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## Career Identity and Community Investment Toolkit for High School English Language Learners

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CAREER IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT TOOLKIT FOR HIGH  
SCHOOL LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by Mary Louise Moga

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Arts in English as a Second Language

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

I have been teaching off and on for about ten years, as a special education teacher and now as an ESL teacher. Most of that experience has been at the secondary level. After teaching English language learners (ELLs) for about a year, I began to wonder why some students, immigrants who start with less proficiency in English, do better than others who were born in the United States and have had a greater exposure to English. Are there individual attributes ELLs possess that make them successful or are there social contexts that facilitate language learning? This introductory chapter explains my path to graduate school and the creation of this capstone project. I tell how I became interested in identity and language learning through my work in a sociolinguistics class, and how through my work in that course I became interested in the work of linguists Mary Bucholtz and Bonny Norton. My question I am attempting to answer in this Capstone project is, *what instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level ELLs identity in present and future imagined communities?* The result of this inquiry is an instructional toolkit for high-school teachers with classroom activities that prompt learners to explore the communities, present and future, to which they belong.

#### **Wondering about identity**

Since I took my first sociolinguistics course, I have been wondering how my students as language learners see themselves in the larger world outside of the classroom. What is their larger identity than just a high school student? Do they give much thought

to their identity? Do they think about their place in their groups and communities? Do they think of their future identities and community memberships? Can theories of Second language acquisition (SLA) or theories of applied linguistics help teachers and advocates of ELLs influence the identity of their students for positive outcomes? In an attempt to answer these questions, I was drawn to Norton's concepts of investment and imagined communities (Norton, 1995) and how they could inform teachers about students' futures and what can Bucholtz's Tactics of Intersubjectivity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004) tell us about ELLs' investment in their imagined communities.

As high school seniors that I work with walk across the stage each June and receive their diplomas, I have been pondering their futures. They or their families have come from Asia, Central and South America, parts of Africa, and even from Eastern Europe. Some have done well in high school and others have just squeaked by. Most increased their English proficiency levels in all areas. Others have increased their language skills only marginally. Some have had big celebrations with the extended family (some of which I was invited to) and some had quieter celebrations with the family they have here in Minnesota with news and pictures sent to different parts of the globe. Some have college or trade school in their future and others will go right into a field of work. They will spread out into different areas of employment and different echelons of society. I have wondered what is it about how they view themselves as English speakers that drives them into certain roles in the world of work, family, and society. Those are the burning questions for me as a researcher and teacher. In this chapter, I would like to give an overview of my research question, my background, and what led me to this question for my Capstone project.

## **Background of the Researcher**

I started my career in education by earning a dual bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Special Education from the University of Northern Colorado. After graduation, I taught in an elementary level resource setting and a junior high-level self-contained classroom program. I gave it my all for four years and burned out. I left to pursue other opportunities, but teaching was always in the back of my mind. I kept a short-call substitute license with the State of Minnesota and kept part of my work life in the world of education when I was between other jobs and school programs. A few years ago, I fell into a long-term substitute position in an ESL program at the high school level. I ended up working in this program for almost two school years. I loved the work, my colleagues at the school, and most of all, I loved the students. My students were from a variety of backgrounds; it was an even split between Spanish speakers and those that spoke a Southeast Asian language with a smattering of African students and a couple from Europe. Some were newcomers, some had been here a few years, some were born here and were long-term ELLs. There were also a few Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). It was during the second year of this stint that I decided to pursue licensure and a degree program in ESL.

I researched different programs available to me and decided on Hamline's program. While I working toward my degree at Hamline, I have worked a couple other long-term ESL positions which have helped me further my skills in teaching ELLs. While I have taught students in kindergarten through high school, my main interest is the education of ELLs at the high school level. One of the required classes in Hamline's

program is called “Language and Society,” a sociolinguistics course. Linguistics is fascinating to me. In that course, as the topic for a literature review assignment, I chose “Language and Gender Identity.” Through my research, I found a body of literature related to ELLs and identity and this became my interest. During my almost two-year long-term substitute position, I wondered why one of my students with an interrupted formal education in his first year in this country excelled in gaining proficiency in English and did well in his classes while many of the students who were born here and have been in an ESL program for most of their school career are struggling academically. This student was in and out of school in his native country, spoke almost no English when he entered high school, and initially seemed to struggle adjusting to life in Minnesota. He had a great work ethic and came in regularly for extra help. He had a “can do” attitude and a great sense of humor. While we told him he could have extra time to earn his high school diploma, that wasn’t an option for him. He was determined to graduate with his peers on time, in four years. I believe it was his extended family and outside community that also contributed to his success. They were refugees many years ago and were in a position to support him. This student graduated this past June with honors and received four scholarships with plans to enter a local community college. Why was this student successful while some students who are born in the United State and who are still designated as ELLs struggle with school? Was it his investment in imagined communities that helped him succeed?

### **Rationale**

Identifying aspects of an English learners’ identities and how that shapes their work, performance, and self-confidence is of immense importance for teachers and others



who teach, guide and manage ELLs to help them become successful at school, at work, and in the community. When we examine identity, we can see how an individual relates to and places themselves in the larger world (Norton, 2013). In identity related second language acquisition (SLA) theories, we can see various positions or roles language learners can speak from and how sometimes those students on the edges can have more agency in certain situations (Norton, 2013). For example, I have an in-law who was born in Mexico and moved to Chicago with her family when she was six. While she was an ELL in school and started to learn the very basics in English, she was an important link between her mother and their new home. Her mother relied on her to navigate the L train when traveling around the city and had to translate interactions between her mother and store clerks. She clearly had more agency, or the power to act independently out in the community with her mother than she did in her first-grade classroom.

Prior to the formation of identity theory in SLA, factors for successful language learners were thought of in either-or-terms like introverted/extroverted, motivated/unmotivated, inhibited/uninhibited, etc. (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, Norton, 1995). Each students' path is different, and some may choose work over higher education or a more demanding career, but can knowing more about their identity assist educators, social workers, etc. in helping ELs become happier, more productive members of the community? Another aspect of this question would be whether there is something in knowing more about one's own identity and place in one's communities that would help ELs make wise decisions about their own future.

### **Project Description**

This project and the activities included in it are intended to be used as a resource for teachers, counselors and other educational staff to determine how invested their high school-aged ELLs or clients are in the communities to which they belong. Knowing how and to the degree a student is invested in a community can aid educators in determining how to assist the student to be successful in the communities they imagine themselves as members of. This resource will contain a variety of instructional tasks that educators can use as separate activities in class or integrate into an already existing curriculum. The activities are based on Norton's concepts of imagined communities and Bucholtz's tactics of intersubjectivity.

### **Summary**

In this first chapter I introduced my research question regarding English language learners and how their identity might affect their success in school and life. I gave a brief history of my teaching career from special education teacher to entering a MAESL program and teaching ELLs. A number of scholars have influenced my thinking about identity and language learning, most notably Mary Bucholtz's 2004 framework that looks at individual identity and agency within language, Helen Staunton's 2016 work in examining secondary level students' sociolinguistic identities, and Bonny Norton's work with English learners investment and identity. In Chapter 2 of this paper, I will discuss Bucholtz's Tactics of Intersubjectivity, Staunton's research into high school students' identity, how Norton's concepts of investment and imagined communities are important in understanding language learning and language learners. In Chapter 3, I will describe how the Tactics of Intersubjectivity can be used to examine language learners' investment in real and imagined communities. These theories and frameworks have

provided background for developing this Career Identity and Community Investment Toolkit and to answer my question, *what instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level ELLs identity in present and future imagined communities?*

Chapter four will include reflections on the development of this project, applications for its use in classroom settings, limitations, and areas for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

This chapter gives a brief overview of the research on individual identity as it relates to education and language learning, specifically Norton's concepts of investment and imagined communities and Bucholtz's tactics of intersubjectivity. Related to that, a short history of identity theories, a brief section on intersectionality, findings from developmental psychology and post-structuralist thought, which has an emphasis on the formation of identity through social discourse and agency or positions of power, are presented. Norton's investment and imagined communities and Bucholtz's tactics are the groundwork for the basis of the classroom activities in the toolkit that is the project. This overview adds necessary background information to answer the research question: *What instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level students' identity in present and future imagined communities?*

#### A Brief History of Theories of Identity

The language we speak is an integral part of each individual's identity. We express our history, opinions, thoughts, beliefs, and a host of other personal information through language. We demonstrate identity through our description of ourselves and the groups we belong to, through the style of speaking and behaving in groups we belong to, through the style of speaking and behaving of those groups, and through the ideas and judgements others form about ourselves and our group memberships (Joseph, 2016).

There are many theories of identity but for the purposes of this paper, theories that are

based on a social perspective will be examined, namely developmental psychology and post-structuralist theory.

Developmental psychology emerged as a field after the start of the Industrial Revolution when a skilled workforce was needed and education became more important (McLeod, 2017). Two developmental psychologists of note whose theories apply to identity and learning are Eric Erikson and Lev Vygotsky. Erikson (as cited in McLeod, 2018), examined human development with a psychosocial perspective. Erikson stated that there are stages that an individual goes through during their lifetime and each stage has a challenge between two states that the individual wrestles with. The stages are: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame/doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair. Erikson also stated that identity consisted of the three Cs: competency, communities, and commitment. Competency is what one does including skills, roles, or vocations. Communities are where one is from and include location, groups, and beliefs. Commitments center around personal relationships.

Lev Vygotsky's theories are important to language learning and identity also because of their social nature. Vygotsky (as cited in McLeod, 2018), stated that it is social interaction that spurs on development. In this text he stated there is a Zone of Proximal Development which refers to a situation where a child has almost mastered a certain skill and will master the skill if taught or assisted by an adult such as a teacher or an older more knowledgeable student. Vygotsky also believed that cognitive development varied across cultures and that internalizing language promotes cognitive

development. It is the major means by which adults impart knowledge to children and language develops from social interactions.

Another view of identity and the individual that developed shortly after Erikson and Vygotsky was the modernist humanistic view. Here each individual has a unique essence which gives them their character or personality. This view took hold in humanistic psychology and in other fields such as linguistics and anthropology as well (Clay, 2002).

This school of thought was followed by post-structuralism. Whereas prior theorists thought identity was contained in the individual, poststructuralists believed that individuals are subject to ‘positions’ imposed on them by culture and society through discourses available in certain contexts. An individual’s identity is found in the positions or roles they take in discourses in social situations (Baxter, 2016). A foremost theorist in this school of thought was the French philosopher, Michel Foucault (Baxter, 2016). Foucault believed that identity is constructed, realized, and regulated through discourse. Identity construction is a reciprocal process between the agency of the language user taking up a particular position and the way they have been positioned as subjects in the discourse by outside social pressure (Baxter, 2016). Agency is defined as “a measure of individual awareness or control over the means by which subjects are ‘interpellated’ or called into existence” (Baxter, 2016, p. 38).

Bonny Norton, educator and researcher, has applied post-structuralist theories to language learning. In their article “Identity, Language Learning and Social Change,” Norton and Toohey (2011) argue for a post-structuralist approach to language learning and identity. This approach allows researchers to examine a variety of perspectives

including how the individual places themselves in the larger social world, how power is distributed, the sociological construct of investment versus the psychological construct of motivation, and the concept of imagined communities and imagined identities. Norton (1995) also states that poststructuralist thought has been important to the study of language and identity as it sees the individual as “diverse, contradictory, and dynamic” as opposed to the previously held humanistic view that the individual has “an essential, unique, fixed, and coherent core (Norton, 1995, p.15).” Additionally, prior SLA theorists have not fully addressed that the language learner takes on different roles in different contexts (Norton, 1995). The language learner’s identity can be subjective given the context the learner finds themselves in and that identity can be influenced by conscious or unconscious thoughts and emotions. The nature of an individual’s identity is changeable and because it is changeable, there is possibility for educational intervention (Norton, 1995).

In addition to applying post-structuralist theories to language education, Norton has introduced two concepts to the body of literature. These are: imagined communities and investment. As a result of the work with imagined communities, Norton challenged the idea of motivation in SLA theory with her concept of investment (Norton, 1995). These concepts are discussed in detail in the next two sections.

### **Imagined Communities**

The concept of imagined communities was first used by political scientist and historian, Benedict Anderson in describing the rise of nationalism (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Anderson suggested that nations are imagined communities in that even in the smallest nations all the members of the community don’t know each other, yet they each

share a sense of belonging to the larger group. This belonging encompasses both space and time (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

Imagined communities of language learners may not always fit the present reality. For example, a language learner who is a senior in high school, who has been in the country four years and still struggles with high school academic language, wants to go to college next year and study finance. This English learner envisions themselves working in investments and making money. This imagined community does not presently exist and does not align with the learners' present reality, but this vision of a future community impacts the investment the learner has in learning English (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

Imagined communities are more than wishing. There are differences between wishes and hopes as they relate to imagined communities. Wishes are equated with inaction, just thoughts, whereas hope creates an image of another world where the individual can take actions in the present to make that world a reality in the future (Kanno and Norton, 2003).

Adding to the reality and power of imagined communities is the fact that, like all communities, they have culturally bound rules (Vygotsky, 1978). If a child is pretending to be a parent, they are practicing the rules of a nurturer or caregiver (Kanno & Norton, 2003). The child is born into a culture that has rules, often unwritten or specifically taught about behavior. A little girl learns the rules of motherhood from her proximity to her mother. When she plays an imaginary mother, she uses the rules she learned to play that role. The same is true of the hopes of the adult. Imagined communities are powerful because they are rule based, giving the learner a plan of action for the future (Kanno & Norton, 2003).



Imagined communities widen the range of the learner's identity and increase the learner's investment in acquiring the target language (Kanno & Norton, 2003). An imagined community might help the learner explore certain types of educational experiences and see their present education in a new light (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Additionally, technological advances and mass immigration have impacted language learners imagined communities. People who are thousands of miles apart can make connections on the internet. With migration, there are a huge number of individuals who are born in one country and live and work in another (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

A concept that goes along with that of imagined communities is that of investment. Language learners will feel more invested in becoming proficient in the target language if they perceive that there are symbolic and material resources to be gained from proficiency in that language. An investment in the target language is also an investment in a community (Atkinson, 2011).

### **Investment in second language (L2) learning**

There have varying perspectives among theorists about the way individual and social variables interact for the language learner, one of which is motivation. SLA theorists viewed motivation as important to language learners becoming proficient in the target language. SLA theories drew from a field of psychology, which distinguished between instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation can be defined as learning something for utilitarian purposes such as learning a language to obtain employment whereas integrative motivation could be looked at as the desire to learn a language to integrate into the community. According to Norton, these concepts of motivation do not address the complexity of the interactions between power, identity, and

language learning (Norton, 1995). Norton challenged the prevailing idea of the importance of motivation and posited that it was an investment in imagined communities that were the key to a language learner gaining proficiency in the target language. Motivation, as it relates to language learning, is broken down into instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation relates to the learner's immediate, practical goals. Integrative motivation relates to language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Norton stated that the context the language learner is placed in as well as relations of power in that context have not been examined enough to determine how those issues influence language learning (Norton, 1995).

Norton (1995) states that a dichotomy between individual and social variables arises from either-or thinking about individual and social factors in SLA. Learners are sometimes introverted, sometimes extroverted, sometimes timid, sometimes confident, sometimes motivated, sometimes apathetic. Norton argues that a comprehensive theory of social identity must examine the context of language learning and that power differences between language learners and target language speakers have not been examined adequately (Norton, 1995).

Rather than motivation, Norton posits the concept of investment. Investment is best understood using an economic term used by Bourdieu and Passeron (Norton, 1995); that of cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to “the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social norms (Norton, 1995, p.17).” Bourdieu and Passeron took a term from economics and used it as a metaphor for wealth possessed by individuals who have the necessary cultural traits to

succeed and move upward in society. Norton states that if language learners “invest” or use the valued aspects of the target language, they will have a greater range of resources available to them. The concept of investment sees the learner as having a complex identity and negotiating relationships with an ever-changing social world. According to Krashen, if language learners have a high affective filter (anxiety or reluctance to speak) (Lightbown and Spada, 2013), it is their investment in the target language that will help them communicate (Norton, 1995). While it is important for the language learner to know the rules of the target language, it is also important for the learner to know the dynamics of these rules. Norton believes that communicative competence in a second language (L2) not only involves knowing the target language but how rules in the target language serve dominant groups in society (Norton, 1995). Is there a tool or structure that teachers can use to analyze their students’ investment in school and other communities? How can those working with ELs determine whether students have agency in the organizations they are a part of?

Identity is created in language but language learners often have multiple identities. Gender, race, religion, and nationality, etc. are all ways of identifying oneself. The next section is a short discussion about intersectionality. How can multiple identities in an individual be examined?

### **Intersectionality**

In identity research within applied linguistics, work has generally focused on one aspect of identity and ignored how different aspects intersect (Block & Corona, 2016). However, it is impossible to examine individual identity and find clear boundaries between, for example, gender, race, or ethnicity. Individuals will often affiliate

themselves with certain groups to establish their identity in discourse. These groups include: race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and class (Omoniyi, 2016; Lytra, 2016; Souza, 2016). Intersectionality refers to the variety of positions in which one is socially situated; it is an umbrella term that aids in understanding the complexity of one's identity and the fluidity of boundaries between groups to which one identifies (Block & Corona, 2016). Do individuals live their lives conscious of these societal groups and identities? Do individuals use aspects of their identity to strategize in specific situations? Theories of intersectionality need to be further developed to answer these questions (Block & Corona, 2016).

### **A Model to Analyze Agency**

Past research has shown that examining the linguistic practices of a broad group like race or biological sex is overly deterministic and predictable (Bucholtz, 2004). Post-structural theorists turned to agency, the ability to use language strategically, as a goal for study in language regarding identity (Bucholtz, 2004). Their ideas about how researchers can use these perspectives aligns with a view on using agency as a means individuals use to identify themselves. Agency is concerned with social strategies and is changeable depending on context (Bucholtz, 2004).

Bucholtz and Hall (2004) developed a framework to examine gender identity and this framework has been used to look at other aspects of identity. They call their model *Tactics of Intersubjectivity*. The term intersubjectivity is used because identity is formed in social groups. We are continually being influenced by others and we in turn influence them. The term tactics is used because it relates to the acts of individuals and groups who do not have access to power (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004). It is based on feminist theory,

and it examines power in relationships, groups, and society. Language learners of differing religions, races, ethnicities, etc. may experience power imbalances in their interactions. This framework is also based on Queer linguistics, which recognizes a range of identity options. Finally, it is based on sociolinguistics which recognizes language as a tool to mediate in relationships (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004).

Within the framework of tactics of intersubjectivity, there are three pairs of tactics, each representing a continuum: adequation and distinction (sameness versus difference), authentication and denaturalization (genuineness versus artifice), and authorization versus illegitimation (institutional recognition versus structural marginalization) (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). The first term in each pairing represents the positive side of identity and relationships while the second represents the negative. Relations between individuals and within groups tend to be complicated and often two or more tactics can be at play in any situation. Sometimes the tactics work together; sometimes they oppose each other. They can be chosen by an individual or imposed upon them by an actor. The tactics chosen may be accidental or a deliberate act (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004).

In the first set of tactics, adequation and distinction, adequation represents when group members find something similar with other group members and experience a feeling of adequacy. For example, in a high school setting this could be wearing a certain fashion or brand of athletic shoe. Distinction refers to the quality that makes a student stand out from their peers. This quality could be related to race, ethnicity, religion, etc. Authentication and denaturalization, the second set of tactics, are concerned with how identities are formed in discourse between entities where these entities have similar

experiences. These similar experiences are shared and are determined by the respective entities to be authentic (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). An example of this could be when two people meet and find out they grew up in the same neighborhood and graduated from the same high school, they might ask each other if they knew so-and-so, or did they have a certain teacher for math, or if they remember the corner store. The identity of that person from the same place has been verified. Another, more official example is when students have to verify their ethnicity to be eligible for a certain scholarship. Denaturalization focuses on challenging the realness of an identity; or those aspects that emphasize the gap between a performed identity and an assumed target reality (Bucholtz 2003, p. 409). Examples of denaturalization include challenging someone else's "blackness" or "Jewishness" or masculinity. The final and third set of tactics, authorization vs. illegitimation refer mainly to institutions and organizations. Authorization refers to the recognition that an institution gives to a certain aspect of identity. An example would be a college establishing a Latinx Studies Department. An example of illegitimation would be a high school administrator who does nothing to quell anti-semitic remarks and graffiti at a high school. Next, how might these tactics be applied in school settings.

### **Applying the Framework in School Settings**

In a study exploring sexual diversity and students' sexual identities in a British high school, Sauntson (2016) uses the Tactics of Intersubjectivity to examine how a group of British Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual young people create their own and others sexual identity in a secondary school setting. This framework was chosen because it provides a structure to examine how gender and sexual identities are created in social context. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain information about each

individual's experiences in social, cultural, and institutional contexts. The results showed that the tactics were not mutually exclusive and that they were often layered on each other (Sauntson, 2016).

Adequation and distinction are tactics by which individuals create a social identity that is similar or distinct from those in their social relationships (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). In Staunton's (2016) work, the subjects used adequation to compare themselves to and create solidarity with other LBG [sic] youth. There were also instances of adequation where LBG students used similarities between them and their heterosexual peers to mitigate their differences (Sauntson, 2016). There were many more instances of distinction, however. Sauntson suggests that students felt that their sexual orientation was "different" or "marginalized" in the school setting. Many instances of distinction referred to gender as well as sexual orientation. Again, while Sauntson was studying gender identity, the concepts of adequation and distinction are applicable to other identity categories. Race is often a factor in the distinction of students and academic performance with one of the predominant examples being the graduation rate between whites and other races and ethnic groups. Another example is that students of color are underrepresented in gifted education programs, which may stem from teachers and administrators' assumptions about students of color (Chu, 2011).

Authentication and denaturalization are tactics to examine the realness or artificiality of an identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004). There were few instances of authentication and no instances of denaturalization noted by Sauntson (2016). It may be the students' perception that authentic LGB identities are "invisible" in their school setting. Sauntson (2016) argues that this could be perceived as illegitimation at the

institutional level. The occurrences of authentication tended to be more conjecture-something that happens or could happen but not here. Sauntson calls these occurrences “irrealis authentication” to emphasize the hypothetical nature of these instances (Sauntson, 2016 p. 8). Individuals are often asked to authenticate racial or ethnic identities by government and social institutions to qualify for funds or services. This is true for Native Americans applying for scholarships. Individuals who identify as multiracial are often thought of by others as fitting into only one category (Fivecoat-Campbell, 2015).

Authorization and illegitimation are associated with institutions and power. Authorization is the institutional use of power to legitimize identities and illegitimation is the opposite process by which identities are invalidated (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). The analysis is more complex for this set than the other tactics. This set of tactics considers the role societal structures and institutions play in forming identity (Sauntson, 2016). For example, in lessons and texts there can be found examples of male/female relationships. This demonstrates the authorization of heterosexuality. How a school responds to homophobic bullying also falls into this tactic. If a school does not respond to these instances, homophobic violence can be seen as authorized. If the opposite occurs, and there is a prompt, negative response to bullying, then this can be seen as an illegitimation of bullying. In general, the students felt that their identity as LGB was illegitimated by the school (Sauntson, 2016). It is interesting to note that men and women participants experienced illegitimation differently. Men experienced explicit illegitimation (physical and verbal abuse more frequently than women). The women experienced implicit illegitimation (silencing and ignoring) more frequently (Sauntson, 2016). If we look at



other categories of identity, segregation based on race or other factors can be considered a form of authorization by an institution.

While, as previously stated, Bucholtz (2004) developed tactics of intersubjectivity with regard to gender identity, this approach has been used to examine other examples of agency that aren't necessarily concerned with gender. These tactics can be used to examine agency from racial, ethnic, religious, or class perspectives and there are some examples in the research. Higgins (2015) used this approach to examine workplace conversations between Tanzanian journalists discussing political figures. Fitts (2010) uses tactics of intersubjectivity to explore how students at a dual language school form relationships with people and groups. Tactics of intersubjectivity has also been used to construct identity by participants using English in Japanese TV variety shows (Furukawa, 2015). With this framework, these tactics can be used to determine where language learners place themselves in their imagined communities and if they are invested in these communities. This is important for teachers, counselors, and others who advocate for English language learners so they can determine how to best assist their students to become fully functioning in their school and communities. The framework will be used to develop instructional tasks and tools that allow learners to examine how they place themselves in their imagined communities.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the history of thought about identity was briefly introduced from Erikson and Vygotsky to Foucault and poststructuralist thought. Norton's concepts of investment and imagined communities and their importance to language learners was addressed as opposed to previous theories of motivation. Common categories of identity

were discussed as well as intersectionality. Bucholtz's Tactics of Intersubjectivity and their use in examining how individuals place themselves in their communities was covered. Staunton's use of Bucholtz's tactics in researching gender in British secondary schools was discussed. The next chapter discusses how Norton's and Bucholtz's ideas and research can be used to create classroom activities to facilitate a positive career and future community identity for Els at the high school level to answer the question: *What instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level students' identity in present and future imagined communities?* It also provides an overview of the setting and intended audience for the project and the components that are found in the toolkit.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Project Description

#### Introduction

Chapter one of this project discussed how the author came to be interested in ELLs and how their identity may affect their academic performance and career choice. Chapter two presented research and important theories related to identity, investment into communities and imagined communities, and how we can evaluate investment in ELLs' communities through the use of tactics of intersubjectivity as a backdrop for answering this question: *What instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level ELLs identity in present and future imagined communities.* This chapter describes the curriculum project, its components and audience for the project, a curriculum guide, Career Identity and Community Investment Toolkit for High School Level ELLs. The design of the project draws on the Norton's work in the previous chapter regarding investment and imagined communities as well as Bucholtz's framework of tactics of intersubjectivity.

This project is intended to be used as a resource for teachers, counselors and other educational staff to determine how invested their high school-aged ELLs or clients are in the communities to which they belong. Knowing how and to the degree a student is invested in a community can aid educators in determining how to assist the student to be successful in the communities they imagine themselves as members of. This resource will contain a variety of instructional tasks that educators can use as separate activities in class or integrate into an already existing curriculum. It could be integrated into a high

school English Language Development (ELD) class or in conjunction with a career seminar class. Included materials for this project are: a survey, journal prompts, resources, and a framework for examining students' responses to the journal prompts.

### **Rationale**

This project is intended to be used by teacher, counselor and other who work with high school level ELLs. The purpose of the curriculum is to determine and explore students' identity and investment in their communities, present and future imagined ones. Norton defines identity as "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2013, p. 203). Language learners are more likely to be motivated to learn a language when they have an imagined identity in a future imagined community and the classroom practices match their imagined community (Norton, 2013). It is in high school where students are prodded to think about their future communities and make decisions about what is next for them, perhaps making them more engaged in academics when focusing on their future. Norton also states that, "it is the importance of the future that is central to the lives of many language learners, and is integral to an understanding of both identity and investment" (Norton, 2013, p. 203). New immigrants look forward to a better future. When ELLs invest in a language, they gain resources, both symbolic and material (Norton, 2013). The purpose of this curriculum is to have ELs see a connection to their future, expand their identity and become more proficient in English.

Teachers may not know their students' aspirations nor their level of involvement in communities outside of school, so this curriculum begins with a short survey. Starting

with a survey will also help the teacher decide what resources from the resource section to use for lesson instruction and what journal questions to use to go deeper into students' feelings about present and future communities. The resource section lists recent news articles of immigrants who have been successful in various vocational fields as well as organizations for various immigrant groups. These organizations are resources for class speakers as well as programs offered that students can take advantage of now or in the future. There is also a framework based on Bucholtz's tactics of intersubjectivity that can be used to further delve into students' level of investment from their journal responses.

### **Project Design Principles**

Using backward design principles and creating essential questions (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005 & 2013), I collaborated with the career pathways coordinator at the school where I teach. Essential questions related to the Career Pathways class was considered and language skills as well as career content was addressed in each activity. A consistent format for the activities in the toolkit was developed: content and language objectives, state standards addressed in both the language and content, steps and procedures, and resources needed to implement the tasks.

### **Project Description**

#### *Audience*

This curriculum is designed to be used with high school aged ELLs. Ideally, it would be used early in their high school years, ninth or tenth grade with tenth being optimal, so that these students can develop a plan for what electives would be beneficial to take given their career interests. This curriculum can stand on its own or would pair

nicely with those students who are in the career seminar course offered by the school, or any English language development class. This material, relating to careers, is beneficial to ELLs because it will help them qualify for internships and thus begin to establish career networks which will help them in acquiring a position after their formal education. Many ELLs and their families are new to this country and may not have established a network of friends that can assist a young person in finding employment.

### ***Components***

The first activity in this curriculum is a student survey about membership and investment in communities. Prior to the survey, the teacher should give a definition of community and give examples from their life. The definition I use is from chapter two of this Capstone project and is based on the writings of Erikson (as cited in McLeod, 2018). Communities are where one is from and include location, groups, and beliefs. Communities center around personal relationships (McLeod, 2018). Examples of communities can include workplace communities and trade or business organization, membership in a faith-based organization, belonging to a group related to a hobby or interest, neighborhood groups, etc.

**Survey.** The purpose of the survey is to determine what ELLs know about communities and their membership, what communities they belong to now and imagined communities they envision belonging to in the future. Through this survey, the teacher can get an understanding of how students view themselves and where they place themselves in the world. This survey would be given to students to complete before any instruction focusing on career exploration and discussion of their future communities begins. The survey has questions related to what communities' students are presently involved in, for

example a job they have, a team they've played on and what they might be involved with in the future, how connected they feel, and what aspirations they have. Some students may not have thought about this at all and the survey may be a starting point for them to think about their future, what type of work they might do, what other activities they might be involved with. The survey could also be used post instruction to measure growth and changes in attitude.

**Journaling and journal prompts/ Rubric for analyzing journal responses for intersubjectivities.** The next component of this curriculum is using journaling to foster learner explorations about future careers community roles they might engage in. A journal prompt might be: What career area have you picked and how is that a match to your skills and preferences? Writing about their future work and imagined communities puts students in touch with their own identities and the power to construct those identities (Norton, 2013). These questions have the students go deeper as to their feelings regarding belonging or alienation from their communities. One of the reasons to use these types of questions with students is that students can integrate a formal or academic language with language they would use in a work or natural setting (Norton, 2013). Next, there is a framework that is intended to be used to evaluate students' responses to the journal prompt. The questions and the framework are based on Bucholtz's tactics of intersubjectivity as referenced in Chapter 2. From the questions and the framework, a teacher can determine if a student identifies with a group or is experiencing alienation. There is a question related to institutional bias for or against an identity or community. This could be important given that students may not feel invested when they are in that

the classroom, school, or other group is biased against them (Norton, 2013). This would be important information for the success of any program.

**Career exploration activities.** The next section included in the curriculum is a series of career explorations activities. Career exploration was chosen as a vehicle to examine identity because so much of an individual's identity is tied up in what they do for a living. When people first meet, a common questions that is first asked is "What do you do?" meaning what is your job? Choosing your career is also choosing, in part, who you will associate with for most of your day. Indeed, by the time the students get to this class, they should have taken a career survey given to all ninth graders in the beginning of their first semester of high school.

The first activity would be to introduce students to the career pathway areas the school district has identified for high school students. These areas are: arts and humanities, science and medicine, business and communication, innovation and emerging technologies. Teachers can expand on these areas to fit their individual class or situation. These career areas were chosen because part of some of the activities include looking at what classes are offered in high school in those career areas. Students would be divided into groups to research the pathways and then the class would do a jigsaw activity. Student would be divided into groups of 5-6 and each student would have a research role in the group. The questions for student research would include what occupations are classified under each position, schooling or training required, salaries, interaction with people or things, and what high school classes are related to each pathway. Students would leave their career group to answer questions with students from other groups who



have the same role. They then go back to career group to present the information they found.

After students identify some specific careers, they are interested in, they can complete three to five mini-research papers for careers they are interested in. Questions they investigate about a particular career include: educational requirements for that career, expected income, employment outlook, pros and cons of the career, some specialized vocabulary of that profession, and what language skills are needed for that career. These last two language-related points are important because it ties the students' future to what they are learning in the classroom. Students will have to consider things like do they need to be proficient in oral or written language; if this job requires writing, is it extensive written reports or just filling out forms, etc. Students can interview each other about their career choices. They can then summarize what they learned about their partner to the rest of the class.

**Stories to inspire** These are real life stories taken from local newspapers or other sources such as *Green Card Voices* that chronicle immigrant success stories. (*Green Card Voices* has text and video that with immigrants telling their stories. Literacy Minnesota has stories that are suited to students who are very new to English.) Both *Green Card Voices* and Literacy Minnesota resources are free to access and contact information is included in the project resources. There is a sample lesson plan included. Students can read them or view them and answer questions about the stories. Various ethnic groups are represented as are different career areas.

**Case studies for evaluation.** In addition to the “Stories to Inspire” are case studies about people who have issues related to jobs and careers. Students read the case studies and

respond to questions about how they would resolve that particular issue. There is a student friendly rubric/questions that can be used to work through the case study.

**Supplementary materials.** Also included in the curriculum materials is a list of community resources. This list is broken down into categories including articles and organizations. Organizations are listed and may state who they serve and what services they offer. Teachers could also contact these organizations for speakers for their class.

### **Summary**

This chapter follows the literature review from Chapter two and builds on that research to construct a curriculum project for use by teachers of ELLs at the high school level. The purpose of the curriculum is to have students become aware of their present identity in community and create a future identity in imagined communities and empower the students in those identities. This project does this by determining the students present identity in their imagined community through the use of a survey, journal prompts, and evaluative framework as well as expanding their identity with presenting them with possible future imagined communities available to them. This project and its components attempt to answer the question: *What instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level identity in present and future imagined communities?* The next chapter will discuss what was learned through the process of creating this project, a revisit of the literature review, limitations and implications of this project, and possible future research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

This paper and the accompanying toolkit is an attempt to answer the question, *what instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level ELLs identity in present and future imagined communities?* My goal in this research and project is to positively impact high school level Els in how they view themselves, broaden their view of their role in community, and to increase their agency in their communities.

### Overview

In my first chapter, I discussed how I got to this project through the wonderings I had about my students. In the second chapter, I summarized the research that I found most salient to my interest in Els' identity and language learning. In chapter three, I described a toolkit I developed for use with Els to study future communities and careers. Finally, in this last chapter of this capstone project, I will discuss what I have learned, what research was most influential in developing this project, some implications and limitations of this project, similar research projects for the future, and how this project could benefit the profession.

### What I Learned

When I first read Bucholtz's theories on language and identity, I found it fascinating and while she did give real world examples in her writing, I wondered how her theories could be applied to educational settings. Additionally, I was taken with Norton's concepts of investment and imagined communities as applied to language

learners. These concepts described what I was witnessing working with Els at the high school level. Many students who were not as successful at gaining a higher level of English proficiency were not invested in the school community. While I could see they were not invested in much of the school community in particular, Bucholtz's tactics of intersubjectivity helped explain this lack of investment on a deeper, more specific level. The tactics also address identity and investment at the institutional level. The tactics gave me direction in developing questions in my project and a rubric of sorts to analyze my students' responses.

Norton's theories were equally important in my learning. The concept of imagined communities is powerful for individual language learners. Where they imagine themselves in the future gives them direction and actions in the present. It ties what they are learning in school to their hopes for themselves. As their teacher, I will give them opportunities to create what their imagined communities and guide them to that future. Along with imagined communities, Norton's concept of investment is important. If students don't feel the agency to speak in their community, they will not work as hard to become proficient in that language.

Some other things I learned had to do with creating essential questions in what I teach. While I think I was fairly good at asking challenging questions of my students, using McTighe and Wiggins' (DATE) principles helped me improve the questions in my toolkit. I also was unfamiliar with my school district's plan to develop career pathways within the school curriculum. I used the career areas there were chosen to guide the development of my toolkit. I will use what I have written in the toolkit with my students this year. It will be interesting to actually put into practice what I have developed here.

In the next section, I will discuss the most important aspects of the literature review that were an influence on the development of my project.

### **Important Parts of the Literature Review**

The two theorists that have guided my work in language learning and identity are Norton and Bucholtz. Norton's work has strongly influenced my views and the formation of this project. Much of Norton's work is based on post-structuralism. Norton & Toohey (2011) are strong proponents of a post-structuralist approach to language learning and identity. Prior to the development of post-structuralism as a school of thought, an individual's identity was thought to be fixed. A post-structuralist approach as applied to language learning, states that the learner's identity is subjective depending on the context. Conscious or unconscious thoughts and emotions can influence identity. Because identity is changeable, there is the possibility for education to influence and change identity (Norton and Toohey, 2011).

Another one of Norton's ideas that is important is that of imagined communities. Communities have a culture and rules for its members. Someone hoping to join that community in the future can learn the rules and thus have a plan of action for what they need to do in the present (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Having a goal of membership in an imagined community will help the student explore educational opportunities they have in the present. Imagined communities will broaden a learner's identity and increase their investment in becoming proficient in the target language (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

And yet another idea that is essential for identity and language learning that goes hand-in-hand with Norton's post-structural approach and imagined communities is that of

investment. Norton states that investment in a target community is more important than motivation for a language learner. Motivation is an either-or phenomenon and is not as complex as investment. Investment in an imagined community is like investing money for the future. The language learner will put effort into present learning for a future reward (Norton, 1995).

The next part of my literature review that is important is Bucholtz's tactics of intersubjectivity. Bucholtz (2004) felt that studying the linguistic practice of a specific group would yield predictable outcomes. Post-structuralists like Bucholtz and Norton felt that agency, the ability to strategically use language, would be more useful to study regarding language and identity (Bucholtz, 2004, Norton, 1995). Bucholtz's pairs of tactic (adequation vs. distinction, authentication vs. denaturalization, and authorization vs. illegitimation) are useful in specifying how students feel disengaged from the community. The last pair of tactics, authorization vs. illegitimation, deals with individuals' identity and investment with institutions they are a part of (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Finally, with regard to Bucholtz's tactics, I believe Sauntson's study with adolescent students and gender identity in the UK is helpful because we see how the tactics are put to use to examine how these students identify themselves in language. In the journal article, Sauntson also composed a chart that clearly summarizes Bucholtz's tactics (Sauntson, 2016). In the next section, impacts of this paper and the toolkit developed are discussed.

### **Possible Implications**

The research discussed in the previous section has a great future for use in working with language learners. This identity and career work has the potential to have a

great impact at the high school level. High school is where students are guided to make decisions about their future with regard to career options. Linking career choices and identity work will have students be more deliberate and thoughtful about their choices. Looking at identity in general, and not just the career aspect, will be interesting. What new things could students learn about themselves? At the high school level, identity and imagined communities work can work well with the present emphasis for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and building community with Restorative Practices (RP). In the next section, some constraints and limitations in the use of this toolkit are discussed.

### **Limitations**

The focus of this project is identity and investment in imagined communities. In the U.S. much of an individual's identity is based on the job they have or the career they are engaged in, and work communities are among high school students' future imagined communities. So while work is one important aspect of identity, it isn't the only aspect. If I am working toward having my students invested in present or imagined communities, there may be other aspect of identity that could be examined with students. Another limitation with using identity as it relates to an individual's career is that the role a person's occupation plays in their life is cultural. While in Western culture we place a high value on what a person does for a living, other cultures place a higher value of a person's role in their family or their faith community. Finally, another limitation, which is unique to the time that this project is written is that the project is written as if the material would be delivered in-person. The project would have to be modified for online distance learning. Some of these limitations could be a topic for future research which is the topic of the next section.

## Future Research

There are many areas of research around identity that would be fascinating to research. One would be around intersectionality. How do all the aspects of an individual's identity (for example, race, religion, gender) interplay with each other and is a specific identity drawn out depending on the context? How does this show up in an educational setting? Another area to examine is communities and the agency of its members; what are the characteristics of educational communities where members feel comfortable to speak or what has to happen before an individual feels invested in a community? Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Restorative Practices (RP) are important areas in the schools right now. Identity research related to community investment paired with one of these areas would work well. Holding regular restorative circles in the classroom are a good community building tool, how might this relate to community investment?

Using the tactics of intersubjectivity to examine how connected students feel to a school would be another area of research that could yield useful results for decision making and programming in high schools. Staunton (2016) used the tactics to examine gender and identity in a UK secondary school setting. I believe that the tactics could be used to examine other areas as well as gender to inform students investment in a particular school community.

Finally, I would like to answer my own research question, *what instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level ELLs identity in present*



*and future imagined communities?* My desire is to do my own action research with my own students on this and I would also like to see other studies that examine what instructional practices related to identity are best practices with EL students.

### **Benefits to the Profession**

Identity, investment, and imagined communities have generally not been used in curriculum materials for ELs at the high school level, especially with regard to career exploration. Some of the activities in the toolkit could be a jumping off point for other educators to try to bring identity topics to their classroom. It could also be used by those educators who want to work on career exploration with their students. The toolkit was also designed so that it could be used in conjunction with a career seminar class for high school students. It would be a benefit to educators looking to expand the idea of choosing a career from skills, interests, and salary.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I gave a very brief overview of this capstone project entitled Career Identity and Community Investment Toolkit. This paper and the development of the toolkit was to answer the question, *what instructional practices can be used to positively influence high school level ELLs identity in present and future imagined communities?* Other sections in this chapter covered what I learned, important parts of the literature review, possible implications and limitations of the project, suggested research, and benefits to the profession.

The student I see in my classes are complex beings with various hopes and desires for themselves and their future. I believe that using a post-structuralist approach to

interacting with my students and addressing investment and identity that best respects them and their need to become English proficient and ultimately be successful in their future communities. My hope is that this project will start them on that path.

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