

Language and the Situated Nature of Ethnic Identity

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Multicultural milieux provide opportunities for many instances of inter-group contact. As a result, ethnic groups may experience a number of challenges including daily hassles (e.g., Lay & Nguyen, 1998), lower levels of adjustment (e.g., Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Clément, Noels, & Deneault, 2001), and, more globally, acculturation (e.g., Berry, 1990). Cross-cultural research on acculturation has focused mostly on acculturative attitudes (e.g., Berry & Sam, 1997). However, aspects and repercussions of acculturation are more numerous. Recent developments have, for example, begun to highlight ethnic identity and its related factors in order to examine consequences of inter-group contact (Phinney, 2003). Furthermore, cross-cultural interaction may evoke a variety of changes from maintaining, adopting, or displaying single versus plural ethnic identities (Clément & Noels, 1992; Landry & Allard, 1992). These multifaceted aspects of identity may be especially apparent in multicultural contexts and among minority or immigrant groups. Members of these groups and in these situations,

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may choose to alternate between cultural identities and feel part of different groups at different times or, alternatively, may choose to maintain a single identity regardless of the context. Thus, contextual variations, combined with personal characteristics (i.e., language and status), influence the experienced identity and displayed behavior.

The present paper discusses aspects of a 10-year research program on the relation between language and ethnic identity. How context affects the manifestation of different patterns of identity will be examined first. Two key aspects to be discussed are (1) the socio-structural status or ethnolinguistic vitality of the groups under consideration, and (2) the immediate interpersonal situation in which intercultural contact takes place. Second, in the interest of understanding the process of acculturation, consideration will be given to how inter-group contact and communication variables, particularly one's anxiety and confidence in using a second language, are related to these patterns of ethnic identity. In doing so, the relevance of context and interactions will be highlighted as key factors to identity formation and acculturation.

Situated Ethnic Identity

Since Barth's (1969) analysis, researchers generally adopt a subjective perspective to defining ethnic identity, such that it corresponds to that aspect of the self derived from real or perceived common bonds with an ethnic group (Edwards, 1977). Like many definitions of ethnic identity, we believe that, in contexts of intercultural contact, at least two ethnic referent groups contribute to both groups' self-definition. Following the terminology proposed by Berry (1990) to describe patterns of attitudes toward acculturation strategies, at least four profiles of ethnic identity are possible. An individual may decide to maintain the original identity and not adopt the other cultural group as a reference group, which

is termed *separation*. Conversely, as reflected by *assimilation*, a person may wholeheartedly engage in the new cultural group and relinquish the original cultural referent group. It is also possible that both identities may be fostered (i.e., *integration*) or neither identity may be acceptable (i.e., *deculturation*). Thus, cross-cultural and inter-group situations may result in the adoption of single or multiple identities. To elaborate, and along the premises of self-presentation and impression management perspectives of the self (Alexander & Beggs, 1986; Schlenker, 1985), identity is not an inveterate characteristic but rather a product of negotiations between individuals in a given situation. For example, a person born in Canada is not *ipso facto* Canadian but develops a Canadian identity as a result of interacting with Canadians and non-Canadians. Individuals have many goals in any social interaction and will behave in a way that best supports the identity-image that will help in attaining that goal. Whether or not a goal is achieved depends upon the acceptability of that image to the interactants. Accordingly, the self is "formed and maintained through actual or imagined interpersonal agreement about what the self is like" (Schlenker & Weigold, 1989, p. 245). The implication of this assumption is that identity not only determines behavior, and vice versa via reactions. Endorsed identities are thus based on social consensus as to which identity is most tenable in a particular interaction.

This negotiation process does not occur in a vacuum, but in the particular interactive social contexts. Situational characteristics are one important aspect of these social contexts. Although social psychological researchers have proposed many taxonomies and frameworks for conducting situational analyses (e.g., Argyle, Furnham, & Graham, 1981; Forgas, 1982), researchers interested in the social nature of linguistic behavior suggest that the setting, the relationship between the interlocutors, and the activity engaged in are three key aspects that define any interpersonal situation (e.g., Brown & Fraser, 1979). Moreover, although many situational domains can be identified, they generally vary in their level of intimacy (Côté & Clément, 1994; Noels, 1998). It is frequently

found that individuals use one speech register for communicative purposes in public, less intimate situations (e. g. with clerks in stores) and another style in private, more intimate settings (e.g. at home with family members). In intergroup interactions, Edwards (1985) suggests that individuals are more likely to encounter members of other ethnolinguistic groups in public domains and hence the possibility of acculturative change regarding their language and identity. Lower levels of inter-group contact in more intimate situations shelter feelings of ethnicity and ethnic markers from acculturative processes. Accordingly, it is expected that identification with one's membership group is greater in intimate domains than in less intimate domains, and the converse pattern is true with regards to identification with the other ethnic group.

Edwards' (1985) contention is, however, relatively unique in attempting to describe the dynamics of identity in an interaction context. Although many social psychologists have commented on the situational nature of ethnic identity (e.g., Okamura, 1981; Phinney, 1991), there is rather little empirical work describing the situational domains across which ethnic identity can vary. Christian, Gadfield, Giles and Taylor (1976), for example, varied situational saliency of ethnic identity by asking Welsh adolescents to write an essay about either a neutral topic or a topic concerning English-Welsh conflicts. Subjects who wrote the latter essay rated themselves on a semantic differential scale as more highly Welsh and accentuated the polarization of the English and Welsh groups. Rosenthal, Whittle and Bell (1988) asked Greek-Australian adolescents to write an essay either about the advantages or disadvantages of their ethnic group membership or about a neutral topic. They found that sensitizing the respondents to their ethnic group membership through the essay topic resulted in increased saliency of Greek identity. In sum, these and other studies (e.g., Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Yip and Fuligni, 2002) indicate that situational cues of ethnicity influence the level of identification with one's own or another ethnic group. It follows that ethnolinguistic identity should be conceived as situationally bound, such that individuals move in and out of memberships as

required by the immediate contextual constraints (Collier & Thomas, 1988; Liebkind, 1989).

These studies did not, however, examine how identity alternates between the ethnic and target groups across a range of intimate and public situations. To that end, Noels and Imai (2000) examined the issue of situational variation with 121 international students at a Canadian university. All were non-native speakers of English, 77.9% of whom originated from East and Southeast Asia, including the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. They were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their ethnic identity. The items were developed based on a survey of activities that people engaged in on a more or less daily basis. These activities were defined in terms of the setting, the person with whom they interacted, and the task performed (Noels, 1998) and were meant to depict relatively intimate situations, including family and friendship domains, as well as less intimate situations such as those found in the school and public domains. For each situation the participants indicated the extent to which they identified with two target groups, their own ethnic group and the Canadian group, on separate 7-point Likert-type scale.

The results (see Table 1) revealed that, overall, ethnic identity was significantly stronger than Canadian identity. This pattern is not unexpected given the participants were short-term sojourners not committed to remain in Canada. When the identity patterns were examined across the four situational domains, however, it became clear that the pattern for overall identity told only part of the story. In intimate settings with family and friends, identification with the ethnic group was stronger. In the less intimate situations, at school or in public, Canadian identity was as strong as the ethnic identity. It is particularly noteworthy that there was little difference between the school and public domains in terms of ethnic identity and Canadian identity. Such a pattern is consistent with the idea that acculturation may occur in some situations before others; the friendship domain, and particularly the family domain, are relatively sheltered from acculturative contact.

Table 1
International students:
Identity as a function of target group and situational domain

Situational Domains	Target Identity Group			
	Ethnic		Canadian	
	M	SD	M	SD
Family	5.71	1.28	2.92	1.71
Friends	5.27	1.13	3.48	1.60
School	4.35	1.54	4.29	1.30
Public	4.43	1.23	4.66	1.40
Global	4.94	1.30	3.84	1.50

These results, then, underline the point that global measures of ethnic identity may underestimate the variability of feelings of ethnic identity across situations and present a misleading picture of ethnic identification. In the family and friends domains, the pattern indicated that the ethnic identity is likely to be retained, and identification with the host culture is not pursued. In the public and school domains, the pattern suggested an integration of the two identities. It is important to note, however, that the means of both ethnic identity and Canadian identity only approach the midpoint, suggesting that strong identification with both groups was not endorsed. Thus, where dual and negotiated identities are possible, situational characteristics (i.e., public versus private) will most likely influence the direction of identification and further reflect acculturation patterns in inter-group contexts.

Situated Ethnic Identity and Ethnolinguistic Vitality

International students represent a particular kind of minority group within Canada. Although many of these students come from areas of the world that are not well represented in Canada, they are

usually not committed to spending a longer period of time in the host society than the duration of their studies, work, or travel purposes necessitate. Consequently, these people do eventually return to their majority status in their country of origin and, as such, temporarily constitute a minority group within the host country. Considerable research, from a variety of theoretical perspectives, suggests that minority group status, whether temporary or not, has an important influence on identity formation and change. Drawing from Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory, Giles and his colleagues (e.g., 1979) have argued that minority groups may shift their identification from the group of origin to the group of higher vitality. Coupled with this observation, it is argued that since minority group members are more likely than majority group members to experience opportunities for contact with the other, higher-status group, and engage in greater second language use across situations, the effects of this acculturative contact should be evident across a greater variety of situational domains. In other words, the impact of acculturation should be more pervasive across situations for minority than for majority group members.

Following the theoretical work of Lambert (1974) and Clément (1980), we believe that integration and assimilation would be evident but the manifestation of these two profiles would depend upon the vitality of the language group. Both Lambert and Clément have suggested that when members of a minority group (such as Francophones in Canada), learn a second language and acquire a second cultural identity, there is a tendency to lose the original group identity and language. This pattern is referred to as subtractive bilingualism and corresponds to assimilation indicative of ethnic cultural loss. On the other hand, when majority groups (like Anglophones in Canada) learn a second language and gain a second cultural identity, they are likely to remain secure in their original culture. This pattern is referred to as additive bilingualism and corresponds to integration in that there is an acquisition of other cultural characteristics and further permeability between groups (see also Ng & He, 2004; Ng, He & Loong, in press).

To examine the effect of group status on situational variations

in ethnic identity, a study was conducted at the University of Ottawa, in Ottawa, Canada, which lies on the border of the provinces of Quebec, a predominantly French-speaking province, and Ontario, a predominantly English-speaking province. As a bilingual institution, the University of Ottawa draws Francophone and Anglophone students from both provinces, such that students may come from a high or low vitality context. A breakdown of participants as a function of their native language and province of origin yielded three sub-samples. The Franco-Ontarian group, composed of individuals with French as mother tongue but living in a mostly (over 94 percent) English-speaking context, is the lowest vitality group. At the other end, the Anglo-Ontarian group represents the highest vitality group. In an intermediate position are the Québécois (French speaking from Quebec) who are a majority in their province (85 percent) but, in this case, are currently in an Ontarian environment.

The means (Table 2) were compared via a three-way analysis of variance using as within-subjects factors the situation (intimate vs. non-intimate) and target identity group¹ (ingroup vs. outgroup) and, as the between-subjects factor, the ethnolinguistic group of the participant (Anglo-Ontarian vs. Franco-Ontarian vs. Québécois). The results revealed a significant 3-way interaction effect (target group X situation X ethnolinguistic group interaction; $F(2, 157) = 15.83, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17$). Post hoc Tukey tests indicated that there were significant differences between in- and outgroup identification such that participants felt more strongly about their ingroup than about their outgroup identity. However, the groups differed from each other in their level of endorsement of each identity. The Franco-Ontarian group had a lower ingroup identity than Anglo-Ontarian and Québécois groups, who had equally strong ingroup identities. This pattern was consistent across both intimate and non-intimate settings. With regards to outgroup identity, the Franco-Ontarians identified more strongly to the Anglophones than the Québécois group, who in turn had a stronger out-group identity than the Anglo-Ontarians. This pattern was also consistent across both intimate and non-intimate settings.

Table 2
Identity means and standard deviations
as a function of ethnolinguistic group, situation and target group

Group	Target Identity Group			
	Ingroup		Outgroup	
	M	SD	M	SD
Anglo-Ontarian				
Low Intimacy	6.11	1.34	1.88	1.09
High Intimacy	6.43	1.30	1.53	1.12
Québécois				
Low Intimacy	5.99	1.14	2.77	1.64
High Intimacy	6.43	1.11	2.14	1.66
Franco-Ontarian				
Low Intimacy	4.56	1.25	3.90	1.57
High Intimacy	5.73	1.02	2.67	1.60

At first glance, the preference for the original group identity relative to the target group identity might be described in terms of separation. Such an interpretation however is only partially correct, since identification with the native language group is lower, and identification with the outgroup is higher for the Franco-Ontarian group than for the Anglo-Ontarian or Québécois groups. For that minority group, it would seem that the distinction between the two identities is considerably attenuated compared to the two majority groups. Moreover, although the two majority groups maintained equal levels of native or ingroup identity, the Anglophone group identified significantly less to the Francophone group than the Québécois did to the Anglophone group. Consistent with the Clément and Noels, (1992) results, this pattern suggests that minority group status has the effect of increasing identification with the higher vitality group, and in the case of the minority, this status may also be associated with diminished feelings of identification with the original ingroup. Such a pattern suggests that an integration profile involving a rapprochement of the two identities is

most closely achieved by minorities, but it is in the dynamic context of relatively high outgroup and low ingroup identification reflecting assimilation to the higher vitality group.

This pattern is further tempered by the situational characteristics in that the identity patterns across situations differed depending upon the vitality of the group. With regard to native language group identity, for both the Anglo-Ontarian and Québécois groups, identity was equivalent across intimate and non-intimate situations, but for Franco-Ontarians, ingroup identity was lower in non-intimate situations than in intimate situations. With regards outgroup identity, all three groups showed higher identification in non-intimate than in intimate situations. This pattern suggests that in non-intimate situations, where there is more opportunity for interaction with members of the outgroup, identification with that group increases. However, this opportunity may also mean a decrease in original ethnic identity for extreme minority group members. In that case, it appears that more intimate situations act as a shelter from the acculturative effects of interethnic interactions.

These results then suggest that, in accordance with Edwards' hypothesis, identity is relatively protected in the private setting. It is likely that majority group members are faced with greater opportunities for intergroup contact and second language use in public settings and the impact of this contact on identity is more evident in this setting. Minority Francophones, on the other hand, are faced with more contact and second language use across a wider variety of situations. Not only does this interaction contribute to a lower level of ingroup identification but concurrently, to a higher level of outgroup identification. Because the intercultural contact is not limited to public settings but extends to more intimate settings, the acculturative impact of inter-group interactions across all domains becomes evident. Thus, Edwards' hypothesis relating the distinction between public and private domains to identity may be influenced by the vitality of the group such that low vitality individuals are not as sheltered in private situations as the high vitality individuals.

Language and Situated Ethnic Identity

While situated ethnic identity is key to the understanding of acculturation, language is also of central importance in identity and inter-group contact. Many researchers have demonstrated a distinct link between language use and ethnic identity (see for review, Abrams, O'Connor & Giles, 2002). Although there are some exceptions (e.g., Bond & Yang, 1982), several studies of bilingual speakers have shown that responses given in a particular language tend to be more similar to the modal responses of monolingual speakers from the corresponding community (e.g., Ralston, Cunniff, & Gustafson, 1995; Sanchez, 2000). Indeed, in Harzing and Maznevski's (2002) examination of this phenomenon in seven nations around the world, these researchers found this pattern of responses quite robust, particularly with regards to culturally loaded items. Among the several explanations proposed, Yang and Bond (1980) maintain that language acquisition comes with cultural attitudes and associated values. It has been argued that original cultural identity and the host cultural identity are stored as separate knowledge structures and that language use may prime specific knowledge structures (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). As such, when cued with one language, the associated cultural characteristics are likely to be evoked.

However, variations in identity may not simply be primed through language, but negotiated through communication practices. This position is similar to that of Kim (1988; see also Collier & Thomas, 1988), who suggested that patterns of communication between members of a group become eventually a consensual system of coding and decoding information specific to individuals in that network. As language is the primary medium of communication of cultural information, it is intimately linked with identity. One implication of this assumption is that in the acquisition of new routines, as happens when learning a second language, cultural identity can change. That is to say, competence in a second language

is a determinant of psychological identity in that a new identity is negotiated between interlocutors through language.

To look more directly at the link between second language competence and ethnic identity, the instrument assessing situated identity was modified such that various situations were presented to participants cued as to the ethnicity of the interlocutor (Noels, Clément, Côté, & Gaudet, 2003). Hence, one third of the participants, who were all Canadian Francophones, received a questionnaire in which the ethnolinguistic group of the interlocutor was not specified, one third received a questionnaire where the interlocutor was described as Anglophone, and one third received a questionnaire where the interlocutor was described as Francophone. Participants were asked to view themselves in the depicted situation and evaluate their degree of identification to both target groups, Francophones and Anglophones. The results (Table 3) showed a significant 2-way interaction for the ethnicity of the interlocutor by target identity ($F(2, 246) = 50.92, p = .000, \eta^2 = .29$). In ethnicity-neutral conditions, a distinction was made between the Francophone and Anglophone identities, such that Francophone identity was greater than Anglophone identity. When interacting with a Francophone interlocutor, this pattern was accentuated such that Francophone identity became higher and English identity was even lower. When interacting with an Anglophone interlocutor, there was a switch – Francophone identity was lower and Anglophone identity was significantly higher than in the other two conditions, and the two identities, French and English were equally endorsed. These findings suggest that the ethnicity of the person with whom we interact influences our own feelings of identity, such that we adjust our identity to accommodate to the other person. It is plausible that this identity accommodation is accomplished through language and communication practices. According to Giles and his colleagues, in the absence of inter-group threat or conflict, there is convergence to the language style of others to achieve solidarity (c.f., Giles & Noels, 2002). Our results suggest that there is also identity convergence.

Table 3
Francophone Canadians:
Identity as a function of interlocutor ethnicity and target identity group

Interlocutor	Target Identity Group			
	English	French		
	M	SD	M	SD
Neutral	2.42	1.19	4.11	1.02
Anglophone	3.04	1.25	3.12	1.3
Francophone	1.83	0.89	4.46	0.85

This analysis did not, however, directly examine the role of communication. To look at the effects of communicative competence in English on patterns of ethnic identity, feelings of confidence using English were assessed (Clément, 1988). The group was split into high and low confidence using a median split (4.63 on a 7-point scale). The respondents' perceptions of their group's vitality and that of the English was assessed by calculating a relative perceived vitality score as a ratio of the French group vitality relative to that of English group. Thus minority Francophones perceived their group as having a relative vitality score below 1.00 and majority group members perceived their group above 1.00.

A series of ANOVAs were computed to assess the Anglophone and Francophone identities and the intimacy of the situation (the within-subjects factors) as well as vitality and language confidence (the between-subjects factors). The results (Figures 1 and 2) revealed a significant 4-way interaction ($F(1,246) = 3.85, p = .05, \eta^2 = .02$). Identity varied according to target identity, subjective ELV, anxiety and the situation. Under conditions of low language confidence (Figures 1a and 1b), for both vitality groups, Francophone identity was higher than Anglophone identity in both intimate and non-intimate situations. Moreover, there were no differences in the levels of each identity across situations or across vitality groups. Thus, regardless of the status of the group, when individuals are not comfortable using the other language, perceived ethnolinguistic vitality and situational variations have little impact on identity.

Figure 1a
Low English confidence and low group vitality:
Identity as a function of situation and target identity group

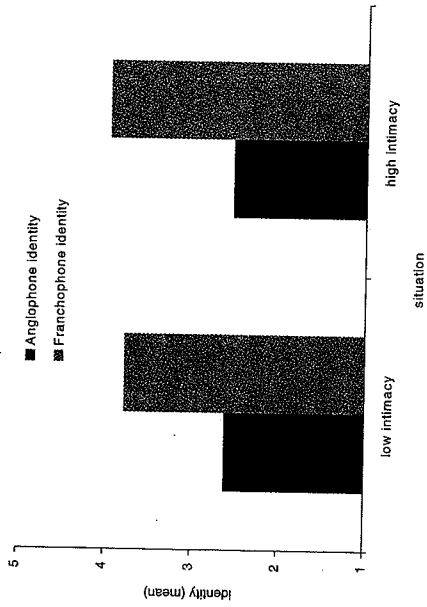


Figure 1b
Low English confidence and high group vitality:
Identity as a function of situation and target identity group

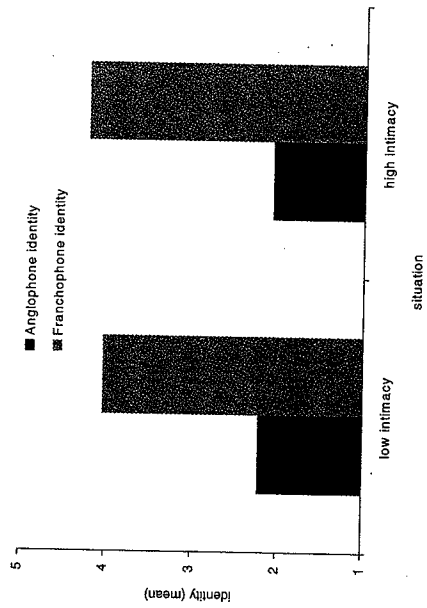


Figure 2a
High English confidence and low group vitality:
Identity as a function of situation and target identity group

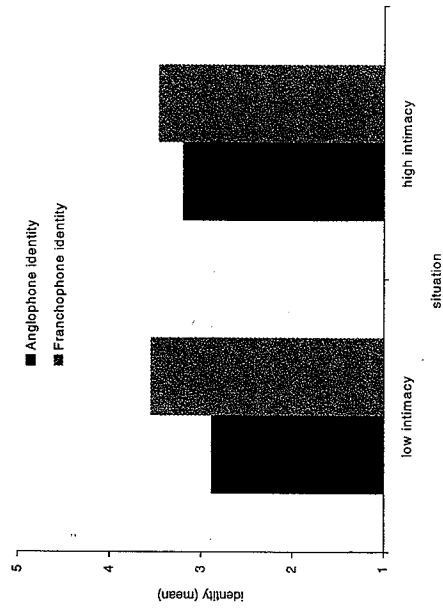
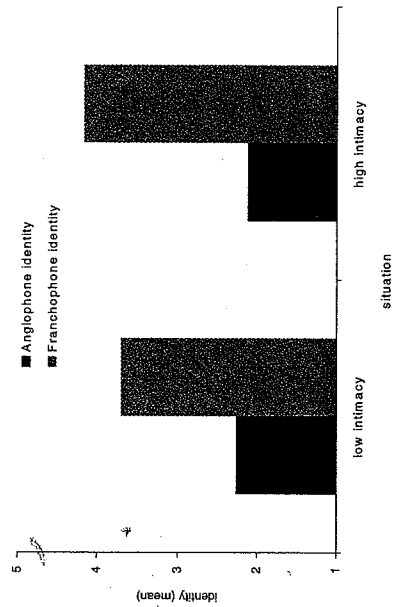


Figure 2b
High English confidence and high group vitality:
Identity as a function of situation and target identity group



Under conditions of high language confidence, however, different acculturative patterns are evident for the two vitality groups (Figures 2a and 2b). For high vitality groups, there was a clear distinction between identities across both situations, such that Francophone identity was higher than Anglophone identity. At the same time, although Anglophone identity was equivalent across situations, Francophone identity was stronger in high intimacy situations. This pattern is consistent with the idea that the original group identity is sheltered from acculturative influences in the high intimacy situation. The low vitality group showed a very different pattern: there was no difference between the two identities in either situation. Francophone identity was lower and Anglophone identity was higher relative to the other groups. Such a pattern suggests that low vitality group members comfortable interacting in the language of the high vitality group are more likely to experience a lessened sense of original identity and an increased sense of identity with the outgroup. Moreover, given there is no difference in the identity patterns across situations, this minority group is not advantaged in a sheltered intimate context.

Thus, despite the close association between language and identity, there are characteristics of language use and the group that need to be examined for a fuller appreciation of the inter-group contact. In the reviewed study, second language confidence moderated feelings of identification for high and low vitality groups. When there were perceptions of lower second language abilities, vitality and public versus private domains had little impact on identification. However, in instances of greater language confidence, low vitality groups demonstrated less in-group identification across all domains whereas for high vitality groups, there was a sheltered context of private domains to maintain in-group identity.

Conclusion

The present discussion had two major objectives. The first was to examine how ethnic identity varied depending on contextual factors,

including the status of the group and the characteristics of the immediate social situation. The second was to consider how linguistic self-confidence relates to these contextual variations. With regards to the first objective, the contextual factors were systematically associated with variations in ethnic identity. The hypothesis that identity should be protected from acculturation pressures in private situations relative to public situations was generally upheld. Ethnolinguistic vitality modified this relation such that the distinction between the two identities was less pronounced for the minority group members. It is possible that majority members experience more intergroup contact and second language use in public than private settings and hence the acculturative impact of intercultural interaction on identity is more evident in this setting. Minority group members, on the other hand, may be faced with more contact and second language use across both intimate and non-intimate situations. Not only does this mean a lower level of heritage identification relative to their majority counterparts, but concurrently a higher level of identification with the other group.

These patterns of identification suggest that an individual may express different patterns of acculturation. Our research shows that although people may feel quite strongly about their first cultural identity particularly in intimate settings, these feelings may be lessened in public situations so that both identities are permeable, a phenomenon resembling integration, but also, arguably, resembling an identity shift or assimilation. Thus, context is an important predictor for patterns of acculturation for the situation as well as for the group's relative status and vitality.

With regards to the second objective, the results indicate that language and communication processes have an important moderating effect on patterns of identity. Under conditions of low confidence using English, there were no differences in the levels of identities across different vitality groups or situations. However, under conditions of high confidence in speaking English, differences in identification were evident depending on the vitality of the group and situation. This pattern is consistent with the position that communicative competence, and particularly confidence in using the

language of the other ethnolinguistic group, is critical for acculturative changes in ethnic identity (Clément, *et al.*, 2004). These findings suggest a mechanism by which acculturative change occurs. That is, it proposes that identities are forced and modified to the extent that one possesses a sense of ease in communicating with people from other ethnic groups. This sense of confidence may be critical for negotiating identities in instances of cultural contact, in terms of both forming new identities and modifying old ones. Attention to the process by which acculturation occurs is relatively under-researched in psychology. Rather, research has tended to focus on states of acculturation in different groups, and how these different states are linked to various outcome variables, such as psychological well-being and socio-cultural adjustment. It is proposed and argued that researchers interested in the interface between language and social psychology need to examine more closely the social interaction and the communication that takes place between members of different cultural groups to better understand how, why and when, changes in identity occur as they do.

Notes

1. For the Franco-Ontarians and the Québécois, the target ingroup corresponds to the Francophones whereas, for the Anglo-Ontarians, the target ingroup is the Anglophone group. Conversely, the outgroup corresponds to the Anglophones for both French groups and to the Francophones for the Anglo-Ontarians.

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11

Exploring Social Support and Social Identity within a Multigenerational Community of Women

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Social support is simply "being friendly, interested, and helpful to your neighbors" (Rachel).

The Montrose Women¹, a multigenerational neighborhood community of women, serves as the focus of this investigation. These women, who have monthly luncheons and daily garden chats, at first proclaimed no similarity with each other except that they live on the same street. Yet, we uncovered significant support, strength, friendship, and knowledge within this group. Together, they welcome new residents, bake cookies for local fraternities, plow each other's snow, and offer assistance during times of need. Of its many distinctive qualities, one of the most interesting is the community support and interaction among all members from the twenty-three year old bride-to-be, Katie, to the seventy-three year old widow, Cardie.

The purpose of our study is to present a holistic, descriptive account of the functions and uses of social support among the Montrose Women. This study responds to a call from Harwood,