Chapter 14
Intercultural identity-alignment in second language study abroad, or the more-or-less Canadians

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This chapter examines identity construction in relation to intercultural encounters when studying a second language (SL) abroad. Specifically, it explores how Canadian undergraduate students realign their identities through their experiences and interactions in the target language and culture while on a short-term intensive German immersion study abroad (SA) programme.

1. Identity in study abroad research

Study abroad (SA) inherently estranges the personal daily routines, behaviours, preferences, and interests of participants and situates them in new contexts (places, experiences, activities, roles, relationships, etc.) that are governed by linguistic and cultural difference from their prior experiential, social, and historical frames of reference. If participants are not to remain tourists, whose perception of the target culture tends not to go beyond generalization to include difference, other values, and self-evaluation (Bertocchini & Costanzo, 1996; Byram, 1997; Plews, Breckenridge, & Cambre, 2010; Sercu, 1998), they must acquire - and be encouraged to reflect on - new language and knowledge, actively negotiate with others, and possibly reposition their sense of self in order to convey and fully grasp messages or accomplish tasks satisfactorily and with understanding. SA participants inhabit a type of "heterotopia" (Foucault, 1986) where they may both see themselves reflected and refracted through new experiences and recreate themselves by appropriating these experiences. SA is therefore well suited for the experience and investigation of identity negotiation (Block, 2007).

Popular opinions of identity often view the way we see ourselves as fixed and attached to stable biological and social labels, supported by unchanging practices, symbols, and institutions. One such apparently stable label is national identity, which is indexed to an ethnic bloodline, place of birth and socialization, geopolit-

ical borders, a standard language, a flag and figurehead, a single historical trajectory, and so on. However, poststructuralist and postmodern social sciences and humanities theorists of the past two decades, such as Butler (1990, 1993), Davies and Harré (1990, 1999), Hall (1998, 2000), Harré and Van Langenhove (1991), Van Langenhove and Harré (1993, 1999), Weedon (1997), and Wenger (1998), among others, have argued that identity - one's subjective sense of self and relation to the world - is an unstable, self-conscious, and dynamic phenomenon that is constituted for us discursively in language, that is, through evolving sociocultural, historical, political, and economic bodies of knowledge, and that we also continuously construct socially through our present agency in our daily conversation and physical interactions with others by acting on, or positioning and performing ourselves biographically within and through, our understandings of those discourses. Weedon (1997) argued that the individual constitutes and reconstitutes her "subjectivity" by identifying with positions already offered in discourse and recognizing that her interests are in conflict with those discursive positions.

No doubt influenced by poststructuralism and postmodernism, second language (SL) education has shifted over the past two decades from teaching another nation's language and culture to the development of learners as 'intercultural speakers'. Byram (1995, p. 25) defined such ideal learners as individuals who "operate their linguistic competence and their sociolinguistic awareness […] in order to manage interaction across cultural boundaries, to anticipate misunderstandings caused by difference in values, meanings and beliefs, and […] to cope with the affective as well as cognitive demands of engagement with others." Students develop intercultural (or transcultural and multilinguistic) communicative competence, that is, the ability to communicate with and understand others in the others' language(s) and to "operate between languages" (MLA, 2007) and cultures by using another language and culture as a lens through which to reflect on themselves and the world, the foreignness of others, the foreignness of themselves to others, and the (linguistic and cultural) diversity of their own society (Byram & Fleming, 1998). According to Kramsch (2009), interculturality stresses the relationship of complementarity and difference among cultures, emphasizes the limitations and flexibility of language, explores the difficulty of translation, and encourages taking up multilingual subject positions. Indeed, Kramsch has redefined the human subject of SL education as a self-actualizing "multilingual subject," who is a student of language use and interpretation, whose existence is mediated by language but also who uses language to create her existence; SL learners progress along a linear path of language learning from a physical/embodied stage involving duress, return to childhood, and limitation, to a psychological/imaginative stage marked by escape, future-orientation, or frustration, to a cerebral/enacted stage, indexed as self-enhancing, seeing-without-being-seen, reflective, and performative (pp. 59-65). Focused on *operating between languages*, the intercultural or multilingual subject

position dislocates any simple alignment with the label of nation in personal identity negotiation. Thus, returning to the focus of this article, the question arises: How do SL SA participants' expressions of their intercultural experiences present the positioning of the subject and the (re)alignment of identity in those in-between spaces?

Study and residence abroad research that discusses identity refers to a number of groups of interest. The first, most researched group includes university SL students participating in specialized immersion programmes or regular university courses for various lengths of time in a foreign country,[1] or working as foreign language assistants teaching their mother tongue in a country where their respective target language is spoken.[2] The second group includes students taking programmes abroad for cultural immersion without a SL component.[3] A third group is comprised of pre-service or in-service SL teachers participating in international professional development programmes.[4]

Regarding the first group, Block's (2007) review draws clear distinctions between studies on American, European, and Japanese (female) students: American studies are concerned with critical experiences and how they can lead to "a recoiling into a discourse of American superiority" (p. 185) rather than engagement with otherness; in contrast, European studies focus on developing intercultural awareness and target-language mediated intercultural and pan-European identities, and a certain number of studies on Japanese women (see Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Skarin, 2001) show how they develop liberated personal and gender identities through English.[5]

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1 See Allen (2010), Archangeli (1999), Cheiffo & Griffiths (2004), Donitsa-Schmidt & Vadish (2005), Franklin (2010), Isabelli-García (2006), Jackson (2006, 2009, 2010), Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver (1992), Kinginger (2004, 2008, 2010), McGregor (2012), Murphy-Lejeune (2002), Pellegrino Aveni (2005), Pitts (2009), Polanyi (1995), Shively (2011), Talburt & Stewart (1999), Twombly (1995), Wilkinson (1998), and Wolcott (2013).
2 See Bacon (2002), Craig (2010), Murphy-Lejeune (2002), and Tusting, Crawshaw, & Callen (2002).
3 See Cheiffo & Griffiths (2004), Dolby (2004), Kinginger (2010), Lenz & Wister (2008), Pedersen (2009), and Shames & Alden (2005).
4 See Marx & Moss (2011), Plews et al. (2010), Plews, Breckenridge, Cambre, & Martins, (2014), Trent (2011), and Willard-Holt (2001).
5 Kinginger (2009) similarly subdivides this first group into three research strands concerning Americans, Europeans, and Japanese, characterized by their different programme foci: early stage language acquisition, the intercultural awareness of advanced learners, and learning English, respectively.

Scholars investigating American SL SA students have found either the strengthening of American identity or a decrease in national identity and concomitant increased intercultural perspective. The consolidation of national identity during SA can result from the negative experiences of being forced together because of "otherness" (Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Wilkinson, 1998) and of misunderstood interactions (Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2010). Kinginger (2010) found most American students did not give much thought to the American image in their host country before arrival and that therefore hosts' questions ranging from general curiosity to those about foreign policy often caused students to "react defensively and recoil into national superiority" (p. 224; see also Block, 2007). Isabelli-García (2006), Kinginger (2008), and McGregor (2012) similarly found that negative experiences caused increased feelings of national superiority and ethnocentric attitudes. Several scholars (Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2008; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005; Polanyi, 1995; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Twombly, 1995) have revealed how these negative experiences were related to culturally different understandings and expectations of gendered behaviour. Donitsa-Schmidt and Vadish (2005) found that American and Canadian Jewish students studying Hebrew in Israel who self-identified as North American (as opposed to Jewish or Israeli) were more likely to hold negative attitudes toward Hebrew and Jewishness.

However, other studies of Americans on SL SA (Cheiffo & Griffiths, 2004; Franklin, 2010; Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2004; Pitts, 2009) have noted that, while cultural differences might cause ethnocentric attitudes in certain circumstances, students' positive acknowledgement of these differences allowed them to develop a multiple or global perspective or more intercultural identity. Spenader's (2008) study of two American high school graduates in Sweden describes how one chose to assimilate while the other was more self-marginalizing. The assimilating participant developed a sense of being "a Swede by association" (p. 254) when doing everyday things with Swedes and speaking Swedish; her "willingness to shift identity and include 'Swedishness' in her own self-concept was strongly related to her ability to learn language" (p. 255).

Corresponding to U.S. findings, Jackson's (2006, 2008, 2009, 2010) studies of Chinese on SL SA in England found that negative experiences in the host culture increased ethnocentric attitudes, whereas an open-minded orientation and positive experiences increased intercultural perspectives. Craig (2009) also recognized this pattern in language assistants from the Caribbean in Colombia and France. Findings concerning European SA participants have also resembled the above pattern, even if not seamlessly. While Tusting, Crawshaw and Callen (2002) revealed nationalistic positioning and Bacon (2002) only some intercultural adjustment in British language assistants, Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) study of Erasmus programme students from across Europe showed how the constant awareness of

national identity early in the sojourn was replaced by target-language-mediated subject positions, the development of pan-European identity, and increased intercultural awareness. She also pointed out how among European students "even the negative or difficult aspects of the stay are eventually perceived as enriching" (p. 231). However, the participants in this study were unusually highly interculturally-oriented even before their SA experience given their prior travel and advanced multilingual competences.

The findings of research on the second and third groups of interest (students in cultural immersion programs without a SL component and SL teachers) do not differ greatly from those on the first. The dichotomy between strengthening national identity and developing an intercultural perspective, however, is less stark for sojourners on non-SL SA programs (Cheiffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dolby, 2004). Dolby found that the national identity of American students in Australia was "riddled with contradictions" (p. 151). While they became more defensive about the USA, they were also increasingly aware of global issues and the appearance and opinions of their own and other nations. Meanwhile, studies of SL teachers on international professional development have revealed that positive experiences might lead participants to align themselves with a more international concept of their profession and so question national practices (Trent, 2011) but also that negative or positive circumstances were perhaps less of a factor in teachers' development of intercultural self-positioning than programme structure, personal agency, and chance (Plews et al., 2010; Plews, Breckenridge, Cambre & Martins, 2014).

Research across all three groups has rarely discussed national and intercultural identity in isolation from other social or psychological aspects of individual identity. Almost all the aforementioned studies addressed positive changes in participants' emotional sense of self, including a greater willingness to speak the target language (Allen, 2010; Archangeli, 1999; Franklin, 2010; Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2006, 2008, 2010; Kauffmann, Martins & Weaver,1992; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005; Shively, 2011; Spenader, 2008); although Kinginger (2004) and Jackson (2008) also showed how their participants were depressed by the reality of France and England not matching their expectations. Cheiffo and Griffiths (2004) noted that increased self- and linguistic confidence could shape national and intercultural identity and Pellegrino Aveni (2005) showed how improved language skills and acculturation led to a "more clearly defined […] image of self" (p. 144). Jackson (2009) argued, however, that foreign language learning, even at an advanced level, does not eliminate ethnocentricism.

The assumption emerging from SA research is that negative orientations and interactional experiences in SL SA may cause participants to reject others' viewpoints and values and to assert a more steadfastly national self. Correspondingly, positive orientations and interactions may lead participants to take on others' viewpoints and values and position themselves as more intercultural and less definitive-

ly associated with a given monocultural identity. This might lead to a simplistic equation in which less intercultural is equated with more national and more intercultural equals less national. Perhaps this body of research is too focused on Americans (Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2009) and nationals from other countries with strong myths of monocultural nationhood and national belonging or with an overriding ideological project (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002), although several scholars working in these contexts claim to view identity as a multi-faceted phenomenon (see also Wolcott, 2013, p. 129), which grows more complex through SA. Certainly, research about educational programming that can lead to new cultural perspectives could itself benefit from another cultural perspective. Thus, this chapter asks: How do data from especially Canadian SL SA participants correspond with existing understandings of identity alignment in SA research?

2. The study

This chapter uses data from a qualitative study of Canadian SL students' experiences on a short-term SA programme in Germany. That study was guided by three general research questions: 1) What is it like to speak German (or English) while on SA in Germany? 2) What is the SA curriculum like? and 3) What is it like to be a Canadian studying in Germany? We chose an interpretive method to research these interests since, as Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) have maintained, such an approach is especially insightful regarding the social or participatory and personal or psychological dimensions of SL learning. Data were collected in Germany in the form of digital recordings of one-to-one semi-structured interviews (on average lasting 45 minutes) and photocopies of language-learning journals from 68 study participants of a total of 170 programme enrollments in June 2010, 2011, and 2012.[6,7] All study participants were Canadian citizens between 19 and 25 years who had previously completed at least one year of undergraduate study at a Canadian university. In this chapter I have focused on the third interview question, looking especially at what the participants said about their intercultural experiences, whether they expressed new intercultural subject positions, and how they related their intercultural experiences and/or positions to their personal sense of self. For this purpose I drew on the interview data collected in 2011 from 33 participants (24 females and 9 males). After transcription, I read the transcripts several times, highlighting sec-

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6   Data were collected by the author and colleagues Kim Misfeldt and Feisal Kirumira.
7   Three individuals are included twice in the participant and enrollment numbers since they took part in the SA program in two separate years and on both occasions volunteered to participate in the study.

tions and making notes concerning emerging trends and narratives related to national and intercultural identity. I then selected some excerpts from ten participants for further analysis, as presented below. I make use of participants' "biographic talk" or "rhetorical redescription" (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1993) to analyze their discursive self-positioning; that is, I explore participant storing or self-indexing as persons in a social plot, their role assignment, self-characterization, selection of relevant action, turns-of-phrase, metaphors, code-switches, etc.

3. The programme

All the participants were enrolled in a longstanding six-week intensive German immersion programme in central Germany, which currently accepts around sixty students from universities across Canada each year. The students receive a two-day residential orientation on programme rules and basic cultural differences between Canadians and Germans, before being billeted with host families for the rest of their stay. They take German language courses at one of three levels: Intermediate (≈ CEFR A2+/B1), advanced (≈ CEFR B1+/B2), or upper advanced (≈ CEFR B2+/C1), and recently a German immersion community service learning course was added. Classes are held Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 12:00, with instructors available for consultation in the afternoons. The instructors are multicultural: during this three-year study they came from Canada, Germany, Great Britain, and Uganda. They use a mix of communicative, task-based, content-integrated, and drama-pedagogy approaches as well as varied literary texts and local textbooks, supplemented by workbooks and grammar reference books. Compulsory assignments include personal or language-learning journals, vocabulary quizzes, oral presentations on cultural topics, guided tours of local sites, film previews and reviews, short essays, ethnographic studies, and examinations; students may choose to do grammar exercises for extra practice. Formal classes are augmented by presentations, excursions, and social, cultural, and sports events. There is a German-only language policy for all classes and programme activities, and students also participate in a tandem partner project with local university students.

4. Findings and analysis

4.1. More intercultural, less Canadian

In his interview, Kieran briefly described two occasions when he experienced a shift in his language-mediated identity:

KIERAN: In my high school I think I was like the only one in Alberta when after I moved there [from New Brunswick], I think I was the only one in the school that actually like was, like lots of people had French last names but they didn't speak a word of French, and I was like the only like true like French-Canadian, I think. […] So my nickname was kind of Frenchy, so.

JOHN: Of course! [Laughs] Not very inventive. But so you grew up with the bilingual identity and sort of here you're adding another language to that. So, you think that by being here that maybe that identity in any way is changing at all?

KIERAN: Kind of making me less of a French-Canadian now.

JOHN: Yeah?

KIERAN: Like learning German.

Kieran recounted first his move from a bilingual part of Canada to an English-speaking one. This move gave rise to the enhancement of the language-mediated aspect of his personal identity, reflected in his new English nickname of "Frenchy." In his recount, Kieran accords himself exclusive status also by focusing on the language-mediated aspect of his biography as the only person at school who could "speak" French. He computes this special status into a unique and increasingly positive bilingual national identity, first by hyperbole ("the only one in Alberta"), then by statistical accuracy ("the only one in the school"), and finally by a statement of exceptional authenticity ("the only like true like French-Canadian"). Then, prompted to reflect on how learning a third language is affecting his bilingual identity, Kieran responds that adding another language decreases his national sense of self ("less of a French-Canadian now"). Elsewhere across Kieran's interview he indicates that his overall experience in Germany was positive, thus supporting prior research claiming that positive experience leads to a more intercultural self-identity and a less nationalistic one.

4.2. Less intercultural, more national Canadian

Participants often mentioned their experiences of German food (e.g., the amount of bread and cheese eaten), and German directness, as indicating distinct cultural differences from Canada. One participant, James, talked about them explicitly:

FEISAL: Were there any instances where you really felt, Oh I'm a Canadian studying in Germany, were there any such instances?

JAMES: Oh definitely with the food, with the direct state of mind um, I'd say those were basically the main two. [And] getting up early.

FEISAL: And when you talk of direct state of mind, do any examples come to mind?

JAMES: Um well, for example if I was thirsty and didn't really want to bring that complaint to my host family then they would be more upset that I did-

n't tell them about my needs rather than trying to look out for their needs.
FEISAL: How did that make you feel?
JAMES: A little awkward I guess and not in a normal state of this-is-how-things-are-done, it's this-is-how-things-are-done-NOW and this-is-how-we-HAVE-to-do-it.

When staying as a guest in a German home, James chose not to bring to his German hosts' attention his need to drink something. Operating from the perspective of the Canadian values of passivity and being an easy-going and uncomplaining guest, he was surprised and unsettled by their response. Instead of seeing how his being undemanding is a challenge to the German value of hospitality, and instead of recognizing in his hosts' direct tone the expression of the German value of clear communication and instruction, his recount of the encounter further normalizes his Canadian perspective over the German one ("not in a normal state") and so necessarily paints his hosts with lack of understanding ("more upset"), inflexibility ("how-things-are-done-NOW"), and authoritarianism ("how-we-HAVE-to-do-it"). Not prepared to realize and negotiate the intercultural dynamics of his situation abroad, James remained in a Canadian sense of self in opposition to Germans.

Mimi also talked about encounters that were difficult and negative experiences for her because of the cultural differences between Canadians and Germans, in ways that showed no consideration for other perspectives. For example, Mimi discussed how she was perceived by some elderly inhabitants of a small town when she wore a short skirt:

> MIMI: I was wearing a dress that I wear at home and people in [German town] could not handle it. Old people were getting so mad at how short my dress was. Like just like people were like walking by and just going, oh well I never! Or like some people would walk by and make [tut-tutting] sounds, and what I was wearing is so like so normal in Canada, like you'd see people wearing it every day, and I just thought that was so funny. Like you [Germans] go naked with strangers in a sauna, but you don't like that my dress is short, but you can't see anything, it's just my legs. […] and like a couple of the other [Canadian] girls too when we wear out like dresses or shorts or skirts or something, old people are upset and like the other people were just like creepin' and it's just like really strange.
> JOHN: So have you done anything about that? Like, have you changed in any way the way you dress or the way you behave?
> MIMI: Not really, 'cause I mean for me it's kinda like if you're going to go naked in the sauna then you should just get over it because I'm not gonna change all my wardrobe.

Mimi is upset that her usual way of dressing in public was being scrutinized and judged negatively by Germans. She quickly turns combative by making her own judgment on the German custom of not wearing clothes when taking a sauna and at the same time reveals the underlying issue of sexual morality ("go naked with strangers"). Thus, this intercultural encounter presents Mimi with the unexpected difficulties of dressing how she wants and of negotiating an apparent conflict in perceptions of her sexual morality. In this negotiation, Mimi positions herself as ordinary ("so normal," "every day," "you can't see anything," "just my legs"), while she pathologizes the Germans ("funny," "creepin'," "really strange"). While with this episode Mimi invokes subject positions related to sexuality, gender, and age, it is also clear by her use of the words "at home" and "in Canada" as well as by the identification of two contrasting cultural groups ("people in [German town]," "old people," "you," and "other people" versus "I," "a couple of the other [Canadian] girls," and "we") that the discourse of national identity is dominant throughout. Faced with a difficult intercultural encounter, Mimi does not investigate the other cultural perspective. Instead, she casts it as hypocritical and pathological and ultimately dismisses it ("you should just get over it"). In so doing, she consolidates her sense of self ("I'm not gonna change") in a hyperbolic fashion ("all my wardrobe") as constituted by and constituting a national alignment ("at home," "in Canada") that operates as a superior reference point ("so normal").

During her interview, Mimi described a number of other intercultural differences, difficulties, and confrontations, only to judge them from the standpoint of her national identity as inappropriate or interpret them in a way that enhanced it. She would blame the Germans for not understanding her rather than try to understand them or question her perspective:

> MIMI: I'm kind of tired of something and I have to deal with something and somebody doesn't understand something for example that I'm doing 'cause I'm Canadian.

Mimi's lack of impartial engagement with others or inability to see difficult moments as opportunities for intercultural learning replicated the consolidated national self-positioning reported in the aforementioned research on Americans (Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2008, 2010; McGregor, 2012; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005; Polanyi, 1995; Spenader, 2008; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Twombly, 1995) when facing unfamiliar, negative, awkward, or disorienting situations.

4.3. Not American, positively Canadian

Many participants in this study experienced being mistaken by Germans for Americans. Having to correct mistaken national identity is a common experience

for Canadians when abroad but it is not unique to them; Jackson (2008) and Craig (2010) found the same for Hong Kongers in England and Caribbean students in France. It does not depend on SA participation, nor does it require a second language environment. But the fact that these encounters took place in this instance while the principal actors are on SL immersion adds a critical element that might otherwise be absent. For example, Madeleine's recount makes crucial use of target culture circumstances to mediate a positive national identity, one that is both emotionally and critically advantageous for her sense of Canadian self:

> MADELEINE: When Germans hear you speaking English they're a little … But once they know you're Canadian, like, they seem to be very friendly. But if they think you're American they're not as friendly. But once I've had like three different people be like, "Oh where are you from?" and as soon as you say Canada they're like, "Oh Canada!" And they get all happy and you're like okay, so I don't know about Americans but yeah so.
> FEISAL: So what does that make you feel like?
> MADELEINE: Makes me feel good but also I don't want people to be assuming that I'm American EITHER, so.
> FEISAL: Why not?
> MADELEINE: Well there's a stigma I think in Europe that Americans are more rude and brash and loud and I don't know if it's true but that's just what people think, I think.

By correcting others' misperception of her Canadian nationality as American, Madeleine is able to reframe a negative and possibly threatening experience ("if they think you're American they're not as friendly") as one that reinforces her positive sense of self ("once they know you're Canadian," "very friendly," "Makes me feel good"). But not only does Madeleine use repeated target-culture circumstances ("three different people") to acquire a positive endorsement of her personal national subject position from Germans ("all happy"), she also co-opts it ("there's a stigma I think in Europe") to clear herself and her nationality of any negative attitudes ("Americans are more rude and brash and loud") and so make her personal Canadian national subject position seem superior to both Americans, who are stigmatized, and to Germans, who stigmatize. In so doing, Madeleine is able to obfuscate ("I don't know if it's true") the likelihood that she as a Canadian shares the stigmatizing attitude of Europeans/Germans ("I don't want people to be assuming that I'm American EITHER"). As in previous research on Americans (Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Wilkinson, 1998) the national label becomes salient in SL immersion for many Canadian SA participants. However, they differ from those Americans in that the motivation is not the threat of their foreign hosts' otherness but, rather, their own national phobia of becoming subsumed by American culture.

4.4. More intercultural, no less Canadian

Some participants described conscious attempts to be inconspicuous during the immersion experience, taking on new subject positions where they simulated being Germans as best they could. Leslie, for example, withdrew her Canadian identity strategically for the sake of language learning:

> LESLIE: I kind of try as much as possible to hide the fact that I'm a Canadian, not because I'll be met with any sort of aggression or anything, because like ... I WANT to ... I don't know, why do I do that? Um ... and you know, after a couple of sentences or something, someone will realize that I'm NOT German and I'm not from here, but uh all the same, uh I feel like I speak better with Germans, when it's just me and a German. I feel like my accent is not as good when I speak with other students ... er, I don't know, but because I don't feel like I have to ... er, watch out for that as much? Uh hmm, subconsciously I think that happens, where I don't have to use more Denglisch than the other students, whereas um, if I feel like I really try and blend in, if I'm by myself, then my German kind of tries to blend in as well, and it kind of gets better in that way?

Leslie realizes that she can most improve her spoken German in sustained interactions with more proficient speakers. She has also realized that concealing her Canadian identity can give her a better chance of accessing those quality interactions, for some native speakers lose interest when they know the conversation partner is a less proficient speaker. Leslie is no less Canadian in reality, but she has learned to perform a sound-appearance ("if […] I really try and blend in, […] then my German kind of tries to blend in as well") that positions her temporarily as German, even if remaining undetected for only a few sentences.

In another example, Sheldon, who took part in the immersion programme twice, conjures an especially vivid image of fitting in with the locals:

> SHELDON: Last year, I felt like I was a Canadian, but this year I learned from last year, observing so many people and like what the German people do ... I felt like the Talented Mr. Ripley trying to fit in. And when I went to clubs or anything, everyone just thought I was German, I did things, I told people [other Canadian students] not to do things, but they still did them.

Sheldon's self-comparison with a film character who conceals murder and his sexuality by impersonating his victim, suggests that learning how to put on a convincing act culturally as a German can help language learners pass in certain life situations ("I did things," "I told people [other Canadian students] not to do things") in which they would otherwise be caught out as foreigners ("they still did them")

and from which they might then become excluded. Sheldon is no less Canadian, but he has learned to use intercultural knowledge to forge a new subject position for himself in another culture.

The above two examples draw attention to the embodied and performative nature of re-positioning the self from one national or cultural identity to another. Leslie tries to embody a desired sound in order to access more advantageous speaking opportunities and Sheldon assumes a foreign guise perfected by gathering intercultural knowledge in order to extend and deepen his cross-cultural experiences. Neither loses the listening and observing Canadian underneath. In the next example, Frida puts the embodied and performative aspects of language-mediated subject positions to a different effect:

> FRIDA: It's kind of funny because when you look at yourself and think, wow, it's like I have split personalities. Not only, it's, it's not only, um, because I feel, like, being culturally aware and you know, and just taking on, so, the way people act here when … and then using that and acting as a German, like, when in Germany do as the Germans do, when in France do as the French, and so forth, um, yeah, it definitely affects your personality.

It is clear to Frida that performing ("just taking on") another language- or culture-mediated identity ("when in Germany do as the Germans do, when in France do as the French") for the purpose of learning that language can re-position and change the self ("it definitely affects your personality"). For Frida the new subject position does not conceal any prior identity. Rather, it makes room for more ("I have split personalities"):

> FRIDA: Um, but not too much. I don't think there's a complete change. […] Some mannerisms, I think, some people notice, um, the voice, for instance, sometimes I think my voice in Spanish, my voice in English is higher than my voice in Spanish, or it's the other way around … Um, and then my voice in French is also different and, um, what I have heard from friends is that my, my facial expressions sort of change. When I speak in French I guess I make more French expressions and, like facial expressions.

Frida's sense of language-mediated self is one that has developed and functions incrementally ("I don't think there's a complete change"). Again, it is by making changes to her voice ("is higher than," "is also different") and body ("my facial expressions sort of change") that she activates and signals more than one new self (Spanish, English, French). Frida is no less Canadian, but unlike the previous two participants she takes on a number of positions in ways that accumulate to something more than a surface manoeuvre or sleight of hand that facilitates the satisfac-

tion of a particular learning need or desired cultural experience. Frida's perform-
ance of various positions is the self-actualization of her sense of self as intercultur-
al ("split personalities," "culturally aware").

Similar to Frida, Mira's recount of her experience abroad also constructs a new
identity by referring to a number of positions, though with Mira these are places
rather than languages:

> MIRA: In Kreuzberg it was so ... party and hip and interesting, and all the build-
> ings are interesting and coffee's half the price it is in Potsdamer Platz, and the
> graffiti is not only beautiful, it's like political in nature. […] And like, you see
> that in Kreuzberg and you're like, "I belong in Kreuzberg". Like, walking around
> I was like this is where Lottie and I were like, "my people", [laughs] like ALL the
> hipsters on a Friday evening are sitting out now, and they're just like ... passing
> around beers and like […]. I honestly ... there are three things, in Canada and,
> in Edmonton, because that's where I was born, like I feel like that is the home I
> have ... but like Ireland is also a home ... it's frustrating in German that you can't
> pluralize home, like the home ... *Heimat*, you need to pluralize it ... and
> Germany for sure, I don't specifically know A city. […] and when I'm IN
> Germany […] I feel very much ... it's ... like part of me now.

During her stay, Mira visits the Berlin district of Kreuzberg and quickly appreciates
its alternative social scene and youth culture whose appearance and behaviour she
already legitimately (Wenger, 1998) shares thanks to its global nature. Her affinity
for Kreuzberg, and, accordingly, for Germany, is so strong that she can talk about
it only in possessive and ultimately physical-psychological terms: "I belong," "my
people," "home," "*Heimat*", and "it's […] part of me." Because of Kreuzberg,
Germany is added to Mira's list of countries that she calls home, which already
includes Canada, her place of birth, and Ireland, the place from where her family
originates. Mira recalls the word *Heimat* [German for 'home', meaning country or
area, 'home town,' or 'homeland'] because she senses it might challenge her new
multiple place-based identity. She believes this word cannot be pluralized and so
excludes the possibility of having more than one home. This does not suit Mira
since taking on Germany as a new home does not mean to her that she must relin-
quish Canada or Ireland. Showing that she is not prepared to let go of understand-
ing herself through her German soul mates and the German language, her solution
is to amend the German word: "you need to pluralize it." Mira would surely have
been happy to learn that *die Heimat* can be pluralized as *die Heimaten*, and might
have found a better linguistic fit here if she had chosen *das Zuhause* (no plural).
But her word choice is deliberate and significantly marks her as an active intercul-
tural speaker. Only *Heimat* invokes the popular, political, and literary German dis-
courses of a specifically German homeland often to the exclusion of other cultures.
Remaking herself by adding her voice to another country's debate, Mira is nonethe-

less no less Canadian as she positions herself through her SA experience as interculturally at home across three cultures.

4.5. More intercultural, more Canadian

The example of Frida, already introduced, goes even further. She indicates that being more intercultural in fact enhances her Canadian sense of self:

> FRIDA: Well, I still feel very Canadian. Um but I wasn't born in Canada. […] And it's always a puzzle. And they're like, "Oh, so you're not actually Canadian," and I'm like, "Actually, I am REALLY Canadian" because that's what Canada is, it's a mix of so many people from so many places. Um, so I think, um, yeah I think I'll feel more Canadian and more okay to be from so many different places in a way.
> JOHN: So learning German as a foreign language is kind of also contributing to your personal Canadian identity?
> FRIDA: I would say so.
> JOHN: It fits with who you are as a Canadian?
> FRIDA: Mhmm. So yeah, I, you know, I am very Canadian, but it doesn't mean that […] you know, this is who I am because I can adapt to other cultures and […] What I like to do is to go unnoticed in other places, not to be pinpointed as the foreigner.

Even despite the SA program ("still"), Frida positions herself as Canadian to an exceedingly high degree or quality ("very," "REALLY") even though she "wasn't born in Canada." She explains that this has been worked out ("puzzle") in Canada where she has frequently had to negotiate her identity most likely precisely because she was born elsewhere and other Canadians use her visible ethnicity to mark her as non-Canadian ("pinpointed as the foreigner"). She continues by invoking the policy of official multiculturalism ("Canada is […] a mix of so many people from so many places") not only to confirm her rightful status as a Canadian - she can be a Canadian despite being born elsewhere - but also to indicate why learning German on a SA program can further guarantee and enhance her Canadian identity ("I'll feel *more* Canadian and *more* okay to be from so many different places"). Indeed, Frida's specific South American ethnicity and heritage, childhood immigration to Canada, continued upbringing in Quebec and then British Columbia, and ability to speak Spanish, French, English, as well as other languages, position her as an ideal Canadian from the perspective of multiculturalism. Adding German to the mix of languages and cultures in which she can operate only makes Frida regard herself as "more Canadian."

As much as Frida assumes her ideal Canadian status, she also suggests that she is tired of how her heritage and ethnicity function to uphold the story of Canadian

multiculturalism ("I like to […] go unnoticed in other places, not to be pinpointed as the foreigner"). Ironically, in Germany, where she is seen factually as a foreigner from Canada, she can use her experience of learning German to confirm herself as more intercultural and so more Canadian.

Like Frida, Marcus also regards himself as more interculturally Canadian as a result of SA and he too refers directly to official multiculturalism. However, his background motivation is quite different:

> MARCUS: Well like my whole dad's side of the family is all German. My mom's side is from England. Um so but personally I feel that I'm more German related than my than English. Um just the way that you know my thoughts, my personality, all that. So when I came here the first time three years ago I felt you know just awesome. Even here every day you know I've not had an awkward moment. […]
> JOHN: So did your dad emigrate directly from Germany?
> MARCUS: My dad didn't, his parents did. […] When they were 18 and 19.
> JOHN: Oh so he was probably born in Canada. But still that's, you still, you have a great sort of sense of your German heritage at home.
> MARCUS: Hmm-hmm oh yeah. You know with my grandparents whenever we ask, "what's cooking?" "What's for supper?" My grandma always said "Kinderfragen".
> JOHN: What region are they from in Germany?
> MARCUS: Couldn't tell you.
> JOHN: Yeah, okay. But is this trip and your previous trip as well sort of part of a kind of an identity journey for you?
> MARCUS: I think so for sure yeah.
> JOHN: Can you tell me a bit more about that?
> MARCUS: Uh, well, personally, like me personally, I enjoy my past, you know, what I've done, um, where I come from and everything so being able to learn from that and go in a little bit farther definitely helps out in finding out who you are, what you want to do in the future and such.
> JOHN: Yeah but how does it relate to being Canadian?
> MARCUS: Um, well, Canada it's like very multicultural. Um so if you go down the street and you talk to anybody, they're from all different corners of the globe. Um so for me to be able to find out who I am from my past … definitely helps out finding out who I am as Canadian or in the future or anything like that.
> JOHN: So are you saying that to be kind of more Canadian you also have to really understand more about your past, your heritage from another culture?
> MARCUS: Oh, yeah, yeah. I definitely think so. 'Cause you know if you look at the TV shows here and in the US and the perfect Canadian, it's all lumberjacks or whatever. So um I think you have to find out who you are as yourself before you can become a Canadian.

Marcus positions his Canadian sense of self in relation to his family heritage, choosing specifically to promote his father's more distinctive German back-ground over his mother's English one. Marcus's construction of his national identity as a heritage German-Canadian relies considerably on his imagination: he is not a first-, but a second-generation Canadian; he does not know where exactly his grandparents came from; yet he, a young man from Saskatchewan, adopts their immigration story directly as his own ("where *I* come from," "who I am from *my* past"). For Marcus ("me personally"), learning German in Germany has everything to do with understanding and exploring his German heritage.

However, Marcus is not interested in his German heritage for its sake alone. He is aware that in "very multicultural" Canada the old ideal images of the Caucasian frontiersmen ("lumberjacks") have no genuine currency anymore and it is important for Canadians to demonstrate their personal diversity ("from all different corners of the globe"). The problem Marcus faces in constructing his national identity is that the symbols he has inherited from his grandparents' generation have become hackneyed and dismissed. His being second generation means if someone were to meet him on "the street" he would not be able to show that he is from another "corner of the globe"; Marcus cannot insinuate himself sufficiently into the all-important identity-forming discourse of Canadian diversity that relies specifically on Other races, Other cultures, and Other languages. Yet by experiencing Germany first-hand, Marcus is able to secure a greater sense of a/his diverse national self-identity as a German-Canadian, that is, he co-opts SA to position himself as more clearly a heritage Other and so a more authentic member of the diverse Canadian mosaic. Hence, Marcus and Frida's examples show that after SA one can feel both more inter-cultural and more national, albeit for different reasons.

4.6. More intercultural, another self

For Lottie, the SA experience has enabled her to discover and actualize a symboli-cally and emotionally/psychologically different sense of self:

> LOTTIE: I think I'm more … I think the word is *Persönlich? Ich weiss nicht* … um … I'm more personable in Germany than I am in Canada because … I don't know why, but I'll talk to people or go shopping … I'll chat with people in the *Straßenbahn*, uh … I dunno! I just LOVE being here! […] I just … feel more like me HERE than I … ever have, I think […] um … I think it is … the [German] language. I think that … in Canada, I think that when it's English, there's so many more ways just to slump around and just get through day-to-day and make it seem like I can … I can function. But here … when it's not

working, it's really not working and ... you can see it and I'm not so good at hiding when I'm really upset about something. And ... I don't know why, but the language actually helps with that […] I think that IS IT, because in Canada I do feel very much like there's something saying, "Okay, there's Lottie", aaand ... I'm almost trapped within that image [...] I'm still the same person ... always smiling, has to be ... brilliant who has to be doing ... the best and being the best ... and really I'm just trying to ... hold it together. So I'm smiling so it doesn't fall apart, whereas here ... whereas here there's no definition. No one knows that Lottie necessarily. So I can be someone ... I can be maybe who I am now, or who ... just somebody that I want to be. And that's not ... there's not that set definition of, "Oh, there's Lottie". […] I feel more like I'm being me because I get more of a chance to grow a little bit as opposed to being this tiny thing and just being trapped there.

Lottie also contrasts her sense of self "in Germany" with how she retrospectively sees herself "in Canada." While neither of these subject positions are strictly representations of national identity, they are personal self-representations aligned to particular nations and cultures, one "here," the other "there." Lottie's recount of her new German-mediated self begins with a description of herself in German: "*Persönlich? Ich weiss nicht.*" The code-switch signals and emphasizes the role of specifically the German language in the development of her new identity. She then switches back into English to state that she is "more personable in Germany." Lottie did not get a perfect match between the German word and the following English word and explanation. *Persönlich* means 'personal,' not 'personable'; but 'personable' is a rather Anglo-Saxon concept focused on the person that is difficult to translate directly into German.[8] The critical point here, however, is that, whether formally right or wrong, *persönlich* is the word Lottie has chosen and she has infused it with the signified of 'personable' in order to create a new meaningful self in and through language (two languages), much like Kramsch's (2009) symbolically competent multilingual subject.

Studying German in Germany has had a profound psychological effect on Lottie's sense of self, one that she sees as positive and is happy to embrace ("I just LOVE being here," "I [...] feel more like me"). From the perspective of the German-mediated Lottie, the Canadian Lottie ("when it's English") is more depressed ("slump," "this tiny thing") and focused on surviving ("just get through," "function," "hold it together") or pretending to ("seem like," "hiding") by putting on a brave face. This sense of self has become so familiar

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8   The closest equivalents convey more the action: the English 'personable' lies in German somewhere between *zugänglich* [approachable] or *ansprechbar* [can be spoken to] and *kontaktfreudig* [outgoing/happy to interact].

("there's Lottie") that she cannot break free from it. By contrast, when using German in Germany and facing the challenges that poses, Lottie cannot draw on her prior identity work ("it's really not working," "I'm not so good at hiding"). This removal of her prior sense of self teaches ("actually helps") Lottie that she can be free of former limitations and invites her to construct and realize ("I can") herself anew as she pleases ("somebody that I want to be"). Not only is Lottie constituted anew by her SA experiences of learning German, but through her use of the target language she actively constitutes her new self. To an extent, Lottie's self-emancipating experience of using German in Germany resembles that of the Japanese women using English described by Piller and Takahashi (2006) and Skarin (2001). Lottie's sense of Canadian national identity might not have changed, but certainly her prior sense of self in Canada has been challenged and re-evaluated by an emergent target-language mediated intercultural self.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This chapter has investigated the identity construction of Canadian participants on a SL SA programme in Germany. It asked how SA participants present the positioning of the subject and the (re)alignment of identity in their expressions of their intercultural experiences, and how data from especially Canadian participants correspond with existing understandings of identity alignment in SA research.

Clearly, this study supports an understanding of participant identity construction in SL SA that allows for variability and complexity in relation to nationality and interculturality. The data on Canadian SA participants analyzed here only partially reflect existing research on SL SA participants from other countries, especially the U.S.A., but they also follow a different dynamic: Canadian SA participants resignify themselves between more or less intercultural or multilingual subjectivities and prior national subject positions; their enhanced national identity might have to do with negative experiences but is more likely a response to identity misrecognition (as American) and does not necessarily imply they cannot also become more interculturally minded; if anything, several Canadians in this study exhibit a sense that being more intercultural means being more Canadian.

These findings differ from those of previous studies possibly because of the qualitative approach and the dialogic nature of research interviews, or possibly because of the specific focus on Canadians whose national identity discourse is already dominated by interculturality or multiculturalism. Concepts of multiculturalism (where all cultures are recognized equally alongside each other within one country), official bilingualism, racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diver-

sity, hybridity, heritage, immigration, and so on, are written into the governmental, political, educational, social, economic, and cultural discourses that shape the contemporary understanding and physical environment of the nation of Canada (see Carter, Vachon, Biles, Tolley, & Zamprelli, 2006). Sociologists (Bannerji, 2000; MacKey, 2002; Sharma, 2011; Thobani, 2007) have argued that white Canadians co-opted diversity in order to manage differences within the nation, to overcome the socio- and politico-historical 'crisis in whiteness' following colonialism, and to differentiate Canadians from Americans. Yet Sumara, Davis, and Laidlaw (2001) also maintain that the vocabulary and history of "deliberate diversity" and the "essential quality of […] a lack of essential qualities" (p. 144), along with differentiation from the U.S.A., has led Canadians to understand their identity as "contextually dependent," "negotiated," and "compromised" (p. 150), that is, "not unified or seamless, but shift[ing] according to the particularity of language, geographical affiliations, and historical circumstances" (pp. 154-155), or in other words already postmodern. Recent generations of Canadians have certainly been raised consuming such official policies and discourses and so it is to be expected that they explicitly or implicitly call upon them during identity work in SA.

Indeed, my analyses show that some Canadian students might co-opt the intercultural experiences of SL SA to afford themselves greater diversity capital and so negotiate their interculturally national identity. Thus the immediate question rising from this study is whether this is unique to Canadians on SA or whether participants from other countries, especially those with formal or informal multicultural or diversity-based discourses of national identity - for example, Australia, Bulgaria, India, Latvia, contemporary South Africa, etc. - also feel more national when gaining a sense of an intercultural self on SA. Still, the Canadian participants in this study come with different lifespan histories and projections from each other, so perhaps we need closer readings of all SA participants to discover whether the variation not only in the degree but also in the kind of intercultural identity alignment in the Canadian results also applies to other groups. Certainly, this study points to the need for SA research to expand the nature of participants by origin and to adopt more qualitative and critical-analytical research frameworks (see also Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2009; Wilkinson, 1998; Willard-Holt, 2001). It encourages us to reconsider what we think we know about intercultural subject positions in relation to language acquisition, national identity, study abroad, time, and place, opening up a space for more human complexity.

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