

2 **Marginalization or Collaboration: First Year ESL Teachers & the Middle School Context**

Courtney George

*The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

ABSTRACT

This study emerged out of a year-long narrative ethnography that investigated the first year of ESL teachers. It describes key personal, contextual, and structural factors that influenced the teachers' professional beliefs and practices. The focus of this study centers on the conversations of three middle school ESL teachers during new teacher support group meetings that were held as part of the research design. During these meetings, the teachers articulated their understandings of the unique position they inhabited in middle schools as teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse youth. Their interest in topics such as marginalization, school relationships, and the status of ESL teachers were important narrative threads. In addition, their experiences and thoughts on collaborating with mainstream middle school teachers emerged as an important theme. In the context of this particular North Carolina school system, these ESL teachers were marginalized experts and collaboration within mainstream classrooms illuminated the status of the ESL teachers and their students in the two middle schools where they worked. While this study highlights the experiences of first year ESL teachers and their students, the lessons learned apply to all middle school teachers who are working with culturally and linguistically diverse youth and their ESL teachers.