
“They can learn to say my name”: Redistributing Responsibility for Integrating Immigrants to Canada

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Abstract: Newcomers to Canada whose names index identities other than “white” and “English” face pressure to alter their names to facilitate integration. Some immigrants oppose the forces of conformity and refuse to assimilate their names. In interviews, they explain this stance using discourses of agency centring on a belief in true names, a moral obligation to get names right, and a need for a strong self. Focusing on ideologies of identity and language in their meta-agentive discourses, I argue that the act of immigrants keeping their ethnic names is a political move to redistribute responsibility for the integration of newcomers into the host society.

Keywords: identity, names, immigration, multiculturalism, ideologies, discourse analysis

Résumé : Les nouveaux-arrivés ayant des noms qui sont liés aux identités autre que “blanc” ou “anglais” se sentent obligés d’altérer leur noms, pour faciliter leur intégration dans la société canadienne. Certains immigrants dans cette étude s’opposent aux forces de la conformité et refusent d’assimiler leurs noms. Au cours des entrevues faites pour ce projet, ces immigrants expliquent leurs position à l’aide de discours d’agentivité centrée sur une croyance dans les noms vrais, une obligation morale pour l’usage correct des noms, et la nécessité pour une forte conception de soi. J’analyse les idéologies de l’identité et de la langue dans les discours méta-agentif des immigrants, et je soutiens qu’en gardant leurs noms ethniques, ils posent un geste politique qui a comme but la redistribution de la responsabilité pour l’intégration des nouveaux arrivés aux membres de la société d’accueil.

Mots-clés : identité, noms, immigration, multiculturalisme, idéologies, analyse de discours

Names as Stance Objects in Meta-Agentive Discourse about Integration

It is no longer sufficient merely to allow newcomers to participate in the dominant society. The goal of socially inclusive policies is to enable all members to engage in the creation and transformation of society (Omidvar and Richmond 2003). By choosing not to assimilate their names in English-dominant contexts, some immigrants to London, Ontario, unsettle national discourses in which immigrants as moral subjects are expected to integrate into Canadian society. Attending to discourses of agency, I examine how immigrants challenge the ideology of integration by making members of the host society responsible for learning how to pronounce, spell, and make sense of unfamiliar names. This study adds to anthropological studies of naming, showing how names do more than merely label referents or index social categories. Names are stance objects that immigrants use to articulate their understandings of agency. They actively politicise the treatment of their names as they negotiate their position in particular interactions and within society more broadly.

Personal names carry multiple social meanings that may associate a particular name with a language, gender, age range, ethnicity, socio-economic status, marital status, religion, or kin group. These categorical associations adhere to names through historical use and contribute to the formation of the name bearer’s social identity through processes of continual repetition (Pina-Cabral 2015). Anthropological studies find that names are always embedded in social relations and that they play a powerful role in social life: “names ‘do’ as well as ‘say’ things” (Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2006:5). Betsy Rymes (1999:163) argues that names must be considered in terms of social and historical context, noting that “[h]ow we get them, who says them, how they are used, and in what context they are spoken are inseparable from a human being’s social identity.”

Investigating how agency is exercised and constrained in naming practices furthers the development of what Valerie Alia (2007) calls “political onomastics,” which takes into account the power relations involved in defining and influencing people’s understandings of, experiences with, and attitudes toward their own names and those of others. I focus on what Laura Ahearn (2012:284) calls “meta-agentive discourse,” analysing how immigrants talk about their own agency, “their own actions and others’ actions, how they attribute responsibility for events, how they describe their own and others’ decision-making processes.” Through this meta-agentive discourse, immigrants explain their responses to constraints on their capacity to name themselves in the Canadian context and on their capacity to influence how others treat their names. In their talk about names and naming, immigrants make explicit and challenge the assimilationist ideologies about language and identity that underpin national discourses surrounding immigration and multiculturalism. Their naming choices can thus be seen as small political acts moving toward social transformation.

The concept of stance is useful in analysing how names are convergence points for ideas about personhood and language ideologies – beliefs and feelings about languages, linguistic forms, and language users (Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998). John Du Bois (2007:163) defines stance as a communicative act “of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the socio-cultural field.” The analysis that follows shows how names work as stance objects that are evaluated in the meta-agentive discourse of immigrants who position themselves in alignment or non-alignment with others in relation to their sense of belonging, their responsibilities as immigrants and Canadian-born citizens, their institutional constraints, and their identity formation. Through their naming choices and in their talk about the treatment of names, interviewees take a stance against name assimilation.

Multiculturalism, Immigration, and Integration

To properly contextualise stance taking on immigrants’ names, it is important to understand the connection between Canadian policies on multiculturalism and immigration. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed in 1988, acknowledging multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society (Dewing 2012:4).¹ The policy aimed to enhance cultural awareness and

understanding, to assist ethnic minorities in fully participating in society, and to foster cultural identities. The inclusive aims of the multiculturalism policy have developed in response to the increased racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity among newcomers to Canada since the implementation in 1967 of immigrant admission criteria related to occupational skills (Abu-Laban 1998). Currently, over 20 percent of the population in Canada is foreign born (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2014a), with the top source countries in the past decade being in Asia and the Middle East (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2014b).

While multiculturalism is now seen by younger Canadians as a defining feature of Canadian culture (Hyman, Meinhard, and Shields 2011), the policy and the concept are controversial (Bissoondath 1994; Malik 2007). A substantial body of literature documents how “multiculturalism policy, despite its ideals, has not led to valued recognition and participation for minority communities” (Saloojee 2003:18). In economic terms, Ratna Omidvar and Ted Richmond (2003) observe that immigrants to Canada since the 1990s have experienced greater rates of poverty and underemployment than preceding generations of newcomers despite being more highly educated and skilled. They argue that this observation is largely explained by racism and prejudice, noting that visible minorities have the highest rates of poverty among immigrants. Frances Henry and Carol Tator (2000) describe the situation as “democratic racism”: pervasive racism within a society that has a commitment to the ideology of democratic liberalism. This inequality is also manifest in the treatment of immigrant names.

The stances people take on immigrants maintaining or changing their “ethnic” names are often expressed using two discourses tied to multiculturalism currently circulating in Canada: diversity and integration. In the first discourse, immigrants are central elements of diversity in Canada’s multicultural identity. Immigrants enrich the collective culture of Canada by contributing new ways of thinking and behaving, along with different foods, art forms, and fashions. “Ethnic names,” or those originating from a language other than English or French, are seen as representations of cultural heritage that should be valued and maintained, contributing to Canada’s diversity. The Canadian government’s efforts at “selling diversity” emphasise the contributions of cultural diversity to the country’s global competitiveness and the need for immigration to grow Canada’s economy (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002). Indeed, the highest proportion (62 percent) of the 250,000 immigrants accepted annually is in the economic class because the government’s

main goal for immigration is “developing a strong and prosperous Canadian economy” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2014). The rapid integration of immigrants into mainstream Canadian society is essential for their transformation into workers. Within the immigration policy discourse, fully integrated immigrants are expected to participate in Canadian institutions and social life, adopt dominant Canadian values and beliefs, and feel a sense of belonging within their communities and to the larger Canadian society (Frideres 2008).

While proponents of multiculturalism describe integration as a process of mutual adjustment by both newcomers and the host society (Abu-Laban 1998:202; Frideres 2008), Peter Li (2003:316) argues that “there is a strong expectation that immigrants should accept Canada’s prevailing practice and standard and become similar to the resident population.” That is, the work of integration must be done largely by immigrants who are expected to learn English, attain recognised educational credentials, find a job, and engage in recognisably Canadian behaviours (Huot et al. 2013; Li 2003). Integration should include the right for newcomers to legitimately challenge social practices and policies; however, Li (2003:329) observes that “the actual forces of conformity remain compelling.” James Frideres (2008:81) echoes this, noting that “the indicators of integration are those of state-organised assimilation pressures on immigrants to conform to Canadian norms.” From this liberal perspective, adopting an English name or a “Canadianised” version of one’s name is a strategic move to increase the chances of securing employment and of “fitting in” more generally.

This analysis explores how having one’s name recognised, remembered, accepted, and correctly pronounced and spelled contributes to a sense of belonging. Immigrants often express this in opposite terms: they feel that they do *not* belong when their names are mispronounced, misspelled, avoided, forgotten, or made the subject of ridicule (Pennesi 2013). João Pina-Cabral (2015:183) explains that “people whose names somehow fail to conform to the norm, or are incomplete, or absent in significant ways, are prone to be pulled out of ordinary personhood, even to experience stigma.” The immigrants in this study struggled with the tension between the desire to belong, fuelled by pressures to conform, and the desire to remain true to their own identities, mindful of linguistic and cultural origins as well as current social circumstances. The choice to maintain the spelling, pronunciation, and use of ethnic names can be seen as both a result of multiculturalism policies and a challenge to the assimilationist project these policies

are based on. Immigrants who protect their names exercise agency in response to racism, discrimination, and social exclusion, putting part of the burden of adaptation on Canadians who must learn to live and work with unfamiliar names. In their meta-agentive discourses, immigrants actively construct their own identity and claim their place in society, not necessarily as members of ethnic groups but, rather, as individuals with rights who deserve respect.

Data and Methodology

This study is part of a larger project investigating multiple dimensions of personal name diversity in Canada.² The present data set consists of 53 interviews with immigrants or newcomers to London, Ontario, which were recorded in 2012 and 2013 with the help of three research assistants. The two main research sites were the University of Western Ontario and the London Cross-Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC), which is a government-funded settlement agency. Participants at the CCLC included both clients and employees, most of whom were also immigrants. All of the participants mentioned in this study had “ethnic” names, meaning that they originated in a language other than English, and many indexed non-white identities. The following languages were represented by the participants’ names: Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, Farsi, Finnish, German, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi/Urdu, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Serbian, Spanish, and Turkish. Students at the university and clients of the CCLC responded to recruitment announcements seeking people willing to tell stories about their names. Employees of the CCLC and of the university were initially approached to discuss the name-related difficulties of their clients and how they managed the diversity of names in their work tasks; however, all of them talked about their own names as well. Occupations varied: 22 were students or faculty of the university; 18 worked at the CCLC; 10 were clients of the CCLC who were looking for work or taking English classes; and the remaining 3 acquaintances of the interviewers included a homemaker, a high school student, and a professor from another university. Participants ranged in age from 17 to over 60, and 70 percent were women (reflecting the high proportion of female employees at the CCLC). The length of time participants had resided in Canada ranged from a few months to 30 years.

All four of the interviewers were white women with English-sounding first names and European last names. I am Canadian born, I have an Italian surname, and I speak English, Portuguese, French, and some Spanish

and Korean. The interviewer identified as LV in the excerpts emigrated from the Netherlands and speaks Dutch as well as English and some Spanish. VG was born in Quebec and speaks French, English, and some Japanese. GS is Canadian born, has a German surname, and speaks English and some French. We followed a semi-structured interview protocol, asking participants about their linguistic and cultural background, the circumstances under which they had come to Canada, their attitudes toward their names throughout their lives, any difficulties, confusions, instances of discrimination, or other problems related to their names, as well as their responses to these situations. We also asked about positive experiences, what their names meant, and other names they used aside from their legal names. To build rapport with the participants, the interviewers frequently shared their own experiences, as well as those of their family members, with name-related difficulties, campus life, and the immigration process. University interviews were assigned based on the similarity of roles between interviewer and interviewee: student researchers interviewed students and the faculty researcher interviewed other faculty and staff. At the CCLC, all interviews were done on site, and introductions were made through other CCLC personnel so that interviewers were presented as allies to the immigrants. Decisions about location and identity of interviewer were made to aid rapport building and to make the participants comfortable in sharing their stories.

All interviews were transcribed without changes to grammar, wording, and pauses; false starts and repetitions were included. Where quotations are presented in the text, explanations or alternative wording is given in brackets to guide the reader's interpretation. Transcripts were analysed according to common attributes, themes, and discourse features using qualitative data analysis software. Useful codes for this analysis included *shift/change/alteration* (describing motivations for changing one's name, assuming a new name, or altering the spelling or pronunciation), *respect* (comments that link (in)correct pronunciation and spelling of names to respect for others), *identity* (comments about names that reflect important aspects of personal, cultural, national, gender, religious, and family identity), and *connections* (comments that make connections between names and issues related to immigration, multiculturalism, access to services, education, employment, discrimination, social relationships, and so on). Discourse analysis offers a close-up look at how names shape identities not in a singular baptismal act but, rather, in a process of continual performance and repetition. In particular, it reveals how the values and attributes assigned to personal names vary with interactional contexts. The interview

data are limited because they rely on participants' one-sided recollections and interpretations of dialogic interactions. Nonetheless, they offer a rich source of meta-agentive discourse in which to begin exploring how immigrants reflect on their own agency and find ways to challenge the constraints they face. To complement the interview data, interactional data will be collected in London and Montreal during the next phase of research.

In the next section, I first describe the "forces of conformity" that compel many immigrants and newcomers to change or alter their names in Canada (Li 2003). I then introduce the discourses of agency used by participants who have resisted assimilating their names to Canadian norms. In the final two sections, I show how non-assimilationist stances toward names are tied to critiques of exclusionary social practices and how they redistribute responsibility for the integration of immigrants.

Assimilating Names: The Forces of Conformity

The decision to change or alter one's name must be understood within the broader context of individual immigration experiences, taking into account their own ideologies of language and identity as well as those circulating in the dominant society. This includes the person's reasons for immigrating; the knowledge of the host society language; the perceived level of familiarity the members of the dominant society will have with the newcomer's name; the experiences and expectations about "fitting in" at work, at school, and in social life; and the experiences with various institutional and administrative identification procedures. How people introduce themselves and how they respond to the way others address them, therefore, can vary according to the relationship with the interlocutors, the purpose of the interaction, past experiences, the anticipation of future experiences, the knowledge of others' experiences, and even changes in mood or disposition at a given moment. Diane Dechief (2015) analyses such choices about names in terms of different audience types – institutional, quotidian, and traditional – showing how alterations to names are made according to the challenges each audience presents. Names are markers of identity, and like identities, they are shifting, multiple, repeated performances, which are regulated and constrained by external factors (Bucholtz and Hall 2004; Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2006). From the interview data, I have identified four strong "forces of conformity" that motivated participants to change or alter their names: (1) the need to find work, (2) the desire to fit in at school, (3) the desire to avoid constant explanations, and (4) institutional and administrative requirements.

While securing employment is a primary concern, new immigrants often have trouble finding adequate work. Research has shown that “foreign-sounding” names are impediments to obtaining jobs (Bursell 2007; Oreopoulos and Dechief 2011). Consequently, many newcomers decide, or are advised by friends, family members, employment counsellors, or employers, to adopt an English or anglicised name. For example, one participant used an English name on job applications instead of his Serbian name because his temporary Canadian employer suggested that others might discard his application to avoid continual embarrassment if they hired him and were unable to pronounce his name. He rationalised the decision saying that immigration requires changing everything, even your name (personal interview, June 20, 2013). In another case, an Iraqi engineer called Jihad reported that he had applied for nearly 700 jobs across Canada over six years without success.³ Taking the advice of an employment counsellor who told him to “be neutral,” he began to use “Jay” on his resume. When he was finally hired, he had to write his legal name for the payroll. Later that day, the company called him to cancel his training, and he lost the job (personal interview, June 10, 2013).

Jihad: And one of the job was, uh, they accept me. . . . Everything was perfect. They said “tomorrow we will do the paperwork.” And next day I have to give them my real name because – for the – they have to pay me and these things. . . . And they took my social insurance number. And you have to see the face of the – that person when I – when I gave him the paper he said “oh this is your name?” I said “yes.” His face was – the colour of his face changed many times and he was angry but he couldn’t say anything, just – I was waiting for the next step which is the training. At the same day when I – they gave me the schedule for training. The same day when I left, they called me at my home and they said “We have to reschedule your – your uh training.” I said “okay and when?” They said “no we will call you again and give you the schedule.” [whistles] That’s it.

KP: They never called.

J: No.

Jihad attributes his failure to find work to associations Canadians make between his name, which is an alternative spelling of “jihad,” and radical Islamists or terrorists. Jihad explains that for Muslims, “jihad” refers to an internal struggle for self-control or self-improvement. It is a common male name with positive connotations. Unfortunately, the Arabic word “jihad” has taken on a narrow and negative meaning among

English speakers, referring to war waged on non-Muslims as part of a religious duty. Jihad and his wife both reported several incidents of people reacting with fear and suspicion when they hear or read his name. Given the imperative to support themselves and their families, many participants changed or altered their ethnic names that they felt hindered them in the job market. Sometimes this involved a legal name change, but due to the time and expense required, most simply assumed the new version for everyday use and kept the original name on legal documentation or identification.

For younger immigrants, school creates another force of conformity. For example, one woman named Mbaka wanted to change her name to Rebecca when she arrived in Canada at the age of 11 so that the other kids at school would be able to pronounce it (personal interview, December 7, 2012). Others who have children after they have immigrated choose ethnic names for their babies with English speakers in mind, avoiding particular non-English sounds or names that they imagine will provoke teasing in school. One Arabic-speaking woman who goes by Hanna said that when she entered elementary school in Canada, she discovered that everyone had a middle name, so she made one up for herself to conform to the norm (personal interview, November 27, 2012).

Hanna: I went through a weird phase in like elementary school where everybody had a middle name and I was like “oh I want a middle name.” So I made one up. I think I called myself like Nadine or something . . . I’m like “Yeah that’s my middle name.” But I didn’t have a middle name. I don’t think I understood the concept of a middle name. [laughs] I just wanted one.

Having settled in a small Ontario city with little diversity, Hanna explains that she assumed the name Hanna at school because it would have been too tiresome to explain the unfamiliar spelling and pronunciation of her Arabic name to everyone.

Hanna: You have to go into the explanations. . . . And it takes time and effort. And you have to do it over and over for every single person you meet. I mean I used to live in [city] and that’s – there was no way I was gonna live in [city] and go by the name [Arabic name].⁴ Like it would just not be possible. Like I would – I wouldn’t be able to live at all because [city] is a mostly um Caucasian oriented society, very – At the time it was fairly uneducated in terms of like ethnocultural diversity and what not. So I mean I would have – like I would have had to explain to every single person about my name. . . . It would have been gruelling to have to explain to every single person I meet.

This strategy of assimilating their names to avoid explanations was adopted by other participants as well. They were not only bothered by the constant corrections and by the continual mistakes but also by the frequent questions about where they were from and what their name means as well as by the judgments about the name and the assumptions of foreignness underlying such comments. One woman who has been in Canada for over 20 years and has a Polish name, Kinga, illustrates (personal interview, January 9, 2013).

Kinga: People say it's interesting or it's unique or "oh that's different." When they say "oh that's different" you think okay well why is it different? Is it because you never heard of it? And I've actually said that a few times when people said "oh that's unusual" I said "why is that unusual? Just because you never heard of it, that makes it unusual?" You know like – then try to like turn the tables on them a little bit because like people have to be aware of the implication of what comes out of their mouths... Well it's mostly people with English sounding names who will say "oh that's different." Or you know "that's unusual" in that kind of tone... I don't know what people think. Like I really don't think that people think about how their reactions are – are read by the person they're talking to. You know, um and I really think about saying things like um, "Oh your name is Bob? Like really? Your parents couldn't think of anything better or different? Like how original." [laughs]

Another woman with a Farsi name, Mahilla, who has lived in Canada for over 30 years, similarly describes her irritation with questions about where she is from when she introduces herself (personal interview, July 7, 2012).

Mahilla: The other thing I find is people ask me "where are you from?" You know?

KP: Yeah, they see the name, they assume you are from somewhere

M: Yes and like, depending on my mood if I'm in a crabby mood or if I just want to give the person a hard time, I say "I'm from London, Ontario" ... I mean my take is, you don't know me and you know, what right have you got to ask these questions?

When Anglo-Canadians comment on someone's name, saying "that's unusual" in a particular tone of voice (as Kinga noted), it can be interpreted as implying that people with unusual names do not belong. While the tone conveys suspicion or hesitation, the comment highlights difference in an exclusionary way. The interviewees say they feel hurt, annoyed, or offended at the

implication that they do not belong, that they have to explain themselves, their presence, or their parents' naming choice. Moreover, the "unusual" name provokes an assessment of their identity that sets up a power asymmetry. When a Canadian-born person comments on the markedness of an immigrant's name, that person is claiming the right to make judgments about the immigrant, as if the name were being submitted for approval rather than for information. Even positive comments such as "that's a beautiful/pretty/nice name" can be seen as condescending or patronising because of the associated emphasis on difference and a power imbalance. Such unwarranted evaluations are insulting to immigrants. As Kinga suggests, Anglo-Canadians would find it rude if she replied with a similarly derogatory comment about their name being too ordinary and unoriginal.

Some immigrants rationalise that it is easier to conform through assimilation of their names than to endure insulting comments or engage in the endless explanations and corrections that keeping their ethnic names necessitates. By making it easier for others to deal with their names, they make integration easier for themselves. Those who do not assimilate may respond, or imagine responding, to what they perceive as rude questions or comments with equally insulting comments in an effort to regain some of the interactional power they lose by being made "foreign" through judgmental remarks.

The final force of conformity is created by institutional and administrative policies and practices. As James Scott, John Tehranian, and Jeremy Mathias (2002) explain, the development of the modern (Western) nation-state required "the fixing of personal names" and a standardisation of name structure to "locate citizens uniquely and unambiguously" and to perform vital administrative functions. During the process of interpreting and modifying names, migrants' names are frequently distanced from their ethnic origins as some names get rewritten in a different alphabet and the majority undergo changes of spelling and pronunciation in order to "fit" within the host society language (Alia 2007; Dechief 2009). Newcomers with long names or names with more than three components find their names truncated on forms and documents that cannot accommodate them. Others with only a single name component are assigned a surname. Some name components get mistakenly categorised so that last names are written as first names, components are hyphenated together, or functional components meaning "of" or "son" are elevated to middle or last name status in non-

sensical ways in the original languages. Such alterations create problems when migrants try to access services or carry out bureaucratic procedures. They are ridiculed and blamed for their difficulties by institutional agents suspicious of, or frustrated by, inconsistencies.

Immigrants are pushed by these daily troubles and degrading experiences to make their names conform to expected patterns established by administrative policy because as Pina-Cabral (2015:186) observes, “A person’s name is seen as somehow continuous with a person’s value, so nowhere can names be used in an absurd or irresponsible way without that having implications for the bearer.” In response, “many groups and individuals have claimed the right to name themselves, whether by developing ethnoracially distinctive naming practices, maintaining multiple pronunciations and spellings of their name, choosing a new name as a political statement, or establishing situationally specific names” (Bucholtz forthcoming). With an understanding of the forces of conformity, I turn now to the discourses of agency with which some immigrants justify resisting assimilation of their names, even as they continue to strive for a sense of belonging.

Maintaining Names: Discourses of Agency

Discourses of agency refer to ways of talking about “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001:112), where the agent’s (linguistic) acts have the power to affect the actions of others and are evaluated in terms of competence, morality, and responsibility (Duranti 2004). About a third of the 53 immigrants interviewed employ discourses of agency in taking a stance against name alterations in most situations.⁴ As they explain their motivations for resisting social dominance through naming practices, beliefs about language, identity, and morality are intertwined in their talk. The discourses of agency that emerged in the interviews were rooted in three main ideologies: a belief in “true names,” a moral imperative to respect personhood, and a need for a strong self.

A belief in “true names” is salient in the meta-agentive discourse of some immigrants who insist on keeping their ethnic names. Pina-Cabral (2010) describes the “conditions of truth” for personal names. The first truth condition is subjecthood, which refers to the legal and official written registration of a name by an authority such as a government or church. This official name becomes the only true name. The second condition is national or ethnic belonging, meaning that the true name must be in the language that best characterises the person’s dominant national or ethnic identity. Trans-

lations (or anglicisations) of names diminish the essential truth of a name. The third condition, unitariness, means that to be a true name it must relate to the essence of being, the self, or the soul of the person. That is, a person as a physical being has only one essence and therefore only one true name. Whereas some people (including anthropologists) conceive of identities as multiple – whether simultaneously or during different periods of one’s life – others give more ontological weight to some aspects of a person (such as names) than other aspects. As Pina-Cabral (2010:298) observes, a person may use more than one name, including translations and aliases, and these may be considered adequate, functional, and even acceptable. However, only the one name that meets the three conditions of subjecthood, national/ethnic belonging, and unitariness will be the true name. The ideology of true names and truth conditions for names adds insights to our understanding of immigrants’ discourses about names in Canada.

When Canadian documents show truncated, rearranged, or incorrectly transliterated names, some participants say that the truth conditions of subjecthood and national/ethnic belonging have been violated. The “new” name on their documents is not recognisable because it is not in the script of their language, and it is not the full name they originally registered in their home country. This situation causes anxiety, resentment, and a sense of disassociation for some people, who feel that they are pretending to be someone they are not or that their true essence is not being recognised by Canadians, who refer to them with the “false” or “less than real” name. For example, Lina, an Arabic-speaking CCLC staff member who emigrated from the Middle East 10 years ago, describes one of her client’s reactions to the mistake on his Canadian permanent resident card (personal interview, June 12, 2013). Sections relating to true names are italicized.

Lina: Sometimes immigration makes mistakes by the name. And this is what I helped uh a guy like three months ago. His name, they switched it. The first name was the last name and the last name – And he was so crazy [upset] about it. It’s not that he doesn’t like the names or – He said “*it change my whole family. It’s not me*” [laughs] “*It’s somebody else. My name is – Ahmed.*” And his last name is Said. They put the opposite so his last name is Ahmed. He said “even later on when I take the citizenship and I go back to my country, *it’s not my family.* If I want to bring my – one of my family here they say ‘oh no you are – your family is Ahmed, her family is Said. *It’s not you.*” So he was so crazy [upset].

She offers another example from a different client.

Lina: When they do the permanent resident cards, there is not enough space to hold some of the names, although it is not uh that much like uh one of the last names it was like five letters. They just put the first three so he's stuck with half of his name and in all his documents, in all the government work his name is xxx three letters. *And it's not him.* And this is the family name. And he gets it "This is not my name." [laughs] You know and – this is wrong because they don't have enough space in the database or the computer you are changing – They don't think of it as legally, *you are changing his legal name.* His papers are complete. There is nothing wrong with it. It's just your document which is wrong.

As immigrants, they are being made into new subjects of the Canadian state, and their documents, such as the permanent resident card, the citizenship card, and the social insurance card, are part of this process. As the official registers of identity, the name that appears on these documents is the only valid one. Previous documents issued by other states are irrelevant in Canada, except as sources for producing new documents. Many participants, especially from Middle Eastern countries where Arabic script is used, complained that even the names appearing on their documents from the home country contained spelling or other errors. These errors were then reproduced on Canadian documents in addition to new alterations. Things are even more complicated for those who maintain membership in transnational communities, travelling back and forth between Canada and another country. As Ahmed, the CCLC client, pointed out above, discrepancies between names on Canadian and other documents can cause problems when people try to cross borders and conditions of subjecthood do not appear to be met. The inconsistency between what people believed to be their true name and what was written on official documents was troubling for many people.

For others, the truth condition of unitariness is more prominent. Recall the case of Jihad, the Iraqi engineer. His wife, Shetha, expressed sadness that she can no longer say his name in public and resents that he was obliged to change his name to Jay to avoid discrimination in the job market (personal interview, June 3, 2013).

Shetha: The name is not just name. It's your – the first thing you hear when you're a baby. It's part of you. To change it is not easy. It doesn't feel right. It doesn't seem right. You don't hear it right. It hurts. But if you have to do it, you don't have a choice....

"Jay" is not part of our culture, it's not part – *Like it's not him for God's sake!* It's not him. But I don't have a choice. It's a scary name for most people [in Canada].

For these people, changing their names represents a shift in identity that is too radical because it disrupts the notion of a unitary self. The effort of correcting others or simply enduring their mistakes is worthwhile to preserve unitariness. Their capacity to rename themselves is constrained by the need for the name to meet the truth conditions. This was the response of the wife of the Serbian man mentioned earlier, who told me that unlike her husband, changing her own name would be impossible. It would be too strange, she imagined: "Suddenly I am another person if I have a different name." Her strategy was to anglicise the pronunciation of the last name slightly by replacing the palatalised [lʲ] with an English [l] so that, for example, Ključić ['klʲudʒitʃ] becomes ['kludʒitʃ]. Beyond this, she would make no changes to spelling or other aspects of pronunciation, such as accepting a final [k] instead of [tʃ].

Name changes or alterations are described as being made only when absolutely necessary and with the undesirable consequence of being obliged to use a name that is less than true. As a settlement worker from the CCLC reports, when immigrants are given the opportunity to change their legal names on the citizenship document, they rarely do, even when their name has caused them difficulties (personal interview, February 23, 2013).

A second discourse of agency is grounded in the moral imperative to symbolically demonstrate respect for personhood by respecting names. Elsewhere, I have discussed how names are seen as symbols of persons when moral values are assigned to naming practices (Pennesi 2014). From this ideological perspective, getting people's names right (spelling, pronunciation, and structure) is a demonstration of respect for personhood that acknowledges the agency of others in determining their own identity. In this data set, immigrants insisting that others address them in the "right" way is a demand for recognition of their agency and their legitimacy as members of society. In this way, properly uttering names functions as greetings do, identifying "worthy participants in interaction" (Duranti 2004:456). As one woman put it, "If you can't say my name, why are we having a conversation?" (personal interview, December 7, 2012). Importantly, this does not mean that there is an expectation of competence; only of effort. When people demonstrate that they are trying to fulfill the moral obligation to get the name right, errors are forgiven. For example, when a high school student named Tasneem

corrected a teacher's mispronunciation of her name, he took offence and then began calling her by a shortened version of her name that she disliked. Short forms and mispronunciations "ruin" the name, she explains. Later in the interview, she mentions the episode again and asserts that what really bothered her was that he was not being respectful and was not making a sincere effort (personal interview, March 30, 2012).

Tasneem: I corrected him and he's like "oh who are you to correct me?" kind of thing so ... it started from there and he just – one day he just started calling me Taz. ... If I tell you my name is Tasneem and you say Tazneem right away like you haven't even tried so like why are you changing my name? ... *Like my name isn't really that big a deal as long as you try I don't really care* (laugh) it's just the name is ruined.

In recounting this experience, Tasneem expresses her belief that despite being in an inferior position to the teacher, she still deserved to be treated with respect. Her attempt to correct him was a move to take a more agentive role. She could overlook errors if the teacher had acknowledged his moral obligation to try to get her name right, but he did not make an effort, refused to accept her correction, and renamed her with a shortened version that included the incorrect consonant that had initially "ruined" her name.

It is the moral imperative to get names right that prevents some people from anglicising their own names when faced with the mistreatment of their names by others. Their agency extends to being respectful of their own personhood by maintaining their names and being indifferent to the behaviour of others, which they cannot directly control but which they can influence indirectly through their non-assimilationist stance. Hanna, in her mid-twenties, explains.

Hanna: Actually it's only started recently, maybe the past two or three years? But I actually started introducing myself with my proper name to people. Like before I was just like, "call me Hanna." So then people started making Hanna Banana, Hanna Montana, Hanna whatever, right? [laughs] I was like listen, I might as well just stick to my name. I like my name and I appreciate it more now I think now that I'm a little bit older. ... I think *I started building my actual personality* a little bit later. But you know *I decided I'm like you know what, this is my name and it's not hard so if you cannot say it then it's your loss.*

Hanna found that her strategy to avoid ridicule by taking on an English-sounding name was ineffective; people still teased her. When she was older and "started building [her] personality," she decided that if she was

going to encounter name-related problems, she might as well use her "real" name. Here again, we can see the truth conditions of national-ethnic belonging and unitariness being relevant as Hanna began to reflect on her identity and the importance of her true name in the construction of her sense of self. With a clearer definition of her "personality" and newfound confidence, she was able to discursively reconfigure the relationship between herself and others (a generic "you") so that the mispronunciations were thereafter seen as a problem for others rather than for her.

Hanna's decision to stop anglicising her name and to go back to using her "proper" name once she had become an adult and had been living in Canada for over a decade also illustrates the third discourse of agency: the need for a strong self to resist dominance and to defend against mistreatment. This kind of meta-agentive discourse makes explicit an ideology of personhood that highlights the development of psychological resources such as self-esteem, self-control, a sense of purpose, critical thinking, and reflexivity (Côté and Levine 2002). Like Hanna, several participants told stories of their defensive or indifferent reactions when their names had provoked disrespectful treatment by others. These stories of resistance demonstrated their confidence in asserting their own identity and exercising agency by protecting their names and their identities from assimilation.

Mahilla, who immigrated to Canada as an adult, always says her name the same way and is not bothered by other people's frequent mispronunciations. Like Tasneem, she finds renaming offensive. Her meta-agentive discourse centres on a strong self and a moral imperative to be respectful of persons and names. Making a mistake while making an effort is acceptable; refusing to try is disrespectful, discourteous, and rude.

KP: What's your reaction if somebody says it incorrectly?

M: Well that doesn't bother me. What bothers me is when people, "oh I can't pronounce your name so I'm gonna call you Molly or Margaret." When I was teaching as a term position at a Canadian university the department head decided, oh my name was too difficult to remember. It is three um three ah syllables so he was going to give me the nickname Molly. And I said "you can name me whatever you want but doesn't require of me to answer to." End of story, you know? I've got a name you know, I mean I learnt your name so if you don't have the courtesy to learn mine well, that's your choice and I don't have to answer (laugh)... Well he called me Molly a few times and I just ignored him and then he, he could perfectly well pronounce my name, you know... Oh I thought it was undeniably rude.

Hanna, Tasneem, and Mahilla all demonstrate strength and indifference toward what they perceive as disrespectful behaviour. Taking this non-assimilationist stance toward their own names is a display of agency that reinforces their confidence and strength. Mahilla frames the learning of people's names as a choice. She asserts that if people choose to be disrespectful by not learning her name, she can ignore the transgression, and her own behaviour will remain unaffected (that is, she will continue to learn others' names). Hanna said that it is others' loss if they are unable to learn new names, which is an idiom conveying a stance of indifference. Similarly, Tasneem explains that she doesn't really care as long as people try. These women present a view of society in which all individuals have moral responsibilities toward themselves and toward others. Their responsibility toward themselves is to build an internally strong, unitary self that acts morally and independently of the actions of others. The responsibility people have toward others is to treat them with respect by recognising the essential similarities in all human beings and making a demonstrable effort to accommodate differences. In terms of naming practices, this means that they expect to be able to choose how they are addressed and to have others comply with that to the best of their ability.

Names and Social Exclusion

Underlying the discourses surrounding names are personal experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and racism. Even as participants aligned with national discourses about the ideally reciprocal aspects of integration, they reflected on these negative experiences and critiqued the exclusionary social practices they encountered in relation to their names. They know first-hand that immigrant experiences of Canada's multiculturalism are not like the national discourse promoting it, in which integration is described as a straightforward process of learning English, getting a job, and making friends. Contrary to the focus on individual agency and immigrants' responsibilities for adaptation in that discourse, barriers to integration are not all personal, and systemic discrimination severely constrains the agency of immigrants (Frideres 2008). For example, a 30-year-old Iraqi immigrant called Hussein described his problems integrating, saying he feels isolated and ignored, like a ghost. Despite his education and extensive work experience in Iraq, he has been unsuccessful in finding work in Canada. Near the end of our interview, he decided that he would change his name since it may help him get a job. What troubles him the most, however, is his status as a "ghost" in Canadian society (personal interview, August 1, 2013).

Hussein: I still have problems here in Canada because of the community. I don't feel I'm part of this community... I feel like a ghost. Yeah, nobody sees me. Nobody knows that I'm there or, yes, just like by myself. And everybody see each other and like a ghost. Do you see the ghost there? [laughs] So I don't feel that I'm part of this community... I don't have a friend, a Canadian friend... I have had some difficulties you can say like discrimination or because of where I'm from, because of I'm not Canadian or I look different... If I was Canadian I don't think I would like to have a friend from the Middle East because of what I know about them. Unfortunately what the media is showing is not wrong, it's just not the entire picture... So I'm not asking you about my name 'cause I think I will, I'll change it ... and even my last name maybe if I could. But I'm asking you about my situation. I mean, I don't want to be a ghost anymore [laugh]. It's really hard. So what, what, what would you recommend?

As I discussed my research with Hussein and told him about other stories I had heard, he came to perceive me as an ally. Despite only having met me once before, Hussein shared with me his deep feelings of frustration and loneliness, even asking my advice about what he could do to make friends and not "be a ghost anymore." Like many other participants, Hussein saw the interview about his name as an opportunity to be heard, understood, and valued. That he reached out to an acquaintance in this way points to the importance of connecting, being included, and belonging.

Other participants also used the interview about their names as an opportunity to report incidents of exclusion, such as not being served in a store, and discrimination, such as a woman being hired one day but replaced the next when she arrived wearing a hijab. Penelope Eckert (1989) and Norma Mendoza-Denton (2008) show how linguistic markers are combined with other "symbols of category membership," such as clothing, hairstyle, recreational behaviours, and social gathering places, to produce recognisable identities such as "jock" or "gang member." In a similar way, immigrants are identified as foreign by the Canadian-born population based on a constellation of signifiers including different ways of speaking, dress, physical appearance, behaviour, and, as this study shows, their ethnically-marked names. Once categorised as "not belonging," they then become targets for racism, exclusion, and discrimination. Shetha, a new Canadian citizen from Iraq, makes explicit the link between acceptance of immigrants as legitimate citizens and the demonstration of this acceptance in treating them respectfully, such as

correctly pronouncing their names (personal interview, June 3, 2013).

Shetha: Because it's – it's all of the things links to each other. And a name it's – it's one of the small things that lead to other things. And it's – it's not the only thing that you can change. You can change the respect of – of the way that people think about us. Because even if they pronounce our names wrong in the future, but they treat us right, it won't matter for us. *Because what we want is the treatment. It's not how you pronounce our name... Our issue we want to be accepted, respected.* And we be part of the culture that we chose to be part of. We came here by decision. I worked so hard to be Canadian I – I feel like I should have the same treatment as you... I would love to see that people understand that that I'm – I'm part of this society. Honestly, hundred percent. My heart is over here. My children are being raised over here... And they are already Canadian one hundred percent... So if I don't love it and I don't want to be here, do I give this country the most valuable thing that I have in my life which is my children? To give this country my children, I feel like I deserve to be part of it.

Shetha argues that she deserves to be treated as other Canadian-born citizens and to be “part of the culture” because she made the choice to immigrate and has fulfilled her obligation to integrate by working hard, learning English, getting a job, and raising her children to be culturally Canadian. She mentions correct pronunciation of names as an example of respectful treatment but notes that this would be a minor issue if she and her family were treated better in other more important ways. In other words, names serve as stance objects in that mispronouncing or misspelling immigrants' names reflects a negative evaluation of immigrants and positions them as outsiders. Since they already suffer from discrimination and social exclusion for being identified as immigrants, Iraqis, and Muslims (Forcese 2002; Jamil 2012), name-related problems take on more significance as “microaggressions” (Kohli and Solórzano 2012) in daily interactions that insult them, deny them legitimacy, and imply that they do not belong.

It is the accumulation of daily interactions with members of Canadian society that comprise immigrant experiences, and through these experiences, their identities are constructed. Overt acts of discrimination and racism are coupled with frequent acts of micro-aggression, such as the careless mistreatment of names. While the name-related turns of a conversation may be very brief and peripheral to the main purpose of the interaction (for example, in introductions or as identifiers on a written document), this study indicates that names are

not trivial and, instead, can be crucial in establishing a frame for interpreting the rest of the interaction. Greetings, introductions, and written terms of address that specify names indicate varying degrees of acceptance by another group or institution. Name-related problems that occur during these interactions can become amplified and symbolise a lack of acceptance, agency, and belonging. For example, a Brazilian professor named Raimundo, who resisted the forces of name assimilation, was troubled by the constant difficulties he encountered because his name was unfamiliar to Canadians. To cite a few examples, his last name was spelled incorrectly on his work-related e-mail account; a similar error meant that his paycheque was not delivered; he missed a medical appointment because a mistake in his name made it unrecognisable in the computer system; people rarely pronounced it as it should be in Portuguese but invented ridiculous (in his view) alternatives; and he always had to repeat, spell, or explain his name during introductions. After a year in Canada, Raimundo decided not to pursue permanent residency and returned to Brazil. He partly explained this decision by expressing his feeling that he did not belong and never would, saying, “I'm nobody here. They can't even say my name or write it the right way. Why should I subject myself to this humiliation every day and be a second-class citizen for the rest of my life?” Framing his complaint by using a “can't even” construction emphasises the idea that getting names right is a demonstration of acceptance and belonging at the most basic level. As these examples make clear, name-related experiences are embedded within the process of trying to establish a sense of cultural belonging in Canada.

Redistributing Responsibility for Integration

Drawing on concepts of personal, ethnic, and national identity, along with language ideologies, the immigrants in this study promote the view that the integration of newcomers requires Canadian-born citizens to do some of the work of adaptation. In light of the meta-agentive discourses analysed here, the host society's responsibility to be welcoming of newcomers as co-workers, neighbours, and friends can only be accomplished by moving beyond mere tolerance and creating more inclusive institutions and social interactions. Members of the host society can participate in the integration process by learning to spell and pronounce unfamiliar names correctly and by avoiding making assumptions about an immigrant's language ability, citizenship status, religion, political affiliation, morality, or work skills based on stereotypes that are often indexed by one's name. For example, employees

of the CCLC and of the university, many of whom are immigrants, take seriously their responsibility as (new) members of the host society to be respectful and to try to get names right, just as they want their names to be used correctly by others. Doug, a CCLC staff member and immigrant from South Asia, explains it this way to the student researcher LV (personal interview, December 11, 2012):

LV: So how do you feel when you mispronounce the name?

Doug: I feel awkward. I feel embarrassed, uh, I feel a little disappointed. I feel like I've lost a little connection. But once I get it, the connection, it's wonderful, it really adds because it's a form of recognition and it's in their language... You let them know that you would wish to see them the way they see themselves ... also understanding that there is difference between us and in just in little ways that difference can be bridged, even if it's just learning how to say their name properly.

Another CCLC staff member, Hanna, aligns with the immigrants who want to maintain their ethnic names and does her part to accommodate her clients, saying "I don't want to say [pronounce] like the Canadianised way 'cause that's not – that won't be their name" (personal interview, November 27, 2012). The underlying model of multiculturalism presented in these comments is that people should be free to retain their "un-Canadianised" name and, with it, their identity. For this to happen, others must be willing to learn new ways of naming.

Immigrants' respectful treatment of their own and other newcomers' names is a move toward a more equal and inclusive society, especially as more immigrants take up institutional positions as leaders, decision makers, and service providers. Sherin, a community educator at the CCLC who immigrated as an adult, made this transformative role explicit as she advised newcomers to follow her example when responding to the difficulties they may face with their names (personal interview, December 4, 2012).

Sherin: I take this as an opportunity to educate people. It takes lots of patience. It's not easy... We have to be, you know um optimistic... When I see the frustration I said "listen, attitude and patience are very important keys to be successful person in this country and everywhere. So um you know people they don't know how to pronounce your name, you know, just be friendly and you know, help them. They want to learn. Consider yourself as a teacher and help them. You know like – you know a positive attitude is very important.

LV: So you encourage people to continue having their same name and to be proud of their names?

SH: Yes.

LV: Instead of –

SH: Changing it. Yes. Absolutely.

In this analysis, I have identified some of the discourses of agency that work against the forces of conformity and influence participants to take a non-assimilationist stance toward their names. This research contributes to the literature on assimilation and integration in multicultural contexts that attempts to explain the different paths leading some immigrant groups to be more successfully integrated than others (Biles, Burstein and Frideres 2008). Attending to how the treatment of personal names affects newcomers' sense of belonging and identity adds insight into the process of socio-cultural integration at the level of individual lived experience, complementing the group-level descriptions of integration indicators more frequently found in the immigration literature. Faced with an ethnic hierarchy in Canadian society that constrains their access to social resources, jobs, and even housing, immigrants need to be able to constantly adapt to new social experiences and reinvent themselves. For some, this adaptation can involve assimilation of their name to benefit from the social advantages of identifying as white or English speaking. For the participants in this study, adaptation involves taking a stance against indifference and educating others about the cultural importance of naming. Taking a non-assimilationist stance toward names challenges national discourses on immigration and multiculturalism by redistributing responsibility for integration to reduce the burden on immigrants. Thus, this study begins to address the reciprocal aspects of integration by considering the ways in which words and actions of members of the host society are interpreted by newcomers. As James Frideres (2008:87) notes, research on integration should not focus exclusively on immigrants but should examine closely both sides of immigrant–host society interactions. Our goal must be to transform social structures and relations so that we foster feelings of belonging among all citizens and increase the participation of immigrants in all aspects of society. More attention to names can lead us toward this goal.

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Notes

- 1 Canadian Multiculturalism Act, RSC 1985, c. 24.
- 2 The research began in London, Ontario, where English is the dominant language. Interviewees only discussed their names in relation to English speakers and processes of anglicisation. There were no comments about how their names might have been treated differently in a French-Canadian context. The project has now expanded to include Montreal, Quebec, so that French-dominant interactions can be considered in comparison. The Montreal data was not yet available at the time of writing.
- 3 Participants consented to using their real names in publications when describing their own experiences. On occasions where interviewees discuss someone else's name, such as a client or family member, they and the other person are identified by pseudonyms indexing similar linguistic, ethnic, and gendered identities. This protects the confidentiality of both parties while still illustrating analytical points.
- 4 Hanna did not want to be identified by her Arabic name in this research and, instead, chose to use her assumed English name.
- 5 This subset of interviewees includes only those who made explicit statements about not changing or altering their names and who reported that they used no other names. This subset excludes interviewees who did not report any problems with their names, either because English speakers did not usually have difficulty saying or spelling their names or because they were simply not bothered by any of the anglicisations they encountered. For those participants, the issue of changing or altering names did not arise in the interview, and they did not take any overt stance toward name changes.

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