

AperTO - Archivio Istituzionale Open Access dell'Università di Torino

Here, There and Everywhere: A Journey Into the Hybrid Identity of a Global Athlete

This is the author's manuscript

Original Citation:

Availability:

This version is available <http://hdl.handle.net/2318/136603> since 2022-02-06T12:58:17Z

Terms of use:

Open Access

Anyone can freely access the full text of works made available as "Open Access". Works made available under a Creative Commons license can be used according to the terms and conditions of said license. Use of all other works requires consent of the right holder (author or publisher) if not exempted from copyright protection by the applicable law.

(Article begins on next page)

TEXTUS
English Studies in Italy
Rivista dell'Associazione Italiana di Anglistica

Consiglio Direttivo
Editorial Board

Carlo Maria Bajetta (Aosta), John Douthwaite
(Genova), Oriana Palusci (Napoli)

Segretario di Redazione
Editorial Secretary

Ian Harvey

Redazione
Editorial Office

Dipartimento di Scienze della Comunicazione Lin-
guistica e Culturale – Sezione di Anglistica
Piazza S. Sabina 2
16124 Genova (Italy)

Casa Editrice
Publisher

Tilgher-Genova s.a.s.
Via Assarotti 31/15
16122 Genova (Italy)
Tel. + 39.010.839.11.40 – Fax + 39.010.87.06.53
E-mail: tilgher@tilgher.it – <http://www.tilgher.it>

I dattiloscritti e ogni corrispondenza di natura redazionale devono essere in-
dirizzati alla Redazione della Rivista. I dattiloscritti dei contributi pervenuti,
anche se non pubblicati, non vengono restituiti.

Richieste di informazioni su prezzi e disponibilità, ordini di abbonamento o
di fascicoli separati, reclami, ecc. devono essere inviati alla Casa Editrice.

*Manuscripts and all editorial communications should be addressed to the Edi-
torial Office. Manuscripts, whether published or unpublished, will not be re-
turned.*

*Any request for information about prices and availability, as well as orders,
claims, etc. should be sent to the Publisher.*

Condizioni di vendita - Terms of sale →

TEXTUS
English Studies in Italy

Volume XXII (2009)

No. 1 (January-April)

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND POSITIONING
IN DISCOURSE AND SOCIETY

edited by
Nicoletta Vasta and Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard

CONTENTS

Nicoletta Vasta and Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard	<i>Introduction</i>	3
Janet Bowker	<i>"Building out the Business": The Dynamics of Metaphor in the Construction of Corporate Identity in Business Audio-conferencing.....</i>	23
Donatella Malavasi	<i>"I hope that I can convince readers of...": The Construction of Professional Identity in Marketing Research Articles</i>	43
Michele Sala and Larissa D'Angelo	<i>Gender- and Authority-related Writing Performance in Academic Research Articles</i>	59
John Douthwaite and Elisabetta Zurru	<i>Patriarchy and Alterity: Re-considering (Female) Identity and Its Construction.....</i>	77
Cynthia Kellett Bidoli	<i>Multisemiotic Transfer of Cinematic American Identity to Deaf Italians.....</i>	113
Monica Turci	<i>Writing the Self: The Autobiographical Subject as Language Construct. The Case of Lost in Translation. A Life in a New Language by Eva Hoffman</i>	133
Aurelia Martelli	<i>Immigrant Identities in the Italian Ethnic Press</i>	147
Cecilia Boggio	<i>Here, There and Everywhere: A Journey into the Hybrid Identity of a Global Athlete</i>	163
Giuseppe Balirano	<i>Towards a Turkish EU-entity: A Semiotic Approach to the Reading of EUROPA's Website Cyber-representation of a "European Turkey"</i>	179

(continua nella pagina seguente →)



TILGHER-GENOVA

Maria Bortoluzzi and Piergiorgio Trevisan <i>Identities in "Non-places": The Geosemiotics of Computer-mediated Learning Environments in Second Life</i>	199
Anthony Baldry and Deirdre Kantz <i>New Dawns and New Identities for Multimodality. Public Information Films in The National Archives</i>	225
<i>Contributors</i>	255

(Instructions: p. 262)

TEXTUS

Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Genova
No. 36 del 16.6.1988

Direttore responsabile: Renato Venturelli
Proprietario: Associazione Italiana di Anglistica

Editore: Tilgher-Genova s.a.s.
Iscrizione R.O.C. No. 6210

Stampato presso la Microart's S.p.A. in Recco (Genova)
per conto della Casa Editrice Tilgher-Genova s.a.s.

ISSN 1824-3967

© Casa Editrice Tilgher-Genova s.a.s.
Via Assarotti 31 - 16122 Genova (Italy)
www.tilgher.it

Poste Italiane S.p.A. Spedizione in A.P. - D.L. 353/2003
(conv. in L. 27/02/2004 No. 46) - art. 1 comma 1
DCB Genova - No. 1/2009

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary societies seem to be dissolving people's sense of emplacement and belonging into what Bauman (2000) calls "liquid modernity", while allowing for the creation of "transition spaces" (Sloterdijk 2005: 238) wherein identities are cognitively constructed and discursively performed as multiple, collective, fragmented, contingent, shifting, and so forth. Indeed, as Duszak (2002: 2-3) aptly synthesizes, "human social identities tend to be indeterminate, situational rather than permanent, dynamically and interactively constructed" through socio-psychological and discursive negotiation.

Thus, far from being fixed or subjective, the concept of identity is set on a cline – a visual metaphor which better captures its fluidity – and at the crossroads of (our own as well as others'): projects of the self as a pre-discursive, personal construct; products of the social (viz., situational and discursive) context; and embodiments of ideology as the wider system of cultural meaning-making agreed on in any given socio-historic community. In other words, doing identity work derives from, and has a direct bearing on both the private and the public spheres. As opposed to the essentialist view which locates identity in the private realm of cognition and psychological experience, the post-modern, social constructionist perspective (e.g., Vygotsky 1978, Harré 1992, Hall 1996) conceives of identity as a process inscribed in a social matrix, publicly constituted rather than simply reflected in discourse.

Identity is a relational, polyphonous, as well as culture-specific concept, performed in, and moulded through socio-discursive inter-

Cecilia Boggio

Here, There and Everywhere: A Journey into the Hybrid Identity of a Global Athlete



Fig. 1 – *Sports Illustrated*, July 12 2004

1. *Introduction*

Maria Sharapova, a Russian-born professional tennis player, is a three-time Grand Slam Champion, a former world number one ranked player, and presently one of the top ten female tennis players. On the court, she is well-known for her mental stamina and for playing point after point with incredible intensity. The press world-

wide has labeled her "Siberian Siren," "Maria Full of Grace," "Tennis Princess," "Nike Goddess" for her looks, poise and demeanor on and off the tennis court.

From a promotional perspective, the versatility of Maria Sharapova — a successful tennis player who is also charming, good-looking, and with a very photogenic face — makes her particularly suited for cross-promotion, a fundamental characteristic in the era of branding. However, differently to the majority of popular athletes, Sharapova is not simply a branded athlete — a star athlete with a highly scrutinized private identity as well as public persona who plays a role in several varied corporate marketing strategies. Instead, she is a "brand presence" (Klein 2000: 55), a position which, so far, has only been attained by the American basketball player Michael Jordan, the ultimate (male) celebrity-athlete (Denkin 2001: 3). As a "brand presence," Sharapova is capable of absorbing an array of consumer product companies into the SHARAPOVA brand, and thus completely erasing the boundaries between sponsor and sponsored as well as between private and public identities.

Since capturing at age seventeen her first Grand Slam title at Wimbledon in July 2004, Maria Sharapova has increasingly been defined as a "global athlete," a "global sports star," an athlete with "global appeal," or a "global marketing phenomenon." Apart from being an international sports celebrity with sponsors worldwide, the highest paid female athlete ever (with estimated earnings of \$23 million a year), and the second most searched sporting name on Yahoo's Internet search engine in 2007 (largely due to the release of her Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Calendar), what does it take to be an icon of "globalized commercial culture" (Machin and van Leeuwen 2008: 41)? This study intends to demonstrate that the first step in the investigation of Maria Sharapova as a "brand presence" is to define the main characteristics that turn a sports celebrity into a brand presence in the era of branding, one cannot achieve the status of "brand presence" without having a global reach. What is it, then, that makes a female professional athlete a "global athlete"? Taking Maria Sharapova as a case study, I argue that there are three main characteristics, or signifiers, at work in the making of a female global

athlete: namely, a hybrid identity, an “acceptable” athleticism (i.e., the perfect fusion of femininity and athletic prowess) and an endorsement contract with Nike Inc. (being a “Nike Athlete” is undoubtedly a big asset).

2. *Materials and Methods*

Although all three signifiers, i.e., a hybrid identity, an “acceptable” athleticism, and an endorsement contract with Nike Inc., are equally important in the construction of a female global athlete, this study only focuses on Maria Sharapova’s *hybrid identity*, a characteristic that makes her particularly suitable for “multicultural marketing” (Lombardo 2006: 3). I conduct my analysis within an interdisciplinary framework that relies on critical discourse analysis as applied to discourses of migration and belonging (Iedema and Caldas Coulthard 2008, Delanty, Wodak and Jones 2007), as well as on the fields of media and communication studies (Machin and van Leeuwen 2008, Stevenson 2004, Denkin 2001) and feminist theory (Butler 1990, Heywood and Dworkin 2003).

After a brief introduction to the borderless world of professional tennis, I define *hybrid identity* and explain the theoretical background from which it stems. In particular, I highlight the crucial role played by Judith Butler’s notion of “identity performance” (1990: 26) in my definition of identity and, therefore, I illustrate how Maria Sharapova continues to perform her “long-term identity” (the identity she started to create for herself before becoming a professional athlete), through how she performs her “identity-in-practice” (her current identity as a professional tennis player).

I shall analyze, then, the linguistic/discursive dimension of Sharapova’s *hybrid identity*. Starting from the assumption that “discourse and text are sites where cultures are jointly constructed and displayed” (Cortese and Dusak 2005: 11) and, thus, where identities are negotiated, I analyze selected answers from the transcript of Maria Sharapova’s official pre-tournament press conference at Wimbledon 2008 (June 21, 2008). I chose this press conference for two

main reasons. First of all, because it is a quite recent press conference and, therefore, it gives one the current status, so to speak, of Sharapova's "identity-in-practice". Second, because it is a quite long press conference (the transcript runs 2,384 words against the average 1,000 words of a traditional post-match press conference) as well as one in which she is not only asked to talk about current events in her life but also about past events. Moreover, since it is not a traditional post-match press conference, she is asked a wide range of questions not necessarily related to the tournament. For the same reason, she is more willing to answer extensively and her answers are not influenced by the positive or negative outcome of a match, as is often the case in post-match press conferences.

3. *The Sport of Tennis and the Hybrid Identity of a Global Athlete*

3.1. The Borderless World of Professional Tennis

Tennis is one of the few truly global sports. Similar to golf and track and field – whose appeal, however, is not as transnational as that of tennis – tennis is an individual sport. Except at the Olympic Games (where it was re-introduced as a medal competition only at the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea)¹ and in the Federation Cup (the women's equivalent of the men's Davis Cup),² players are representing themselves, not their countries. Indeed, the individual performance of the athlete is what matters most in a tennis match, to the point that players are not allowed to communicate to anybody, including their coaches, while competing. Also the main organizing body of women's professional tennis, the WTA (Women's Tennis Association), is not tied to any nation; rather, it is

¹ Tennis was part of the Summer Olympic Games program from the inaugural 1896 Olympic Games but was dropped after the 1924 Summer Olympics. After its reappearances as a demonstration sport at the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, it returned as a full medal sport at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, and has been played at every edition of the Games since then.

² The Fed Cup and the Davis Cup are the two major international team competitions in tennis. Both of them are run by the ITF (International Tennis Federation), the world governing body of tennis, and not by the ATP and the WTA, which only organize single and double tournaments.

a global regulatory body that facilitates tournaments and establishes a uniform set of rules to be observed by all players during tournaments. Most important, the WTA organizes the “WTA Tour”, the worldwide professional tennis tour for women, with professional players representing over seventy-five countries and over sixty events per year spanning six continents. Furthermore, the Grand Slam tournaments, the four major tennis tournaments in terms of world ranking points, tradition, prize-money awarded and public attention, take place in four cities located in three different continents: Melbourne (the Australian Open), Paris (the French Open), London (Wimbledon) and New York City (the US Open). The global dimension of the sport of tennis is further demonstrated by the fact that, currently (as of April 2009), eleven countries are represented in the top twenty rankings for the WTA (i.e., the United States, Serbia, Russia, Poland, Switzerland, Slovakia, France, Bulgaria, Italy, Denmark and Hungary). The sport of tennis, thus, is global by definition. For this reason, it is the only women’s sporting contest – with the exception of the Olympic Games – where women’s competition matches that of men in terms of media coverage, spectator interest and, increasingly, prize money and sponsorship. These are the characteristics which are required to enter the global sporting marketplace, a field driven by the entwined quest for increased corporate profits and the global media audiences deemed necessary to achieve such levels of profitability (Stevenson 2004: 277). It is especially global media coverage that, on the one side, has made it possible for top women tennis players to receive substantial endorsements and prize money, and, on the other side, has raised a number of those top players, among whom Maria Sharapova, to the status of sports celebrities, an essential element of the globalization of sport in general, and of the sport of tennis in particular.

3.2. Identity Revisited

Before turning to the analysis of Maria Sharapova’s *hybrid identity*, it is useful to clarify its meaning in this work. I use the currently fashionable concept of *identity* bearing in mind that it is not a fixed concept but, rather, a complex, multi-dimensional and, therefore,

ever-reconceptualized concept. One could go as far as to say that it is a process rather than a concept. As Iedema and Caldas-Coulthard maintain, the notion of *identity* stands at the intersection of many different theoretical domains and disciplines and, as a consequence, “it is increasingly being asked to bear a heavy theoretical burden in discourses concerned with education, learning, development and the relation of the individual and the social” (2008: 6). With this in mind, I am particularly concerned with the linguistic/discursive aspect of the concept of identity and the notion of “identity performance” as first theorized by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, her highly influential study on gender relations and constructions. Her claim that gender identity “[...] is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (1990: 25) can be applied to broader notions of identity. In particular, it can be applied to postmodern notions of identity that “embrace multiplicity and hybridity of social identities across both diverse human relationships and social categories such as gender, sexuality, class, culture, race, ethnicity, and so on” (Lemke 2008: 17). Therefore, the multiplicity and fluidity of postmodern identities is not new or exceptional. Rather, it is the contemporary realization of Butler’s notion according to which the long-term aspects of identity are maintained and re-inscribed in us as we act in the moment in particular ways:

We perform a pre-existing identity, that is, we continue a previous pattern of response to certain types of situations [...]. We can perform longer-term identities through how we enact and identity-in-practice. (Lemke 2008: 24)

Together with the notion of flexible, free-floating identity (Butler 1990: 27), I use the concept of *hybridity*, another multi-dimensional and much-theorized concept, which, in its current meaning, stems from the work of post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994). In my analysis the combination of *hybridity* and *identity* positively connotes the exemplary postmodern condition, for “the discourse of hybridization allows an opening to the multiplicity of traditions and cultures within the diaspora without succumbing to the temptations of homogenization and domination [...]” (Fludernik 1998: 21). In

other words, *hybridity* defines an interstitial position that allows a progressive cultural diversity. A *hybrid identity*, then, is one that is performed – i.e., based on “what you do” at particular times rather than a universal “who you are” (Butler 1990: 25) – as well as one that is built on either the conscious or unconscious assimilation of multifarious cultural traits – i.e., no longer connected to a specific nation or place of origin (Machin and van Leeuwen 2008: 41).



Fig. 2 – *California Style*, Nov. 12 2008



Fig. 3 – *Vogue Russia*, Oct. 24 2008

3.3. Maria Sharapova’s “Identity Performance”

As a consequence of the globalization of the sport of tennis, professional players (both men and women) lead a truly nomadic life during their careers, as they travel around the world for roughly ten months in a solar year playing in a tournament every other week on average. Maria Sharapova, who has recently declared that she travels more than 100,000 miles every year, is no exception. I contend that Maria Sharapova’s current professional nomadic life embeds a long-term identity that she began to enact as a young girl. Moreover, since she began to be in the media spotlight after her 2007 Wimble-

don victory, this long-term identity greatly helped her to become a transnational sports celebrity. The pivotal moment in the creation of her long-term identity was in March 1995 when, for economic and professional convenience, the almost eight-year-old Maria Sharapova moved from Russia to the United States with her father Yuri in the hope of being accepted at the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Bradenton, Florida.³ Although she has been residing in the United States for thirteen years, she still retains Russian citizenship and plays Fed Cup for Russia.⁴ It is precisely her long-term identity combined with her being part of the extremely mobile world of professional tennis – i.e., her identity-in-practice – that, as I am about to illustrate, enables her, more than any other player, to perform her *hybrid identity* and, therefore, negotiate various borders of the global sports market to achieve a global celebrity status.

As I have previously mentioned, one of the characteristics that allows Maria Sharapova to emerge as a global athlete is her ability to carefully negotiate various forms of belonging as an international citizen without accepting (or displaying) strong ties to one target nation, imagined community or fixed cultural identity. Rather, on more than one occasion she has demonstrated that she has developed “weak attachments” (Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2008: 113) to both her target country (the United States) and her country of origin (Russia) as well as other countries around the world where she happens to play, win tennis tournaments, or simply visit during her time off the WTA tour.

³ Maria Sharapova’s rags-to-riches story, which is often given as an explanation for her focus and determination on and off court, is undoubtedly part of her global appeal. In September 2008, an animated film about Sharapova’s rise from her childhood in Siberia to her first two years in the United States without her mother (who stayed behind to wait for her visa application to be approved) to, fighting against the odds, the number one ranked player in the world became part of Nike’s “Here I am” campaign. With this campaign, Nike strives to inspire a new generation of women to experience the impact of sports in life. The animated film can be viewed on the Nikewomen website at <nike.com/nikewomen>.

⁴ She would have represented Russia at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China, if she had not been forced to withdraw due to a torn rotator cuff tendon in her right shoulder. Because of this injury, she also missed the 2008 US Open and the 2009 Australian Open. She returned to competing in professional tournaments in March 2009.

During the Wimbledon 2008 pre-tournament press conference, for instance, she declared herself very excited by the fact that the Russian soccer team had reached the semifinal of the European Championship. She then proudly announced that she would not miss watching the semifinal match against Turkey on TV with her dad and friends for anything in the world, and she concluded by saying: “I think I have a Russia hat from Fed Cup. I might wear that.” A couple of minutes later, during the same interview, when asked what she did after losing unexpectedly early at the 2008 French Open, she replied that she went back home to Florida and “it was just so awkward to be home” at the time of the NBA Finals. She also pointed out that within twenty-four hours of her loss in Paris she was in her local coffee shop with her cookbook seeing what she was going to cook for dinner and concluded with the remark: “It was such a different world [...]”. At that point, one member of the press asked her the obvious question: “What is your specialty?” Her answer, once again in perfect agreement with her *hybrid identity-in-practice*, was: “Italian, because that’s the easiest thing to cook. I’m good at pasta and sauces.” From a semiotic perspective, Maria Sharapova’s world is undoubtedly a constellation of signs that participate in her enactment of a *hybrid identity*. The following linguistic/discursive analysis of two extensive answers from the same press conference will further confirm her *hybrid identity-in-practice*.

Toward the end of the press conference, when someone commented on the fact that she is often spotted shopping in the cities where she plays, especially London and Rome, her reply was:

- (1) *I love London in general. I love the fact that in Europe and in England you get to walk around, just experience the life outside. It seems like in the States, a lot of the time you’re always driving everywhere. In Europe, Italy especially, you’re always walking to places. I think that’s why people are so thin all the time. They’re walking everywhere. Walking to the market and the grocery store. In the States, you get out of your house, you get in your garage, you get in your car, you get in the car, put the groceries in the car, drive it into your garage, and it’s there. Here it seems you get to walk everywhere and experience things, live a little bit. It’s fun.*

The discursive strategy at the foundation of the above answer is a common one in discourses of migration, especially those in which migrants construct their attachments or feelings of belonging. According to Krzyzanowski and Wodak (2008: 107), the specific both/and and neither/nor patterns of arguing for one's belonging are, often unconsciously, adopted by migrants to express ambivalence and emotional dilemmas towards their community of origin and their target community. What emerges from Sharapova's above reply, thanks to the adoption of the either/or discursive strategy, is, at a first glance, a critique of the solitary and routine-like American lifestyle versus an appreciation of the European lifestyle, as Europe is a place where people "walk everywhere", meet people, "experience things" and take it easy. At a closer look, however, one realizes that what emerges from her comparison of the two lifestyles is not so much a critique of the American lifestyle but, rather, Sharapova's almost idyllic view of the European lifestyle (whose climax is her comment on the fact that Europeans are thin as a result of always walking everywhere), which is part of the stereotypical American perspective on the Old Continent. Although there is certainly some truth in what she states, the way she states it displays a "weak attachment" to her continent of origin, which is further demonstrated by her use of the word "Europe" as a single undifferentiated "country". Also of notice is her apparent burst of involvement and emotion at the idea of being able to "walk around" and "experience the life outside" in "Europe" confirmed by the use of the pronoun "I" in the first two sentences in association with the so-called private verb "love."

(2) *I love London in general. I love the fact that in Europe and in England you get to walk around, just experience the life outside.*

After this initial burst of enthusiasm, though, she switches to the impersonal pronoun "you" to describe people's preferred means of transportation both in the United States and in Europe, thus showing again "weak attachments" to both continents.

(3) *It seems like in the States, a lot of the time you're always driving everywhere. In Europe, Italy especially, you're always walking to places.*

Most interesting, a little earlier in the press conference, Sharapova was asked to correlate the fact that she regards the U.S. as home but, at the same time, considers herself as Russian. In her flawless American English she gave the following answer:

- (4) *Well*, I moved to the States because of my tennis, *you know*, because becoming a professional tennis player, or trying to at that age, the conditions that were offered there were not good. *You know*, you're not able to play six days a week, four hours of tennis. That was just impossible. There were not enough facilities. The weather did not permit it. It was quite expensive at that time because of the limited amount of courts and facilities. It's practically impossible. When you have to make those choices you move to a different country, you live there for such a long time, get accustomed to life and the culture and the way things are, you make friends there, you spend more than half of your life there, *you know*, it is kind of strange, definitely. *But, you know*, I know where my roots are. *I mean*, all my family, apart from my parents, are all in Russia. When I'm home I speak Russian, I read Russian. We're a big Russian family when I'm at home. *But, you know*, the home happens to be in America, *so ...*

A discourse analysis of the above text reveals how Sharapova discursively constructs her *hybrid identity* by expressing her “in-between-ness of belonging” (Probyn 1996, quoted in Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008: 107) through multiple attachments. Her attachments to both her target community (the United States) and her community of origin (Russia) – which Figs 2 and 3 illustrate – are predominantly constructed through “context-dependent *topoi* of multiple attachments” (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008: 106).

The analysis of Sharapova's reply that follows stems from the theoretical approach to the question of identity based on the concept of belonging through identification as proposed by Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2008) in their detailed and systematic linguistic investigation of the range of discursive negotiations and co-constructions of European migrant identities. However, differently from the migrants that are object of their analysis, Maria Sharapova can afford to turn the problem of “not knowing where one belongs” into one of the characteristics that gives her a global appeal as a female

athlete. To put it in other words, because of her celebrity status, she does not have to search for a new identity to make sense of the world and try to fit in it. From my analysis, nonetheless, there emerges a desire for certainty and stability together with the opportunity, possibility and, in her case, perhaps also the requirement to perform a *hybrid identity* to suit her professional life.

This answer, like the previous one, centers around the both/and pattern of arguing for her belonging as depending on her place of origin as well as her place of living (though sporadically). In two different instances, the same mitigating particle (“But, you know”) marks the switch from the “both” conjunction to the “and” conjunction:

(5) [...] you live there for such a long time, get accustomed to life and the culture and the way things are, you make friends there, you spend more than half of your life there, [...] *But, you know*, I know where my roots are. I mean, all my family, apart from my parents, are all in Russia.

(6) When I’m home I speak Russian, I read Russian. We’re a big Russian family when I’m at home. *But, you know*, the home happens to be in America, [...]

Her attachment to *both* the United States *and* Russia is also constructed through the use of deictic forms. The spatial deixis she uses (“there”) refers to both countries, as it stands for “in Russia” as well as “in America”:

(7) [...] the conditions that were offered *there* (i.e., in Russia) were not good.

(8) [...] you live *there* (i.e., the United States) for such a long time, get accustomed to life and the culture and the way things are, you make friends *there*, you spend more than half of your life *there*, [...]

Since she is talking about those two countries while in England, she never uses “here”. However, “there” refers to a distant physical location and therefore, from an identity discourse perspective, conveys weak attachments. She also uses temporal deictic expressions,

which show that also time plays an important role in the construction of belonging. Expressions such as “when”, “at that time” and “at that age” mark stages in her life as a young girl in Russia, whereas “for such a long time” and “more than half of your life” mark sequentiality of events:

(9) [...] because becoming a professional tennis player, or trying to *at that age*, the conditions that were offered there were not good. [...] It was quite expensive *at that time* because of the limited amount of courts and facilities. [...] *When* you have to make those choices you move to a different country, [...]

(10) [...] you move to a different country, you live there *for such a long time*, [...] you spend *more than half of your life* there, [...]

As Krzyżanowski and Wodak point out (2008: 109), multiple attachments are also constructed through *topoi* of difference (e.g., different religion, different language, different habits, different mentality), in which the difference from group X or Y forms a point of reference for one’s identity. Sharapova uses the *topos* of different culture and lifestyle to emphasize the differences between her target community and her community of origin.

(11) [...] you move to a different country, [...] *get accustomed to life and the culture and the way things are* [...]

Moreover, multiple attachments are often also realized through mitigating particles and self-reflecting constructions (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008: 108). Fillers such as “well”, “but”, “I mean”, “you know”, are generally used to allow the speaker time to plan what to say next. In the press conference answer reproduced in extract (4), they seem to allow Sharapova to switch from one culture to the other. In a similar way, the self-reflective construction “[...] it’s kind of strange, definitely” realizes her ambivalence towards her attachments. This ambivalence is amplified by the metaphor of “roots” that immediately follows:

(12) [...] you spend more than half of your life there, you know, *it is kind of strange, definitely*. But, you know, *I know were my roots are*.

The mental verb she uses here (“I know”) turns this statement into an emotionally-loaded construction of attachments, further reinforced by the topos of family:

(13) [...] all my family, apart from my parents, are all in Russia.

But precisely when she seems to elect Russia as her community of belonging (which, however, remains purely abstract in nature given that she probably never visits her relatives there), she immediately resets her perception of “family” in two different ways:

(14) When I’m home I speak Russian, I read Russian. We’re a *big Russian family when I’m home*. But, you know, *the home happens to be in America*.

First of all, she reduces the concept of family to “we”, that is, her parents and herself, which is already a contradiction in terms, given that a family of three is not a “big family”. Then, she overlaps “family” with “home”, thus displaying – since “home” is “in America” – her new, though once again weak, attachment to her target community, the United States.

4. Concluding Remarks

The underlying aim of the above study is to demonstrate that a *hybrid identity* is one of the three key signifiers enabling a sports celebrity to become a *global athlete*. It is no accident that Maria Sharapova has become the quintessential female global athlete. The linguistic analyses of a selection of her discursive practices has confirmed my initial contention that Sharapova’s long-term identity (i.e., the identity she has been performing since she left her country of origin, Russia, at the age of eight to train in the United States) combined with her identity-in-practice (i.e., her being currently part of the extremely mobile world of professional tennis) enable her to perform her *hybrid identity* and, therefore, negotiate various borders of the global sports market to achieve a *global* celebrity status.

However, Sharapova’s *hybrid identity* has not gone unnoticed. On the one hand, despite her becoming the first Russian woman to

attain the world number one ranking in tennis, the Russian media have often criticized her for trying to be perceived as American rather than Russian, because that is more marketable and thus more profitable. On the other hand, it has been speculated that she has been paid millions of dollars to endorse products by multinational brands, such as Nike, Canon, Sony Ericsson, Land-Rover and Tag Heuer, precisely because, as Russian, she can be appealing both in Europe and in countries around the world that do not necessarily embrace American supremacy. For the sake of my study, the fact that both the above points of view have more than a shred of truth is yet another confirmation of Sharapova's *hybrid identity*. An identity that, as my analysis has shown, she performs through her "weak attachments" to her target community (the United States), her country of origin (Russia) as well as other countries around the world where she happens to play tennis tournaments or visit for sponsorship commitments or for leisure during her time off the WTA tour.

REFERENCES

- Bhabha H. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, London and New York.
- Butler J., 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Cortese G. and A. Dusak, 2005, "Introduction", in G. Cortese and A. Dusak (eds), *Identity, Community, Discourse: English in Intercultural Settings*, Peter Lang, Bern, pp. 11-28.
- Delanty G., R. Wodak and P.R. Jones (eds), 2007, *Migrant Voices: Discourses of Belonging and Exclusion*, Liverpool U.P., Liverpool.
- Denkin N.K., 2001, "Representing Michael", in D.L. Andrews (ed.), *Michael Jordan Inc.: Corporate Sport, Media Culture, and Late Modern America*, Suny U.P., Alban (NY), pp. 2-13.
- Fludernik M. (ed.), 1998, *Hybridity and Postcolonialism*, Stauffenburg Verlag, Tübingen.
- Heywood L. and S.L. Dworkin, 2003, *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon*, University of Minnesota P., Minneapolis.
- Iedema R. and C.R. Caldas-Coulthard, 2008, "Introduction: Identity Trouble: Critical Discourse and Contested Identities", in C.R. Caldas-Coulthard and R. Iedema (eds), *Identity Trouble: Critical Discourse and Contested Identities*, Palgrave, New York, pp. 1-13.

- Jackson S.J. and D.L. Andrews (eds), 2005, *Sport, Culture and Advertising: Identities, Commodities and the Politics of Representation*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Klein N., 2000, *No Logo*, Picador, New York.
- Krzyżanowski M. and R. Wodak, 2008, "Multiple Identities, Migration and Belonging: 'Voices of Migrants'", in C.R. Caldas-Coulthard and R. Iedema (eds), *Identity Trouble: Critical Discourse and Contested Identities*, Palgrave, New York, pp. 95-119.
- Lemke J.L., 2008, "Identity, Development and Desire: Critical Questions", in C.R. Caldas-Coulthard and R. Iedema (eds), *Identity Trouble: Critical Discourse and Contested Identities*, Palgrave, New York, pp. 17-41.
- Lombardo L., 2006, "Print Ads in the Consumer Culture: Verbal, Visual, and Cultural Readings", in N. Vasta (ed.), *Forms of Promotion: Texts, Contexts and Cultures*, Pàtron, Bologna, pp. 1-19.
- Machin D. and T. van Leeuwen, 2008, *Global Media Discourse: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Probyn E., 1996, *Outside Belongings*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Stevenson D., 2004, "Women, Sport and Globalization: Competing Discourses of Sexuality and Nation", in D. Rowe (ed.), *Critical Readings: Sport, Culture and the Media*, Open U.P., Maidenhead (UK), pp. 276-294.