

## Chapter 5

# Backing Into Race: Immigration, Identity, and Social Movement Theory in English Language Teacher Education

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter focuses on more accurate and in-depth analyses of immigration in relation to individual identity factors as a way to better understand the specific role of race in broader relations of power within English language teaching. Using data from a narrative case study to account for various positionalities, this chapter proposes a general framework for English language teacher education that draws on aspects of social movement theory to analyze contextual factors of immigration, such as migration channels, settlement in urban/rural localities and human capital, and transnationalism. By incorporating specific aspects of social movement theory, an intersectional approach to ELT education holds promise of preparing teachers to identify racism, power, and gaps in support for their multilingual students.*

English language teacher (ELT) education programs in the U.S. have included research on teacher identity as a way to unpack and problematize implications for classroom instruction (e.g., Ajayi, 2011; Liggett, 2009; Motha, 2014; Taylor, 2017; Vitanova, 2016). Indeed, when we look at the intersections of race and language, we see how previous research has informed the field and worked to incorporate inquiry into identity in teacher education programs (e.g., Alim, 2010; Lee, 2015; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Liggett, 2014; Varghese et al., 2016; Von Esch et al., 2020) often through culturally responsive pedagogy; diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI); or social justice education. However, over the past several years, the topic of race and immigration has intensified in the U.S., often with harmful, false, and denigrating rhetoric about immigrants and immigrant groups. The linguistic and cultural diversity of English learners (ELs) suggests that more and more teachers serve as intercultural and interlinguistic educators, in effect, educators who reach out to learners from a variety of backgrounds to provide effective strategies

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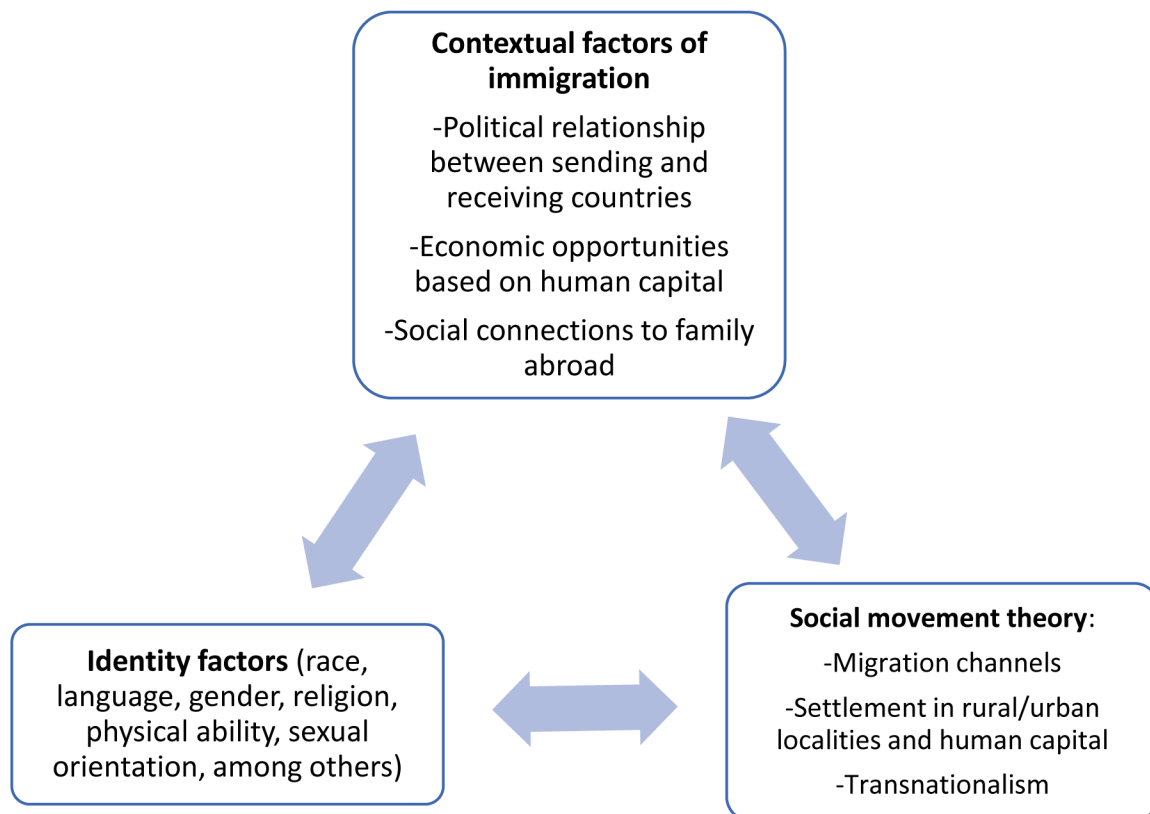
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for rigorous academic learning (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Snyder & Fenner, 2021). For teachers, this involves not only making curricula relevant and understandable but also expanding perspectives beyond second language acquisition.

Because ELs have parents, grandparents, relatives, friends or themselves who have experienced immigration first hand, a focus on more accurate and in-depth analyses of the factors that influence migration in relation to identity factors could lead to better understandings of the specific role of race in broader relations of power within English language teaching. This relationality expands within the various contexts of political, economic, and social issues that determine opportunity and possibility for multilingual students and their families. To account for this relationality, I propose a general framework for ELT education that incorporates contextual factors of immigration, such as political relationship between sending and receiving countries, economic opportunities based on human capital, and social connections to family abroad, along with individual identity factors and aspects of social movement theory. Incorporating specific aspects of social movement theory provides an intersectional approach to ELT education, which holds promise of preparing teachers to identify gaps in support for their multilingual students.

Burns and Robert (2010) emphasize the importance of social theory in English language education stating that, “More nuanced theoretical approaches reframe ESOL research, shifting away from simply what works in the classroom to what could work if language and migration were better understood,

Figure 1. A general framework: Three focal areas for ELT education



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