and right now because it's salient and disguised as just the anti-immigrant legislation. So, we've been really active in informing the students of the legislation. We think they need to be informed about it. A lot of them aren't. . . . I don't like the don't ask don't tell policy and I think the "Shhhhhhhhhhhhh!—We've got undocumented students!"—and—"Let's not really talk about it"—and—"We don't really know who they are"— I don't think that's helping anybody.

The Students for a Progressive Society began following the legislation as it passed from one chamber to the next and back to committee again. In January 2006, some of the club's members went to a progressive summit in Atlanta and heard the President of GALEO [Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials] encouraging people that wanted to help to get involved with doing a town hall. Taylor explained, "So we started attending different forums around the city—um getting involved around encouraging people to take part in vigils—basically just follow the legislation." In mid-February the club had organized three screenings of "Wetback: The Undocumented Documentary"; and, by the month's end SPS had announced its own town hall meeting on illegal immigration:

Monday, March 6th, 7-9 p.m.

Illegal Immigration: "Myths and reality about immigration: What is the truth? What is the real solution?"

The forum will provide an opportunity for civil discourse on one of the most contentious topics facing our state and nation today: Illegal Immigration.

A diverse group of experts with different perspectives will answer questions from

the audience.

A Sweet Water professor of Spanish was to serve as the moderator. The panel was to be

composed of six individuals of various genders, races, and ethnicities. They included a

former Sweet Water mayor; a Latino Methodist clergyman; the Republican State Senator

who had proposed the legislation; the Regional Counsel for the Mexican American Legal

Defense Fund (MALDEF); the Latino Democrat State Senator from Atlanta; and, a

popular right-wing local radio talk show host.

<div align="center">Taylor's Coming to Consciousness</div>

In the weeks leading up to the town hall on illegal immigration, Taylor steadily

grew more excited—busily planning the event between teaching classes and

administrating the ESL program. However, Taylor's concern about the postsecondary

opportunities of immigrants and immigrant children was something that she had

expressed early on in data collection—a concern that begun even before I began visiting

Sweet Water.

She confided that in her second semester at the college, some three years earlier,

one of her students did not return—"One of our best students." Concerned, she went to

see Meredith, who at the time was program coordinator: She explained,

> I said, "Meredith, where's you—know—so and so?" And, she was like, "Oh, he
>
> can't afford tuition because—you know—he's undocumented. He has to pay out
>
> of state tuition" . . . . So, I said—I mean—when she said that it was like the first
>
> time I had heard that term—it was about three years ago.

As I have explained, Taylor and her colleagues believed that ESL Learning Support would be a money saver in the end for an English learner seeking a degree. However, Taylor fully recognized the tremendous financial burden that out-of-state tuition carried. The truth of the matter was that out-of-state tuition for the entire 10-course/34 credit ESL sequence spread over three semesters totaled nearly $10,000 in tuition and fees alone—as opposed to $2,600 for a Georgia resident. Even if a student were only required to take the final Level III Reading course, and by default Vocabulary I, II, and College Orientation, the total was still substantial: $3000 out-of state versus $800 in-state—and ESL coursework didn't count for degree or transfer credit.

During that pivotal conversation with Meredith, it suddenly occurred to Taylor what an "illegal immigrant" looked like: a student in her classroom. The import of the category was suddenly less abstract for her:

> I started translating in my mind, "Oh, illegal immigrant--That's what that means." And then I thought, "Oh, my gosh!" I realized that so many of my students were undocumented, and I said, "Oh, so this is what illegal immigrants look like. They look like my students." And that's when I became interested; but I was more interested at that time about how much tuition they had to pay. Then when all these laws all these bills started being presented last year that would impact them and keep them out of schools altogether then I felt that I had to speak out who else was going to they weren't going to speak for themselves cause they're scared.

Thus, Taylor explained, the town hall meeting she and the club were organizing was not a choice. Rather, it was her duty: "You know I—I had no choice. Any teacher would do that for his or her students."

The Town Hall

 By 7:10 p.m., every seat in the Sweet Water College auditorium was taken;

students were even standing. Breathless, Taylor stood at the door surveying the crowd.

Things were not going exactly as planned; Taylor was worried. That afternoon had been

exceptionally stressful. Only a few hours earlier, the MALDEF legal counsel had called

to say that she was double booked and would try to make it—but would be late. The

Latino Senator, a Democrat, had pulled out as well because of a double booking. The six

person panel had shrunk to four: the Methodist, the former mayor of Sweet Water, the

local radio talk show host, and the State Senator whose proposed legislation was,

implicitly, the focus of the forum.

The auditorium, however, was full; and, there was no use waiting any longer.

Advertisements on campus and in local papers had drawn more than 300—an audience

diverse in age, gender, ethnicity, race, and citizenship. Parents had come with their small

children; students with their friends; faculty with their colleagues. Although the Students

for a Progressive Society had in the last seven months organized a number of very

successful events—including a panel discussion on racism just the month before—this

time it was different. The town hall had drawn an audience from outside the college.

Entire families had come out to hear what the panel had to say.

The Faces of Immigration

At 7:10 p.m., it was past time to start. Taylor asked the club members who were

standing at the doors passing out programs to shut them. Smiling, she walked the

carpeted steps to the podium; and, the town hall meeting on illegal immigration began.

Taylor's role was not to moderate. Rather, she was to introduce the moderator, a Sweet

Water friend and veteran professor of Spanish. Speaking to the auditorium's full capacity,

Taylor welcomed the crowd:

> The fact that you're here means you care. It means that you want to be informed
>
> and educated and we commend you all for that. There are an estimated 300,000
>
> undocumented immigrants living in the state of Georgia and some 20 million
>
> living throughout the country. When I gave you these figures each of you will
>
> undoubtedly have images in your head. I'd like to ask you what are those images?
>
> Do you see defiant individuals who have willing broken the law of the land and
>
> should consequently be imprisoned or deported? Dangerous criminals who
>
> threaten our homeland security? Do you hear a different language that you don't
>
> understand? Do you worry about foreign cultures that might inevitably influence
>
> our country's values? Do you see adventurers and risk takers who like so many
>
> before them including our ancestors have come to the land of opportunity in
>
> search of the American Dream? Do you see desperately poor people who were
>
> forced to travel far and go to extreme measures in order to find work any kind of
>
> work so that they could feed their families? Do you think of hardworking laborers
>
> who are essential to our economy and should be acknowledged for their
>
> contribution? Do you see a parent? A classmate? A neighbor? A friend? Is only
>
> one image accurate? Or could they all be accurate? We all have come here
>
> because we are concerned about the issue of immigration. We've come to have
>
> for respectful dialogue which defines us as an institution and a nation. We have a
>
> distinguished panel of experts who will inform us and an extraordinary moderator
>
> by who our civil discourse will be facilitated. [Applause].

Taking the microphone, the moderator thanked Taylor and the Students for the

Progressive Society for their tremendous work in organizing the meeting that was about

to begin—and if everybody could please turn off their cell phones, thank you.

Ground Rules

The moderator explained that she saw the town forum as an extended teachable

moment. She therefore asked the audience to consider not only the panelists' positions

and proposed solutions—but also the nature of problem of illegal immigration and its

causes. Would the solutions proposed by the panelists help to reduce the causes of illegal

immigration? She cautioned the audience to consider if the panelists' solutions addressed

the complex causes of illegal immigration. Moreover, she asked the audience to question

if the panelists' proposed solutions would generate consequences that, potentially, "as a

nation we would simply not find acceptable."

Laying out the ground rules, the moderator explained that after introducing the

four panelists, each would have two-minutes for opening remarks—to establish their

stance on the issue. After, she would address questions generated by the audience to the

panel as a whole or individual panelist. These questions were to be written on the yellow

index cards that the Students for a Progressive Society were busy distributing at that

moment. Responses would be limited to three minutes per person per question.

The moderator paused to recognize the presence of another of the city's former

mayors (besides the panelist), and she explained the absence of the Latino Senator.

Finally, she noted that the MALDEF representative had a similar engagement at 6:00 but

would be arriving shortly. The town hall began.

The Panelists

The talk-show radio host, a white female, explained that they were not necessarily talking about individuals—but what to do with taxpayer money— "And that government gets no money without taxpayers." She explained that she herself had immigrant roots and that her own grandmother had come to the U.S. in 1903 and again in 1907. Her grandmother arrived at Ellis Island with only $2.00 in her pocket. The difference, she explained, was that her grandmother, like millions of others, had obtained their citizenship legally. From her own point of view, there were laws about immigration and those laws had to be upheld. To that end, she considered the guest worker plan as "putting the cart before the horse"—with the horse being a mixed breed of border security/law enforcement.

The Republican author of the bill, a white male, spoke next. He jokingly explained that had Taylor not been "so doggone persistent" he probably would not have come that evening. It was true, however, that the issue needed discussion—but discussion based on facts and laws and not, he insisted, on emotion. Therefore, what the audience was going to hear was not his own opinion about how he thought things ought to be in a perfect world. Rather, his position, as a lawmaker, was based on facts and law. That was his job—to uphold the law. The law, he explained, treated everyone who was here legally exactly the same. "The United States allows more people to legally immigrate into our nation every year than the rest of the world combined. So," he explained, "The suggestion that there is no way to get here is just false." Once in America, individuals legally here could change the law through political engagement.

The former mayor, an African-American woman, explained that she loved to share things that she learned, and that tonight she wanted to learn and to share. She

explained what she saw as her inadequacy of being on a panel of such distinguished individuals. Not a lawmaker, she explained that she saw things from the human side and not from a political one. She thanked the college for the invitation.

The reverend, a Latino male, began by asking how many of the audience were students. He too had come to the forum as a student—a student of the legislation currently under consideration. However, the student inside of him perceived the contested legislation as a gross reduction of the complexity of illegal immigration. The "law enforcement" model was simplistic. Furthermore, immigrants in Georgia had become yet another timely wedge issue that the GOP had created for the 2006 elections. The problem, he explained, was multidimensional. That the GOP was unwilling to address its complexity was proof that it was a wedge issue.

The town hall meeting was off to a "civil" start. No one had been interrupted. Everyone had said his or her bit and the moderator asked for the yellow-cards from the audience. As she began reading through the cards and addressing them to the panel members, the audience listened attentively—applauding politely at the end of each and every response. The initial questions were about the legislation itself—of what it consisted and what effects it was intended to have. It was clear, however, that the Senator and the talk show host were out-talking the minister. The Senator, after all, had written the bill. He knew it well. The talk show host was a professional arguer. She did it for a living. The mayor, it seemed, was still unsure of her opinion except that she was concerned. The minister was simply outnumbered.

Had the Town Hall meeting ended, at this point, it would never have made the news. It was, pretty much, a non-event. The Senator had made his points, eloquently. The

talk show host had enjoyed herself. The former mayor had pretty much kept quiet. The

minister had raised some points. The Senator and the talk show host had deflected them

gracefully. Then it all changed.

A Late Arrival

With only fifty-five minutes to go—more than an hour and five minutes into the

forum the Southeast Regional counsel for MALDEF arrived—a young white female

lawyer. The moderator stopped the questions and invited the counsel to give her opening

two-minutes remarks:

Thank you very much and thank you very much to Sweet Water College for

having an important discussion on this very important debate. It's a debate that's a

very real debate about very real people—not just the Latino community. This

issue impacts everyone in the state of Georgia and until we realize this, something

like SB 529 which is unconstitutional, unrealistic, and inhumane will pass [Long

applause]. But, I am confident that it's not going to pass and the attendance here

today is a perfect sentiment of that . . . SB 529 is something that is not new. We

debated it 20 years ago and we defeated it in court. That was Proposition 187. It

similarly sought to deny public benefits to undocumented residents—but of the

state of California. My organization was an integral part in ensuring that that was

found unconstitutional. But, unfortunately, because 20 years later we have people

who are still resisting the contribution the economic and the labor contribution of

our undocumented immigrants we are seeing the same anti-immigrant legislation

being introduced and to some certain small extent successfully in the state of

Georgia. It's not what we want for the state of Georgia and I urge you all to

oppose it [Applause].

She was the real thing and the Senator and the talk show host were in for their money.

The audience liked her. The MALDEF lawyer jumped on every question. She had the

answers the minister hadn't and she spoke them in flawless English with poise and grace

and a vast and historical understanding of the legal issues. The Town Hall had suddenly

fallen into her hands. She was taking over.

Nevertheless, the talk show host had something to say about lawyers and to the

lawyer from MALDEF in particular:

I guess—I guess what my problem is—with—about talking. We only want to

enforce felony laws and we don't want to enforce civil laws. I have a real problem

with that. And, I'm not a lawyer—and, uh—I have no problem with lawyers

taking us down roads—where we were talking about and having a productive

discussion about issues and now we're talking about trespassing—which clearly is

not what an issue that any of us were going towards. I have a real problem—uh

in—in looking at this in that way. And I'm not even talking about SB 529 and I

thought this was a discussion about immigration in general what we are saying

here is that there is a way to approach this problem pragmatically—and I've used

this word many times tonight. We've got to be pragmatic about it. I don't think—

I'm not a round'em up and ship them home kind of people. I don't think that's

going to work; that's not what they did to my grandmother; that's not what they

did anywhere else. But I am a person that says we have to secure our boarder. We

must do that and that doesn't mean keeping anybody out but we must do that. We

have to allow our law enforcement to enforce the law. Then we need to have a debate about guest workers and about temporary workers. But I don't think anybody would deny that we've got to enforce the boarder and then deal with law enforcement issues that relate to that. [Applause]

The lawyer responded. The talk show host fired back. The minister and mayor watched in silence. The Senator butted in. The lawyer pushed back. The town hall was getting personal—even testy. The lawyer and the Senator had had this argument before. They were sparring partners. The phrase "racial profiling" reared its head. Applause!

The Scandal

The moderator calmly continued with the yellow note cards with questions from the audience. The talk show host suddenly accused the lawyer of fear mongering and of incendiary talk and of calling people names [Applause]—Oh, really? What name did I call you?—And for waltzing in a half hour late [Booooo].

The moderator interrupted to ask the talk show host to address the question rather than the other panelist [Booooooooo]—Do us the honor of speaking to the audience rather than to the other panelist—[Boooooooo]. And the talk show host pulled herself out of her chair and told the moderator that she was leaving—that she hadn't come to Sweet Water for this. Either way, she was leaving. [Wild Applause, BOOOOOOOOO, Go Home!].

This was North Georgia, after all, and when a white Southern woman—a celebrated one at that—walked out of a full house because she felt she was being disrespected, it was a big deal. The moderator, also a white Southern woman, remained admirably composed:

Moderator	We would of course rather have you return.
Talk Show	[Walking up the padded aisle and then turning] Well, I mean really this was not what the lawyer wanted to achieve here! She came in with an agenda! She called people racist! And she called racial profiling—
Moderator	[Nodding her head and smiling] Thank you, nonetheless, for attending. [Exit talk show host to loud applause].

The former mayor, also a [black] Southern woman, stepped in to save the day. In a soft calming voice, she gently asked if she could "just plain old talk." The moderator nodded. In a whisper the mayor began:

> I think arguing about illegals and [pause] all of this –it doesn't really accomplish much. What we need to be doing tonight is brainstorming about the solutions of what we'd like to see done [pause]. Somehow we've got to work through—this is an issue. No matter who we are, it is issue. So all of us please need to do constructive discussions tonight, please. Thank you. [Grateful applause].

The lawyer jumped right back in and apologized for coming in late. She explained that she had been on a radio show talking about the same very important issue that would go to the Senate for a vote the following morning. Then, she took up where she had left off before the talk show host had stormed out. The Senator jumped back in and the debate continued between them. More questions from the yellow cards. The moderator moderated. The panel gave their closing remarks. The lawyer spoke last; and, yes, she concluded, SB 529 was about race. This was the South; it was always about race.

Some two hours after Taylor had first stepped up to the microphone to welcome the crowd, the town hall on illegal immigration was officially over. Thank you, thank you. Applause and handshakes.

<div align="center">Trouble in Sweet Water</div>

A day after the Town Hall meeting, SB 529 passed the Republican-controlled Senate chamber by 40-13. The debate lasted two hours. On 23 March, the House passed it. On 14 April, the Governor signed SB 529 into law. As originally proposed, the Georgia Security/Immigration Compliance Act would have denied access to public services to all illegal immigrants in the state, denied undocumented young men and women entry into the state university system, and required law enforcement officials to check the immigration status of anyone they arrested. In its final version, children would receive state health services regardless of their residency status; emergency care and treatment of communicable diseases would be available to everyone; all young women and men could attend college; and only those arrested on felony charges would be checked for their legal status (see, Georgia General Assembly, 2006).

While the town hall meeting had not prevented SB 529 from passing, it had been, from Taylor's point of view, a success. True, it had been unfortunate that the talk show host had stormed out—but that had been the talk show host's choice and, moreover, her right. Still, it was too bad. Yet, SB 529 had deserved a town hall meeting and it got one. Others at the college thought, as did Taylor, that the meeting had been—overall—a great success and told Taylor so. The moderator had been extremely level headed. A variety of opinions had been represented. The questions from the audience had been plentiful and

thoughtful. The Students for a Progressive Society had learned an awful lot about how a bill became a law. Sweet Water had reached out into the community.

Media Coverage

The city's newspaper ran an article about the "often-tense debate" on 7 March and another on 12 March about the "immigration enigma"—again citing the town hall meeting at Sweet Water as an example of the emotional public debate in Georgia over illegal immigration. All these things were good.

Things suddenly changed, however, when the same local newspaper reported on 1 April that the forum had not sat well with some [unnamed] members of the state legislature and that the town hall—reportedly—had nearly cost Sweet Water a $5 million addition to its student center. The paper reported that the funds, earmarked for the college, had almost been redirected. Simply put, Sweet Water was too "liberal" and the funds could be awarded to more deserving, i.e. conservative, units of the University System that did not treat guest panelists rudely.

The President of Sweet Water, the paper reported, was unaware of the appropriations committee's concerns, and the paper quoted her as saying:

> This was a public forum in which the college doesn't take a stand, one way or
> another . . . . I am certainly disappointed that legislators would look on that as a
> reason not to give students a building they need on our campus . . . . It's
> unfortunate that there would be any kind of sign that we should not explore ideas
> in a civil discourse on a college campus.

Taylor and her colleagues were outraged. They rallied around the President and their right to intellectual freedom and free speech.

One faculty member responded with a letter to the editor asking if anyone else in Sweet Water had mistaken the April 1 article for an April fools joke. Taylor was quoted in the paper and heard in the hallways of Academic II saying, "We do live in a democracy, don't we?" The faculty wanted to know which legislators had thought of pulling the funding. They wanted names.

Taylor felt that the local press had done well to expose the childish behavior of the legislators. It was an election year, and they had to be held, she explained, accountable:

> I think by and large people umm faculty are very very upset and proud of Dr.
> Chandler for defending us and defending academic freedom but um also I think
> people want to know who's behind it. People want to know names because this is
> an election year and politicians need to be held accountable for their actions and
> actually that's just unethical to behave that way. You know to tie funds—to—to
> try to control what a college does.

Livid, Taylor left for the weekend to attend the statewide annual Learning Support Conference where she would be presenting a paper, "Educating the Undocumented."

Taylor's Job

When Taylor returned that first week in April, I asked her how she was feeling about the town hall and its fallout—almost a month later. Again, she told me how proud she and the other faculty were of their President for coming out so forcefully to defend academic freedom.

I'm really happy I'm really happy that I have the President behind us. And I'm

very proud of her—and she and I have been emailing. And, ummmmm, definitely

on the same page with all that. Why wouldn't we be? You know, we're educated.

At the same time, she repeated that people wanted to know who exactly had thought to

take away Sweet Water's $5 million. She explained,

I mean even if we—we didn't do anything bad or radical—we did something very,

very valuable to the community. But even if we had even if we had up there—

saying wide open boarder policy amnesty for everyone, umm—even if we'd had

that still this is a democracy and we have to have a place for that.

What seemed to upset Taylor most of all was how the Students for a Progressive Society

might understand what was happening. As proud of her students had been about putting

together an event that had drawn more than 300 people, Taylor feared that the legislators'

pettiness would turn her students off from politics altogether:

Taylor: And I you know what I'm upset the most about Spencer?

Spencer: Tell me.

Taylor: I'm upset the most about how the students will view this. Because

                they learned—the students in the club learned so much through

                planning this event. They learned all about the legislative process. I

                mean we watched bills go from chamber to chamber to committee

                back to other chamber. And we followed them. We saw bills being

                withdrawn then the ones that eventually made it to the general

                assembly and went to the governor. They followed that whole

                process. They learned how to figure out who their reps were how

to contact their reps. They learned how to plan a huge event like this in terms of programming—you know—for up close to three hundred people there. And, you know, I'm concerned about how they're going to see this. You know. They were so proud of what they did. And if there's this kind of negative backlash—if there's this kind of pettiness coming from our leaders.

In Taylor's opinion, young people in America were already too apathetic. The idea that her students should be punished for taking a stance on an issue was, for Taylor, outrageous.

Friends that she trusted, such as Sue Ellen, the Director of Learning Support, had warned her over the weekend to be very careful. Her position could be jeopardized. She wasn't even tenured. In retrospect, Taylor felt that the town hall had been even-handed:

I just don't know how we could have done anything ummm more above board and more in consideration of varying views and respect for democracy even, even . . . for example even she [talk show host] walked out of the forum . . . . Well you know students didn't like. That they were critical of her walking out. They said that that was unprofessional. Well, yeah, maybe it was unprofessional; but, you know what? This is a democracy and we all have the right to—to free speech . . . . That's why—even her action—I defend because she was tired of talking she walked out. Fine. We're not forcing anybody to talk here or not to talk. You know, this IS America. So I—you know—I'm just really upset on so many levels I cannot even tell you. So I am so every time I talk about it I start seething again.

Taylor confided that some of her colleagues were worried that she, Taylor, would somehow be punished for own part in the town hall. She had only been the ESL program coordinator for less than a year. Taylor had taken a risk:

> People that genuinely care about me told to be very careful because—you know, "Your position here could be jeopardized." I'm glad I've got the President behind me. Sue Ellen's worried about my position. She's worried. She was telling me over—cause I was talking about this pretty much non-stop for the first couple days of the convention because I was soooooooooo angry—she was like, "Taylor, okay you have to take a deep breath. You have to relax. You have to you"— you know she's a—she's a Southern woman and she's very diplomatic. And she's, "Okay, you know, you have to be very careful that it doesn't jeopardize your position." And other people who've taken a stand on issues and have had the backlash from it have also warned me to be careful.

For the time being, Taylor explained that she was just trying to take a couple of days before she did anything more—before she sent, for example, her own editorial to the paper.

The Phone Call

While Taylor was trying to cool off— a little more than two weeks later, on 18 April—another article appeared in the same paper revealing that 17 illegal immigrants had received in-state tuition at Sweet Water State. In response to an inquiry by the paper, the President of the college issued a candid written statement explaining, yes, 17 undocumented students had indeed received in-state waivers. In her statement, the President argued that all 17 were Georgia residents, albeit undocumented; and, all had

graduated from the state's high schools. All showed great academic promise. Furthermore, she argued, no law had been broken. The waivers had been in accord with University System policies. She argued that it would be better, after all, if those 17 youngsters stayed in school.

Not long after the article appeared, a drunken death threat was phoned into the Dean's office. No one was there to answer it. He left a message. The Dean had Taylor come to his office to hear it:

--And he was using the f word over and over again—and, you know, they considered it a serious threat. It was almost like a death threat. "All the faculty— everybody up there—needs to be shot. You're just fucking giving away these— this free education to these fucking illegals and I fuck, fuck" and on and on and on. . . He called the dean's office, his secretary—yeah and—and he sounded like a Caucasian—maybe, thirty-something. He sounded a little bit thick-tongued like he might be drinking or doing drugs, but he sounded outraged and scary—and people up here have guns, Spencer.

The Dean and the others told Taylor to cool it. Should any of the media call, she should refer them to the President's office. Taylor understood that this was serious. She kept quiet. Taylor was worried.

<center>Discussion: Understanding Taylor's Advocacy</center>

Taylor's advocacy for her students— advocacy came so naturally to her—was something that in the final days of Spring 2006 even Taylor had begun to question. By the end of that semester, she was tired. The aftermath of the town hall meeting had taken a toll on Taylor and, she thought, on her students—emotionally and academically. An

unusual number of her Advanced Grammar and Writing students had not done well that semester. They had not made it through the assessment obstacle course that concluded the program. Taylor suspected that it was because some of them simply could not concentrate. They were worried about what was happening not only in Georgia but also across the nation. The strong message coming from both right and left was that there was no room for them in postsecondary education. The stories their elementary, middle, and high school teachers had told them—that if they studied hard and went to college, etc.— were not exactly so. What had Taylor's advocacy, she began to wonder, achieved?

In one of our final conversations the semester of the town hall meeting, Taylor explained that although it had been her intention to shake things up, she had never wanted it to reach the point where people would be worried about their lives. Taylor hadn't seen the death threat coming.

Taylor hoped that the town hall and its fallout had not affected her teaching—no, it hadn't, she hoped:

> Well, my—I don't want to admit that my teaching was compromised in any way. I know that I was pulled in a lot of different directions this semester whereas in the past—before I took on the role of coordinator and also, um, faculty advisor for the progressive club—I really just focused on teaching. And now that I'm on tenure track and I'm up for pre-tenure this year—promotion—they really push you to be on committees and do a lot more work. And I had so many extra responsibilities that I haven't—you know, my teaching has been secondary not in my heart but in terms of the time I had to a lot to it. And, I would hate to—to say that that's impacted how my students have done. I don't really think it has.

What was certain was that it had been a tough semester. She had gotten personally involved. She had been distracted—maybe. No, she did not think that her teaching had suffered, although she could not really say either way. She hoped not. She hoped that what she and the Students for a Progressive Society had done that March had been worth it. SB 529 had been modified. That was a small victory. However, she was still sad that it had passed.

Taylor worried about the upcoming elections and the wedge that immigration was creating in Georgia and nationally. She worried about a fence being built across the Southern border. She worried about her students. She worried that the Board of Regents would interpret SB 549 as meaning that the University System could no longer offer in-state tuition to non-residents—not anywhere. She worried how students were going to be able to pay out-of state-tuition. Taylor told me that she had only been trying to help her students because the issues they had to deal with were ones that she too had to deal with—and that what she had done had been out of love for them. Taylor explained that she hadn't even wanted to be faculty advisor—it had just happened that way. It had been an improvisation. The town hall meeting had been an "improvisation" (Holland et al., 1998).

What I understood was that, in the end, the town hall meeting had been Taylor's way of interpreting undocumented students for the college—of humanizing them. The town hall had mattered to Taylor—not because SB 529 would have threatened so many of her students. In fact, maybe only a dozen across the college would ever feel it. Yet, that was enough reason enough for Taylor. It would have mattered had it been for one.

Learning from a Town Hall Meeting in North Georgia

A summer later, in Fall 2006, Taylor still had her job. The Students for a Progressive Society were still programming events in preparation for the upcoming November elections. The college had not lost its $5 million for a new student activity center. No one had come to Sweet Water to shoot the faculty. For another semester, a dozen undocumented students would keep their in-state tuition waivers while the University System waited for the Board of Regents to set a definitive policy. SB 529, though still contested, was much less severe than it could have been.

Taylor had been lucky. She knew this. It could have been otherwise if Taylor had been otherwise, if the President had been otherwise, or if her colleagues, her students, or had the media been otherwise. I have told Taylor's story for a number of reasons—not the least of which was that Taylor herself asked me to tell it so that people would know what had happened in a two-year college in North Georgia that semester; and, so people would know what had almost happened.

Things could have ended very differently. I thought about why they hadn't. How was it that it had all worked out? Was it because of who Taylor was and the white privilege she was afforded as a Southern woman? Was it because Sweet Water College had that same academic year become Sweet Water State College? Had the President's aspiration that her institution be taken seriously fueled her outrage? Was it because the President and her colleagues had rallied around Taylor? Was it because of Honor's Day when nine current or former ESL students garnered a variety of awards for their academic achievements and leadership? Was it because of a sympathetic press? Or, was it simply because in the larger scale of things a town hall meeting in a two-year college in Hog

Mountain, Georgia was not worth making too much of a fuss over? I speculate that all of these things mattered. Contexts matter.

Quoting Canagarajah (1999), "Since everything that is taught already comes with values and ideologies that have implications for students' social and ethical lives, teaching is always problematic" (p. 16). Teaching is complicated. In Spring 2006, teaching ESL Learning Support at Sweet Water seemed even more so. At a basic level, Taylor's experience that semester illustrated the highly political nature of teaching immigrants and children of immigrants in U.S. postsecondary institutions—a politic intensified by a resurgence of American nativism fueled by fears of limited resources, reverse discrimination, and an unstable national identity (see, Sanchez, 1997).

In its most radical versions, new American nativists such as Brimelow (1995) have framed post-1965 immigration as preternatural Aryan retribution for the destruction of Nazi Germany:

> There is a sense in which current immigration policy is Adolf Hitler's posthumous revenge on America. The U.S. political elite emerged from the war passionately concerned to cleanse itself of all taints of racism or xenophobia. Eventually it enacted the epochal Immigration Act of 1965. And this, quite accidentally triggered a renewed mass immigration, so huge and so systematically different from anything that had gone before as to transform—and ultimately perhaps even destroy—the one unquestioned victor of World War II: the American nation. (p. 254)

In the face of such rhetoric, I suspect that ESL faculty such as Taylor do a lot of interpreting on behalf of their students—helping colleagues and K-16 institutions understand their challenges and their potential. As such, they are advocates.

Who Owns Advocacy?

An attention to issues of power characterizes much of contemporary research literature for L1 college composition and is characteristic of a twenty year "*conscientizaçaõ*" (Freire, 2000) of the discipline (Durst, 2006). Lu's auto-depiction of how she repositions one international (F1 Visa) student's unorthodox combination of "can be able to" as a statement of resistance follows in that tradition—one framing the postsecondary composition classroom as a "contact zone" and its instructors as "transgressive intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988). In its most elaborate form in the L2 college composition, Canagarajah draws from his own experience as a multilingual graduate student and writing instructor in North America to fashion a handbook for teaching "critical academic writing" to multilingual students. Advocating a "negotiation" model of writing instruction resonating with Lu's "contact zone," Canagarajah argues that ESL writers "be made reflexively aware of the medium they are using, developing a critical understanding of its potentialities and limitations as they appropriate and reconstruct the language to represent their interests" (p. 17).

It is possible to understand Sweet Water ESL Learning Support as a postsecondary system that legitimized the marginalization of English learners—as a continuation of the "subtractive schooling" (Valenzuela, 1999) researchers have exposed in a myriad of K-12 settings (see, e.g., M. A. Gibson, 1988; Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002; Gutiérrez et al., 2000; Moll & Ruiz, 2002; Orfield & Kornhaber, 2001;

Spring, 2004; Valdés, 2001; Valencia, 1997, 2002; Valenzuela, 2004). It is also possible to frame Taylor and her colleagues as complicit in that marginalization. That is, they never overtly challenged their institution's conceptualization of what it meant to be ready for college—despite a vast body of literature for the profession revealing the exclusivity of such paradigms and their potentially noxious effects on students from outside the heterosexual, white, North American, middle class.

However, Taylor did challenge proposed legislation that would have quite literally exclude undocumented students from attending Sweet Water or, for that matter, any tertiary institution in the state. She mobilized a college.

Although "can be able" (Lu, 1994) might raise some eyebrows, in your face critiques of freshman composition have not to my knowledge been the inspiration of any death threats. In contrast, Taylor's pedagogy of confrontation—her intensely literal activism—came with consequences—some unintended. In the spring of 2006, the consequences of Taylor's advocacy might have included, for example, the loss of a job, or institutional funding, or, a blanket death-threat that in the context of North Georgia had to be taken for what it was—and seriously.

Looking at research for L1/L2 college composition, and, more broadly, research about English language classrooms K-16, it seems to me that we researchers have become exceedingly comfortable in our offices from where we theorize provocateur pedagogies. Confronting social injustice in the context of a two-year college in North Georgia in Spring 2006 was not only an abstract, discursive battlefield about what it meant to be an educated person and who had the right to decide. Rather, Taylor's

concerns that semester—about undocumented students' right to any education K-16 were extremely concrete—and all the more perilous.

Researchers need to do a better job at concretizing what a teacher's activism might look like—beyond the theoretical notions of power and discourse that we have become exceedingly fond of and exceedingly good at exposing. Discussions of power might also and should, for example, include this story of a teacher fighting for her students to sit in a postsecondary classroom in North Georgia.

Researchers need also to do a better job at documenting what the unintended consequences of social and political activism in U.S. schools might be. We need to describe, analyze, and represent not only the happy endings, but also the unhappy and the almost unhappy ones. Perhaps then, when pre-service and in-service "transformational intellectuals"(Giroux, 1988) have both abstract and tangible understandings of the forms that activism in K-16 institutions might take, how that advocacy be enacted, and all the things that such advocacy potentially entails, they won't be as frightened as Taylor was—as we all were.

Finally, before, during, and after the town hall meeting, Taylor had friends. They all seemed to understand what the town hall meeting had meant for Taylor, for her students, and for their institution. Together, they took a stance. Creating that network came as easily to Taylor as advocating for the students she loved. How teachers of English learners might learn to create and sustain the type of support that Taylor was afforded also belongs in the knowledge base of L2 teacher education K-16.

CHAPTER SIX: THE DILEMMA OF THE PERSONAL

On Honor's Day of Spring 2006, Jesús María garnered Sweet Water's Most Improved ESL Student Award. In the past, a modest cash prize had accompanied the honor. That May, however, the ESL program was short on soft money. Some days later, Roberta brought up the idea of the teachers pulling together $200.00 for Jesús Maria:

Roberta: Let's give him some money.

Taylor: You want to give him some money? I can't right now

Spencer: I can't.

Taylor: You're the one with the rich husband.

Roberta: When I say rich I think he makes more than an educator

             [laughing]—

Taylor: --Mine does too, but I swear we are always—You look on paper

             how much we're making, and you can't believe we actually live

             hand to mouth. But we have so many expenses with Cody!

Spencer: Kids and daycare—

Taylor: --Well, and therapy, and all the stuff that we have do for Cody

             that's not covered.

Roberta: He makes the same amount of money as my husband probably.

Taylor: I don't think he makes as much as your husband. But it's not a

             competition.

Roberta: I know—but I mean [laughing] that's just scary cause it tells me

             when my kid comes I'll have to pay a lot for daycare

Taylor: Well hopefully you won't have a special needs child that needs a lot of therapy and—

Roberta: --But, I'll need therapy—

Taylor: Yeah, that's right [laughing].

Roberta: Somebody's got to pay for me when I got to the psych ward and get committed [laughing]—Come on now!

Taylor: It's been a tough semester.

Undoubtedly, Spring 2006 had been "tough"—as Taylor commented in one of our last recorded conversations that May. There certainly had been a variety of predicaments surrounding the ESL Learning Support program that semester. In this final findings chapter, and in continued response to the question that drove this research effort, I inventory the five women's individual interviews that semester and related fieldnotes.

As the narrative that follows illustrates, the contexts that complicated ESL Learning Support faculty members' understandings of themselves and what they did ranged from the college's excruciatingly narrow understanding of what it meant to be ready for college, to the ambiguous relationship between ESL Learning Support and remediation, to the tortuous exit procedures, to the college's emerging four-year aspirations, to the toxicity of a town hall meeting on immigration. There was also the money, or lack thereof, and the perennial labor issues that had plagued the field of college composition for decades (see, e.g., Trainor & Godley, 1998; Wyche-Smith & Rose, 1990).

I, for one, had received not much more than $3,000.00 for the six credits I had taught that semester—a couple of thousand dollars short to complete the eternal repairs

that two and a half years of commuting to Sweet Water had wreaked from my 18 year old Toyota Celica. I kept paying and paying and paying. There was nothing left for Jesús María. There was never enough.

Yet, reviewing my data set, I argue that Spring 2006 took an emotional and physical toll on the teachers for more than the reasons the instructors related in the formal interviews they accorded me, or for the reasons I had documented in my own observations of their classroom instruction. Reading and re-reading my five semesters of fieldnotes, I realized that some things were remarkably absent.

In the hallway between classes, on the phone, via email, and in casual conversations during the many hours that I spent at Sweet Water, I had become familiar with the other and more private conundrums that concerned these teachers who had become my friends. These dilemmas—as the data byte with which I opened this chapter illustrates—were exceedingly personal. They included, among other things, Roberta's excruciatingly difficult pregnancy that semester and Taylor's special needs child, Cody, who was having a hard time in kindergarten that year.

While I was privy to the details of these daily happenings, the women rarely if ever referenced them in the formal interviews when they were "professionals" and I was a "researcher." Nevertheless, each teacher, besides teaching, was navigating the vicissitudes of her own existence. Although our unfolding lives framed the bulk of the conversations that we had as colleagues, these personal dimensions rarely if ever surfaced in the formal setting of researcher and participants. I question the invisibility of the personal in my data; and, I theorize the implications of this absence for the knowledge base of L2 teacher education.

The Exit Interviews

As I have explained, by January 2006, I had inventoried a number of predicaments that potentially affected participant's understandings of their "teaching selves" in my previous semesters' fieldnotes—reformulating them as interview questions for the ESL program's five faculty members.

The Spring 2006 initial interview protocol (Appendix A) consisted of a series of questions aimed at eliciting teachers' understandings of these quandaries. Questioning addressed: (1) teachers' understanding of the relation between ESL Learning Support and the global institutional mission of the college; (2), the evolution of ESL Learning Support since they had begun teaching; (3) their perceptions of the ESL program's impact on degree-seeking students in the program; (4) their perceptions of ESL students' preparedness for Sweet Water literacy coursework; (5) the relationship between what ESL students were taught at Sweet Water and what they had learned in high schools; (6) their understandings of "college level" coursework and where Sweet Water ESL fit into that paradigm; (7) their understandings of and satisfaction with the ways ESL students were assessed at Sweet Water; (8) the relationship between ESL Learning Support and their students short and long term goals; and, (9) finally, their perceptions of their advocacy. The Spring 2006 exit interview (Appendix B) was based on a review of the data generated during the semester's initial and follow-up observations/interviews with teachers.

Taylor and Growing the Program

As I have written, the issues surrounding postsecondary access for English Learners were central to Taylor's thinking in Spring 2006. Related to those concerns, and what she described as her biggest dilemma, were the program's stagnant numbers:

Ummm honestly right, now my biggest dilemma is how are we going to sustain the program—and grow the program? I am very concerned—and this ties into the immigration issues—but I'm very concerned about how students are going to be able to pay for their college because of the out of state tuition. And if the law that was just passed that Sonny Perdue just signed—they say it's going to go into effect. Unless it's challenged to be unconstitutional, it goes into effect next July 07. The Board of Regents will probably interpret that to say that institutions can no longer give out of state tuition to any—to any—any institution in Georgia. That's what the President told me—Dr. Chandler.

Taylor felt that given the large numbers of Latinos in the area's public school system, Sweet Water's enrollment should better reflect that demographic. In the end, Taylor believed the community college was falling short of its historic mission to serve the community's needs:

How can I how can I get them in here—I mean where are they going to go if they don't go to college they graduate from high school I mean what are they going to do? You know they're going to try to find some sort of job and they're just going to be relegated to the menial work that their parents have done. I'm not saying that there's not some dignity in any kind of work but is that really what they want?

In the immediate future, Taylor hoped to lobby for the college to waive a standing regulation that required students—ESL or otherwise—to complete 12 hours of academic credit before being allowed to apply for an out-of-state tuition waiver:

> So what I'm going to encourage them to do is to lift that requirement—I don't know if they're going to listen to me at all. Umm. they may think I'm a nut but encourage them to lift the 12 hour requirement this year, especially, to get as many students in and to get them—let them have the waiver for at least the first year.

Thus, to a certain extent, the activism that brought Taylor and the Students for a Progressive Society into the spotlight in March 2006 was partly motivated by Taylor's concern that the program's numbers would dwindle—or at least not increase—without a proactive out of state tuition waiver policy for undocumented Georgia high school graduates.

Roberta and High Stakes Testing

In her exit interview, Roberta reiterated that her biggest dilemma was the high-stakes testing cycle that her students needed to pass to exit ESL and enter the mainstream:

> Biggest dilemma? Wow. [pause]. For my exit classes, it's deciding—it's that whole tension to pass the test and teaching to teach skills needed for mainstream because it's such a high stakes test for both exit classes for reading and writing. There's definitely tension there. How much stress and emphasis do we put on that high stakes test at the end of the semester?

As I have written, Roberta's improvisation of the high stakes testing at Sweet Water was to embrace it.

June and the Particularities of Evening Classes

June suspected the dilemmas she faced were specific to teaching evening classes. Her p.m. students all seemed to be working adults. This, she explained, created a number of conundrums for her in terms of keeping track of attendance and in deciding what sort of accommodations to make for those students who she suspected were working full time:

> I've just always given them the benefit of the doubt. I felt—you know—they're working full time. And, I always give an essay near the beginning of the semester where they can talk about work and going to school. And after reading those essays I really feel for them even though I did the same thing. You know, I seem to feel more for them. Ummmmm, so, that that to me has been a dilemma. How much do I credit to their working full time and not being able to—uh, I've not counted people off for being late because of that. But, I would feel different during the day. I think—although often they're coming from work to. This is a real problem.

Intuitively, June seemed to understand the sacrifices that the vast majority of her students had made to come to Sweet Water. She seemed to understand what it meant to them and their families. In response to what she saw as her adult learners' difficult situations of balancing work and study, June created an enormous amount of supplementary material for self-study. June believed that her strategy worked. In previous semesters, students had enjoyed and had taken advantage of the packet she was constantly expanding—taking

references from here and there, worksheets, answer keys, etc. For this reason, Spring 2006 had been something of a disappointment for June because her students hadn't taken much advantage of the extra material she had offered them.

Moreover, June had had an unusually problematic student named Bogdan who, in her words, "Spread such a pall over the class." She elaborated,

They're in college they need to act like they're in college. It's up to them to um—you know, they just can't continue as high school students. And, that's the problem. . . . But I try not to treat it that way. I try to treat them like they're in college; and, therefore, if Bogdan wanted to sleep in the corner I let him sleep. But, in retrospect it may have given a message that I'll tolerate anything and therefore some of them may not have worked as hard as they should have. I've never had that problem before.

By the end of Spring 2006, June was thinking about the sort of disciplinary stance she would take with Bodgan should he return to her course.

Louanne, One Semester at a Time

As I shared the office with Louanne, my other interviews with her were something of a running conversation that we would pick up whenever we saw each other next. As I mentioned earlier, Louanne, a part-time adjunct, taught generally taught one course for the ESL program— ESLO 1101 Classroom Communication and College Orientation. Of all the ESL courses, ESLO 1101 bore degree/transfer credit and was an additional requirement for all students enrolled in more than two ESL Learning Support courses. The course itself, however, did not figure into the high stakes assessment cycle

whereby students exited the program. Thus, for Louanne, the dilemma of her teaching depended entirely on the students in her course from one semester to the next.

Like June, Louanne was highly sensitive to the fact that many of her students had responsibilities besides their own education. This was due, in part, she admitted, to her own working class origins:

Louanne: One woman in my afternoon class—she got—her boss gave her different hours without asking her. And, so, I had to allow for that.

Spencer: So it sounds like you have to sometimes rethink your policies because of the lives of the students.

Louanne: Yeah. Yes. Because most of the, as I said, usually come from around here. They're having to work they're having to do things at home. A lot of times they'll be the translator going to court. Or, they have to take somebody to the airport. Or, they have to baby-sit. . . . I know the Hispanic culture is family oriented. I know that these people are very—that they are telling me the truth. At least— I, for the most part—that I found out.

Like June, Louanne had taken "the time to know them [their students]" (Sternglass, 1997). Consequently, both women were markedly sensitive to the specificity of English learners in public two-year colleges (see also, e.g., Fry, 2002; Fry, 2004) and both conceived of the dilemma of teaching ESL Learning Support as whatever dilemma a particular student was facing that semester.

Several days after the exit interview, however, Louanne had more to say about the biggest dilemma of teaching ESL Learning Support

Louanne: Ooooooookay [clears throat] getting others to realize how important it is I guess.

Spencer: Who do you mean by others?

Louanne: I'm talking about others in the college.

Spencer: And how do you think it's perceived right now?

Louanne: Well the—they don't really think of it except as a second thought. That's what it seems like. I don't know, but it seems like it's just like a second thought 'cause you know they—Taylor has to go hunt for people or else somebody will send her a student that can't do something. And really they need to think of it as a part of Learning Support and not just an afterthought.

Many faculty, she believed, did not even know that there was an ESL program—a complaint that four of the five participants voiced at one point or another during the five semesters of data collection. Along with whatever was happening in the lives of her student one particular semester, the lack of mainstream awareness of the ESL program bothered Louanne hugely.

Lodoiska

As the semester reached a close, I reflected on my experience at Sweet Water and my relationship with its ESL teachers. Over the five semesters of fieldwork, I had come to know my participants well—especially Roberta whose class I had observed for three semesters, and Taylor who had been the first teacher I had met at Sweet Water. It had become my custom to begin my visits to Sweet Water by stopping by one of their offices

for a brief, informal chat. Over the two years, we had come to consider each other as more than researcher-participants. Rather, we had become friends.

As friends do, we kept up with each other's happenings—how the weekend had been, what was new in our lives, etc. Although I had only just met Louanne and June, that Spring 2006, we also had come to know each other that semester as we all shared an office. Louanne and I spent a good deal of time together between my 8:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. ESL Vocabulary courses on Mondays and Wednesdays. Likewise, June and I had begun opening up more and more to each other—in between the interviews and classroom observations. Of the five ESL teachers that semester, I saw the least of Lodoiska.

Our First Meeting

A Polish national, Lodoiska had initially come to the U.S. as a nanny. After completing her Masters in Russian and English philology at a major Polish university, Lodoiska had decided to spend a year in the U.S. The nanny service, she explained, initially sent her to a suburb of Washington, D.C. However, because her boyfriend at the time was working in Atlanta she requested a transfer south. By the end of the nanny job, Lodoiska had secured an assistantship at the state university where she would eventually graduate with a second Masters, this time in TESOL.

Lodoiska had been recruited to teach an ESL Level III Reading for Spring 2006. Taylor, actually, had met her a while back at a regional TESOL conference. Lodoiska had come to Sweet Water in Fall 2005 to teach Russian. In Spring 2006, she was teaching one section of ESL Level III Reading in the evenings and its mainstream Learning Support equivalent in the afternoons.

Lodoiska's cubicle was not in Academic III. Rather, it was a short walk away in the Division of Humanities. In Spring 2006, the space she shared with a half dozen colleagues was under renovation. Thus, Lodoiska was not as easy to find as the other ESL faculty who, unlike Lodoiska, were all in consecutive offices in Academic III. In January 2006, I put out the word that I was hoping to contact her. By the end of the month, Lodoiska and I had met and arranged a schedule of interviews and observations.

New to ESL Learning Support, Lodioska explained that for this reason she was somewhat hesitant during the interviews:

Spencer: This first interview—it's the same questions I've asked Roberta, Taylor, Louanne, and June—and I just wanted to go through them with you—

Lodoiska: Gosh, I don't know if I can answer all of them.

Spencer: It's okay—there's no wrong answer . . . . The first question is, "How do you understand the institutional mission of ESL?"

Lodioska: Ohhhhhhhh, I have to think about it. I'm not sure. Well, I mean I know what Taylor told me and what the goal is of the course.

Spencer: What?

Lodoiska: But I think that to be really able to answer that question we would have to—well at the end of the semester I would really tell you what I think about it.

However, even by that first month in ESL Learning Support, Lodoiska had already understood the significance of the COMPASS in Reading. She told me about the pressure she felt to get her students through it. Comparing her experience teaching Sweet Water

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ESL to a continuing education course she had taught at another U.S. community college, Lodoiska confided, "Honestly, I feel more pressure because they have to take tests. They have to pass the tests . . . . It seems like there's more pressure here."

Learning to Read?

Although Lodoiska hoped that the students in her course would leave with a set of skills that would help them through the COMPASS in Reading and in their future college coursework. However, she was skeptical that she could really accomplish much. From her own experience as an English learner, Lodoiska was unsure if a student could "learn" to read academic texts in 16 weeks:

> But it's just—this [reading] is something that you more acquire than learn over time. It requires time. Like my friend asked me, "How do you teach reading?" I mean—You just have to read. You just have to read a lot over and over and over . . . . How shall I put it? Yeah, I guess because it's so difficult within such a short period of time to learn and to be able to answer all of the questions. That's what puts a lot of pressure on them and on the teacher. So it's sort of—it's not that it's not realistic—but that to really—uhhh—to really be able to deal with all of the reading, it just takes time.

Sixteen weeks later, her students would be taking the COMPASS in Reading.

We are Retards

I continued visiting Lodoiska's classroom that semester. She admitted that she had been struggling with the same student who had given June so many problems. She explained that during one session Bodgan fell asleep. Neither she nor the rest of the class had been able to wake him. That was weird. Still, Lodoiska plowed ahead—moving

chapter by chapter through the textbook around which both the mainstream Learning Support Reading course and the ESL Level III Reading course revolved.

Besides the pressure of the COMPASS, Lodoiska found that ESL and non-ESL students' own perception of Learning Support—at least in her experience—were problematic:

Lodoiska: Hummm. I can tell by the students—the—the way they feel about it. I think there is some resentment going on. They are not very happy about taking these courses.

Spencer: Yeah, why do you say that?

Lodoiska: Because they wish they were taking regular courses that they could get credit for. That is—for them, it's just, you know, "Why are we here? We're not getting any credit for that. We have to go through that because"— like—my ummm—I mean this is not relevant to this class as much as to my 099 class last semester. They were so unhappy. They just—one of the students was just like, "Oh we are retards. That's why we are here."

At the same time, Lodoiska did think that without a course like Level III Reading, students would have difficulty sitting down and studying. Learning Support created a discipline for students who would otherwise have none:

Back in Poland I would have to study at home—or probably wouldn't be studying but just feeling that I have to take the test; and, I would be stressed out over it—not having studied. Because unless you're really pushed by going to classes and having to sit down and do the homework I don't think people would.

Level III Reading and the other Learning Support courses were, for Lodoiska, the push students needed.

Her Visa

Lodoiska explained that after being in the U.S. for almost five years, she was ready to go back home to Poland. The relationship that had brought her to Atlanta had ended; her student visa, extended with a year of Optional Practical Training (OPT), was soon to expire. Without a full time contract and the sponsorship of an employer, Lodoiska would be obliged to leave the U.S. I asked her if she had thought of continuing with a Ph.D. She explained that she had. However, she explained, it had been a long time since she had seen her family.

Her Disappearance

Lodoiska never succeeded in getting Sweet Water to sponsor her visa extension. Taylor explained that Lodoiska's student evaluations had not been very positive. That mattered to the College. She was not offered a new contract. Additionally, Taylor had had a hard time getting in touch with Lodoiska throughout the semester. Lodoiska hadn't responded to Taylor's emails about various arrangements that were necessary for planning for the COMPASS.

Taylor had been frustrated. It was unprofessional of Lodoiska. She asked me if I had been able to contact her. I, too, had been looking for Lodoiska—trying to establish a date for an exit interview. She had not returned my emails or phone calls. When I finally caught up with here in late April, she was driving. She asked if she could call me back later. She never did. I called again that week. She never answered.

When the exam cycle was over, Roberta mentioned that she had run into Lodoiska in the mailroom. Lodoiska had been turning in her grades. As Roberta put it, Lodoiska seemed glad to be done. Roberta, like Taylor, expressed frustration with what she perceived as Lodoiska's part-timer mentality.

In mid-May, I called again the cell phone number Lodoiska had given me in late January when we first met in the mailroom. I called again in June. An automatic recording counted out the phone number. I left another message—that I was hoping to get in touch with her and if she could please call me. Lodoiska, I imagined, was already in Poland with the family she had not seen in five years. I imagined that Sweet Water College was a distant and somewhat unpleasant memory for her. The College had not offered to renew her contract. The College had not stepped forward to sponsor her visa application. She had gone home.

Thinking about Lodoiska: The Dilemma of the Personal

It was peculiar that Lodoiska's visa worries happened to overlap with the town hall meeting on immigration and the upheaval it caused at the college that semester. It did not surprise me that Lodoiska never returned my calls or emails; and, for this I held no grudge. I, at least, was fairly certain that Lodoiska's biggest dilemma that semester had been the uncertainty of her own situation. Would she stay? Would she go?

During the three years of data collection, I had personally witnessed several close friends in Athens, Georgia make difficult decisions of whether to leave or to stay in the U.S.—and if to stay, how to stay. I accompanied one of these friends to Atlanta for a series of hearings with immigration officials. The weeks before each of these appointments, he became physically ill to the point that he was prescribed painkillers.

What did surprise me as I began looking over my data and thinking about Lodoiska and the other conversations I had had with the teachers were the personal happenings that I remembered but had not thought to record and that teachers had not made mention to in the formal setting of researcher/participants. I wondered why they hadn't. I wondered why I hadn't thought to ask.

When I met with Taylor and Roberta before the semester's end, I raised the idea that perhaps the biggest dilemmas that all of us faced that semester were not only what had happened at the College that semester, or the particular subjectivities that we brought with us to Sweet Water, but also the happenings of our personal lives.

That semester, Roberta and her husband had sold their house in a suburb of Atlanta and had bought another. Just as they were scheduled to move, the new contract appeared to be falling apart. She was unsure where they would live and what they would do with all their stuff and her ailing mother who lived with them. In March, Roberta became pregnant and was violently ill thereafter. She could eat nothing. June's husband had retired at 65 in January. Her health insurance had been thrown into limbo. Louanne's son had broken some bones the previous fall and was living with Louanne and her husband. Her father fell ill that spring and it looked like he wouldn't pull through. Taylor's autistic son had started kindergarten that fall. His teacher didn't seem to know how or want to learn how to work with him. Then there was Lodoiska and the uncertainty of her visa. The list went on and on and on.

I knew the details. I had heard about these and other dilemmas all semester. I had shared some of my own: the seemingly endless and costly repairs on my 1987 Toyota Celica; the uncertainty of funding for the last year of my studies; my frustration with the

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revisions I was being asked to make on the prospectus—and more. We shared these things every day. Examining my fieldnotes in April, I realized how little I had recorded of these things—only bits and pieces of these conversations—if at all. It seemed that the personal did not belong there. It was personal, after all—just as Lodoiska's situation was, finally, personal. Or was it?

Teachers at Risk

As I have explained in a previous chapter, the well of contemporary concerns about what teachers need to know and know how to do to teach effectively has its source in a so-called "new reform" in research for general teacher education motivated by the goal of the professionalization of teaching. The argument posited that teaching could only be raised to the status of a profession through the establishment of a knowledge base of that activity (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; The Holmes Group, 1986). Once that knowledge base was established, teacher education programs could take the lead in communicating and transmitting it to the nation's new generations of professional schoolteachers.

With a cue from research for general teacher education, influential figures in TESOL have since drawn attention to the post method condition of the discipline (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001) and the insufficient research base to support longstanding models of L2 teacher education such as the M.A. TESOL (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). More recent sociocultural research in TESOL emphasizing the significance of the contexts of teaching of English to speakers of other languages has acknowledged, among other things, the centrality of "the hidden side of the work" (Freeman, 2002) that provious models of teacher training had previously underestimated.

Today, L2 teaching is generally conceived of as much more than the development of skills, or the mastery of principles and theories (Parrott, 1993). More exactly, as Marland (1995) specifies, L2 teachers are guided by internal frames of reference grounded in personal experiences, both academic and other, and their interpretation of them. Thus, proponents of a reflective practice model have argued that through educators' constant reflection on the choices they make in the classroom, and the bases for those choices, reflective practitioners might better understand what alternatives were available to them during a critical incident in the classroom, and, consequently, what choices are available in the future.

Largely derivative of general teacher educational theory and practice, a growing body of L2 research aimed at better understanding the ways teachers construct the realities of their classrooms has taken hold of L2 teacher education—solidifying interrelated pre and in-service "reflective practitioner/teacher as researcher" paradigms in L2 contexts (see, e.g., Freeman, 1993, 2002; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Golombek, 1998; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Johnson, 1999, 2000; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Richards, 1996, 1998; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). L2 teacher education has, thus, brought more attention to the experiences that teachers bring with them to the classroom. Thinking closely about critical incidents both in the classroom and in teachers' lives has been argued as a heuristic for teachers to make sense of who they are as professionals, the choices available to them in their classrooms and institutions, and how they might be/become something or someone other than the teacher they are in the present. However, it is important to note that, for the most part, such experiences are often framed as memories of things past. I argue, however, that the significance of the present, the

unpredictable happenings of the synchronous lives that teachers bring to teaching as those lives unfold, remains largely invisible in the K-12 research literature.

Looking at the field of college composition, it is certainly true that the intersection of the individual and the professional has received ample attention. Ongoing discussions of college composition part-time and full-time faculty and the exploitative labor practices they endure (Harris, 2000; Murphy, 2000; Schell, 1998) have given way to related discussion of how such institutional marginalization might be resisted through disciplinary resolve (Robertson, Crowley, & Lentricchia, 1987; Trimbur & Cambridge, 1988), innovation (Trainor & Godley, 1998), "cultural and activist practices" (Okawa, 2002), "pedagogical performances" of class, gender, and sexuality (M. Gibson et al., 2000), collaborative reflection with colleagues (Bishop, 2001), and auto-representation (Fontaine & Hunter, 1993).

Nevertheless, it does seem to me that K-16 teacher education remains reluctant to acknowledge what I suspect many teachers have long known. That is, of the many dilemmas that characterize teaching, the sometimes trivial and sometimes very serious aspects of their teachers' lives *in media res* are perhaps the most consistent dilemmas that women and men face in the construction of their teaching subjectivities.

At the same time, I do not underestimate the significance of the various concerns that the five teachers articulated in our interviews. The programs stagnant numbers, the yoke of high stakes assessment, the often difficult lives of the students, and the contradictions of curriculum itself preoccupied the teachers; and, they thought deeply about these things and what they thought of these things informed how they understood themselves as professionals. Yet, how did Lodoiska's visa, Taylor's autistic

kindergartener, Roberta's difficult pregnancy, June's uncertain health insurance policy, and Louanne's parent's illness also frame not only their subjectivities as teachers, but also the actual activity of their teaching? I believe that these things did affect their understandings of themselves as teachers. . I cannot say, however, how that was so. It was a question I posed too late—at the end of fieldwork. I too had mistakenly understood that because teaching is a profession, the personal is strictly that—personal.

Teachers' Lives

Those final days of the semester, I explained to Taylor and Roberta what I had not included in my fieldnotes:

Spencer: At first I didn't think—well I don't want to document peoples' like personal things. But that has been something I noticed over the semester—you know things happen in people's lives. And sometimes that makes it [teaching] complex or that brings a certain complexity to the teaching which if we just lived in little plastic bubbles then it wouldn't happen—

Taylor: Well, but we're not like that we're human beings and we have real lives and you know Roberta's pregnancy—

Spencer: That for example.

Taylor: The very obvious thing—you know and she's been so sick.

Spencer: Well Roberta's pregnancy. And then I was thinking, June had all of that problem with health insurance at the beginning of this semester which at first I didn't ever take a note on that because, well, that's personal actually. But then, "Oh actually that is a

> dilemma—especially in that there's no health insurance for part-time faculty." So, I mean there that kind of is—that sort of, "So why would you work at a job that you just makes you maybe more vulnerable when you could be doing something else? Because you love it?"—you know, so it's—

Roberta: Thanks, I want to quit now [laughing]. I'm just [laughing]. . . . Just so you know if you quit, I quit!

Taylor: I'm not quitting.

Spencer: I'm quitting [Laughing].

Roberta: I couldn't do this without Taylor— I'll tell you that right now.

Taylor: Oh that's why I've been having a nervous breakdown—nearly a nervous breakdown every time you tell me, "I don't know if I'm going to teach this summer."

The personal dilemmas of individuals who call themselves "teachers"—happenings that have apparently nothing to do with teaching—have everything to do with teaching and with how teachers understand themselves and each other's professionalism.

By Spring 2006, Roberta, Taylor, and I were all able to recognize that what was happening in our lives counted. Perhaps we were only free to do so when we were not wearing our professional hats, when we were not teachers or researchers, when we were only individuals who cared deeply about each other. What mattered most as we sat together that May morning was having others around us who didn't know what they would do without us; and, who told us so. Lodoiska disappeared. I am afraid she never heard that from any of us. I fear too many teachers haven't heard that either. If a semester

is tough, it is not always only because of, "Who teaches what to whom, where?"

(Freeman & Johnson, 1998). It is also, possibly, because of "What is happening in the

lives of those individuals at that moment?"

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

To recapitulate, this dissertation employed a Vygotskian framework and participatory ethnographic methods to answer the following research question:

- In the setting of a public two-year college in North Georgia, how are ESL Learning Support faculty members' subject positions mediated by their understandings of and engagement with the multiple and interactive contexts that frame their professional activity?

I began the presentation of my findings with an analytic description of the dilemma of gatekeeping and advocacy—a conundrum fueled, in large part, by the institution's uncompromising understandings of what it meant to be prepared for college and the high stakes testing whereby such readiness was measured. I have argued that data revealed a wide variety of tensions that complicated the teaching of ESL Learning Support. These included the yoke of high stakes testing, the program's low status at the college, and much more. Teachers struggled with these uncertainties. However, I argued that, for the most part, Roberta, Taylor, and June were able to position and reposition themselves in ways that allowed them to make sense of themselves as professionals. At the same time, Roberta's conceptualization of gatekeeping as advocacy brought with it an emotional toll that was especially apparent at the end of each semester when some students passed and some students failed.

In the second findings chapter, I argued that the highly contentious issue of immigrants' right to access a postsecondary education in the state of Georgia was central to Taylor and her colleagues' concerns during the final year of data collection. I discussed Taylor's activism in regards to anti-immigrant legislation proposed during the

last year of data collection that threatened to affect undocumented students' access to the program. I have theorized her improvisation in regards to those events—a town hall meeting that shook up both the college and Taylor herself that final semester. I have argued the need for researchers to document what the unintended consequences of social and political activism in U.S. schools might be.

Finally, I have inventoried what the five ESL teachers perceived as the greatest dilemmas of their teaching: Taylor's concern about the sustainability of the ESL program; Roberta's frustration with the test-centric curriculum; and, June and Luanne' preoccupation for their students' welfare. At the same time, I have discussed my own reluctance as a researcher to document that various personal conundrums the teachers and I all lived through during Spring 2006. I have reflected, in particular, on Lodoiska's abrupt departure to argue that teaching Sweet Water ESL was complicated not only by the dilemmas specific to what was happening at the college or in the ESL program, but also by was happening in as the lives of its teachers as those lives unfolded during data collection. Although the very personal dilemmas that the five women were dealing with in their lives that semester framed the bulk of the conversations that we had as colleagues, these dimensions rarely if ever surfaced in the formal setting of researcher and participants. I have argued that if a semester is tough, it is not always only because of, "Who teaches what to whom, where?" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). It is also, possibly, because of "What is happening in the lives of those individuals at that moment?"

<div align="center">The Sensitivities of ESL Teachers</div>

Teaching English as a second language is a complex activity or that teachers are complex individuals. As obvious as that may seem, recognition of that complexity in the research literature has not always been forthcoming.

Introducing this study, I began with a short excerpt from the final chapter of Valdés' (2001) ethnography of four Latino children's middle-school experience. As I explained, Valdés narrates that only one of the four children she knew as middle schoolers, Elisa, actually made it into postsecondary education—sort of. In a brief afterward, Valdés bitterly describes Elisa's deception:

> The tiny flaws in English that did not prevent her from maintaining a C+ average in high school were nevertheless too much for the sensitivities of community college teachers. (p. 145)

Like quantitative inquiry for Latinos in postsecondary education (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004; Fry, 2002, 2004, 2005; Swail et al., 2004), Valdes' story of Elisa points to the significance of the two-year college in the educational trajectory of Latinos—and other immigrant children and children of immigrants. Statistically, the public two-year college is where students such as Elisa enroll (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004) but where multiple studies have indicated they are least likely to prosper (see, Fry, 2002, 2004, 2005). Unlike quantitative syntheses, Valdes (2001) emphasizes the emotional devastation one Latina U.S. high school graduate experiences when she, having struggled against many odds to break out of the K-12 ESL "ghetto," enters higher education only to find that the category from which she sought to escape still sticks. Once an English learner, always an English learner.

Valdés story of Elisa is one significant piece of a body of ethnographic research for English learners in U.S. schools describing, analyzing, and interpreting the difficult experiences of immigrant children and children of immigrants K-16 as they struggle to navigate institutions never designed to accommodate diversity (e.g., Harklau, 2000, 2001; Olsen, 1997; Suárez-Orozco, 2000; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). Such scholarship has certainly deepened understandings of what it is to be an English learner in U.S. schools.

However, it does seem to me that research for English learners has often been about English learners only. Just as "the sensitivities of community college teachers" are taken for granted in Valdés' afterward, teachers of English learners in general have received little attention in the activist literature—except in those cases where the activist teacher and the activist researcher are one in the same(e.g., Canagarajah, 1997, 2002a; Lu, 1994).

On some level, researchers advocating on behalf of students such as Elisa are writing—or, at least, should be writing—to an audience that includes teachers. It therefore seems to me that such advocacy would be more effective if the same researchers took more time to know and to understand who those teachers are, their "sensitivities," and how it is they make sense of themselves and what they do and what they don't do.

The subjectivities of the five women of ESL Learning Support were unfinished processes meditated by their understanding of and engagement with multiple, interactive layers of context that surrounding their professional activity and shaped and re-shaped

how they understood themselves and each other as professionals. They were teachers; they contained multitudes.

<div align="center">What is Remedial Two-year College ESL? What Else Might It Be*?*</div>

Postsecondary systems of remediation at the public two-year college have been central policy-oriented debates concerning and the societal mission and obligation of public higher education and the potentiality of remediation to forward that mission. That said, within the literature for postsecondary remediation there exit a rarity of empirical studies, quantitative or qualitative, specifically addressing two-year college remedial ESL. The ascendance of the public two-year college, the dynamics of a post-Fordist U.S. economy, and the Latinization of North America are only a small ensemble of factors that have transformed public two-year college remedial ESL from something of an intra-disciplinary incongruity to be contained within research for L1/L2 college composition into an interdisciplinary issue of critical national importance. Simply put, two-year college remedial ESL implicates an array of research, advocacy, and policy literatures.

Broad and encompassing definitions of adult ESL students have been argued as a means of creating a dialogue about adult literacy between its many providers (e.g., Smoke, 1998). Although such dialogue is important, this research effort has demonstrated that the various and often specific "professional" concerns of Sweet Water's ESL teachers were in large part due to the remedial paradigm of ESL Learning Support at the college itself. To that end, I argue that future research for Adult and Postsecondary ESL would benefit from specificity.

Namely, it is important that researchers distinguish between high stakes, institutionally mandated remediation primarily directed to degree-seeking students

otherwise barred from full entry into postsecondary education and other types of ESL

programs such as pro-bono p.m. adult literacy programming, or postsecondary ESL

writing centers for international graduate students, and so forth. In other words, adult

ESL is not adult ESL is not adult ESL.

It is certainly possible that a great deal of postsecondary ESL programming does

not fit the definition of remediation that has shaped my specific understanding of Sweet

Water ESL Learning Support. However, in the cases that such programming does, I argue

that it is important to ask, "Who is enrolled in such remedial ESL coursework? How is it

that they arrive there? How long do they stay? What happens after remedial ESL and how

do those outcomes compare to what we have begun to understand about postsecondary

remediation and more specifically about the trajectories of immigrants and children of

immigrants at the two-year college?"

What Does Remedial Two-year College ESL Accomplish?

While Taylor was concerned with the ESL program's relatively small enrollment,

research indicates a steady increase in two-year institutions offering English as a Second

Language—especially in areas with large immigrant populations (Schuyler, 1999). While

the education of English learners, principally Latinos, has become a focus for researchers

in Georgia and other parts of the New South (see, e.g., Bohon et al., 2005; Hamann,

2003; Neal & Bohon, 2003; Pew Research Center, 2005; Wainer, 2004; Wortham,

Murillo, & Hamann, 2002), there remains a need for more empirical research at the two-

year college level. Significant research has been conducted in regards to the effectiveness

of postsecondary remediation (Bettinger & Terry Long, 2005; Boylan et al., 1997; L. F.

Johnson, 1996; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). However, the specificity of postsecondary

remedial ESL has been understudied. Future research is needed to understand more precisely the relationship between remedial ESL and the postsecondary trajectories of immigrants and children of immigrants.

While waiting for national entities to begin that process, two-year college ESL programs could begin some of that work themselves—keeping track of their ESL students' trajectories through Learning Support, into degree-bearing coursework, and through their postsecondary careers. Institutions might also begin counting, for example, the numbers of U.S. educated English learners in their programs and their subsequent achievement levels. Such numbers were unavailable at Sweet Water. Consequently, teachers' fervent beliefs that coursework such as Advanced ESL Grammar and Writing made a positive difference were anecdotal at best.

What Does It Mean To Be An Educated Person And Who Decides?

ESL Learning Support was one small piece of Sweet Water's organizing blueprint of what constituted a "fully" educated person in North Georgia and who had the right to be/become one. Socially organized, ESL Learning Support and its significance was derived in its collaborative re-creation; and, it existed "only by the virtue of adherence to the rules that constitute it" (Holland & Quinn, 1987, p. 3). Taylor recognized that she would need one day to have a conversation with the English Department about what the ESL program and what 1101 professors really wanted English learners to come out of Learning Support knowing and knowing how to do.

The sort of intra-institutional dialogue Taylor had expressed a need for is one that other institutions with similar ESL Learning Support programs might also want to begin if they haven't already. I suggest that that conversation be bilateral. Likewise, high

schools and postsecondary institutions might also begin inter-institutional dialogue about

what it means to be ready for college and how they might work collaboratively to better

ensure English learners' trajectories through K-16. Such dialogue must include teachers.

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Appendix A: Initial Teacher Interview Protocol

Institutional Mission
How do you understand the mission of ESL Learning Support at the College?

Evolution of ESL
How has ESL evolved since you began working at Sweet Water?
What are its most pressing issues?
What do you feel ESL achieves?

Degree Seeking Students at Sweet Water
How do you perceive ESL's impact on degree-seeking students in the program?
How has a growing ESL population impacted the program and its mission?

Sweet Water vs. High School
What are your perceptions of ESL students' preparedness for Sweet Water?
How do you perceive the relation between what your students learn in school literacy coursework and what they are learning in Sweet Water ESL?

Remediation and ESL
What constitutes remedial at the two-year college? What constitutes college level?
Where does ESL fit in or not?
At Sweet Water, are all ESL courses remedial, some of them, or none of them?
Examples.

Perceptions of Assessment Procedures
What do you perceive as the role of assessment in ESL?
What do you think the tests measure?
What would you like them to measure more clearly?

Academic/Career Goals
What are your students' short and long term academic and career goals?
How does ESL coursework inform/help them realize their goals?

Agency
What does it mean to you to be an advocate for your students?
What do you do in your classroom level and at an institutional level that you consider advocacy? Give examples.

Additional Comments?

Appendix B: Exit Teacher Interview Protocol

The Context of Sweet Water College
    How does the context of Sweet Water impact your own teaching?

Dilemmas in Teaching
    What is your biggest dilemma as a teacher here in Sweet Water ESL Learning
    Support?

Improvising Curriculum
    To what extent is your curriculum open to your own improvisation? Give examples?

The Catch-22 of the Two-Year College
    Delores Perin calls the simultaneous goals of open access and high standards the
    catch-22 of the two-year college. Where do you see ESL Learning Support in relation
    to the goals of open access and high standards? Elaborate.

Unresolved Challenges
    What do you see as the greatest challenge for ESL Learning Support? How do you
    (not) address that challenge?

Roles as a Teacher
    Of the various hats you wear as an ESL instructor, which is the one you wear most
    often? Which is the one that suits you best/least?

Gatekeeping
    ESL Learning Support are gateway courses to the two-year college curriculum. To
    what extent are you a gatekeeper? Elaborate.

Advocacy
    What does it mean to be an advocate for your students? How do you enact your own
    advocacy? What role do your standards play in your own advocacy?

Gatekeeping and Advocacy?
    What sort of tensions exit between your role as an advocate for the students you teach
    and as an employee for this institution?

Defining Success
How do you define your own success as a teacher at the college? How does the college
        define your success? How do you define your students' success?