

CHAPTER 37

THE ADOLESCENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER:

Identities Lost and Found

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ABSTRACT

Theory and research on second language acquisition have long acknowledged the significant influence of learner identities—that is, how learners see themselves and are seen by others in relation to the target language and culture. Learner age has likewise been a central theme in second language acquisition research. These two important factors intersect in the case of adolescent language learners. Adolescence is regarded as a particularly malleable and difficult age in the development of social identity and conception of self, and even more potentially problematic for multilingual and multiethnic English learners. In this chapter, I first briefly outline current debates and cross-cultural research about adolescence as a unique developmental stage in identity development and suggest potential implications for English language learning. I then outline major strands of investigation on the role of social context and social identity in adolescent English language learning, including research in social psychology and intercultural communication; research in social psychology, clinical psychology, and clinical health; research in educational anthropology and sociology; and research on critical theory, cultural studies, and poststructuralism. The chapter concludes with a summary of current debates and directions for further research.

INTRODUCTION

Theory and research on second language acquisition (SLA) have long acknowledged the significant influence of *learner identities*—that is, how learners see themselves and are seen by others in relation to the target language and culture. Learner age has likewise been a central theme in second language acquisition research. These two important factors intersect in the case of adolescent English language learners (ELLs).

In SLA research, adolescence has been seen primarily as a developmental watershed in which the child's neurological facility for learning languages is lost or altered (e.g., Scovel, 2000). At the same time, theorists have often portrayed maturing learners' changing views of self and social context as an important factor in age differences in second language (L2) attainment (e.g., Krashen, 1981). Accordingly, this chapter reviews research and theory on societal images and self-perceptions of adolescent ELLs and their interrelationships with language and academic learning.

The modern notion of adolescence can be traced to G. Stanley Hall, whose expansive 1904 opus on the subject launched a century of research on adolescence as a unique phase of human development. Scholarship on the nature of adolescence has focused primarily on youth in the dominant, American middle class, white culture. The experiences of adolescents outside of this group are considerably less understood and researched (Arnett, 1999). This review addresses identity development in first-generation, adolescent migrants to majority-English speaking societies. However, because the literature frequently aggregates this population with second-generation and indigenous minorities under pan-ethnic labels such as *Hispanic* (e.g., Niemann, Romero, Arredondo, & Rodriguez, 1999), this review will necessarily include some of that work. Since there is no universally understood period of adolescence, I define it somewhat arbitrarily here as ages 12-18. Finally, this review focuses on scholarship over the past 15 years (See Giles & Johnson, 1987; Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987; Gumperz, 1982; Phinney, 1990; and Tajfel, 1981 for earlier work.)

While widely varying in perspective and emphasis, theory and research on adolescent ELL identity address at least one of three interrelated foci: (a) individual psychosocial processes that serve to recursively organize and construct the self; (b) sociocultural, political, economic, institutional, and historical structures or discourses that convey group values and beliefs to the individual about identity and are in turn affected by individual actions and beliefs; and (c) interaction and day-to-day contact among individuals through which constructions of identity are constantly asserted, monitored, and altered. In practice, there is overlap among these foci as well as work in which a theoretical framework is underspecified or missing entirely (Phinney, 1990). Nevertheless, these foci can serve as useful ways to organize a discussion of English language learning adolescents' experience of identity.

INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOSOCIAL PROCESSES OF IDENTITY FORMATION

Scholarship in this area spans several disciplines including social psychology, intercultural communication, counseling, and clinical psychology. Work in this area is typically characterized by the administration of Likert-scale-based multi-item inventories soliciting adolescent feelings, values, and self-reported behaviors relating to ethnolinguistic identity (see, e.g., Niemann et al., 1999; Phinney, 1992; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2001) and multivariate predictive models (e.g., Swanson, Spencer, & Petersen, 1998). Less common are in-depth case studies (e.g., Shih, 1998), focus groups (Niemann et al., 1999), and other psychometric measures (e.g., Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995).

In psychosocially oriented research, how adolescent ELLs see themselves in relation to the target language and culture is encapsulated in the notion of *ethnic identity*. Several facets of ethnic identity have been investigated, including how adolescents self-identify or self-label their ethnicity, the relative strength of the bond with a self-identified group, how favorably youth regard the group, and the degree to which youth participate in the social life of their self-identified group through language use, friendships, religious organizations and practices, ethnic clubs or associations, political activity, and living in ethnic enclaves (Phinney, 1990; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1996). While early work (e.g., Giles & Johnson, 1987; Tajfel, 1981) highlighted the role of language choice and use in ethnic identity, recent

theorists consider its role less central and more ambiguous (e.g., Hansen & Liu, 1997; Liebkind, 1999). Theorists see strong links between ethnic identity, acculturation (Berry, 1997; Maharaj & Connolly, 1994; Phinney, 1990; Schönflug, 1997), socialization (Adams & Marshall, 1996), and constitution of the self (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996), although opinions vary widely on the exact nature of the relationship. Psychosocial theorists also vary on the extent to which they posit an essential self or identity existing autonomously from linguistic or social construction (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996).

Ethnic identity formation is seen as a dynamic process that is as much achieved as given and that changes over time. Phinney's (1990) model of acculturation, based upon psychoanalytic theories of identity (e.g., Erikson, 1968), proposes that individuals begin adolescence with a received or unexamined ethnic identity. Identity exploration, often triggered by a significant experience with another ethnic group, focuses awareness on one's own identity and ultimately results in a new examined or achieved ethnic identity. Berry (1997), however, contends that immigrant acculturation processes are too varied to characterize in a unilinear stage model. Instead, he focuses on strategies used by youth in acculturation and identity formation, characterizing them in one of four ways: assimilation (rejection of home culture in favor of adopted culture); marginalization (rejection of both home and adopted culture); integration (identification with both home and adopted culture); and separation/segregation (rejection of adopted culture in favor of home culture).

Following Erikson (1968), psychosocial researchers cast the achievement of a stable, coherent, positive sense of identity as the major task of adolescence (Phinney, 1990; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1996). Social and clinical psychology has therefore examined constructs such as self-esteem, stress, coping, and resilience and has focused on the formation of ethnic affiliations, self-concept, and cultural identification as variables intervening in adolescent "storm and stress" (Hall, 1904). Clinicians hypothesize links between adolescent identity formation and risks of parental conflict, mood disruptions, and behaviors (Arnett, 1999) including substance abuse, underage sexual activity, violence and criminality, depression, suicide, school underachievement, and dropping out (Dryfoos, 1998).

Researchers debate whether immigrant status enhances these risks (Berry, 1997; Lazarus, 1997). Rosenthal and Feldman (1996) propose that risk level is determined by the degree of similarity or difference between old and new cultures, the reason for the transition, the abruptness of the change, and the extent of immersion in the new culture. Others find that adolescent immigrants may have distinctively high levels of sadness and preoccupation with losses (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995) and that refugee traumas (Kiang, 1995) affect psychological well-being and identity. Since adolescents may acculturate faster than their parents (Kiang), adolescent ELL identity formation is sometimes associated with familial and intergenerational conflict (Calderón, 1998; Shih, 1998). Affiliation with urban youth gangs has also been linked with immigration and attendant destabilization of familial and community support systems (Faderman, 1998; Fine & Mechling, 1993; Vigil, 1993). Immigrants, particularly female youth, may also face conflicts in gendered identities (Kiang, 1995; Lee, 1996; Olson, 1997). On the other hand, some researchers report that immigrant adolescents value family and tradition more than non-immigrant peers do (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1996) and experience less parental conflict (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995).

Although Erikson's (1968) influential work hypothesized that parental influences on identity formation are eclipsed by peer associations in adolescence, empirical work suggests individual (Hartup, 1999) and cultural (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995) variation in peer influences on adolescent identity. Moreover, while non-minority adolescents in Western contexts tend to be defined and define themselves in terms of the activities, interests, or reputation of their peer group, immigrants from ethnolinguistic and racial minority groups may find their identities and peer associations defined primarily in terms of similarities in ethnicity and race, and similarities in perceived distance and marginalization from the dominant group (Shih, 1998). Maharaj and Connolly (1994), however, suggest cross-national variation in tendencies for peers to self-segregate in racialized ethnic groups.

Adolescent ELLs' ethnic identities are shaped not only by the experience of immigration but also by the status of their identified group in the wider society. Following Tajfel's (1981) early work, many scholars suggest that the achievement of identity for ethnolinguistic or racial minority adolescents necessitates more complex cognitive and affective dynamics than that of the dominant cultural group (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1996; Swanson, Spencer, & Petersen, 1998). Adolescent ELLs may face psychological conflict bridging home and dominant cultures in societies where they are associated with a stigmatized subordinate group (Phinney, 1990). Swanson et al. believe that societal prejudices regarding language minority status work upon the individual by triggering stress and coping mechanisms (e.g., not participating in biased school practices) that may be effective in an immediate sense but lead ultimately to adverse "lifestage outcomes" (e.g., poor school achievement). As a result, minority youth might be more likely overall than majority youth to have a poorer sense of "personal efficacy" and to accept perceptions of limited social access rather than to challenge or circumvent them.

Psychosocial research on adolescent ELL identity is not without logistical and theoretical challenges. While theories abound, empirical work on general adolescent processes of identity formation, and on ethnolinguistic minority youth in particular, lags far behind and is as yet limited (Phinney, 1990). While some theorists regret the lack of a single overarching and universally accepted framework for the exploration of identity formation, they themselves may contribute to the proliferation of models (e.g., Côté, 1996; Phinney, 1990). Reliance on cross-sectional measures has hampered efforts to discern longitudinal developmental trends (Goossens & Phinney, 1996; Hansen & Liu, 1997). Self-report measures are not accompanied by confirmatory observation (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), and the reliability of some measures is low or unassessed (Phinney, 1990). Moreover, while the linkage between social context and intra-individual identity formation is widely acknowledged (Berry, 1997; Erikson, 1968; Swanson, Spencer, & Petersen, 1998), methodologies typically employed in psychosocial research have nonetheless emphasized individuals as the unit of analysis (Goossens & Phinney, 1996). The "storm and stress" orientation of research on adolescence tends to emphasize deviations and negative effects of ELL identity development and may be distorting our understanding of the process. Researchers note the need for more research on how ethnic identity changes situationally (Phinney, 1990) as well as more systemic cross-cultural research on how the size and status of the local and societal ethnic community influence adolescents' ethnic identities (Berry, 1997). Recent work is marked by cross-national and cross-generational comparisons of ethnic identity in

adolescent ELLs (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995).

A particular challenge is the use of broad ethnic categories in psychosocially oriented research on identity. Umaña-Taylor and Fine (2001) show that pan-ethnic designations, such as *Latino* or *Hispanic*, prevalent in identity research are of dubious validity, since responses to commonly used measures of ethnic identity vary considerably among Spanish-speaking ethnic groups. Moreover, an increasing number of individuals' backgrounds are not representative of one "pure" ethnolinguistic group (Phinney, 1990). Berry (1997) further cautions that research must contextualize ethnicity in the full constellation of cultural and psychological factors brought to acculturative processes, e.g., gender, race, and social class. For example, while extant research often fails to differentiate generational status of ethnolinguistic minority youth, there can be major differences and tensions among first and subsequent generations of adolescents in the same setting (Lee, 1996; Lee, 2001; Olson, 1997; Shih, 1998; Valdés, 2001). Moreover, even adolescent ELLs quite similar in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and social context can experience considerably different processes of identity formation (Shih, 1998), resilience, and coping (Calderón, 1998). Additionally, because the host society is not monolithic either, immigrant youth necessarily favor some subgroups such as youth cultures (James, 1995) more than others in processes of acculturation and identity formation (Horenczyk, 1997). As a result of these difficulties, some psychosocially oriented scholars (Horenczyk, 1997; Pick, 1997; Swanson, Spencer, & Petersen, 1998) recommend a social constructionist perspective and more investigation of how immigration causes individuals and groups in contact to actively reconstruct and redefine representations of their own and other cultures.

INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIETAL CONTEXTS OF IDENTITY FORMATION

Scholarship in this area draws primarily from the sociology and anthropology of education and is typically characterized by ethnographic and case study methodologies featuring unstructured, in-depth interviews and participant observation of informants in social settings (although see Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, for a large-scale survey approach). While there is considerable anthropologically and sociologically oriented work on the cross-cultural identity formation of immigrant children (e.g., García & Hurtado, 1995), scholarship on adolescents is less plentiful (Wulff, 1995b).

It must first be noted that anthropologists and sociologists dispute whether adolescent identity-seeking and even adolescence itself are universal or culturally specific phenomena (e.g., Baumeister & Muraven, 1996; Coté, 1994). Very little empirical work has addressed cultural differences in identity exploration (Goossens & Phinney, 1996), and cultures may define adolescence in different ways (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Arnett, 1999; Muñoz, 1995; Schlegel & Barry, 1991). If notions of adolescence are culturally produced, socially oriented researchers argue that the nature of adolescent ELL identities cannot be studied or understood apart from their specific institutional and sociocultural contexts.

Adolescent ELLs enter societies in which images of immigrants are largely unfavorable (Vargas & dePyssler, 1998). Latinos in the U.S., for example, are portrayed in the media as *waves* or *tides* of criminal aliens or helpless victims

(Vargas & dePyssler, 1998) and Latino youth as gang-bangers, graffiti artists, and migrant fieldworkers (Hernández, Siles, & Rochin, 2000). Asian Americans are often perceived as unassimilable foreigners (Lee, 1996). Rampton (1995) identifies a prevalent racist “babu” stereotype of ESL/Indian English speakers in England—“deferential, polite, uncomprehending, and incompetent in English” (p. 52).

Schools are primary “arenas” (Olneck, 1995) for instilling or ameliorating societal notions of race, ethnicity, language, and identity. Thus, schooling has been a central focus of socially oriented research on adolescent ELL identity. In the U.S., studies report that schools operate on prevalent English monolingual ideologies, overlooking immigrant students’ previous linguistic and academic accomplishments and casting students as linguistically and cognitively deficient (Harklau, 2000; McKay & Wong, 1996). Bilingualism or ELL status is often stigmatized as remedial (McKay & Wong, 1996), subjecting immigrants to harassment and ridicule from American-born peers (Lee, 1996; Olson, 1997) and marginalization in the classroom (McKay & Wong, 1996). Immigrants from white middle-class backgrounds (e.g., Russian immigrants; see Vollmer, 2000) may be perceived as more assimilable than Asian or Latino peers. Latino adolescents in U.S. schools may be subject to “benevolent racism” (Villenas, 2001), casting students as “academic underachievers, illiterates, dropouts, incompetents in reading, writing, and numeracy” (Villarruel & Montero-Sieburth, 2000, p. xviii) in need of special help. A *model minority* representation of Asian heritage students in the U.S. (Lee, 1996; McKay & Wong, 1996), Canada, and Australia (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1996) obscures differences in achievement and schooling problems among them by portraying them as uniformly successful. African Caribbean youth in British (Gillborn, 1997) and Canadian (Solomon, 1992) schools experience persistent harassment and discrimination, and their language is stigmatized by teachers who see Creole simply as non-standard or incorrect forms of English.

Ogbu’s (1991) cultural ecological model of cultural identity development and minority academic achievement has been influential in explaining the variable effects of societal discrimination and stereotyping on immigrant youth identities. Ogbu proposes that *voluntary* immigrants tend to overlook discrimination and to learn English and succeed academically, while *involuntary* minority groups incorporated through conquest or slavery develop oppositional identities in which English and schooling are seen as vehicles of societal oppression. Ogbu’s model has received qualified support in research on adolescent ELLs (see, e.g., Gibson, 1988; Lee, 1996; Matute-Bianchi, 1991; Suarez-Orozco, 1989). However, some researchers question whether all immigrant groups are equally successful (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Moreover, in recent years research on immigrant identity and school performance has shifted towards equally important patterns of intragroup variation (Davidson, 1996; Gibson, 1997; Goto, 1997; Lee). Researchers also note the interaction of immigrant status with other aspects of identity such as gender (Gibson, 1997; Lee; Olson, 1997; Poynting, Noble, & Tabar, 1999), class (Lee, 1996), and race (Cummins, 2000; Gillborn, 1997; Lee, 1996; Solomon, 1992).

Researchers have also noted changes in voluntary immigrant responses to the dominant society across generations and time (Gibson, 1997). Adult immigrants and their adolescent children’s ethnic identities may develop quite differently during acculturation (Shih, 1998; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and take on hybrid cultural characteristics as a result of contact with the dominant group (Darder, 1995; Lee, 1996). Davidson (1996) argues that adolescent ELLs can take on

identities that are simultaneously academically engaged like voluntary minorities and oppositional in the sense of preserving home language and culture.

Researchers note the important role of educational institutions in adolescent ELL identity formation. Schools contribute to marginalized identities when they take a coercive (Cummins, 2000) role, enforcing assimilationist values (Feinberg, 1998) and practices such as negative academic expectations, impersonal and uncaring relationships with educators, and unequal access to information about and opportunities for their futures (Davidson, 1996; Conchas, 2001; Gillborn, 1990; Olson, 1997). Alternatively, schools can counter societal relations of power (Cummins) by actively engaging ELLs' divergent cultural identities (Feinberg), holding high academic expectations, and guiding them and their families in preparing for future opportunities (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990). Adolescent ELLs may adopt a range of strategies in identity development, including ethnic flight and identification with the dominant group, adversarial identities rejecting the dominant group, and transcultural identities synthesizing elements of each (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Some suggest that those with strong heritage cultural identities and those with transcultural identities fare best in school and society (Gibson, 1997; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; although see Lee, 2001, for a dissenting view).

Relatively little work has focused on immigrant adolescent identity formation in home, work, and community and in peer contexts (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Weis & Fine, 2000), although existing research shows the significant influences of family and community (Centrie, 2000; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Zhou & Bankston, 1994), peer groups (Olson, 1997), gang affiliations (Moje, 2000; Valdés, 2001), and workplaces (Muñoz, 1995).

Recent theorizing on adolescent ELL identity is situated in critiques of the very concepts of culture (e.g., Clifford, 1986) and identity (Hall, 1996). This "contextualist perspective" (McKay & Wong, 1996) draws variously from cultural studies (e.g., Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996; Weedon, 1997), postmodernisms (e.g., Foucault, 1977, 1995/1979), and critical discourse studies (e.g., Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1996). Key notions in these perspectives include cultural identities (or subjectivities, e.g., Weedon 1997) as representational, power-laden, reciprocal, multiple and hybrid, mobile, and contested.

Identities are *representations* that fix upon attributes of the individual—physical phenotype, language, cultural beliefs, and practices and use them as shorthand to classify people (Hall, 1997). In doing so, however, they mask heterogeneity within and across individuals. Harklau (2000), for example, finds that the same individuals can take on very different identities as ELLs depending on the institutional context and the other students with whom they are grouped or with whom they are compared.

Identity categories are *power laden* because the dominant group defines itself by defining and excluding a cultural *Other* (Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 1996). For example, pan-ethnic identities such as *Latino* and *Asian American* are as much imposed by contact with a dominant white group as chosen by individuals (Lee, 1996). Immigrants of color internalize dominant U.S. norms equating *American* with *whiteness*, and cast themselves as foreigners (Harklau, 2000; Lee, 1996; Olson, 1997). Lee (1996) and McKay and Wong (1996) find that adolescents draw upon pan-ethnic identities such as *Asian* or *Chinese* for group solidarity in situations of interethnic and interracial contact and potential social vulnerability, while

negotiating much more intricate and nuanced ethnolinguistic identities among themselves.

Processes of adolescent ELL identity formation are also *reciprocal*; that is, they both shape and are shaped by societal and institutional influences or discourses (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Foucault, 1995/1979). The individual's range of possible identities at any point in time is limited by preexisting societally and institutionally recognized differentiations in gender, language, ethnicity, and race. Adolescents always operate in reference to these discourses at the same time they are contributing to or resisting them. Adolescent immigrants, however, may experience acculturation and identity formation to be a one-way process in which they and not American-born peers are expected to change (Olson, 1997). Berry (1997) points out that the adjustments of the non-dominant group have been emphasized in both research and social policy and calls for increased attention to mutual accommodation in pluralistic societies.

Cultural identities in transnational multiethnic societies are *multiple and hybrid* (Grossberg, 1996). The notion of *core* unitary ethnolinguistic identities corresponding with geographic boundaries is in fact largely an invention of eighteenth and nineteenth century social science (Kroskrity, 2001) and is belied by current research. For example, Lee (1996) finds that ethnic Chinese students from Cambodia identified with both ethnic groups. McKay and Wong (1996) contend that the notion that immigrants commit to only one identity and one language or the other is xenophobic. Nevertheless, the notion of a unitary or authentic ethnicity is a powerful one (Reyes, 2002), and adolescent ELLs may therefore see ethnic identity as a choice between home and adopted cultures (e.g., Olson, 1997).

Adolescents' identities are also *shifting and mobile*, an ongoing and never completed process of the remaking of the self. For example, among British adolescents, the use of Creole has changed its meanings in relation to identity, becoming popularized among white youth, and in turn has changed the nature of the Creoles themselves (Gillborn, 1990).

Cultural identities are innately strategic and positional (Hall, 1996) and are therefore *sites of contestation* (McKay & Wong, 1996; Rampton, 1995). Adolescent ELLs do not simply accept their positioning by others but actively set about resisting their positioning and attempting to reposition themselves through counterdiscourses. For example, McKay and Wong show how a student resisted the subject position of *ESL student* by utilizing his greater command of Chinese cultural symbols to make an off-color joke that his friends but not the teacher would understand.

A nascent challenge to postmodern conceptualizations of culture and identity comes from Moya (2000), who expresses dissatisfaction with an oversimplistic binary between *essentialist* and *postmodern* conceptualizations of cultural identity. Moya also notes that postmodernism and cultural studies have negatively emphasized the violence of identification and subjectification at the expense of the enriching and enabling aspects of cultural identities. Some, particularly educators seeking change in educational or societal practices, seek greater emphasis on the role of personal agency in processes of cultural identity formation.

FOCUS ON INTERACTION AND SEMIOTIC PRACTICES

Scholarship in this area spans a number of disciplines, including intercultural communication, social psychology, linguistic anthropology, literacy education, and

media and cultural studies. Methodological approaches vary, ranging from surveys of communicative styles and language attitudes to ethnography, microethnography, conversation analysis, and other approaches taking an intensive focus on recorded interactions. Recent work goes beyond the traditional realm of spoken language to investigate a broad range of semiotic and communicative practices (e.g., Moje, 2000).

One approach examines *communicative styles* cross-culturally. Yager and Rotheram-Borus (2000), for example, find evidence for differing expectations for social interactions among European American, Hispanic, and African American adolescents. They suggest that cultural differences in group orientation, assertiveness, and aggressiveness may help to explain self-segregation and conflict among adolescent ethnic groups in school settings. Likewise, Gillborn (1990) argues that culturally influenced interactional styles of Afro-Caribbean students in England were misinterpreted by teachers as disaffected or threatening, in turn shaping student identity.

Other researchers look at the roles of *code switching* and *language choice* in identity work. Zentella's (1997) influential work on Puerto Rican ELLs in New York follows in an interactionist tradition in anthropology and sociolinguistics (e.g., Gumperz, 1982). Zentella shows how members of the community construct multiple and shifting identities through the sometimes overlapping deployment of multiple languages and dialects, including standard and non-standard Puerto Rican Spanish, standard New York English, Puerto Rican and Hispanicized dialects of English, and African American vernacular English. Likewise, Heller (1999) shows complex negotiations of adolescent ELL school-based identities through the uses of French, English, and vernacular languages at a Francophone high school in Toronto. Zentella notes that this sort of complexity of communicative options and patterns is what one might expect in a community that is linguistically, ethnically, and racially diverse, and Heller further describes how particular code choices are made legitimate or illegitimate in power-laden discursive contexts. Working in a multilingual high school setting in England, Rampton (1995) finds that adolescents aspiring to full participation in the peer group acquire not simply the monolingual Standard English but rather a variable mastery of a repertoire of languages. Both Zentella and Rampton suggest therefore that adolescent ELLs' social identities and social status are actively processed and renegotiated in social interactions.

Work in this area also looks at language as symbolic resources used to include and exclude. Lee (1996), for example, notes that ELLs at one high school used Korean language as a means of excluding other Asian Americans from social events. Zentella (1997) argues that stigmatization of Puerto Rican identity in New York is associated with the stigmatization of bilinguals' synthetic language repertoire. Asian Americans and Asian Canadian ELLs may be subject to silencing in schools through peer ridicule of their English usage, but paradoxically their very silence may also invoke representations of cognitive and emotional immaturity (Duff, 2002; Lee, 1996; Pon, Goldstein, & Schechter, 2003). However, silence was also agentive when resisting unwanted representations of their cultural identities (Duff, 2002). James (1995) suggests that youth cultures possess distinctive communicative practices and dialects and contends that adolescents who are most competent in the generational style use talk to distinguish themselves from more marginal members of the group. Rampton (1995) shows that minority languages may be incorporated into community language norms and practices as adolescents cross ethnolinguistic

groups and fashion new conceptualizations of ethnic identity. Moreover, Rampton shows how immigrant youth may revoice minority or learner linguistic codes as a means of resisting stigmatization. Adolescents in his study deployed stylized code-switches into ESL/Indian English to parody stereotypes of Asians they encountered in English society and to undermine the authority of white authority figures in school interactions. Reyes (2002) shows how Cambodian American students deploy talk to resist their positioning by educators as inauthentic bearers of Cambodian ethnic identity and instead counter with a notion of identity indexing ethnic and racial differentiation.

A small number of studies have noted the *production of identities in narrative*. Harklau (2000) suggests that adolescent ELLs draw upon societal and institutional discourses about immigrants to portray themselves positively in autobiographical texts as moral agents who overcome hardship and possess model behavior and special respect for educators. Likewise, Lee (1996) suggests those Asian refugees' self-disclosures about personal traumas in school-based written narratives invoked and reinstated the model minority stereotype. Research on adolescent ELL identity work in spoken narratives remains far less explored (see Rymes, 2001, for work with American-born adolescents.). Although untapped in current research on adolescent ELLs, diary studies and other autobiographical forms (e.g., Dykman, 2000; Min & Kim, 2000) hold potential for research on identity development.

A long tradition (e.g., Hebdige, 1979) links adolescent identity formation with media, consumption, and youth styles (Wulff, 1995a). Recent research has shown how a broad range of semiotic practices associated with youth styles, including gang tags, writing styles, music, and clothing styles (Lee, 1996; Moje, 2000), are used by ethnolinguistic minority youth to assert group affiliations and identities. Côté (1996) suggests that such practices are of increasing importance for managing one's social place in urbanized late-modern societies. With growth in media and adolescents as their primary targets and consumers, media images or representations of culture and of adolescents are perhaps more pervasive and more influential than ever before. Media images potentially carry stereotypes that can act to validate and normalize particular beliefs and notions of adolescent ELL identity (Zuengler, 2004).

Researchers also suggest that media growth has transnational and global implications for youth identities. Schlegel (2000) and Wulff (1995b) argue that ideas and commodities of youth culture flow most easily across cultural borders. They suggest that an adolescent culture oriented towards consumerism and emblemized in behaviors, clothing, and music is being spread globally through international media, touring entertainers, migrants, import-export markets, and travels of adolescents themselves. From this perspective, media make it ever more possible and even necessary to navigate across cultural and linguistic boundaries (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Some argue that the proliferation of media lends multiethnic adolescents access to media reflecting both the dominant youth cultures of English-speaking societies and alternative images in Latino (Vargas & dePyssler, 1998) and Asian American media, while others (Duff, 2002) argue that popular culture can be exclusionary to immigrant youth who do not share referents. Zuengler (2004) argues that adolescent ELLs do not simply take on identities available to them in consumer-oriented media but rather engage in a sophisticated process of appropriation and resistance.

Scholars in this area increasingly portray interaction and semiotic practices as mediating between intra-individual psychological processes and institutional and

social contexts. Nevertheless, this remains perhaps the least researched area of inquiry on adolescent ELL identity formation.

CONCLUSIONS

From this review, it is clear that the notion of adolescent ELLs possessing a stable, bounded, and essential ethnolinguistic identity is no longer favored, if indeed it ever was. Theorists from across disciplines appear to agree that identities are multiple and dynamic in nature. There is also widespread agreement that ELL identity is an immensely complex construct, situated in a matrix of social interaction, intra-individual psychological processes, and broader institutional and societal contexts. All three perspectives—the psychological, the contextual, and the interactional—are required in order to get a holistic sense of the phenomenon. Rampton (1995), for example, argues for a need for research combining ethnography with close analysis of language use in order to capture connections between language use and higher levels of social structuring. Nevertheless, work on the same population that spans disciplinary perspectives and methodological paradigms remains quite rare. Additionally, in spite of the widespread view that identity is a continual work in progress, there is a paucity of longitudinal work following the same individuals over the course of several years (e.g., Zentella, 1997).

It is also important to note that language in most recent work is portrayed as only one of an array of symbolic resources through which identities are forged, tried on, accommodated, imposed, resisted, and changed. While researchers in SLA may see English learning as the central issue, as McKay and Wong (1996) note, it is important to remember that adolescents themselves may see English language learning as peripheral to the work of building and managing identities in a new social context. Thus, too narrow a focus on the role of language unnecessarily narrows the scope of research on ELL identity (Hansen & Liu, 1997).

Given the diversity of findings presented here, it seems likely that universally applicable theories or conclusions about adolescent ELLs and identity will always elude us. And if we should happen upon them, even stalwart seekers of such theories (e.g., Phinney, 1990) acknowledge that they may not be particularly useful when developing educational and counseling applications for specific individuals and groups in particular contexts. This admission does not diminish the value of the work to theorists and educators, however. Continuing growth in scholarship on identity is likely to provide more new insights and perspectives on adolescent identity formation and associated processes of additional language learning for the foreseeable future.

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