

# Chapter 1

## An Introduction

I am writing a book of personal essays that I hope will illuminate issues related to privilege in education, especially second language education, in particular TESOL. These chapters contain stories about myself, about my students, about my colleagues, and about academe, in the context of our larger society. The chapters follow a different path than most academic writing; they blend theory, analysis, and narrative. I hope that readers will find the essays both engaging and thought-provoking.

Yet as I begin writing the introductory chapter—this one—I find myself writing in generalizations and in academic-speak. I need to do so in order to explain the book to readers, especially, first, on the topic of privilege and, second, on my reasons for the choice I have made to write very personally. So I am caught in a contradiction: I seem to need to write in a somewhat traditional academic style in this introduction before getting to the chapters that combine academic analysis with personal narratives.

I begin each chapter with a story or a note; in the case of this introductory chapter, I begin instead with this appeal to you, the reader, to understand my dilemma, and to read this chapter for background, as a foundation for the rest of the book, with the understanding that you will soon get to the main text, the body of the book: my narrative essays.



**A** look around any classroom, including any ESOL classroom, will show how many identities students and instructors have. Various nationalities, ethnicities, races, social classes, genders, sexual orientations, religions, abilities, disabilities, health statuses, and ages are among the identities on display, or sometimes hidden but still important, in classrooms. Privilege and its effects are found everywhere, in and out of classrooms, yet privilege is often invisible, and even when it is visible, we often prefer not to acknowledge it. In the United States, we like to think that everyone has equal opportunities to succeed if she or he is willing to work hard. Many in the United States and elsewhere, including those of us in academe, seem to be made uncomfortable by the thought that privilege is so prevalent, and so powerful in its effects on people's lives. In particular, we seem not to want to talk about social class privilege; however, class privilege is extremely powerful, both on its own and in its interactions with other identities such as gender, race, and sexual identity. As bell hooks so forcefully puts it, "As a nation we are afraid to have a dialogue about class even though the ever-widening gap between rich and poor has already set the stage for ongoing and sustained class warfare" (2000b, p. 11). Proweller (1998) adds that

While class is a central category of social analysis inside American culture and society, it remains a relatively unspoken descriptor, commonly filtered through discourses of gender, race, and ethnicity.

The “myth of classlessness” is notable among Americans in general who tend to describe themselves as middle class because they see the middle class as a *universal class* with *universal* membership. (p. 69)

Although educators tend to be progressive, and are perhaps more aware of certain types of privilege (such as racial privilege) than others, there is still a tendency not to want to acknowledge the profound effects of privilege, or lack thereof.

In this book, I explore the following topics as they relate to education, especially second language education/TESOL: which identities are privileged; when, how, and why they are privileged; how these identities, including their accompanying privileges or lack thereof, intersect and interact; ways in which identities are not unified or static, but rather multiple and fluid and evolving; and what the effects of such varying types and levels of privilege are in the classrooms, institutions, and societies in which we teach and live. My own teaching site is a university in the United States, and most of my stories and my examinations of privilege are in that context, but I believe that they also have a wider resonance.

As I discuss various types of privilege that do or do not accompany various identities, I hope it will be clear that I am not “judging” any of these identities as inherently better or worse; rather, I am attempting to identify these identities, especially as they exist in the ESOL world and, more generally, in the world of education, and to examine ways in which privilege manifests itself and makes its influence felt. In addition, I am hoping that such examination will facilitate both instructors’ and students’ taking responsibility for acknowledging their (our) privilege and its ramifications in our educational settings.

Note that throughout this book I use the terms ESOL and ESL interchangeably. ESL is still the most widely used term, and thus more widely recognized; ESOL is more accurate, in that for many students, English is

not simply a second language but perhaps a third or fourth language, and may be used equally with a first language, or may only be used in certain contexts and for certain specific purposes. I use the term TESOL when I refer to the teaching aspect of our work, but also in a larger sense when I refer to our profession and our academic field.

This introductory chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, I discuss social class, as it is the identity I most focus on in this book, along with its intersections with other identities and other forms of privilege. In the second section, I explore the role of personal narrative in scholarly writing, and I discuss my reasons for choosing to write in a hybrid genre that blends personal narrative with more traditional academic writing. In the third section, I provide an overview of the structure of the book.

## Social Class in Interaction with Other Types of Privilege

I am concerned about and interested in all types of privilege and their manifestations, especially in ESOL classrooms and environs, and in this book I examine privilege related to gender, race, sexual identity, academic status, age, and other identities and factors. In particular, the strongest focus of this book is on one specific aspect of privilege: the social class identities of ESOL students and their instructors, and the effects of social class privilege on students, faculty, and educational institutions. Even when addressing other factors, such as gender or sexual identity, I look at the connections and interactions between those identities and social class identities. One reason for this focus is that social class status is even less acknowledged than many other identities. In our professional literature, and even in our classrooms, ESOL educators have increasingly—although still not enough—discussed race and gender, but very rarely discuss class. And in the few instances when ESOL scholars address class issues (e.g., Auerbach, 1993; Auerbach & Burgess, 1985; Benesch, 2001; Morgan, 1998), they almost always focus on working-class or poor

students. Middle-class identities are almost never addressed, perhaps because middle class is considered the norm and therefore an unmarked identity. Upper-class identities are even less often addressed. Because of this near universal lack of mention of the middle and upper classes, and because many of the students in my university classes, at an expensive private university, come with a great deal of social class privilege, this is a topic I have explored in my own work, especially in an article entitled “Privileged ESL University Students” (Vandrick, 1995a). In that article, I noted the signs of privilege displayed by wealthy international students, such as expensive cars and clothing, and often attitudes of entitlement, and I noted that such privilege affected the dynamics of the classroom. Less privileged students sometimes feel inferior and/or resentful; even instructors may feel resentful, especially if they feel they are being treated as glorified servants. I have also studied a subset of this privileged group, one I call “students of the new global elite” (Vandrick, 2007); these students are not only wealthy and privileged, but have lived and studied in at least three countries. They are “a curious combination of rooted and untethered; they are rooted in one place, yet they have acquired additional roots elsewhere; they feel comfortable and connected everywhere and yet do not feel they totally belong anywhere” (Vandrick, 2007). Although it is probably true that students with these identities are—by virtue of the very class privilege they enjoy—less in need of understanding and aid than others, I believe that it is important to examine all levels of social class identity, to provide a full picture, and to see how each level affects and is affected by our instruction and classroom interactions.

There are more publications about social class in our “sister” field, composition studies, as well as in English studies and related fields, but not many. Curiously, the biggest single group of publications about social class in composition studies seems to be edited collections of essays by working-class academics about their own experiences in academe, such as those by Shepard, McMillan, and Tate (1998), Tokarczyk and Fay (1993), and Zandy (1994). Those who have written about the

class status of students (occasionally referring to the class status of faculty as well) include Coiner, Frankenstein, Miller, Rudnick, and Slapikoff (1995); hooks (2000a, 2000b); Ohmann (2003); and Tate (1997). Again, writings about the middle or upper classes, whether referring to students or faculty, are much rarer. Bloom's article "Freshman Composition as a Middle-Class Enterprise" (1996) is one well-known exception; another exception is Proweller's (1998) research on upper middle-class youth culture.

Academe itself is classed. Certain universities—especially certain private universities—have more prestige than other institutions. Research universities have more prestige than others. Universities with graduate programs generally have more status than those without, and both have more status than community or junior colleges. Faculty, too, are definitely classed: In addition to possessing the status provided by various professorial ranks, those with tenure are regarded more highly than those without, and those with full-time jobs have much more status than those with part-time positions. Students with higher social class levels are more likely to attend institutions with higher statuses. Each reinforces the other. Universities benefit from students who can pay full (high) tuition and who are often better prepared because of their access to good schools and resources during their elementary and high school years; students benefit from the high status of the more prestigious universities because they gain a reflected high status from their attendance there, and because their degrees from such institutions often help them attain more success after college (DeGenaro, 2001; Soliday, 1999). O'Dair (2003) notes that although higher education has expanded, affluent students make up a higher proportion of undergraduates now than in the past. Thus institutions themselves both empower and reproduce class differences (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

These are not just matters of graduation and career statistics. These are matters of the lived experiences of students and instructors being strongly affected by their social class identities. Sternglass (1997), among

others, reminds us that just paying for college and earning degrees within a reasonable number of years are highly classed activities; she quotes one student, Ricardo, saying “I’ve been on the honor roll for three years, but if I can’t pay the rent and eat, who cares about grades?” (p. 105). Bell hooks (2000a) tells us, with her strong feelings still evident many years after the fact, of her difficult experiences as a young student from an African-American working-class family attending Stanford University. She speaks of students who “flaunted their wealth and family background” (n.p.) and who trashed her room as a prank:

I hated that girls who had so much, took so much for granted, never considered that those of us who did not have mad money would not be able to replace broken things . . . that we did not know everything could be taken care of at the dry cleaner’s, because we never took our clothes there.  
(n.p.)

The social class split may be most obvious at elite universities such as Stanford, but almost every university has students (and faculty) from a range of class and economic backgrounds, and there are often tensions between those at the two ends of the continuum. International undergraduate students are generally at the higher end of the class spectrum, as they almost always have to be able to pay full tuition (as opposed to immigrant students, who often have legal resident or citizen status, and thus pay in-state tuition at state universities; immigrant students are also eligible for financial aid). For example, at the private university where I teach, my students “write unself-consciously of their parents in high positions, of summer homes, of expensive overseas vacations, of servants, of parties at exclusive hotels and clubs, and of upscale cars given them on their sixteenth birthdays” (Vandrick, 1995a, p. 375). In addition to

the obvious material manifestations of wealth, these students generally exhibit “the self-assured, comfortable demeanor usually found among young people who are used to financial security and privilege”; there is also often “a clear sense of entitlement, of feeling that it [is] natural and given that they [are] among the affluent and elite” (Vandrick, 2007, n.p.).

One whole area of emphasis and concern that is clearly underpinned by class differences is the area of remediation and accompanying perceptions of deficit. Many students who are labeled as “underprepared” (and this label often has to do with language skills) and needing remediation, before or while being mainstreamed, are from social class backgrounds that did not provide them adequate educational preparation for higher education, and these are concerns that should be addressed. However, remediation has sometimes become a way to separate (some would say ghettoize) students from such backgrounds from more prosperous students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. There is much discussion in academe, and in particularly in writing programs, about how best to deal with such differences in preparation. Should there be separate sections of composition for underprepared students? Should students who come from immigrant families and whose English language abilities may still not be on a par with those of native speakers be in separate sections? (For more detailed discussion of such issues of remediation, see Benesch, 1988, 1991; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Soliday, 2002.)

As for faculty—who were once students as well—one of the most heart-wrenching stories I have read in an academic publication is that of Patricia A. Sullivan, a long-time and well-established professor of composition. Sullivan came from a very deprived working-class background, and for years she never told anyone about this background; she excelled at “passing” as middle class. But at a certain point she came to feel it was wrong that “Class is academe’s dirty little secret, its last taboo, that about which we dare not speak” (1998, p. 239), and she decided, with much trepidation, to speak out about her own background. She writes of working sixteen-hour shifts, living in the cheapest dorm, receiving

smuggled-from-the-cafeteria food from friends, getting food stamps, doing without new clothes or shoes, and borrowing toothpaste and shampoo from her roommate. Other working-class academics describe how difficult it was

to picture themselves as being academics, how little support they received, how they felt unentitled, and felt that others from the middle and upper classes knew the secrets of academe, which they, shamefully, did not. They speak of passing, of anger, of loneliness. (Vandrick, 2001a, p. 28)

Sometimes these class differences not only cause mental and emotional anguish for faculty, but can actually be a source of (generally unintentional) discrimination. Some years ago I became familiar with a situation in which an applicant for an academic job, though in many ways the most qualified candidate, was not chosen for the position. It seemed to me that the main reason she was not chosen was certain “markers” which indicated that she was from a working-class background. Consciously or not, those who made the hiring decision (middle-class academics and administrators) did not feel quite comfortable with this person, but framed the decision by deciding that this candidate didn’t seem likely to fit in at the institution in question. I believe this type of decision occurs more often than we would like to think.

These issues of privilege, and particularly those of social class, need to be further explored in our professional venues. One way to do so is through academics’ sharing their experiences, their stories. In the next section, I discuss reasons for my belief that personal narrative can be a powerful and effective form of scholarly writing, and my reasons for choosing to incorporate personal narrative into my writing, as I have done in this book.

## Personal Narrative in Academic Writing

This book is not written in a typical academic style; rather, it is written in a hybrid genre; it presents personal narratives in the context of more traditional academic writing. The personal stories are drawn from my own life and the lives of those I interact with, especially my students and my professional colleagues. All of the stories, even the childhood and outside-of-work stories, connect with my life as an educator and scholar. The more traditional academic writing builds on my interests in, and prior research and publications on, issues in the interrelated fields of TESOL, Applied Linguistics, Second Language Education, Language and Literacy Education, Literary Studies, and Gender and Sexualities Studies. The memoirist Patricia Hampl (1999) alludes to this connection between our experiences and the issues we care about when she says, “Instinctively, we go to our store of private associations for our authority to speak of these weighty issues” (p. 31). She further describes memoir as “the intersection of narration and reflection, of storytelling and essay writing. It can present its story *and* consider the meaning of the story” (p. 33). This is what I am aiming for in my own mixture of story, context, interpretation, and application. My hope is that the various types of writing that are combined and intertwined here, and the various types of writing in the professional and other literature drawn on in this book, inform each other, and that the combinations illuminate important professional and social/political questions that educators struggle with.

A very basic reason for the introduction of narrative into academic writing may have to do with the universal human need and desire for story, something Coles (1989) terms “the call of stories.” Doris Lessing, in her 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature acceptance speech, reminds us that “The storyteller is deep inside everyone of us. The story-maker is always with us . . . for it is our imaginations which shape us, keep us, create us—for good and for ill” (Lessing, 2007). There is also a human urge

to tell one's *own* story, thus the recent predominance of personal blogs, and of autobiographies and memoirs on the bestseller lists and, now, in academe.

In recent years, there has been an increased flexibility about which kinds of writing constitute acceptable scholarly writing; qualitative and ethnographic research and narrative inquiry have become somewhat more common and accepted. There is an enhanced understanding that there is nothing sacred about quantitative research, that no research or writing is truly objective, and that various types of research and writing can and do add different and valuable perspectives to the bodies of knowledge and scholarship in most disciplines (Bateson, 1994; Bruner, 1991; Geertz, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988). Czarniawska (2004), for example, writes of the “narrative turn” in social sciences. Some publications about qualitative research and academic writing specifically address questions of narrative research; examples include Burdell and Swadener (1999); Clandinin and Connelly (2000); Daiute and Lightfoot (2004); and Witherell and Noddings (1991). Such “narrative inquiry” in academic research and writing can provide a new and useful way of illuminating research questions and issues, and of making academic writing more accessible as well. As Christine Pearson Casanave and I put it in an earlier publication (Casanave & Vandrick, 2003a),

narratives allow for understanding and connection in ways that straight exposition does not. Truth in academic writing, particularly in the more scientific fields, has been characterized as objective, as written in the third person, as distanced from personal feelings and experiences. Language education, especially ESL, was grounded in applied linguistics, which considered and perhaps still considers itself a science, so these attitudes have been the foundation of scholarly writing in many language-

related fields. Yet we contend, as do an increasing number of scholars in our field as well as related fields, that there is another kind of truth to be obtained from narratives, stories, and first-person viewpoints, which people use to construct their realities and interpret their experiences. (p. 2)

As a feminist scholar, another reason that I am drawn to narrative as scholarly inquiry is that many feminist scholars consider such narratives to have “epistemological and methodological value because it is through narrative that personal experience—a rich source of knowledge—can be shared and theorized” (Sharkey, 2004, p. 498). One of the earliest and most inspiring of scholars to write about the importance of story for women was Carolyn Heilbrun, especially in her groundbreaking 1988 book, *Writing a Woman's Life*; it is a book I treasured when it was first published, and treasure still. Gender issues, and feminist analysis, are an integral part of my own life, stories, scholarship, and teaching.

The use of personal or autobiographical narrative in academic writing is still even less common than other types of narrative, such as ethnographic accounts. However, personal narrative has been more frequently discussed, employed, and published in recent years in various academic disciplines. In the move to more qualitative inquiry in many academic disciplines, some have argued the value of autoethnography, in which “the researcher is the subject of the text,” and “researchers conduct and write ethnographies of their own experiences” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, p. xii). Willard-Traub (2006) points out that “Increasingly . . . approaches to writing that incorporate autobiography and personal narrative are being used by scholars not simply as means for meditating on lived experience, but also as methods of scholarly analysis and argumentation” (p. 424). She adds that the “turn toward reflective writing across the disciplines attests to the influence of cultural studies, feminist studies, and epistemologies that insist on the local and the ‘everyday’ not only as valid objects of inquiry, but also as valid sources of authority” (p. 425).

Some of the prominent scholars in various fields who have felt constrained by the limitations of traditional academic writing and have chosen to experiment with employing personal narrative in their academic work include anthropologist Ruth Behar (1993), sociologist Carolyn Ellis (1997), French Studies scholar Alice Kaplan (1993), English literature scholar Shirley Geok-lin Lim (1996), sociologist Laurel Richardson (1997), and law scholar Patricia Williams (1991); collections of such writing across the disciplines include Freedman and Frey (2003). Examples in the field of education but focusing on certain populations of academics are Dews and Law's (1995) collection of essays by academics from working class backgrounds, Freeman and Schmidt's (2000) collected stories of women teachers, and Li and Beckett's (2006) edited volume on and by Asian women academics.

In English and composition studies, there have been several "special issues" of journals on personal narrative (e.g., Gebhardt, 1992; Hindman, 2001, 2003), and numerous scholars have used personal narrative in their published academic writing (e.g., Bishop, 1997; Bloom, 1992; Haroian-Guerin, 1999; Herron, 1992; McCracken & Larson, 1998; Roen, Brown, & Enos, 1999; Schmidt, 1998; Trimmer, 1997). The increasing popularity of personal narrative in these fields may be partly due to the very nature and emphasis of the disciplines: a focus on writing.

Teacher educators have also used stories to enable prospective teachers to better understand "the richness of experience and practice, . . . the struggles and triumphs of teaching, . . . the life of classrooms" (Phillion, 2005, p. 1). Connelly and Clandinin, in particular, have been leaders in valuing "teacher knowledge," stating that "stories, . . . narratives of experience, are both personal—reflecting a person's life history—and social—reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live" (1999, p. 2).

TESOL scholars have been much slower to write about personal experiences in academe, but since the mid-1990s, there have been several examples of such writing, including the following edited collections: Belcher and Connor's collection of stories of multiliterate scholars

(2001); Blanton and Kroll's collection of reflections by seasoned scholars and teachers in TESOL composition (2002); Braine's volume of autobiographical writing of nonnative teachers of English (1999); Casanave and Schecter's set of personal narratives by teachers about how they became teachers (1997); Casanave and Vandrick's contributors' essays on their varied experiences as scholarly writers (2003b); and the stories of racial minority educators in TESOL (Curtis & Romney, 2006). Individual articles or books employing personal narrative include Casanave and Sosa (2007); Kouritzin (2004); Lin et al. (2004); Sharkey (2004); Vandrick (2001a); and Woo (1999). Other scholars who include some personal narrative, and whose strongly personal authorial voices are integral parts of their books, include Clarke (2003, 2007). TESOL scholars who have written *about* narrative as research include Bell (2002); Johnson and Golombek (2002); and Pavlenko (2001, 2002, 2007).

These scholars and their work have paved the way for others, including myself, to experiment with new forms of academic writing. In this book, as stated at the beginning of this section, I employ a hybrid genre, focusing on personal or autobiographical narrative, but always in the context of theory and the professional literature about the topics I address through my narrative. Most of my narratives focus on my own experiences as an educator and scholar, both inside and out of the classroom and university, as well as on the experiences of some of my students and my fellow educators. In order to provide theoretical/academic context for these stories, in each chapter I draw on related scholarly literature about the areas on which I focus. As Bell (2002) points out, narrative inquiry "requires going beyond the use of narrative as rhetorical structure, that is, simply telling stories, to an analytic examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that the story illustrates" (p. 208); this blending of story and analysis is my goal in this book. Nash (2004) calls this type of combining of genres "scholarly personal narrative" (p. 4), and states that such writing differs from memoir and autobiography because the personal narrative is organized "around themes, issues, con-

structs, and concepts that carry larger, more universalizable meanings for readers” (p. 30). Spigelman (2004) asserts that “Personal writing can do serious academic work; it can make rational arguments; it can merge appropriately with academic discourse” (p. 2), and goes on to employ the terms “personal academic discourse” (p. 3) and, her preferred term, “personal academic argument” (p. 10), to describe this “blended genre” (p. 2).

Reflecting and writing on one’s own experiences is not easy. It is difficult to gain the necessary perspective to be insightful about one’s own life and experiences. Even when we achieve insights, it is often difficult to articulate them in ways that are accessible to readers. Telling our stories draws on different skills than our usual academic writing does. And although we now understand that all knowledge, all research, all “truth” is subjective, when we tell our own stories we must acknowledge that such telling involves fallible memories, as well as more interpretation, more subjectivity, than most other types of research and writing. Further, it is somewhat anxiety-producing, even frightening, to look deeply into ourselves, and to expose aspects of ourselves and our experiences to our readers, many of whom may be our professional peers as well; if writers are truly being honest in telling their stories, they make themselves vulnerable in a rather public way.

In addition, we must acknowledge that in telling our own stories, we are always telling stories of those around us as well, and we have an obligation to them not to violate their privacy or to misrepresent them. We can protect their confidentiality, where it is appropriate, by providing pseudonyms and omitting identifying details. The question of representation of others is a more difficult one. Are we representing others accurately? Fairly? Are we careful not to violate their privacy, their dignity? Do we recognize ways in which our own cultural and other identities and positionalities may affect how we perceive and portray others? Do we claim to speak for others, those with identities different than our own, in a way that would not be acceptable to people with those identities? These are all difficult questions that must be kept in mind when

portraying others and their stories. (See Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, for further exploration of these topics.) In this book, I will address some of these issues in more detail as I describe my own struggles with them.

Despite the increasing acceptance of personal writing, autobiographical or personal writing is still questioned or even denigrated by many in academe, and this denigration may have negative consequences for a scholar's career and reputation. Some scholars who have used alternative writing styles and topics have spoken of feeling marginalized when doing so (Dean, 1998; Richardson, 1997). Some young scholars have been cautioned not to do personal writing early in their careers, or at least to balance such writing with other more traditional academic writing. It is true that most of the pioneers of personal writing in academe have been well-established scholars whose solid reputations could withstand negative perceptions of their experimentation with alternative, more personal topics and types of writing. For example, in the (overlapping) fields of composition and English, some of the early writers of personal essays published in academic journals were Nancy K. Miller (1991, 1997, 2002), Nancy Sommers (1992, 1993, 1998), and Jane Tompkins (1987, 1990, 1996), all well-known scholars with secure positions in academe.

In this book, another way in which I deviate from traditional academic writing is that, although I am not writing specifically about literature, I also sometimes draw on literary sources, especially fiction. I have loved reading, especially reading fiction, ever since I was a child; I have undergraduate and graduate degrees in English literature; I have taught literature, written about literature, especially about teaching literature (Vandrick, 1993, 1994b, 1996, 1997a, 1997c, 2003); and I continue to read dozens of novels, short story collections, and memoirs every year. I believe that literature represents the deepest wisdom of each culture, and I further believe that literature can provide insights that illuminate almost any topic.

I hope that the stories in this book, while not claiming to be representative of the experiences of all educators, will shed light on some aspects

of the lives and experiences of educators and their students, especially (but definitely not only) in the (closely related) fields of second language education, applied linguistics, and TESOL. Further, I hope that these narratives, in conjunction with the more traditional academic exposition in which they are set, will stimulate thought and discussion about the role of privilege in education.

## Overview of the Book's Structure

This book consists of ten chapters. All of the chapters address issues of privilege as manifested in the lives and work of educators, especially second language educators, and most especially ESOL educators. A foundational assumption throughout the book is that teachers and students do not come to their classrooms and work as blank slates, but bring all their identities and experiences, whether they show or discuss them openly or not. Each chapter includes, in some way and to some degree, attention to educators' and scholars' personal lives, teaching lives, and writing lives, in other words, to educators and scholars as "whole persons"; some chapters focus on one of the three aspects (personal, teaching, and writing) more than others. Many chapters also address issues of privilege as they can be seen in students' personal lives and classroom experiences. In all cases, much attention is given to intersections of various types: between students and teachers, between teaching and scholarship, between institutions and their participants, among each person's multiple identities, and among the various identities of various participants in the educational world. Some of the experiences and examples I describe refer specifically to ESOL settings, some do not, but in all cases they address aspects of the multifaceted lives of ESOL (and other) teachers and scholars.

After this introductory chapter that you are reading now, the book continues with Chapter 2, "ESL and the Colonial Legacy: A Teacher Faces Her 'Missionary Kid' Past." This chapter employs personal narrative as well as perspectives gained from post-colonial studies as a lens to ana-

lyze connections between, on the one hand, my experiences as a child of Christian missionaries in India and, on the other hand, my years of teaching ESOL. I discuss implications for the field of TESOL. Chapter 3, “Tea and TESOL,” attempts to demonstrate how certain physical objects and their related associations and ceremonies reflect one’s experiences, thoughts, and aspirations, and are symbolic of certain types of privilege. For me, tea (the word, the physical material, the meal, the connotations) symbolizes comfort, my childhood in barely post-colonial India, my Anglophilia, my beloved English novels, women’s groups, and the nourishing of community, among other associations; it is also a source of ambivalence because of its postcolonial and social class associations. I make connections between these various associations and my life and work in international education.

In Chapter 4, “Shifting Sites, Shifting Identities: A 30-Year Perspective,” I examine the effects of institutional contexts on the careers and lives of ESOL educators and students. As an example, I describe the institution where I have taught over a period of more than thirty years as a site of some of the historical and material factors that influence and shape the field of ESOL and its participants. This chapter includes attention to some of the specific “on the ground” issues that educators deal with in interacting with their institutions and working conditions. I examine the power of institutions through the perspective of privilege. Chapter 5, “Fathers and Mentors,” is a tribute to my own father and to the academic “fathers” who have mentored, helped, and supported me in my career; it also examines the aspects of privilege that allow such support. In Chapter 6, I turn to the topic of “Gender, Class, and the Balanced Life.” Although there are many aspects of gender and class that could be discussed, some of which I have addressed in other publications, here I focus on a critical, even urgent, topic for many academic women: how women in education—both students and faculty—struggle with balancing work and family in a society that often makes this balancing act very difficult. After framing the issue, I illustrate the dilemma with the story of a female graduate student whom I observed and interviewed

over some time, and the ways in which her gender and her social class impacted her experiences as she attempted to balance preparing for a career with having a family. Chapter 7, “Sexual Identity and Education,” continues to examine the impact of social class on international and immigrant students and instructors, this time at the intersection of class and sexual orientation. I know that many educators struggle, as I did and do, with whether and how to address sexual identity issues in their classrooms and institutions. I argue that we educators, no matter what our own sexual identities are, must acknowledge the presence of students and faculty of various sexual identities, and must grapple with how to support and educate all our students and colleagues, in order to ensure equity for all. I explore these issues partly through describing my own personal journey to better understanding of, and to speaking and writing in professional venues about, LGBT issues; I hope that my experiences will be of use to other educators.

In the next two chapters, I shift my focus toward the topic of scholarly writing, and how educators can incorporate their research and writing into their personal and academic lives. I also discuss the issues of privilege that allow some but not others to engage in research and writing. In the first of these two chapters about writing, Chapter 8, I write about my own path toward scholarly writing; as a late-blooming writer, I title this chapter “On Beginning to Write at 40.” This chapter explores obstacles—personal, social, and institutional—that academics, especially women academics, may need to overcome in order to become published scholars. The second chapter about writing, Chapter 9, celebrates “The Power of Writing Groups.” It includes examples from my own several writing groups and related groups, all of which in various ways provide vital support, assistance, and encouragement to my academic and writing life; I then examine the types of privilege necessary in order to obtain such support.

The book concludes with Chapter 10, “The Aging Educator,” in which I reflect on my more than 35 years of teaching and on what I have learned, in the contexts of how the world has changed, and how

the fields of applied linguistics and TESOL have changed, during that time period. I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being an aging educator, especially a female aging educator, and again, examine intersections among age and other identities.

Questions for further reflection and discussion are included at the end of the volume (see pages 157–162).

Throughout this book, I hope to convey my belief that entering and sustaining a teaching life involves recognition that we are whole, multifaceted persons, leading complex lives, in multiple contexts; the same is true for our students. Our teaching and scholarly work cannot and should not be isolated or separated from our backgrounds, our various identities, our living conditions, or our beliefs, nor from those of our students and colleagues. The topics addressed in this book are elements that form strands of the web of our connections with each other. That is not to say that any or all of these factors will necessarily be focuses of our classroom teaching or our scholarly writing, but that it is critical to recognize and reflect on the contexts they provide and the ways in which they influence our work.



With this discussion of privilege, and of the role of personal narrative in academic writing, as foundation and context for the rest of the book, I invite you, the reader, to proceed to the following chapters, to peruse my stories, and to make connections with your own stories. I welcome your responses, and would be honored to hear your stories as well.