

**BETWEEN TEXT AND TALK: EXPERTISE, NORMATIVITY, AND SCALES OF  
BELONGING IN THE MONTREAL TAMIL DIASPORAS**

**by**

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**2008**

## **Dedication**

To those for whom the act of speaking, writing,  
and belonging is vexed with uncertainty

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I have used pseudonyms to conceal the actual name of Parker Elementary School and the identities of my informants, excluding those whose work is publicly recognized in some official capacity.

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### **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ADQ	Action Démocratique du Québec
AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
CEGEP	Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel
CSDM	Commission scolaire de Montréal
CUTAM	Concordia University Tamil Mantram
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
EMSB	English Montreal School Board
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
PELO	Programme d'enseignement des langues d'origine
PQ	Parti Québécois
PL	Parti Liberal
TRO	Tamil Rehabilitation Organization
UQAM	Université du Québec à Montréal
WTM	World Tamil Movement

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Perhaps it is not by coincidence that one of my principal informants, Father Joseph, is a skilled exorcist of ghosts, one whose services are quite popular among Filipino seafarers who routinely dock at the Port of Montreal. Father Joseph, a man in his mid 40s, is formerly the head priest of Mullaitivu, a Sri Lankan village directly hit by the tsunami of December 26, 2004. Since 2002, however, Father Joseph has served as the chaplain of the Montreal Tamil Catholic mission and the Port of Montreal. During his spare time, Father Joseph delivers guest homilies in other Catholic parishes in the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto region to raise money for tsunami survivors.

I first arrived in Montreal at the end of November 2004, when I immediately set out to rent a room in the Plamondon neighborhood of the district of Côte-des-Neiges. I was confident that by living in a neighborhood with the largest Tamil-speaking population in Montreal, I would be well positioned to interact with Tamil speakers and observe Tamil language classes. Satisfied with my arrangements, I briefly returned to the U.S. in mid-December to celebrate the holiday season with my family. Our plans were to depart for Montreal a few days before the New Year, just in time to participate in our annual Lévesque family *jour de l'an* celebration. And then suddenly, from our vantage point in front of the television set, we watched as the tsunami plundered the coasts of Sri Lanka and South India and wrecked havoc on its Tamil-speaking villages.

I would later learn from Father Joseph that many Mullaitivu fisher folk had perished that day. Yet by the grace of the Virgin Mary, a good number of his former parishioners had been “called” to attend mass at an inland church and, in doing so, had been saved from the devastation of this colossal wave. When speaking to me of Mullaitivu, Father Joseph would often describe his first days as parish priest, days spent exorcising the ghosts of fallen Tamil and Sinhalese soldiers who had died while taking refuge within church walls during the early phase of the Eelam war. In a few short months, Father Joseph had successfully vanquished these ghosts, founded an orphanage, and helped to restore moral order to this small fishing town. While our conversations would mostly focus on topics of language and religion, Father Joseph’s intermittent references to such political, economic, and social circumstances of Tamil migration to Montreal would never fail to remind me of the many contingencies shaping the Tamil diaspora experience.

Father Joseph would often insist that he and I were leading overlapping lives. In truth, I had also approached my fieldwork site in expectation of exorcising some ghosts. I consider myself to be a native of Montreal, expatriate for most of my life yet oft long-term visitor in the period of my childhood and adolescence. I claim the status of “native” because I speak French like only a native of Montreal can speak French. My pre-field memories of Montreal are dominated by the vicissitudes of maternal bonds of kinship, yet as an ethnographer I was faced with the task of seeing Montreal through “unhaunted” eyes. Rather than interpreting the experiences of Montreal Tamils through the eyes of a “*métisse*”, one whose tentative hold on Québécois society has always hinged on my ability to speak a form of Québécois French known as *joual*, I sought to understand how

1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generation Tamil-speaking immigrants and refugees from Sri Lanka and India, along with their 2<sup>nd</sup> generation descendants, speak and write a variety of languages in order to selectively entail the scales of their belonging.<sup>1</sup> Rather than interpreting the religious activities of Hindu and Catholic Tamils as mirroring my own experiences as the child of an inter-faith marriage, I sought to understand how Montreal Tamils participate in religious activities so as to profitably orient these scales of their belonging.

Try as I might, my “ghosts” of ethnographic bias refused to be vanquished until I had successfully “exorcised” them through the activity of participant observation. During my dissertation fieldwork, I participated and observed distinct religious, linguistic, and ethnonational Tamil groups whose experiences of belonging at times overlapped with my own, but more often than not superseded them. After all, as I was to learn countless of times, this research project was to be about Montreal of the 2000s, not Montreal of the 1970s-1990s. This “turn-of-the-millennium” city is a rapidly globalizing space with linguistic, religious, and political landscapes that have irrevocably changed since the referendum for secession in 1995. This is also a city whose unfolding narrative, I will argue, can be best understood through the linguistic and other cultural experiences of its diaspora participants, including Montreal Tamils.

Upon returning to Montreal in January 2005, I met with Muthu, a Tamil student leader who promptly invited me to attend the city-wide memorial for tsunami victims on January 15<sup>th</sup>. At the memorial, the mayor of Montreal joined with local Tamil leaders from Montreal and Toronto to commemorate the lives of tsunami victims from the Tamil-speaking regions of India and Sri Lanka (see Figure 1). These leaders also applauded the

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<sup>1</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> generation refers to Tamil immigrants, 1.5 generation refers to Tamil immigrants who arrived in Montreal during their primary or secondary school age years, and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation refers to the Canadian-born children of Tamil immigrants (either 1<sup>st</sup> or 1.5 generation).

efforts of local fundraisers, including a group of Tamil-speaking high school and university students who had raised \$10,000 CAD in humanitarian funds. A few days later, I joined these student leaders at a private party held at Ganesh Party Palace in Ville St-Laurent. Although I did not understand it at the time, both events were highly atypical in their composition. Namely, these events were attended by members of both Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas who, by the unlucky providence of the tsunami's path of destruction, were temporarily "united" in spite of their divisive politics of belonging.



**Figure 1: Tsunami Memorial in Montreal, Quebec**

The tsunami is but one of several commonalities shared by these two diasporas, the most obvious being the Tamil language itself. During the party, students spoke in Tamil, English, and French, often code-switching between two or even three of these languages in their efforts to reach across barriers of immigration and social status, religion, and nationality and come together as Montreal Tamils. At the beginning of the

party, Indian Tamils sat together near the back of the reception hall while Sri Lankan Tamils sat together near the front. After eating a dinner of spicy Sri Lankan Tamil cuisine, a young Sri Lankan Tamil woman by the name of Nalini asked everyone to sit in a circle on the dance floor. We then went around the circle and introduced ourselves to one another. Picking numbers out of a hat, Nalini called upon random people to perform a silly task or test, one of which involved correctly identifying the Tamil word for computer. When it came to my turn, I was told to pick a partner with whom I would perform a “Latin dance.” Not wishing to further confirm my status as an outsider by choosing a male partner, I asked Nalini to be my partner and for several minutes we awkwardly swirled around the dance floor in a very non-“Latin” style of movement.

I left the party that night full of hope that my fieldwork would proceed as smoothly as it had the first few weeks. I looked forward to interacting with my new informants, even planning group interviews which would allow me to easily access their diversity of linguistic and other cultural experiences. Yet as it turns out, the Ganesh Party Palace function was the last time that I would personally attend an event jointly organized by Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils. Through the course of my fieldwork, I would quickly learn that my biased views of language and group formation – the ideological “ghosts” of my heritage as a French Canadian and a Bengali - had wrongly predisposed me to expect that Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils would cohere as a single linguistic group in Montreal, thus warranting the label “Montreal Tamils.” Instead, I found that the collaborative spirit of both Tamil diasporas in Montreal, as evidenced by their swift responses to help tsunami-ravaged South Asia, is limited by their

propensity to view themselves as belonging to a common and ancient heritage from which both groups have since diverged.

From convergence to divergence and back again, this dissertation describes the fluidity of scales through which Montreal Tamils stake the conditions of their belonging within a globalizing city where language is the most overt as well as overly-determinant signifier of group identification. The questions that arose during the course of my research were ultimately shaped by the desires and exigencies of its many participants, including those who encouraged me to record and analyze their linguistic practices and language ideologies as well as those who discouraged me from examining them too closely. From the point of view of a linguistic anthropologist interested in studying the mutual constitution of globalizing cities and diasporas, three areas of theoretical significance gradually emerged as being most central to this project.

The first theoretical area of significance concerns the different scales of metalinguistic awareness exhibited by Montreal residents as they participate in the transformation of a bilingual (i.e. two languages) city into a multilingual (i.e. three or more languages) city. I argue that this awareness is rooted in the tightening web of discursive and political economic linkages that are being entailed between “city” and “diaspora” through synchronized processes of globalization. The second theoretical area of significance concerns the multiple scales of belonging through which Montreal residents are aligning themselves in order to profit from such processes of globalization. The fluidity that characterizes these scalar alignments is due to the fact that they are predominantly linguistically entailed. The third theoretical area of significance concerns the spatiotemporal field of social relations in which to situate the linguistic practices and

ideologies of Montreal Tamils. I adopt a genealogical approach that is sensitive to the interdiscursive dimensions of emplacement when describing the semiotic transformations and scalar patterning of linguistic practices and language ideologies en route from South Asia to Montreal. Through these three areas of inquiry, this dissertation highlights the hyper-constituting role of language, in its different modes as discourse, communicative practice, and performance, within a city where the currency of linguistic competence is already at a premium value.

### **A Globalizing City**

Montreal is a rapidly globalizing city situated within the province of Quebec, a self-identifying francophone nation that seeks to be recognized as a culturally and linguistically “distinct society” within Canada. In both academic and popular analyses of Québécois linguistic nationalism, the city of Montreal and its inhabitants are often singled out as the main culprits in the nationalist movement’s shortcomings. Such discourses draw attention to a pervasive belief among the Québécois that Montreal is an anomalous and inassimilable social space within the otherwise cohesive imaginary of the Quebec nation.

Recently, economists and sociologists have conferred the status of “global city-region” upon the city of Montreal. At an international public policy conference on global city-regions held at UCLA in 1999, former Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard succinctly defined this category of city in the following manner: “Global city-regions are metropolitan areas where local economic activity and political issues are closely related to the world system” (2001: 50).<sup>2</sup> He then described how Montreal meets these criteria:

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<sup>2</sup> Lucien Bouchard was Premier of Quebec and Chairman of the Parti Québécois from 1996 to 2001. He succeeded Premier Jacques Parizeau after Parizeau failed to achieve a successful outcome to the 1995

Montreal is fifteenth among major North American cities in terms of population. But it now ranks ninth for the number of high-technology companies; seventh for the number of jobs in information technology; sixth in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors; fifth in aerospace; and it stands at the very top for the proportion of the population working in high technology. (Bouchard 2001:52)

He also explained how Montreal boasts 40% of the province's total population and 50% of its total economic productivity, the majority of which is exported to foreign markets.

According to Bouchard, these figures attest to how Montreal's economic sector is closely linked to the global economy.

Scott et al. further explain that the unique social organization of "city-regions [is] becoming increasingly central to modern life" (Scott et al. 2001:11):

Today, globalization has brought about significant transformations of this older order of things. There are many institutional experiments now under way that are leading in the direction of a new social and political organization of space. This new organization consists above all of a hierarchy of interpenetrating territorial scales of economic activity and governance relations, ranging from the global to the local, and in which the emerging system of global-city regions figures prominently. (ibid 12-13)

Due to the scalar nature of its governance, Montreal's socioeconomic and political landscape is constantly being organized into "polycentric or multi-clustered agglomerations," each with differing spatiotemporal qualities of place (ibid 18). As Montreal residents move through these polycentric zones, they experience conflicting drives to participate in global markets while supporting local enterprises, to experience urban, modern lifestyles while valorizing peasant traditions, and to cultivate a socially progressive, multicultural civic society while paying tribute to the goals of secular ethnolinguistic nationalism.

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referendum. Bouchard's tenure signaled a gradual reconceptualization of Québécois nationalism in order to address issues related to globalization, immigration, and multiculturalism.

At times, these spatiotemporal contrasts are rationalized as embodied properties of the people who regularly inhabit these spaces. Such second-order rationalizations promote acts of scapegoating and stereotyping between different groups of residents, including immigrants, indigenous peoples and other racial minorities, and descendants of the original settler populations. As Canadian economic policy continues to increasingly rely upon the skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor of foreign-born workers, rates of (im)migration to Canadian global city-regions are expected to escalate well into the foreseeable future.

The challenges that global city-regions face are in many ways the same that beset Quebec. We have to integrate growing immigrant populations and make them welcome. We also have to create an environment that is conducive to economic growth, while meeting global competition head-on. Finally we must ensure that all have a voice in shaping the world they share. Whether at home or around the world, we must not let social and economic distance grow between the haves and the have-nots. This is something to which my government is particularly sensitive. (Bouchard 2001:54)

As a city long since enmeshed in controversies of sovereignty and minority rights, Bouchard insists that it is the unique challenge of the Montreal global city-region to equitably address such problems of social integration and political citizenship as a model for the rest of the world.

Bouchard's internationalist discourses attempt to reframe Montreal's multilingual and multiethnic populations as a source of differentiated manpower, rather than as second-class citizens, and as profitable commodities, rather than as moral anomalies. For example, Bouchard lauds the fact that 60% of Montreal's total work force (and 80% of its engineers) are bilingual and 6% are trilingual (or more) speakers, the highest rate in all of Canada. Furthermore, he cites current plans to transform Montreal into a ubiquitously multilingual city:

Under a program that we have just announced, called “The Decade of the Americas,” we will double the number of trilingual persons within the next ten years. Thus, the teaching of Spanish and other languages will be encouraged. (ibid 52)

Although Bouchard does not specify which “other languages” are to be officially sponsored (or not), he nonetheless concludes that Quebec is a francophone society which “fully respect[s] minority language rights” and urges other nations to follow this same approach (ibid 52).

In reality, however, Quebec’s nationalist and multicultural policies have produced conflicting efforts to socialize Montreal’s minority populations as Québécois citizens *and* ethnolinguistic “Others.” 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants and 2<sup>nd+</sup> generation ethnic or racial minorities are popularly referred to as *étrangers*, immigrants, allophones, visible minorities, or néo-Québécois, in order of increasing political correctness. Depending on the observer’s point of view, some minorities are believed to embody the cosmopolitan ethos of the globalizing city while others are believed to embody the morally backwards ethos of patriarchal and/or non-secular societies. Often, Québécois nationalists too readily assume that the latter group uniformly disregards their purist norms for a francophone and secular society, even with ample evidence to the contrary. These (mis)perceptions have resulted in many Québécois (particularly residents of Montreal) cultivating a hypersensitivity to differences in linguistic form and practice.

Consequently, metalinguistic evaluations of phonological, lexical, and even syntactic variation are rapidly becoming an established norm of communicative practice in Montreal. Even among French-speaking interlocutors, such evaluations are routinely conducted to assess the style of French spoken, the speaker’s degree of fluency in French, and the speaker’s affective bond with this or another language. Ultimately, these

assessments help the speaker determine if his/her interlocutor is an “authentic” and/or “expert” speaker of French and, by extension, if his/her form and style of French is authentic and/or expert-like. By situating interlocutors within a broader cultural framework of “Self” and “Other”, moral claims can then be made with respect to the interlocutor’s scale of belonging in Quebec society. The iconic association of French-speaking minorities with a distinct “heritage” language transforms them from mere citizens into racialized subjects.

### **Montreal Tamils**

Among Montreal’s minority populations, Tamil-speakers are deemed to be among the most linguistically foreign and morally inscrutable. To speak Tamil is to speak an unknowable language; to be Tamil is to be a dubious actor in the unpredictable globalization of the city. At times, “*tamoul*” is even used as a curse word to slander the recipient’s lack of moral virtue, regardless of his/her actual ethnicity. Needless to say, Montreal Tamils occupy a prominent role in Québécois nationalists’ constitution of the ethnolinguistic Other.

According to the 2006 census, there are 13,895 Tamils who currently live in Montreal, among whom 11,530 speak Tamil as their “mother tongue” (Statistics Canada 2006b). These statistics include 1<sup>st</sup> generation skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled immigrants and refugees from Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, South Africa, and Europe (in decreasing population size), as well as their 2<sup>nd</sup> generation offspring. Given the fact that many Tamils from Sri Lanka are living illegally in Canada, such statistics should be interpreted as an underestimation of the actual population size (Rudhramoorthy 2000: 189). According to most of my sources, there are at least 20,000-30,000 Sri Lankan

Tamils and about 2,000-3,000 Indian Tamils in Montreal.<sup>3</sup> Sri Lankan Tamils, in particular, are recognized as being one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in Canada:

Between 2001 and 2006, language groups from Asia and the Middle East recorded the largest gains. These language groups include the Chinese languages, Punjabi, Arabic, Urdu, Tagalog and Tamil. (Statistics Canada 2007)

As a result Tamil, which is currently the second most spoken South Asian language in Montreal, is fast becoming one of the major “minority” languages of the city (see Table 1).<sup>4</sup> Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils, by virtue of speaking the same language, are generally regarded by other Québécois as belonging to a single ethnolinguistic group. This view is contested by many Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils in Montreal who, in emphasizing their separate (and segregated) religious, cultural, and linguistic institutions, claim that Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils instead belong to two distinct diasporas. In chapter four, I trace the roots of the Montreal Tamil diasporas’ divergence to three key factors: (1) the divergent conditions of Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil migratory experiences, (2) the relative

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<sup>3</sup> According to Tamilnation.org, there are 300,000 Sri Lankan Tamils living in Canada (Tamilnation 2008). Yet according to the 2001 Census, these numbers are much reduced:

According to the 2001 census, there are some 91 670 Sri Lankan born Canadians the vast majority-some 84%-in the province of Ontario with more than 10% in Quebec (on the basis of ethnic origin the numbers surpassed 100 000 with 61 315 Sri Lankan and 39 075 Tamil). Toronto is by far home to the largest Sri Lankan community on the continent with nearly 72 000 persons born in that country (on the basis of ethnic origins 45 240 reported Sri Lankan and 33 145 Tamil) and Montreal with just over 10 000 persons born in that country (on the basis of ethnic origin 8 465 Sri Lankan and 2 920 Tamil). (Jedwab 2005)

Unfortunately, Statistic Canada refers to “Tamil” and “Sri Lankan” as separate categories, probably assuming that Sri Lankan specifies Sinhalese. Nevertheless, many Canadian Tamils refer to themselves as Sri Lankan, and may have identified as one or both in the census questionnaire.

<sup>4</sup> According to the 2006 census, the largest population of South Asians in Montreal is Punjabi-speakers, whose numbers total 11, 730. While there are probably a couple thousand illegal Punjabi-speakers from Pakistan in Montreal, the number of undocumented Pakistanis would still be much smaller than the number of undocumented Sri Lankan Tamil refugees.

homogeneity of each population, and (3) the mediated positioning of Tamils as racialized minorities in Quebec.

One would expect that in places where Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils are not in frequent contact, their cultural and linguistic differences would be less noticeable.

**Table 1: Linguistic Practices of South Asians in Montreal (Statistique Canada 1996)**

Language	First Language	Language Spoken with Parents	Language Spoken with Spouse	Language Spoken with Children	Language Spoken with Friends
Punjabi	23.1%	24.6%	19.4%	5.9%	7.6%
Tamil	14.8%	15.7%	8.5%	5.3%	5.6%
Urdu	10.4%	7.0%	9.0%	6.9%	4.0%
Hindi	10.3%	8.4%	7.0%	2.3%	1.2%
Bengali	3.0%	3.1%	1.8%	2.2%	1.8%
Malayalam	1.8%	1.8%	---	---	---
Other South Asian Language	22.8%	20.2%	26.0%	14.7%	11.3%

In contrast, due to Montreal’s urban density, Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils often encounter one another in the university, the cricket field, the Tamil cinema hall, and in a variety of patron-client relationships through which they are familiarized with different modalities of Tamil linguistic variation. At times, Montreal Tamils exploit this metalinguistic knowledge to insist that Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils actually speak two different languages. These beliefs about the relationship between language and social identity (as well as other social phenomena) are examples of what linguistic anthropologists refer to as language ideologies (Kroskrity 2000). Through an analysis of multiple language ideologies which pertain to the diverse experiences of Montreal Tamils, I present an original empirical study of the ethnogenesis of both Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil groups in Canada.

## Language Ideologies of Talk and Text

Linguistic anthropologists have identified four key features or functions that are characteristic of language ideologies: 1) their mediation between social structures and forms of talk, 2) their varying expressions of metapragmatic awareness, 3) their endorsement of moral and political interests, and 4) their mutability and multiplicity (Schieffelin et al. 1998; Kroskrity 2000). First, the concept of linguistic mediation is premised on the fact that language is a semiotic system. Silverstein explains that language is composed of “indexical facts all the way down” (1998:138), each of which participate in multiple orders of representation that are discursively translated into language ideologies through various semiotic processes and mechanisms. Peircean semiotics recognizes a triadic relationship between representamen (sign), object, and interpretant (Parmentier 1994). Language ideologies are formed when interpretants continuously misidentify the indexical relationships between representamen and object. Irvine and Gal (2000) specify these semiotic mechanisms of this process as 1) *rhematization*, where indexical relations are misinterpreted as iconic relations, 2) *fractal recursivity*, where existing oppositions in roles or activities are projected onto different social or linguistic levels, and 3) *erasure*, where persons and activities inconsistent with the dominant ideology are rendered invisible.

Cognitive discernment of semiotic mechanisms and processes depends on the interlocutor’s level of metapragmatic awareness. Jakobson first defined this “metapragmatic function” as the ability to make self-referential statements about linguistic practice and form (Waugh and Monville-Burston 1990). Linguists and psychologists have since disagreed on whether the metapragmatic function is expressed

through mental structures or social processes. For example, psychologists Gelman and Coley (1991) believe that individual cognitive processes are responsible for the formation of social stereotypes about language and speakers. Linguistic anthropologist Silverstein (1979), in his re-interpretation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, instead describes how grammatical units are differentially coded for cultural significance and amenable to social processes of interpretation. In Montreal, phonological distinctions between French linguistic varieties are usually interpreted as indexing the speaker's regional background or social class. In contrast Montreal Tamils, who are less liable to note phonologically-based regional distinctions, instead interpret morphological and syntactic distinctions in speech styles as icons of either a "colloquial" or "literary" style of Tamil. These contrasting examples underscore the culturally-variable coding of the significance of "text" and "talk" between Tamils and Québécois.

Linguistic anthropologists also disagree about whether to analyze embedded linguistic elements, explicit metapragmatic statements, or a combination of both when analyzing language ideologies. Lucy (1996) uses experimental methods to demonstrate that Mayan speakers, who habitually use numeral classifiers to grammatically signify the material properties of sign-objects, unconsciously demonstrate a generalized preference for material-based classifications rather than shape-based classifications. Kroskrity (1998) uses a variety of ethnographic methods to conclude that Arizona Tewa speakers possess only partial awareness of the dominant influence of kiva speech standards on their everyday linguistic practices. Briggs (1998), on the other hand, claims that Warao speakers consciously and even strategically deploy different language ideologies as interactional resources. He urges anthropologists to attend to speakers' explicit

metalinguistic or metapragmatic statements rather than privileging the analyst's point of view.

I argue that in cases where multiple language ideologies are in play, metalinguistic awareness is usually emergent rather than entirely implicit or explicit. For example, McKenzie (1987) explains how Maori chiefs, who are accustomed to using flexible forms of oral consensus to arrive at political agreements, only became aware of the binding power of signatures when they unwittingly signed away their territorial rights through the Treaty of Waitangi. By focusing one's analytic attention on identifying "crucial sites" of ideological mediation (Philips 1998, 2000; Spitulnik 1996, 1998), the dialogical basis of metalinguistic awareness becomes apparent.

In Montreal, metalinguistic awareness of linguistic variation is incrementally cultivated through communicative encounters between interlocutors whose relative social statuses are perceived to be mutable. In a globalizing city where multilingual speakers are successfully challenging the socioeconomic status of monolingual and even bilingual speakers, it has become everyone's business to know his/her interlocutor's exact scale of expertise in speaking and writing different languages. For this reason, crucial sites of ideological mediation in Montreal include both larger-scale socializing institutions as well as smaller-scale sites of encounter between real and imagined interlocutors. In chapters three through six, I analyze the dynamics of such encounters between Québécois and "*tamoul*", Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil, and 1<sup>st</sup> generation and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Tamil interlocutors.

Irvine and Gal (2000) also note how language ideologies mediate between social structures of power and talk in promoting the moral and political interests of elites. A

prominent example is the language ideology of linguistic standards. By modeling grammatical or stylistic elements of the standardized, written language after their own vernacular speech, elites succeed in elevating their speech (and rank) in relation to non-elites (Hobsbawm 1990, Eisenstein 1983). King (1989) describes how the standardization of script orthography in 19<sup>th</sup> century North India was motivated by the decisions of elite Hindu nationalists to depict Hindi and Sanskrit as native Hindu languages and Urdu and Arabic/Persian as foreign Muslim languages, thus further Othering the status of Indian Muslims. Similarly, class hierarchies in Britain and ethnoracial hierarchies in America were reinforced through the recognition of an upper-class British English standard and a white, middle-America English standard, respectively (Milroy 2001).

The structuralist concept of diglossia is another language ideology that differentiates between the vernacular languages of elites and non-elites. Ferguson and Fishman, the chief proponents of the diglossia theory as a descriptive sociolinguistic model, have respectively proposed use-oriented and user-oriented versions of this concept (Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1967). Ferguson defines diglossia as “two varieties of a language [which] exist side by side throughout the speech community, with each having a definite role to play” (Ferguson 1972: 249). In this sense, diglossia refers to functionally opposed yet related linguistic systems that can be ranked as high and low, formal or informal, literary or colloquial, classical or modern, etc. Ferguson further stipulates that the high variety is never “used as a medium of ordinary conversation, and any attempt to do so is felt to be either pedantic and artificial (Arabic, Greek) or else in some sense disloyal to the community (Swiss, German, Creole)” (Ferguson 1972:245).

Fishman (1965) accounts for situations of diglossia in multilingual communities. He describes how user-oriented distinctions can also exist between two or more related and unrelated language varieties. In his formulation, users (i.e. speakers) are associated with linguistic varieties that are believed to be more or less pure, prestigious, etc.

In the Tamil-speaking regions of South Asia, the relationship between media, genre, and styles of “text” and “talk” is explicitly theorized in terms of this structuralist concept of Tamil diglossia. Britto traces the initial emergence of a diglossia-type consciousness in Tamil-speaking South Asia to the recognition of literary and non-literary genres in the ancient Tamil grammar text, *Tolkappiyam*, written circa first century BCE (Zvelebil 1995:705-6).<sup>5</sup> Both use-oriented and user-oriented diglossia distinctions persist today in popular and academic references to different genres of *eḷutu tamil* (written Tamil), *mēṭai tamil* (staged Tamil), and *pēccu tamil* (spoken Tamil), as well as different period styles of classical Tamil, literary Tamil, and modern Tamil (Britto 1986; Meenakshisundaram 1965; Shanmugam 1983; Schiffman and Arokianathan 1986; Schiffman 1998).<sup>6</sup> No doubt, the language ideology of Tamil diglossia played an important role in the Indian government’s decision to officially recognize Tamil’s status as a classical language in 2004, one year before they granted the same status to Sanskrit.

In Quebec, the concept of diglossia is rarely used to describe the relationship between French or English linguistic varieties. To insist that two or more languages exist

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<sup>5</sup> Britto (1986) based his analysis on a few representative works from the ancient, middle, and modern periods of Tamil literary history. This includes Sethupillai’s (1979) compilation of bardic, epic, and devotional poetry, Beschi and Vedanayagam Pillai, and Subrahmanya Bharati’s prose, various native and foreign grammar books (including the *Tolkappiyam* and writings by Beschi (1822), Caldwell (1856), Pope 1904, etc.), Brahmi and Tamil *vaṭṭeḷuttu* inscriptions, and folk literature.

<sup>6</sup> There is also an extensive body of sociolinguistic research that describes the various social dialects (Karunakaran 1978, 1980, Karunakaran and Sivashanmugan 1981, and Sivashanmugan 1981), regional dialects (Kamatchinathan 1969, Karunakaran 1971, Zvelebil 1959a, 1959b, 1960a, 1960b, 1961, 1964a.), or caste dialects (Bean 1974, Bloch 1910, Bright 1960, 1966, 1968, Bright and Ramanujam 1972, Gumperz 1958, 1961, 1969, McCormack 1968, Southworth 1975) of Tamil.

in a hierarchical relationship to one another would detrimentally interfere with the linguistic nationalist movement's efforts to secure the equality of Québécois French varieties with relation to English and European French varieties. Nonetheless, I argue that a diglossia-type consciousness implicitly persists in the manner in which people classify languages in Quebec, even if it is not explicitly described in such terms. For example, Québécois language ideologies often point to user-oriented distinctions between speakers of purist linguistic varieties (e.g. European French), prestigious linguistic varieties (e.g. English, European French), and impure or non-elite linguistic varieties (e.g. Québécois joul). They also point to use-oriented distinctions between language styles by describing Québécois French as a higher status and more formal, literary, and modern language than the supposedly low status and more informal, colloquial, and archaic Québécois joul language (Dumas 1987; Papen 1998). For these reasons, I liberally use the terminology of diglossia to differentiate between French genres, styles, and mediums. Each of these labels evokes a particular aspect of the standardization process; thus, "textual French" emphasizes its script-based mode of communication, "written French" emphasizes qualities of a standardized form, and "literary French" refers to its prestigious and formal qualities.<sup>7</sup>

In the first two chapters, I compare the social patterning of "text" and "talk" in South Asia and Quebec. Chapter two traces several important historical transformations in the language ideology of Tamil diglossia, all of which contribute to the formation of a representational economy which classifies Tamil sociolinguistic phenomena as "mother tongues" or "literary standards". The former are interpreted as icons of a modernizing

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<sup>7</sup> By literary French I refer to the linguistic medium in which French is written, not the passé simple style used in certain literary genres.

state while the latter are interpreted as icons of an ancient and timeless Tamil society. Chapter three describes how the Québécois came to privilege language as their primary signifier of social identity. In the process, linguistic expertise was iconically associated with literary standards and moral normativity with colloquial speech. Later in chapter four, I examine how Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils divergently draw from both Tamil and Québécois language ideologies of moral normativity and linguistic expertise to “enregister” their distinct ethnonational personas. As both ethnonationally- and ethnolinguistically-differentiated Tamils, these sub-groups are legitimated as such within the multiple and intersecting cultural frameworks of the Montreal Tamil diaspora.

### **From Speech Communities to Scales of Belonging**

Up until the late 1960s, assumptions of “homogeneity”, “sharedness”, and “boundedness” dominated both anthropological and linguistic understandings of human groupness. Linguists such as Saussure, Bloomfield, and Chomsky abstracted from empirical facts of real-world diversity to describe idealized norms of communicative behavior within clearly defined “communities.” Saussure further suggested that the homogeneous “linguistic community is to some extent responsible for ethnic unity” (Saussure 1966[1916]:77, 223). In the late 1960s and 1970s, however, sociolinguists gradually abandoned these notions of linguistic homogeneity and normative sharedness in describing speech communities and ethnic groups. In his 1967 address to the American Ethnological Society, Hymes (1968) critiques the ideology of the “cultunit” by demonstrating a lack of geographic correspondence between cultural, territorial, and linguistic units. He instead declares that the speech community “share[s] knowledge of rules for the interpretation of speech, including rules for the interpretation of at least one

common code” (Hymes 1968:37). Gumperz qualifies this statement by nonetheless insisting that, in most cases, homogeneous speech patterns tend to coincide with “wider social units, such as countries, tribes, religious or ethnic groupings...” (Gumperz in Gumperz and Hymes 1972:16)

Ultimately, Labov’s (1972) case study of the differential distribution of English linguistic competences among different New York City racial and class-based groups prompted Bauman and Sherzer to finally conclude that “the production and interpretation of speech are thus variable and complementary, rather than homogeneous and constant throughout the community” (1974:6). With this statement, the idea of the bounded speech community became theoretically untenable. Since then, anthropologists have sought to “reformulate the problem of the location of culture within a social ontology in which neither individuals nor collectivities are basic units” by demonstrating how social structures are emergent forms of situated action (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995:8). One popular approach has been to metonymically reduce the concept of “community” to that of its “borders”, thus privileging the group boundary as the ideological construct most in need of analysis. By studying borderlands, or more specifically by examining the ideological contestations that play out within these zones, anthropologists have also attempted to describe the subjective experiences of the “Other” in relation to the “Self”.

Van Gennep’s (1909) original formulation of the border as liminal zone describes the precarious and often dangerous position of sign-objects which occupy or move through this zone. During a rite of passage, a person will temporarily pass through this liminal zone in preparation to assume a new social status. However, for sign-objects that permanently inhabit this liminal site, e.g. non-standardized linguistic variety, a *métisse*

person, or a refugee asylum, the border is revealed to be a highly exclusionary technology of power. The study of borderlands generally emphasizes different aspects of the precariousness of movement of people, objects, discourses, and ideologies across borders. For example, diaspora studies examine how hybridized subjectivities emerge through the internalization of competing social norms and moral ideologies of homeland and hostland. In comparison, refugee studies emphasize migrants' hard fought struggles to even gain physical entry or basic citizenship rights within another nation-state. In studies of transnational networks, anthropologists highlight the political economic conditions under which sign-objects cross (or flow across) geopolitical boundaries.

Within the field of linguistic anthropology, Barth (1972) first empirically described how criteria of ethnic membership could vary with respect to linguistic competence. In this study, Barth shows how the performance of stereotypic expressions and intonation patterns is sufficient for ethnic membership in the Baluch, but not the Pathan, tribe (Barth 1972). Later, Jackson (1978) describes how, among the Vaupés Indians of southeastern Colombia, linguistic membership in a particular patrilineal group does not coincide with cultural membership in a particular tribe. Jackson's findings also establish the universality of multilingualism as a recurrent feature of both small-scale and large-scale societies. Additional studies of multilingualism have revealed that certain practices, such as code-switching and code-mixing, may function as acts of boundary transgression. Rampton (1991; 1995; 1998) describes the "language crossing" of British Anglo, South Asian, and Black youth in Manchester as attempts to subvert local racial hierarchy. Similarly Woolard's (1998) concept of "bivalency", which highlights moments of simultaneity in linguistic practice, suggests that Catalans strategically

subvert Spain's language policies by speaking in non-identifiably Catalan or Castilian registers.

Both of these case studies emphasize a high degree of intentionality in speakers' multilingual practices while selectively ignoring their habitual patterns or contexts of use. According to Schieffelin and Ochs (1986), speakers are socialized into culturally-defined roles and culturally-sanctioned patterns of language use during the period of their childhood and adolescence. Because developmental constraints limit novices' abilities to direct this process, most of the literature on language socialization focuses on interactions between expert caregivers and novice children. However in Eckert's (2000) analysis of a suburban Detroit high school, she elaborates on the concept of "communities of practice" to suggest that both peer and expert-to-novice interactions facilitate the development of schoolchildren's language skills. Goodwin (1990), in her analysis of the language socialization of African-American girls and boys in Philadelphia, further suggests that neighborhood-based peer interactions, more so than school-based expert-novice interactions, socialize children into producing more elaborate patterns of speech. Yet according to Meek (2007), culturally defined categories of "expert" and "novice" also play a constituting role in the overall language socialization process. Thus, among heritage language learners of the Kaska tribe in the Yukon Territory, respect for elders' linguistic expertise and social status limits children's experimentation with the spoken Kaska language.

Montreal Tamil youth are socialized within a variety of institutional and non-institutional sites, including the home, the heritage language school, the diaspora neighborhood, and the religious organization, on how to properly speak Tamil. Among

these sites, the heritage language school plays a crucial role in the socialization of their minority subjectivities (see Jaffe 1993). In chapter six, I describe how Montreal's heritage language industry markets its heritage language classes as both "knowledge-based" and "identity-based" commodities to minority youth and children. By enrolling their children in these Tamil language schools, parents unwittingly endorse the Quebec state's categorization of Montreal Tamil youth as ethnolinguistic Others. As a result, school-endorsed language ideologies of linguistic purism and sociolinguistic compartmentalization encourage Montreal Tamil youth to affectively identify with their heritage language as an iconic marker of their ethnic identity and to maintain the purity of their sociolinguistic personas.

Because imagined communities use linguistic forms of representation and structures of interaction to imagine the essence of their nation-hood (Anderson 1991), state-endorsed heritage language institutions inevitably promote primordialist notions such as (1) the geometric congruity of national, linguistic, and territorial boundaries, (2) the truth value and unifying function of standardized languages, and (3) the aesthetic function of language as the spiritual essence of a "folk" or nation (Silverstein 2000). At the same time, however, heritage language institutions are socializing Montreal Tamil youth into new roles as "linguistic ambassadors" to Montreal's globalizing economy. As Tamil youth continue to garner privilege prestige for their multilingual expertise in French-English-Tamil interpretation and translation, their respect for the linguistic expertise and moral authority of monolingual or even bilingual adults and elders is correspondingly eroded. This trade-off, between cultivating a new type of multilingual citizenry while preserving the nation's existing status hierarchies and linguistic/cultural

distinctiveness, represents an important dilemma facing modern nation-states within the globalizing world.

According to Wallerstein (2004), one of the key proponents of the World Systems Analysis framework, the modern world-system is comprised of multiple scales of activity that are held together through the capitalist division of labor. Because market-driven activities of production, distribution, and capital accumulation are respectively carried out at peripheral, semi-peripheral, and center scales, commodities generally accumulate value in their movement towards the center. Blommaert et al. (2005) extrapolate from World Systems Analysis theory to further suggest that center-periphery relations also map onto linguistic phenomena. Blommaert (2007) coins the term “sociolinguistic scales” to refer to semi-permanent, interlocking structures of local and translocal indexical orders onto which center-periphery relations of different sociolinguistic types are recursively reproduced. In replacing the concept of the speech community with the concept of the sociolinguistic scale, Blommaert imagines a type of boundless yet lived space that is both discursively entailed and normatively regulated.

One innovative feature of the concept of sociolinguistic scales is the idea that, rather than being entirely constituted through the linguistic practices and imaginations of its speakers, space also constitutes the value of its speakers’ linguistic competences. For example, Blommaert et al. (2005) describe how linguistic competences in Turkish, a language deemed peripheral to the world-economy but central to diaspora social life in Belgium, are accredited with low social value on the Belgian stock market but high social value within the diaspora neighborhood. A similar case study among Indo-Mauritians suggests that linguistic competences in Hindi, Bhojpuri, and Creole are scaled such that

they respectively acquire their highest values at transnational (which indexes the homeland), local (which indexes the diaspora), and regional (which indexes the nation) scalar spaces (Eisenlohr 2006). Correspondingly, generational shifts from speaking Bhojpuri or Hindi to speaking Creole are anxiously viewed by Indo-Mauritian nationalists as signs of a shifting spatiotemporal orientation between homeland, diaspora, and nation in local politics.

Scalar shifts are defined as interpretive changes in the value and validity of linguistic competences and their concomitant socio-spatial identities (Blommaert 2007). Blommaert writes, “This phenomenon-gaining or losing ‘competence’ by moves in space is part of the experience of migration and diaspora, and it could be a key to understanding sociolinguistic processes of globalization” (2007:2). The divergent evolution of Engsh as an up-scaling cosmopolitan mixed code and Sheng as a down-scaling urban mixed code is an example of such a scalar shift in progress. In Nairobi, Engsh speakers live in upper-class neighborhoods where high-class and high-fashion styles of a globalizing youth subculture are validated. In contrast, Sheng speakers live in lower-class neighborhoods where the innovation and authenticity of a hyper-local youth subculture is valued (Abdulaziz and Osinde 1997). Infrequent interactions between Engsh and Sheng speakers often result in performative contests through which actors seek to establish the higher value of their globalizing or localizing spatial orientations.

I argue that such contestations can also trigger shifts in the participant and interpretive frameworks of an interaction. Over time, the accumulative effects of such scalar shifts may even transform the dominant linguistic regime. In Bailey’s (2001) ethnographic study of Dominican American youth in New York City, he describes how

youth often strategically mix Spanish, AAVE, and (white) standard English to disrupt local racial categories. When phenotypically black speakers code-switch between AAVE and Spanish, they succeed in destabilizing their interlocutor's metapragmatic rationalizations of language and race and in seizing control of the interaction's framing dynamics. In Montreal, the socially dominant language ideology of sociolinguistic compartmentalization enforces scalar distinctions between those social spaces which index the nation, the local diaspora neighborhood, and the global city. Even though these sociolinguistic scales are discursively entailed and institutionally oriented through center-periphery relations that preferentially favor the nation, such orientations are far from being standardized.

In chapter five I describe how the Tamil diaspora neighborhood, along with its heritage language schools, religious institutions, and textual façades, possess an institutional nuclei through which its segregated monolingual domain can be immediately recognized as indexing an alternative sociolinguistic scale. In chapters five and six, I also describe how certain religious, economic, and linguistic practices shift the scalar orientation or participant frames of speakers, institutions, or places within or across the diaspora neighborhood, thus entailing new regimes of value that reflect this increasingly cosmopolitan city. The relative fluidity of these scalar acts of emplacement underscores the increasing political, economic, and cultural linkages that are being created between global city and diaspora in modern nation-states.

In conclusion, I use the phrase "scales of belonging" to refer to the hierarchical patterns of emplacement that constitute the "institutionality" of the diaspora. My empirical focus on experiences of belonging functions as a necessary antidote to the

anthropological over-use of the concept of “displacement” when writing about minority peoples and the places they inhabit. I also seek to expand the semantic purview of “displacement” to suggest that such sentiments are actually discursively ratified qualisigns of spatiotemporal foreignness or non-normativity. Conversely, sentiments of belonging are discursively ratified qualisigns of spatiotemporal normativity. Simply by shifting the scale of analysis back and forth between the normative frame of the nation – whose center only appears to be homogeneous and fixed – to that of the diaspora or the globalizing city – whose centers are multiple and shifting – one can “displace” assumptions of non-normativity which unnecessarily bias the anthropological analysis of minority groups. This approach also enables me to build upon a growing body of literature which analyzes the temporal and spatial aspects of ideological regimentation through linguistic practice.

### **Spatiotemporal Fields of Study**

The interdiscursive property of language refers to its ability to circulate through space and time through processes of entextualization and contextualization (Silverstein and Urban 1996). Silverstein (1976) explains that speech events possess multiple indexical origins that shift both within and across context-bound discourses and historically-situated sites. In contrast to the decentered iterability of text (Derrida 1972), discourse both presupposes and entails asymmetric spatiotemporal chains of meaning through its iteration and circulation. Irvine’s discussion of “shadow conversations” as “multiply dialogical” performances describes how past and future interactions are simultaneously presupposed and entailed through a “lamination of participant roles” (1996:146,151). Irvine (1989) also specifies that entextualized chunks of discourse

circulate and participate in the global market as commodities with abstracted economic and social use-values.

Discourse not only possesses the ability to circulate through space and time, it also possesses the ability to manufacture space-time. For one, temporal and spatial scales of indexical signs can be brought into alignment to produce chronotopic representations of condensed space-time (Bakhtin 1979; Silverstein 2005). Eisenlohr (2004, 2006) describes how Indo-Mauritians create chronotopes of sacred geographies through their religious pilgrimages, purist Hindi-Bhojpuri registers, and Hindutva discourses. Agha (2005), in outlining the semiotic process of “enregisterment”, suggests that the guided interpretation of contrasting (en)textualized voices within chunks of discourse can creatively entail motivated iconic and indexical alignments between linguistic type, social persona, and spatial or temporal structures. This process ultimately results in new local, national, or globally-scaled linguistic registers. Finally, as was discussed earlier, sociolinguistic scales are themselves constituted through the social patterning of the indexical dimensions of contextualization inherent in lived spaces.

Blommaert et al. (2005) extrapolate from Goffman’s formulation of participant frames and footings to explain exactly how “spatial boundary making” (2005:207) functions as an interdiscursive practice. They assert that boundaries index “short- or long-lived relationships of inclusion and exclusion” (2005:207) through framing dynamics “that are patterned, value-laden, and subject to multiple points of view and interpretation.” Even though Goffman conceives of framing dynamics as face-to-face interactions, Blommaert et al. instead emphasize how framing dynamics can also emerge through semiotic interpretations of entextualized discourse. In fact, the ability to

manipulate frames and framing devices is often determined by the contextual relationship between social actor and social space. Sometimes, framing dynamics are more easily manipulated by actors who regularly inhabit a space than by actors with more ephemeral ties to a space. At other times, actors with access to higher-scale participant frameworks enjoy greater control over this interpretive process than actors with access to lower-scale participant frameworks.

Historians and post-colonial scholars similarly describe how the genealogical practices and epistemological biases of Western elites helped to construct the border between the West and the non-West (Trautmann 1997, Cohn 1996). Keane (2007), in his study of Christian missionary encounters in the colonial Dutch East Indies, explains how Westernized elites attempt to purify modern “subjects” from colonial “objects” by discursively entailing the perception of their moral distance. These acts of ideological regimentation gave rise to the “moral narratives of modernity” that, in turn, denied or eradicated the existence of so-called “hybrid” forms.

One such moral narrative is the social evolutionary view of the different “scales of civilization”. This 18<sup>th</sup> century idea of human progress temporalized moral distance as essentialized ontological difference by slotting “savage” and “civilized” societies into non-coeval chronotopes (Fabian 1983; Trouillot 1991). Colonial and indigenous societies were seen as pre-modern and morally backwards for lacking standardized languages, denotative literatures, and textual historiographies, thus denying the “savage”, the “Oriental”, or the “subaltern” his/her historical voice (Guha 1997; Olender 1992; Said 1986; Spivak 1988). Trautmann (2007) also suggests that the philological work of constructing language families, whose segmentary logic of genealogical kinship denies

the premise of mixture between peoples, languages, and civilizations, was used to corroborate the existence of racial groups. For example, Woolard (2002) shows how 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Christian leaders discredited evidence suggesting that ancient Muslim Moors spoke Castilian in order to maintain the perception of Christian Spaniards' racial and linguistic purity.

The discursive purification of modern subjects from colonial objects was also enacted through the demarcation of public and private spheres by state/media agents. Habermas (1962) first referred to 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century British and French cafés and saloons as “public” spaces where “disinterested” individuals could meet to engage in “face-to-face” “rational” critiques of the state. Feminist scholars Fraser (1992) and Eley (1991) have since critiqued this myth of the disinterested, egalitarian, and rational public space by pointing to the elite political and moral interests of their property-owning, white male membership. By associating the private sphere with supposedly negative qualities or femininity, such as irrationality and moral weakness, patriarchal control of these exclusive public spaces is maintained. Gal and Woolard (2001) and Warner (2002) have since redefined publics as multiply imagined, discursive totalities that exist in different, non-territorially-fixed relations to state institutions. Warner (2002) and Fraser (1992) further propose that, by identifying a range of counter-publics and alternative publics, one can account for the contested and contingent processes through which dominant publics emerge.

Cohn first revolutionized the methodology of including both metropole and colonial publics into a “unitary field of analysis...on the British conquest of India” (Cohn

1996:4). Chatterjee has also emphasized the importance of utilizing historiographical methods that are sensitive to the interdiscursive dimensions of these publics:

But one of the most important results of this historiographical approach has been precisely the demonstration that each domain has not only acted in opposition to and as a limit upon the other but, through this process of struggle, has also shaped the emergent form of the other. (Chatterjee 1993:12)

In this dissertation, I have constructed an interdiscursive and genealogical field of analysis which draws upon multiple publics relevant the linguistic and cultural experiences of Montreal Tamils. By including metropole, colony, and diaspora publics within a unitary field of analysis, I seek to analyze a diverse range of linguistic practices and linguistically-imagined experiences through which Montreal Tamils' scales of belonging are entailed.

Finally, the title of my dissertation, "Between Text and Talk," underwrites my efforts to critically de-objectify the modernist dichotomy "between" text and talk by resurrecting their ontological and epistemological spaces "in-between". "Text" includes textual artifacts and forms of speaking that are both literary-like in style, while "talk" includes textual artifacts and forms of speaking that are both colloquial-like in style. Other terms that may appear in relation to "text" are "written language" and "scriptive language", while those that may appear in relation to "talk" are "spoken language" and "oral language". Together, this diverse range of linguistic phenomenon that is situated between the poles of "text" and "talk" assumes its proper historical voice in the telling of this narrative.

### **Into the Field: A Methodological Approach**

From November 2004 to August 2006 (excluding May-June 2006), I collected linguistic, ethnographic, and archival evidence on religious and cultural institutions that

collectively constitute the Montreal Tamil diasporas. From January to April 2005 and again from September to December 2005, I first lived in the multiethnic and multilingual district of Côte-des-Neiges where there are many Tamil-owned businesses, shops, community organizations, language schools, and households. Côte-des-Neiges is generally known as a neighborhood where many Hasidic Jews, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Tamils, Bangladeshis, Caribbeans, and Arabs live. During my stay in Côte-des-Neiges, I was affiliated with the *Groupe de recherche ethnicité et société* through the sponsorship of Dr. Deirdre Meintel of the Université de Montréal.

In the first few months of my fieldwork, I worked to establish relationships with various local Tamil organizations. This includes working with the presidents and board members of CUTAM (Concordia University Tamil Mantram) and Tamilagam. Through these contacts I was able to interview 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Tamil-speaking students, young professionals, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and elders. I also met a Sri Lankan Tamil graduate student who agreed to tutor me weekly in Sri Lankan Tamil. Through my affiliation with David Sommerset at the Université du Québec à Montreal (UQAM), I was invited to participate in Hindu pujas at the Thiru Murugan temple in Dollard-des-Ormeaux. I was also granted permission by the temple managers to attend and observe their weekly Tamil language classes on Sundays. I conducted these observations from March 2005 through July 2005. I also spent time at the house of the Sivapillai family of Côte-des-Neiges, where they hold weekly French tutoring sessions for Tamil children.

From May 2005 to August 2005, I lived in the neighborhood district of Villeray. This neighborhood is composed of mostly white, lower-middle class households of

various European as well as Québécois de souche backgrounds. In Villeray there are also several jewelry, textile, and furniture factories where many monolingual Tamil immigrants work. Also in Villeray there is the only Sri Lankan Tamil Roman Catholic church in Montreal. Catholic Tamil families from throughout the metropolitan Montreal area attend Sunday mass at Our Lady of Deliverance church. Before mass, church leaders host both Tamil language class and religion class. The priest of this Tamil Catholic mission, Father Joseph, invited me to regularly attend church service, observe language classes, participate in religion classes, and speak to members of their youth group. I also assisted Father Joseph in providing religious services to Asian (mostly Filipino and Indian) seamen at the Montreal port. In June I joined Father Joseph and his altar boys in Toronto and Ottawa, where they performed baptisms and raised money for tsunami relief. When Father Joseph briefly returned to Sri Lanka, I also volunteered as an assistant to his replacement priest, Father Michael.

I also became close friends with a young Catholic Tamil woman, Marianne, whose family recently migrated to Montreal from France. They belong to an elite diaspora of Pondichery Tamils who originally migrated to French Southeast Asia and France around the time of Indian independence. I would often accompany Marianne and her family to mass at different multiethnic churches in Montreal. I also attended services at St. Kevin's church in Côte-des-Neiges, a church whose membership is comprised of Filipinos, Tamils, and a few Caribbean families. In July 2005 I attended several Charismatic Renewal services and I would discuss their significance with Tamil Catholics. Since summer is a season for religious festivals, I also attended the Thiru

Murugan temple's annual festival and Our Lady of Deliverance's annual peace processional of the Virgin Mary at Rigaud.

During the summer and fall of 2005, I met with government officials at the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) to discuss my project to observe Tamil language classes in their school district. In December 2005, I was finally granted permission from the school board to conduct my project and I immediately contacted two school principals. One of these school principals works at an English-medium elementary school in Côte-des-Neiges. The principal of this school was somewhat open to participating in my study, but in the end I decided to conduct my research at an English-medium public school in the district of Parc-Extension. From January to March 2006 I observed, audio-recorded, and interviewed Tamil PELO students and teachers at Parker Elementary School.

After my interview with the PELO director, I was given access to government reports and documents on heritage language education in Quebec. Later at the Archives Nationales du Québec, I conducted an extensive archival study (1988-2005) of newspaper and magazine articles written on subjects pertaining to the PELO, heritage language education, language and identity, South Asian immigration, Tamils, racism and discrimination, and multilingualism in Quebec. I later analyzed these media for insights into changing perceptions of social identity and multilingualism in Montreal.

From January 2006 to April 2006, I lived in Parc-Extension and conducted research at Parker Elementary School. This school teaches Tamil, Hindi, Bengali, and Greek to students after school. On Mondays and Wednesdays I would alternatively observe two Tamil PELO classes: one with 1<sup>st</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> grade students and another with 4<sup>th</sup> -

6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The duration of each class was one and a half hours. During this time, I observed and recorded classroom interactions, individually interviewed five students and two teachers in Tamil, French, and English, conducted classroom and individual surveys, and interacted socially with the PELO teachers. Through one of the teachers, I was also introduced to a local Tamil shopkeeper who supplies Tamil educational materials.

My contacts with Tamilagam enabled me to enlist the services of an Indian Tamil tutor. My tutor, Mr. Krishnan, is the author of a series of Tamil language textbooks which are distributed in India through the Giri Trading Agency. Mr. Krishnan is also a certified translator and interpreter in Tamil, English, and French for the government of Quebec. In his capacity of interpreter, he assists with Sri Lankan Tamil asylum cases. We would often discuss the proceedings of these cases off the record. Mr. Krishnan helped to design and to participate in my experimental study of Indian Tamil-Sri Lankan Tamil inter-ethnic communicative practices. Mr. Krishnan and I also analyzed recordings of a drama performance recorded at the 2006 Tamilagam Deepavali celebration. I had previously met with the student writers of this drama at an Indian Tamil graduate student social event. Also, through my contacts with CUTAM and the Murugan Temple, I was regularly invited to attend political and cultural events sponsored by the World Tamil Association. These include memorials and fundraisers dedicated to tsunami victims and war victims of Sri Lanka.

My experiences in Montreal were also structured through my roles as a university student and as the kin of a large Québécois de souche working class family, some of whom are affiliated with the *Parti Québécois* nationalist party. By living with

Chinese-Québécois and Haitian-Québécois students, French and Mexican exchange students, Québécois de souche blue-collared workers, and Arab and African immigrants, I was able to witness the tensions that exist between nationalist versus multicultural and religious versus secular lifestyles. In March 2005, I participated in a large-scale student protest of the provincial government's proposed cuts for student financial aid. In February 2006, I witnessed local Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslim residents of Parc-Ex protest the publishing of the Danish Mohammed cartoon. In July 2006, I observed local Tamil residents protesting the Canadian government's decision to brand the LTTE as a terrorist organization. I was also an irregular participant in various orthodox and devotional religious activities in Montreal, where I visited several different Hindu temples (including the Ram Krishna temple, Thiru Murugan temple, Hindu Mandir, Sri Durgai Amman temple, and Ganesh temple) and participated in multiracial Christian youth groups and bible study groups.

Through these varied experiences, I have been able to witness and analyze the linguistic practices and attitudes of many different ethnic, racial, class, and religious groups in Montreal, in addition to those of Montreal Tamils. These interactions have contributed to my overall understanding of the "structures of feeling" emergent in contemporary Montreal. These structures of feeling, which in chapter seven I collectively refer to as an uncertainty of status, is entailed through the many dialectical moments of movement and social (dis)integration that, ironically, more firmly unite the globalizing city and the diaspora within a single scale of analysis.

## Chapter 2

### Tamil Mother Tongues and Literary Standards

#### Semiotics of Text and Talk

One day, I accompanied Father Joseph on an assignment to the Port of Montreal. He had asked me to take the chief engineer and the chief engineer's wife of an Indian merchant ship on a tour of the major sights of Montreal. I was happy to oblige, knowing that I would receive a personal tour of the ship afterwards. During our car ride to the port, Father Joseph and I discussed his progress in purchasing a church for the Tamil Catholic mission. He then asked me if I could assist him in translating an inspection report of the desired building. The report was written in French, a language that Father Joseph does not speak, read, or write. I consented and then asked him if he had ever attempted to learn French during his four years in Montreal. His response is paraphrased as follows:

I approached Father André, who is the French Canadian priest in charge of St-Vincent's, the mission house where I live. I asked him if he would tutor me in French, as I was very keen in the beginning of my service to learn this language. I was quite surprised when he replied that he wasn't qualified to teach French. I insisted that he is of course qualified, because French is his mother tongue. Yet still, Father André was convinced that he could not teach French. I found his attitude to be quite peculiar. Any Tamil would be able to teach his mother tongue.

When Father Joseph insisted that Father André was indeed qualified because French is his mother tongue, Father André specified that he lacked academic expertise, not native experience, in French.

It became clear to me that Father Joseph and Father André had very different understandings of linguistic expertise. Every Sunday, Father Joseph runs a Tamil language school at Ste-Cécile's church in Montreal. At this school there are both "mother tongue experts" who teach Tamil speech to young children, and "literary experts" who teach Tamil writing composition and literature to older children. Despite lacking academic training in pedagogy, linguistics, and/or Tamil literature, all these teachers are accorded the status of language expert by virtue of their habitual use of the Jaffna Tamil purist register. They attained this knowledge through their childhood language socialization in Sri Lanka.

The priests' differing attitudes thus invoke conflicting interpretations of the relationship between "experts" and "novices". In the Montreal Tamil diaspora, linguistic expertise in Jaffna Tamil is understood to be a form of embodied knowledge that is acquired through the language socialization of culturally embedded persons within Jaffna society. Hence, contextual knowledge of the "mother tongue" is a good index of the person's ability to teach Tamil. Because diaspora leaders generally presume that the purity of the Tamil language is unfavorably corrupted by the multilingual setting of the Montreal diaspora, both diaspora children and foreigners equally share the rank of novices.

The Québécois, on the other hand, interpret linguistic expertise to be a disembodied form of knowledge that grows incrementally through developmental stages and academic phases of an individual's lifespan. Standards of linguistic expertise are measured in conceptual terms of metalinguistic awareness, not in contextual terms of linguistic practice. Hence, knowledge of a "literary standard" becomes a necessary

prerequisite to teaching French. Given this logic, multilingual novices with otherwise highly developed metalinguistic acuties are recognized for their potential to challenge the expertise of mother tongue teachers, especially after having mastered the written language's grammatical structures. Given the extent to which anxieties about incorrect French grammar pervade Québécois society, this epistemic challenge portends a potential loss of expert status for native speakers of Québécois French, an eventuality that Father André is unwilling to risk.

I first arrived at these understandings through a comparative investigation of language ideologies of “text” and “talk” as they have developed through different phases of South Asian and Québécois modern history. In this chapter, I trace the genealogical evolution of language ideologies pertaining to “mother tongues” and “literary standards” in the Tamil-speaking regions of India and Sri Lanka. In the following chapter, I undertake the same exercise with respect to Quebec society. This unit, which I have entitled “Language, Expertise, and Morality,” thus collectively explores the social significance of “mother tongues” and “literary standards” in the articulation of moral epistemologies and sociolinguistic personas within nationalist South Asia and Quebec.

In the language of Peircean semiotics (Peirce 1902[1955]), Québécois language ideologies appear to place greater value on the symbolic modality of language. In contrast, Tamil language ideologies appear to place greater value on the iconic modality of language. In other words, Father André's understanding of linguistic expertise as scholastic knowledge prioritizes the “thirdness” of written language, while Father Joseph's understanding of linguistic expertise as embodied knowledge prioritizes the

“firstness” of spoken language. This analysis is confirmed by Daniel’s (1995) semiotic analysis of social life in the Indian Tamil village of Kalappūr:

I will argue that some cultures chose, in general, to display one particular sign modality in preference to others. Specifically, I will argue that in Hindu India, iconicity is valued over symbolization, whereas in the modern West, the quest for indexical and symbolic signs is valorized. (Daniel 1995: 40)

Even in the Montreal Tamil diasporas (as I will later argue), iconicity remains vitally important to the manner in which Tamils interpret the relationship between linguistic forms, practices, and speakers and the rest of the phenomenal world.

I begin this chapter by describing how the regimentation of textual and oral Tamil forms as embodied icons has been implicated in the moral and political evolution of colonial and post-colonial Tamil societies. Although the Italian grammarian Beschi (1728, 1730) had first written about High and Low varieties of Tamil in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the emergence of the Tamil diglossia language ideology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Tamil scholars would translate these distinctions into a coherent representational economy of “text-like” versus “talk-like” sign-objects. In 1944, Sethupillai first described phonological and lexical distinctions between different registers of “colloquial” and “literary” Tamil. Later, after Ferguson introduced the concept of diglossia in 1959, Tamil scholars such as M.S. Pillai (1960, 1965, 1972), Zvelebil (1964), Schiffman (1978), and Arokianathan (1982) applied his theory to describe the sociolinguistic patterns of Tamil language use.

These publications have since given rise to the popularized use of two diglossia classification systems of the Tamil language: (1) a system which describes the different genres of *eḷutu tamil* (written Tamil), *mēṭtai tamil* (staged Tamil), and *pēccu tamil* (spoken Tamil), and (2) a system which described the different historical styles of

classical Tamil (circa 500 BCE to 500 CE), literary Tamil (circa 600 CE to 1700 CE), and modern Tamil (circa 1800 CE to present) (Britto 1986). The official recognition of Tamil as a classical language in 2004 has further entrenched the dominance of this Tamil diglossia language ideology in both academic and popular thought. I also suggest that this structuralist concept provides a coherent representational economy for classifying Tamil sociolinguistic phenomena as either “mother tongues” or “literary standards”.

In this chapter, I explain how these linguistic forms came to be iconically associated with specific moral and spatiotemporal attributes. The persistence of such iconic significations throughout colonial and post-colonial periods is due to the corroborating linguistic work of Orientalists, missionaries, and nationalists in South Asia. In the process, Tamil literary standards have emerged as codified texts which iconically signify purist and prestigious spatiotemporal qualities. Due to their relatively stable and invariable linguistic structures, literary standards have been generally interpreted as moralized icons of a timeless and ancient Tamil society. Mother tongues, on the other hand, emerge as oral languages which evoke gendered images and sentiments of devotion among their speakers. Due to their variable linguistic structures, mother tongues are generally interpreted as moralized icons of an evolving, modern state. At times, however, Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists have divergently manipulated the text-like and talk-like attributes of the mother tongue and the literary standard to meet their evolving political objectives.

### **Historical Narratives and Chronotopes**

The semiotic interpretation of spatiotemporal and moral properties in linguistic form is dependent upon the existence of particular interpretative frameworks of history.

Various interpretative frameworks have been articulated during the political and religious reformist movements of South India and Jaffna societies. For example, Tamil nationalists in India and Sri Lanka have both endorsed a primordialist language ideology to suggest that “the antiquity (*tonmai*) and primordality (*munmai*) of Tamil, as well as its uniqueness (*tanimai*) and purity (*tūymai*)” are qualisigns of a culturally and morally advanced Tamil heritage (Ramaswamy 1997:39). Neo-Saivite reformers have similarly emphasized how the primordality, egalitarianism, and rationality of this devotional religion surpass the more recently developed philosophies of Brahminical Hinduism and European secular humanism. On the other hand, Indian Tamil statisticians have endorsed a modernist language ideology to suggest that a grammatically simplified Tamil language is an iconic sign of the province’s economic and social progress. Both of these historical narratives have dialectically emerged through colonial and post-colonial interventions into South Asian history.

### ***Primordialist and Modernist Narratives***

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British liberal political philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Macaulay, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill declared South Asia’s native epistemologies to be lacking a proper concept of history (Mehta 1999).<sup>8</sup> According to this liberal philosophy, historical progress occurs through a series of linear and causal events, not through cycles of degeneration as imagined in Hindu cosmology. Furthermore, at the historical rupture of modernity, this tempo of historical progress is believed to accelerate and to produce morally advanced epistemologies and technologies. In Europe, the rupture of modernity is believed to have given rise to scientific reasoning,

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<sup>8</sup> Post-colonial scholars have described how the British Raj deliberately erased evidence of Indians’ pre-historic accomplishments in mathematics and astronomy in order to portray them as pre-scientific (Sen 2005).

liberal philosophy, and textual standardization. By denying the scientific advancements of Hindus and the historicity of their oral traditions, European liberal portrayed Hindu society as perpetually trapped in a pre-modern stage of moral and social evolution (Sen 2005).

Gandhi was the most prominent of Indian nationalists to respond to orientalizing charges of the backwardness of Indian society. His *satyagraha* movement manipulated themes of religious devotion and tradition to wage an effective, non-violent campaign against the presumptive moral authority of the British Raj (Dalton 1993, Rudolph and Rudolph 2006). Even though Gandhi relied on Hindu imagery in his political oratory, he was also considered to be an advocate of Muslim, Christian, and Dalit rights. The success of Gandhi's subaltern movement paved the way for Nehru to implement a secular constitution that would protect the religious neutrality of the nascent Indian nation (Jaffrelot 1996; Rudolph and Rudolph 1967).

Other strategies of religious reform and political resistance in colonial South Asia reveal the impact of liberal notions of historicity (Dalmia 1997; Raman 2006; Mandair 2005). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic reformers and Hindu bhakti leaders in Jaffna showcased their monotheistic or monistic orientation, standardized moral codes, and historical texts to argue for the theological superiority of their respective religious movements (Chandrakanthan 1995; Saveri 1993). These canonical texts were published by Hindu and Catholic presses and disseminated widely throughout Jaffna (Holmes 1980; Navaratnam 1964; Saveri 1993). Also in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tamil nationalists converted oral mythologies of Tamil homelands into historical texts and pictorial representations that were then printed in popular newspapers and magazines and

distributed throughout Tamil Nadu. Through these actions, the modernist regime of the literary standard was endorsed in the Tamil-speaking regions of South Asia.

At the same time, Tamil nationalists developed a primordialist historical narrative to promote the antiquity of the Tamil homeland, first with respect to the West and second with respect to rival ethnic groups in South Asia. Spatiotemporal chronotopes of Tamil homelands played a particularly important role in the discursive development of this primordialist narrative (Bakhtin 1981; Silverstein 2005). Tamil homelands include the cultural realm of Tamilagam, the mythical landmass of Lemuria, the Hindu kingdom of Jaffna, and the prehistoric territory of Eelam. Historical reconstructions of these homelands have either relied upon vague references in classical texts or contested interpretations of the archaeological record to verify their temporal and spatial scales. The most striking feature of these historical reconstructions is the grandeur of the spatiotemporal past with respect to the modern present.

Tamil historiography chronicles the unidirectional and progressive degeneration of Tamil territory through historical time. This degeneration starts with the supra-continental-sized Lemuria (circa 50,000-30,000 BCE), to the sub-continental-sized Tamilagam (from 300 BCE to the 14<sup>th</sup> century), and finally to the smaller territories of the Jaffna kingdom (from the 13<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the province of Tamil Nadu (from 1956 onward). These chronotopic representations are accompanied by historical myths which interpret historical change as cultural, linguistic, and/or moral degeneration.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian Tamil nationalists depicted Lemuria (also known as Kumari Nadu or Kumari Kandam) as the birthplace of all human civilization. The

Dravidian-speaking people of Lemuria were believed to inhabit a landmass that spanned the width of both Indian and Pacific Oceans and joined together parts of continental South Asia, Australia, and eastern Africa:

Where the Indian Ocean exists today, once there was a vast land expanse. This was called Navalan Teevu. Europeans called it Lemuria...At its center stood Mount Meru. One of its peaks was (Sri) Lanka. Just as the continent of Asia lies in the north today, Navalan Teevu or Lemuria lay in the south...There was intense volcanic activity on Navalan Teevu. Several of its regions disappeared into the ocean. At this time, there was a vast land adjacent to a goddess referred to as *kanni* or *kumari* (virgin). Hence the land came to be called Kumari Nadu. (Ramaswamy 2000)

After the flood of circa 16,000 BCE, these Dravidian people were dispersed into different continents where their spoken languages later diverged into new language families. Only the Dravidian languages of South India, and especially Tamil, are believed to have retained many of the grammatical features of the original Dravidian language of Lemuria (Arudpragasam 1996; Ramaswamy 1998).

Almost as grandiose are tales of ancient Tamilagam, a territory whose borders cross the entire expanse of south India, starting from the Tirupati Hills in the north to the coastal tip of Kanyakumari in the south and from west to east coasts. Tamilagam is a vast cultural realm that is believed to have existed since the time of the third Tamil Sangam, a period of intense literary and artistic activity in South India (circa 200 BCE to 300 CE). This cultural territory was ruled by several Dravidian dynasties, including the Cholas, Cheras, Pandyas, and Pallavas. In the early stage of the Tamil nationalist movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dravidian nationalists sought to create an independent Dravida Nadu state that would encompass most of the original Tamilagam territory. Myths about Tamilagam have also been crucial to the national imagination of Sri Lankan Tamil society. Due to the literary and artistic achievements of the Tamil

Sangam, many Sri Lankan Tamils consider Tamilagam to be the primordial homeland of classical Tamil culture and language. The people of Jaffna often refer to their own province as “Ceyagam”, or the place of the child, so as to emphasize the cultural and linguistic similarities between ancient Tamilagam and modern Jaffna (Sivathamby 1995).

Recently, however, Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists have begun to de-emphasize these resemblances and instead emphasize evidence of their indigeneity to the island (Pfaffenberger 1994; Scott 1995). Rajanayagam explains why it was politically necessary for Sri Lankan Tamils to claim a distinct homeland from Indian Tamils:

The Tamil cultural ‘nation’ rarely coincided with any open territorial state and the Tamils were not concerned about statehood, except for the Ceylon Tamils....It became necessary for the Tamils in Ceylon to claim that they were not politically part of India and possessed their own traditional homeland on the island, if they were to survive politically and socially as a distinct nationality. (Rajanayagam 1994)

The Sri Lankan Tamil homeland is usually considered to be the Hindu Tamil kingdom of medieval Jaffna. From the 13<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, while ruled by the Aryachakravarti dynasty, the kingdom of Jaffna successfully withstood numerous military assaults by both India’s Vijayanagara rulers and Sri Lanka’s Kandyan rulers.

Other Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists have instead suggested that the Jaffna kingdom is the historical reincarnation of the pre-historic Dravidian homeland of Eelam (or *Hela* in Sinhala), which existed prior to the migration of Sinhalese-Buddhists to Ceylon (Arudpragasam 1996):

...Eelam Tamils possess all the basic elements that define a concrete characterization of a unique nation. We have a homeland, a historically constituted habitation with a well-defined territory embracing the Northern and Eastern provinces [of Sri Lanka], distinct language, a rich culture and tradition, a unique economic life and a lengthy history extending to over 3,000 years. As a nation, we have the inalienable right to self-determination. This right to self-

determination is none other than the right to choose our own political destiny, the right to secede and form an independent state. (Bose 1994)

After the Jaffna kingdom was conquered by the Portuguese in 1621, the single remaining cultural artifact of the original Eelam civilization is the Jaffna Tamil language. By embodying the timeless and pure qualities of Eelam culture, the Jaffna Tamil language is envisioned by Tamil nationalists as temporally condensing the region, people, and languages of pre-historic Eelam, pre-colonial Jaffna, contemporary Jaffna, and the future nation-state of Tamil Eelam. Thus, as McGilvray writes, the Sri Lankan “Tamil past as it is popularly understood is not so much a record of personalities and events as a collective sense of a timeless and eternally valid Dravidian heritage” (2008:55). This variant on the primordialist theme thus substitutes the Indian Tamil emphasis on historical degeneration with an emphasis on historical timelessness.

### **Icons of the Literary Standard**

Language ideologies of linguistic purity and timelessness are commonly associated with the codified properties of literary standards. As a linguistic standard that is codified as text, the very script-based and written media of this form of communication appear to withstand the vagaries of historical time and human caprice. Even in its oral form, literary standards draw upon stylistic devices which index qualities of cultural antiquity and moral virtue. Countless of studies have revealed how policies of language standardization have played an instrumental role in nationalist movements throughout the world. The Tamil-speaking regions of South Asia are no exception. What makes the Tamil literary standard distinct, however, is its semiotic association with a primordialist historical narrative. Through the vast history of Tamil linguistic scholarship, text-like

qualities have come to be associated with the moral and spatiotemporal qualities of purity, classicalism, and primordiality.

### ***Literary Standard in Pre-Modern South Asia***

Evidence of purist linguistic practices and attitudes in classical and medieval Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka have been extracted from the historical analysis of temple inscriptions and literary texts (Britto 1986). While literary texts are thought to represent the attitudes of elites, temple inscriptions are believed to represent the attitudes of the common folk. Together, these references point to the emergence of a Tamil literary standard at least since the time of the third Tamil Sangam (from 200 BCE to 300 CE). The third Tamil Sangam refers to a literary association of non-Brahmin bards and poets who found patronage for their craft in the ancient city of Madurai. While most Sangam poets were South Indian Tamils, there are a few literary allusions to Sri Lankan Tamil Sangam poets, especially during the rule of King Ellara in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Kalainathan 2000).

The most famous of Sangam texts, the *Tolkappiyam*, attempted to preserve the grammatical structure of the vernacular language spoken by Madurai's *literati*. This language, which Tolkappiyar refers to as *cēn tamīl*, became the literary standard of his grammar book:

Sathasivam (1966), for instance, expresses the view that “Tolkaappiyar, who produced a grammar of Tamil on the basis of the spoken usage of the educated, and of *Cēntamīl*, which was the literary usage, founded his grammar on the unchanging qualities of the language, which changes from time to time... When a grammar is written on the basis of these qualities, the language, while it is in use, will acquire an unchanging, permanent nature”... (Kandiah 1978: 60)

Because medieval Tamil pundits and rulers regarded Sangam bards and poets (and their language) as icons of ancient Tamil wisdom, or “*mutuvāy*”, they drew upon the grammar

and poetic style of these classical texts, and especially the *Tolkappiyam*, to fashion their own literary standard (Devaneyan 1996). During the period of Pandyan rule in Madurai, Tamil pundits incorporated grammatical elements from their own prestigious Tamil vernacular into this classical literary standard. By the late medieval period, the vernacular language of Madurai elites had become normalized as the new literary standard. Correspondingly, the meaning of *cēn tamīl* shifted from “Madurai Tamil” to simply “pure Tamil”. Tamil registers spoken by people living in regions far away from Madurai were instead referred to as *koṭun tamīl*, or crooked Tamil.

By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Sanskrit had begun to compete with Tamil for political and religious patronage, especially in South India. Brahmin Tamils, in perceiving Sanskrit to be the more prestigious language, would speak in mixed codes of “Sanskritized Tamil”. In response, Tamil pundits attempted to enforce the phonological purity of Tamil orthography by using native Tamil phonemes to transcribe Sanskrit loan words (Annamalai 1979). At the same time, the anti-Vedic and anti-Brahminic devotional themes of Saiva Siddhantism began to dominate Tamil literature, even more so in Sri Lanka where the Brahmin Tamil population was small and marginal (Sivathamby 2005). These medieval linguistic practices and attitudes counter normative expectations that “purity is generally associated with the Brahmins and high castes, and impurity with the untouchables and low castes” (Britto 1986:112).

Given the extensive cultural and migratory flows between both societies across the Gulf of Mannar, the people of medieval Jaffna are believed to have endorsed the same literary standard as the people of medieval South India. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century and onward, a divergence in religious themes and colonial experiences has given rise to distinctly

Indian and Sri Lankan corpuses of Tamil literature (Kalainathan 2000, Kandiah 1978; Sivathamby 2005). Nonetheless, Indian Tamils and Sri Lankans have continued to use the same or very similar literary standards up until the present time.

### ***Tamil Colonial Philology***

During the early colonial period, Orientalists referred to such classical and medieval literatures in their classification of South Asian languages and cultures. In 1786, Sir William Jones first developed the concept of the Indo-European language family from the study of classical Sanskrit and Persian texts. This Indo-Aryan proof gave credence to the new sciences of comparative philology and ethnology:

The new science of comparative philology was the elucidation of historical relations among language and their classification into families on the basis of the radiation, segmentary family tree model taken over from the Mosaic ethnology. (Trautmann 1997:131-132)

To classify the colonial Indian population into segmentary nations/stocks/races, philologists and ethnologists compared core words lists of different literary standards.

To determine the core vocabulary of each literary standard, philologists relied heavily upon the expertise of Brahmin pundits. This collaboration led to the adoption of two Brahminical principles: (1) “the Vyākaraṇa doctrine of the unity of all languages as corruptions of the eternal and incorruptible Sanskrit language” and (2) “the analysis of the vocabularies of the modern languages of India into words of Sanskrit, foreign, and local (*deśya*) origin” (Trautmann 1997:136-137). These Brahminical principles introduced local ideologies of linguistic purity and corruption into European thought. Such ideologies prompted Jones and other Orientalists to proclaim the existence of an Indo-European linguistic and racial progenitor through which all other South Asian and

European language and races were related by descent. Friedrich Max Müller referred to this race of Indo-European speakers as *Aryas*.

The Madras School of Orientalism later challenged this notion of Indian and European unity by proving the existence of a separate Dravidian language family. Francis Ellis, who published his Dravidian proof in a “note to the introduction” to Alexander Campbell’s *Grammar of the Teloogoo Language* in 1816, relied a lot on classical Sangam texts for his analysis. Drawing from the grammatical works of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit missionary, J.C. Beschi, Ellis first distinguished between classical forms of “high Tamil” and contemporary forms of “low Tamil” (Trautmann 2006:126). Due to its abundance of *deśya* lexicon and the antiquity of its classical literature, High Tamil was regarded as the purest and most primordial of all Dravidian languages. Other modern Dravidian languages, including Low Tamil, were believed to have evolved from High or classical Tamil. Some Orientalists even proposed that proto-Tamil was the progenitor of all aboriginal Indian languages.<sup>9</sup>

The rise of race science in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century eventually led to the displacement of segmentary ideologies of ethnological relatedness by Hegelian ideologies of ethnological difference. Trautmann explains these differences in perspective:

British (and American) ethnological thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was guided by two master figures, the tree and the staircase. The first is the branching tree-of-nations image that ethnologists share with linguists, and the second is the stepped staircase of progressive succession of forms, the “scale of

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<sup>9</sup> Orientalist advocates of an aboriginal theory of Indian racial unity, including Stevenson and Hodgson, first endorsed the idea that Dravidian was the native language of the original inhabitants of India. In comparison to the light-skinned civilizing invaders of high-caste (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisyas) Hindu pastoral agriculturalists, dark-skinned Dravidian barbarians were seen as a rude population whose languages, religions, subsistence patterns, and other customs had been severely repressed by the conquering Aryans. Among all of Dravidian’s daughter languages, Tamil is believed to be the most “perfect remaining type”. These theories were later discredited in 1856 when Robert Caldwell proved the primordial existence of the Austro-Asiatic language family (Trautmann 1997, 2006).

civilization” that subtends the notion of the stages of social evolution (Trautmann 1987, 1992a). (Trautmann 1997:8)

Racialized interpretations of philological research soon led European scholars to posit the existence of distinct Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, and Austro-Asiatic races. Lexical and grammatical patterns of linguistic contact between language families were then parsed to ascertain migratory patterns of pre-historic contact between racial groups. This racial theory states that “India’s civilization was produced by the clash and subsequent mixture of light-skinned civilizing invaders (the Aryans) and dark-skinned barbarian aborigines (often identified as Dravidians)” (Trautmann 1997:4). Various derivatives of this racialized narrative would play an important role in the development of purist literary standards in modern Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka.

### ***Tamil Literary Standard in Modern India***

In the late nationalist period of the 1910s through 1930s, non-Brahmin high-caste students, teachers, and other political leaders of Tamil Nadu’s Self-Respect Movement utilized these racialized narratives to promote a Tamil nationalist view of Indo-Aryan and Dravidian pre-historic contact.<sup>10</sup> The 1924 archaeological discovery of the Bronze Age Indus Valley civilization in northwest India had lent credence to the belief that Dravidians were the original inhabitants of India. Tamil nationalists seized upon this discovery to claim that Indo-Aryans had invaded North India circa 1500 BCE and later expelled its native Dravidian inhabitants to the south. In the following centuries, Indo-Aryans conquered South India and imposed its caste system on Dravidian inhabitants. All Dravidians became *Sudras*, who are the low-caste menial workers of Indo-Aryan

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<sup>10</sup> Many Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists are/were from the Vellāla caste, a non-Brahmin high caste.

priests (*Brahmins*), kings (*Kshatriyas*), and merchants (*Vaishyas*).<sup>11</sup> Consequently, these Tamil nationalists also suggested that present-day Brahmin Tamils have attained their high caste status by intermarrying with Indo-Aryans and, in the process, diluting the purity of their Dravidian blood (Barnett 1976; Weiner 2001). That Brahmin Tamils liberally use Sanskritized lexicon and phonology in their speech was interpreted as a sign of their racial foreignness.

Leaders of the Self-Respect Movement called for the dismantling of Brahmin Tamil religious, economic, and social authority and the establishment of a purely Dravidian nation, *Dravida Nadu*. Yet as Indian independence from British rule appeared inevitable in the 1930s and 1940s, Tamil nationalists began to focus less on racial and caste issues and more on language issues. Through the subsequent linguistic nationalist movement that Ramaswamy (1997, 1999) refers to as “language devotion,” Tamil nationalists began to condemn the influence of Sanskrit, Hindi, and English on the Tamil language. In 1937, rumors of a federal recommendation to institute Hindi as a compulsory school subject instigated anti-Hindi riots throughout the province of Tamil Nadu. Soon after, news of Hindi replacing English as the sole official language of India fueled anxieties of a renewed North Indian invasion of South India. In 1964-1965, six young Tamil men burned themselves alive and three young Tamil men swallowed poison to protest the institutional imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu. Largely due to the efforts

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<sup>11</sup> This represents the standard view in the Aryan debate, which Trautmann refers to as the “immigrant Aryan” position. The alternative view, which Trautmann refers to as the “indigenous Aryan” position, suggests that Aryans were instead indigenous to India at the time of the Indus Valley civilization from 2600 to 1900 BCE. Competing reconstructions of pre-Vedic and Vedic times are mostly drawn from the literary interpretation of the Rig Veda (written circa 1200 BCE) and from seals found in the Indus valley site (Trautmann 2005).

of these Dravidianist protestors, the federal government of India passed the Official Language Acts of 1963 and 1967 to maintain the official use of English in India.

Since the 1960s, Tamil Nadu's parliamentary government has been dominated by pro-Dravidianist parties. In particular, the DK and its political successors, the *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (DMK) and the *All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (ADMK), have officially endorsed policies of Tamil linguistic purification in their political mandates (Annamalai 1979; Sivathamby 1995). Politicians, linguists, and teachers belonging to these political parties have discouraged the use of Hindi lexicon or Sanskritized phonology in written forms of communication (Pandian 1987; Ramaswamy 1997; Ramaswamy 1999; Subramanian 1999). The widespread establishment of printing presses in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century helped to institutionalize this purist literary standard throughout Tamil Nadu. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this literary standard was both spoken and written for most media, academic, government, literary, and religious discourses (Annamalai 1979; Britto 1986). Whereas the spoken literary standard is meant to embody the moral voice of Tamil Nadu's political and religious leadership, the written literary standard is meant to embody the collective unity of the Tamil nation.

Unfortunately, only literate elites could initially read, write, speak, or even understand literary Tamil. In the 1980s and 1990s, federal and provincial governments financed literacy campaigns throughout rural Tamil Nadu (Cody 2007). Even though Tamil Nadu's school enrollment rates are currently among the highest in India, the majority of rural villagers continue to experience some difficulty in communicating in

literary Tamil (Weiner 1991; Dreze and Sen 1995).<sup>12</sup> Tamil nationalists have responded to this problem by attempting to “modernize” the grammar of literary Tamil:

...the principal objective of the nationalists was to democratize it by shaping it into a language of the people. Indeed, starting in the final decades of the nineteenth century, nationalist journals and pamphlets called for closing the gap between high and colloquial Tamil, emphasizing its role as the language of popular education, of mass communication, and of politics. (Ramaswamy 1993:701)

Annamalai specifies that only Tamil sandhi, morphology, and syntax have been since grammatically simplified:

There were two trends, viz., purification and simplification, in the efforts of modernization of Tamil in this country. Present day written Tamil is coming closer to the colloquial in sandhi and syntax and to some extent in morphology – a move in the opposite direction of archaism (Annamalai 1976). It may be said that purification as opening to archaic sources (i.e. classicalisation) has succeeded to a large extent in spelling and vocabulary; but simplification has succeeded in sandhi and syntax. In morphology, the morphological structures are closer to the colloquial with new morphemes and their combinations, but the phonological shapes of the morphemes, which follow archaic spelling are removed from colloquial pronunciation. (Annamalai 1979:51)

By maintaining the purity of Tamil lexicon and orthography, Tamil nationalists can still claim the relative purity and primordality of their literary Tamil standard.

The normativity of this modern Tamil writing style was first enhanced by the rising popularity of the genre of literary realism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This genre’s novelty can be attributed to its textual representation of Low, or colloquial Tamil voices within a High, or literary Tamil style prose:

The significance of ‘realism’ and ‘dialogue’ is that these techniques ushered L, the ‘dialect colloquial forms’, into the written domains, where H used to be the dominant variety. (Britto 1986:96)

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<sup>12</sup> In 2001, the literacy rate of female children over the age 7 was 65%, and the literacy rate of male children over age 7 was 83%. The mid-day meal scheme, which was launched by Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran in 1982, helped to increase school enrollment throughout Tamil Nadu (General 2008).

Efforts to hybridize spoken and written forms of Tamil into populist varieties of literary Tamil have since proliferated in various media and genres. Writers are currently experimenting with novel orthographic conventions to represent spoken Tamil lexicon (some of which is of foreign origin) and morphology as written texts. Because the spoken language is believed to convey a folk authenticity, contemporary Tamil fiction has experimented with the use of different colloquial dialects in indexing the “spatial and social environment” (Annamalai 2007:67):

To mark the upward mobility of characters from low social status and from illiteracy, these novels switched to the use of the formal language (Muttiah 1980). The use of spoken Tamil in fiction by the protagonists themselves was a later development. It was a concession given to the language of the private sphere to be used in the conversational part of the story, where the characters move the story, while keeping the formal variety of Tamil, which is written, to the narrative part of the fiction, where the author moves the story. Diglossia of the language was carried to make diglossic fiction. (Annamalai 2007:65)

Television and radio programming are also adopting a variety of regional spoken dialects to cultivate a populist appeal among viewing and listening publics (Nakassis and Dean 2007). These examples suggest that the literary standard of Modern Tamil is successfully drawing from qualities of both “text” and “talk” to enhance its accessibility among all citizens of Tamil Nadu.

### ***Tamil Literary Standard in Modern Sri Lanka***

In Sri Lanka, the racial clash of Dravidian and Indo-Aryan peoples has and continues to play out in conflicts between Tamil nationalists and Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalists. The idea that Sri Lanka is composed of two racial/linguistic communities first developed in response to British colonial policies and was later institutionalized in the period immediately preceding Ceylon’s Independence in 1948. Prior to this date, differences in caste, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socioeconomic status figured more

prominently in the social stratification of Sri Lankan society. Intermarriages across such social groups, while not normative, were relatively common, just as political alliances between social groups were common prior to Independence.

During the British colonial period, Tamil elites had disproportionately benefitted from the patronage of British rulers and European missionaries.<sup>13</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European missionaries had opened many bilingual English-Tamil schools in Jaffna. These English-educated Jaffna Tamils, many of whom were members of the Vellāla caste, often procured bureaucratic posts working for the British colonial government in Colombo (DeVotta 2004; Kandiah 1979; Rajan 1995; Sivarajah 1996). As British authority began to wane in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, English-speaking Sri Lankan Tamil elites began to assemble a Tamil literary standard that would be suitable for use in government and business administration.

Their own vernacular speech, which was riddled with English lexicon, and the *centamiḷ* standard, which was too archaic, were both deemed unsuitable to function as model for this modernized Tamil literary standard. Instead, Sri Lankan Tamil bilingual elites worked with Tamil pundits to combine stylistic forms of classical Tamil with grammatical forms of the Jaffna Tamil vernacular. As Kandiah states, “The result was a language that was in many crucial respects different from *Centamiḷ*, just as it was from their colloquial usage” (Kandiah 1979:68). The stylistic borrowings from *Centamiḷ* gave the standard a “kind of traditional sanction” that iconically indexed the superior literary tradition of Tamil over Sinhala (ibid 68). At the same time, the grammatical features of Jaffna Tamil reinforced the purity of this cultural tradition.

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<sup>13</sup> The British also favored the Burghers, who are of mixed Sinhalese, Tamil, and European descent.

Perceptions of British favoritism of Sri Lankan Tamils gradually contributed to feelings of discontent among monolingual Sinhalese villagers of rural Ceylon. By 1946, when the Tamil-speaking population constituted 28.6% of the total population and the Sinhala-speaking population constituted 69.6% of the total population, Tamils were overrepresented in all professional fields, bureaucratic positions, and educational institutions. After the Donoughmore Commission granted universal franchise to all citizens in 1931, Sri Lanka's balance of power and privilege began to shift in favor of the Sinhala-speaking masses. Through the next few decades, Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalists instructed this newly enfranchised Sinhalese voting bloc to progressively strip socioeconomic and educational privileges from Tamils.

First in 1948, Estate Indian Tamils were constitutionally disenfranchised on the basis of being "foreign nationals," despite their many generations of residence in Sri Lanka (Bose 1994; Rajan 1995; Gopal 2000; Nesiah 2001; Peebles 2001; DeVotta 2004).<sup>14</sup> Later in 1956, President Bandaranaike instituted Sinhala as the sole official language of Ceylon.<sup>15</sup> In 1973, the government placed limits the number of Tamil students who could attend medical and engineering school. This law required that Tamil applicants score higher on entrance exams and imposed an additional admissions quota

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<sup>14</sup> Since then, there have been a series of agreements reached between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments to grant partial franchise to Indian Tamils (Malayaka Tamils) of Sri Lanka (Peebles 2001).

<sup>15</sup> Ten years later, the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act was passed as an amendment to the Official Language Bill. Bandaranaike, who drafted this amendment, stated that "any Tamil gentleman must have the right to correspond in the Tamil Language but the position of Sinhalese as the Official Language must be preserved" (Rajan 1995). Yet very little effort was invested in providing for Tamil-language services, such as translators, typists, and stenographers (Rajan 1995). Again in 1972 the constitution was amended to declare that Sinhala and Buddhism enjoyed official status in Sri Lanka (Shastri 1990). The passage of the 16<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment in 1988, a law that granted national and (limited) official status to Tamil and mandated the recruitment of Tamil typists, stenographers, and translators, was perceived as a futile and much belated conciliatory act.

on Jaffna Tamil applicants.<sup>16</sup> By 1978, these policies had caused a 40% drop in Tamil enrollment and a 78% rise in Sinhalese enrollment. Also from the 1930s to the 1970s, the government helped Sinhalese families to settle in newly nationalized and irrigated agricultural lands in the northern and eastern provinces. These colonization policies undermined the majority status of Vellāla Tamils in these regions (Peebles 1990; Shastri 1990).<sup>17</sup>

In 1973 the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) responded to these government policies by demanding the creation of a separate Tamil state. After the anti-Tamil riots and pogroms of 1977, 1981, and 1983, however, many Tamil citizens rejected the TULF's constitutional process and endorsed the LTTE's (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) militant approach. After the "Black July" riots of 1983, the LTTE established a proxy government in the Tamil majority region of northeastern Sri Lanka. In subsequent decades, intermittent skirmishes with the Sri Lankan army have caused the LTTE to both gain and lose territory in regions surrounding the major cities of Batticaloa, and Trincomalee (Bose 1994; Rajan 1995; Nesiah 2001; DeVotta 2004). To date, only the region of Jaffna has consistently remained under the control of the LTTE.<sup>18</sup> Such events

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<sup>16</sup> Historically, Tamil students have performed better than Sinhalese students on competitive entrance exams. This statistical discrepancy is often attributed to Tamils' long-standing access to English-medium schools.

<sup>17</sup> Caste distinctions among Sri Lankan Tamils, all of which are assumed to be of the sudra caste according to the dominant Indo-Aryan varna paradigm, are sometimes influenced by the local socioeconomic hierarchy. Therefore, richer Jaffna Tamils perceive poorer plantation Indian Tamils to be of lower caste. Even minor caste differences among Sri Lankan Tamils living in the northeast are accentuated to reflect the deeply entrenched socioeconomic disparities that exist between the dominant agriculturist Vellāla caste and these other sudra caste groups<sup>17</sup>. Vellāla dominance has led Kenneth David (1977) to describe the Jaffna caste structure as being divided between bound and un-bound castes – those that are service bound to the Vellālas and those that are not. The small groups of Brahmins present in Sri Lanka are also bound to provide the Vellāla caste with temple services. Strategies of "Vellālarization" rather than "Sanskritization" or "Kshatriyaization" thus represent the dominant modality for achieving status in Sri Lankan Tamil society.

<sup>18</sup> Having recently secured the east of Sri Lanka, the government is now attempting to secure the last LTTE stronghold in the northern Jaffna region of Sri Lanka.

have permitted Jaffna society to develop into a close approximation of the Tamil Eelam nation. Unsurprisingly, most of the LTTE leaders and cadres are Vellāla Tamils from Jaffna.

The LTTE, in claiming to be the sole spokesman of all Tamils in Sri Lanka, have pressured the Sri Lankan government and other international players to recognize their legitimate role in diplomatic peace efforts. However, increasing animosity between the Indian government and the LTTE, especially in light of the failed IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987-1990 and the LTTE assassination of Prime Minister Gandhi in 1991, have strained relations between Jaffna and Tamil Nadu. In addition, the LTTE's expulsion of Tamil-speaking Muslims (i.e. "Moors") from Jaffna in 1990 and their belated support for Estate Indian Tamil constitutional grievances have eroded the LTTE's political influence among both of these groups. In fact many of these minority Tamils, in suspecting that the LTTE's primary allegiances are directed toward Jaffna Tamils, have begun to support a second paramilitary faction, the eastern-based *Tamiḷ Makkaḷ Viṭuthalai Puḷikal* (TMVP) (Kandiah 1978; Sumathy 2001).<sup>19</sup> The LTTE has since accused the TMVP of secretly working with the Sri Lankan government to sow seeds of dissent within the Tamil nationalist movement, while the TMVP has denounced the LTTE's extrajudicial actions as impeding the devolution of political autonomy to confederated Tamil provinces.

To prevent the political rupture of the Tamil Eelam nation, LTTE leaders have vehemently promoted their cause of Tamil ethnolinguistic unity. However, these efforts have been undermined by the literary standard's inability to elicit sentiments of language

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<sup>19</sup> LTTE leaders have historically doubted the loyalties of eastern province Tamils because the opposing Tamil paramilitary faction of the TMVP controls most of this region.

devotion among all Tamil-speakers in Sri Lanka. For one, the Sri Lankan Tamil literary standard more closely resembles the vernacular language of Jaffna Tamils than Colombo Tamils, Batticaloa Tamils, Trincomalee Tamils, or Estate Tamils, a fact that has exacerbated rather than alleviated partisan loyalties. Another contributing factor is that Muslim Tamils (also known as Moors) use Arabic as their liturgical standard (Kandiah 1978; McGilvray 2001).<sup>20</sup> Thus, even though contemporary Sri Lanka boasts a 92% literacy rate, it cannot be assumed that there is a one-to-one correspondence between a citizen's literary and colloquial language.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, to promote their ethnolinguistic ideology of a unified Tamil Eelam nation, the LTTE has instead attempted to emphasize the unifying sentiments of the Tamil colloquial language as “mother tongue”.

### **Icons of the Mother Tongue**

Ramaswamy explains how the universalization of the “mother tongue” concept is rooted in the expansionist and modernist epistemologies of post-Enlightenment Europe:

The globalization of the nation form and its cultures of modernity enabled the universalization of the concept of language as “mother tongue,” the site where culture becomes nature. The mother tongue is a construct that emerged at a particular historical moment in the complex transformation of Europe's linguistic landscape from the middle of the second millennium, as Latin was progressively withdrawn from the public domain and the ‘vernacular’ was elevated as the language first of the state and then eventually, by the nineteenth century, of the nation (Seton-Watson 1977). (Ramaswamy 1997:15)

The “mother tongue” concept was first used in 12<sup>th</sup> century Europe to distinguish between languages spoken by uneducated masses (*lingua maternal*) and educated elites (*lingua latina*). By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, vernacular-medium schools had replaced most

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<sup>20</sup> Although they have been traditionally referred to as Moors, the LTTE is now calling upon this population to assume the identity of Muslim Tamils and to claim membership within the LTTE fold. Sri Lankan Moors trace their ancestry to Arab-speaking traders who settled in Sri Lanka between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century. Other Indian Muslims who came to Sri Lanka as indentured workers during the British colonial period in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were originally from Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

<sup>21</sup> See the 2001 Census.

Latin-medium schools in Europe, thus increasing the elite's affiliation with their vernacular language. Two centuries later, European nationalists such as J.G. Herder began using the trope of the "mother tongue" to elicit sentiments of national unity among dispersed European tribes and fractured European city-states (Kroon 2003; Olender 1992).

Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans applied this ideology of the mother tongue to the colonial rule of South Asia. Prior to this point, European Orientalists had primarily studied South Asian literary languages, such as Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and High Tamil, for insights into the ancient world.<sup>22</sup> Only Christian missionaries had learned local vernaculars to translate the Bible and convert local Hindus. With the rise of the British Raj in 1858, colonial administrators increasingly relied on their knowledge of non-literary vernaculars to administer colonial law, communicate with colonial subjects, and study the ethnological landscape of South Asia. As Cohn (1996) explains, colonial rule had as much to do with defining and classifying (i.e. standardizing) spaces, properties, populations, religions, and languages as collecting taxes and imposing laws.

Later, nationalist elites would rely upon gendered images of the "mother tongue" to cultivate sentiments of patriotic devotion. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalist essays on "mother tongue" commonly regard language acquisition as an "emotive process [sic]" of child development (Rao 2000). This perspective is best summarized in a statement made by N.V. Thirta, a contemporary Gandhian scholar and advocate of universal mother tongue-medium education:

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<sup>22</sup> Cohn explains how the process of studying Indian classical languages and vernaculars intruded a new epistemological regime known as Orientalism. This regime had the effect of converting "Indian forms of knowledge into European objects", including grammars, dictionaries, translations, and teaching aids (Cohn 1996:21).

...since language is one of the first items that an individual learns on his mother's lap and since the language acts as a key to the learning of his entire social heritage, man appears to follow his own tongue – mother tongue more than any other language and thus is inclined to give an exaggerated place to his own tongue....man's basic growth-intellectual, social and emotional–depends on his mother tongue, since it is through that medium of infantile learning that his basic concepts are found in him.” (Thirta 1962:9 in Rao 2000:2).

Gandhi's own writings also emphasize an iconic resemblance between the acts of learning one's mother tongue and nursing at one's mother's breast. He writes, “The mother tongue is as natural for the development of man's mind as mother's milk is for the development of infant's body” (Gandhi in Sakrikar 1879:11 quoted in Rao 2000:2). This quote suggests that Gandhi envisions mother tongue expertise as a natural birthright that does not require formal schooling for its development (Pattanayak 1981).

Ramaswamy's historical reconstruction of pre-modern and modern language ideologies in India exposes the “feminization of languages in modernity, a feminization that has been so naturalized as to have sealed off the ‘mother tongue’ from history” (Ramaswamy 1997:17). Ramaswamy explains the significance of these gendered tropes for the development of Indian nationalism:

In late colonial India as well, from the turn of the century, motherhood came to be privileged, not only as the sine qua non of women's identity, but as the foundational site on which pure and true communities could be imagined and reproduced. (Ramaswamy 1999)

Chatterjee (1993) refers to this nationalist ideology as the “new patriarchy” of modern nationalist India, in which the work of reproducing the nation fell on the shoulders of the morally virtuous yet modernized (i.e. literate) mother. In the process of cultivating a spiritual sphere distinct from the Western-dominated material sphere, women had to be de-sexualized and de-eroticized in order to embody the persona of the reproductive mother/nation. Ramaswamy also explains that “the woman was entrusted with the task of

reproducing the nation not just biologically, but culturally and linguistically as well...” (1999:2). As a result, distinctions between moral and immoral women came to be seen as iconic signs of generalized moral attributes of languages and their speakers.

### ***Standardizing the Mother Tongue in India***

The College of Fort William in Calcutta, the College of Fort St. George in Madras, and the Literary Society of Bombay were first established as the three main centers for language learning in 1804, 1812, and 1805, respectively. Later, the Charter Act of 1813 and Macaulay’s Minute of 1835 set a precedent for the bilingual education of Indian elites and British officers in English and Indian vernaculars at these colleges and literary societies. In subsequent decades, the British Raj would extend similar educational opportunities to the non-elite masses. For example, the Dispatch of 1854 and the Hunter Commission of 1882 recommended the establishment of a greater number of primary and secondary public schools for the local study of English and local Indian vernaculars (Goel and Saini 1972; Pattanayak 1981).

During the Swadeshi movement of the early 1900s and the Non-Cooperation Movement of the 1920s and 1930s, Indian nationalists sought to implement a universal system of vernacular education. In 1937, the All India National Education Conference officially declared that primary education should be conducted in the child’s mother tongue. Nationalists deliberately used the term “mother tongue,” rather than the colonial term “native language,” to avoid insinuations of the “nativeness” or primitiveness of South Asian languages (Pattanayak 1981). After achieving Independence in 1947, the new Indian government authorized a three-language formula for teaching schoolchildren (1) their regional and/or mother tongue (if the mother tongue was different than the

regional language), (2) Hindi (or another language if the child resides in a Hindi-speaking area), and (3) English (or another modern European language) (Goel and Saini 1972; Khan 2000).

To implement these educational policies, colonial and nationalist leaders had to first determine and then delimit the mother tongues with which Indians identified. Instrumental to this standardization process were the use of government census questionnaires and field surveys. At first, the 1881 census elicited a broad range of mother tongue affiliations in response to the question, “language spoken by the individual from the cradle?” These responses suggested that the interpretation of the icon “mother” in “mother tongue” was in need of further standardization. In 1961 the definition of “mother tongue” was changed to “language spoken in childhood by person’s mother” to address the issue of multilingual households (Pattanayak 1981:48). Unfortunately, this definition had failed to standardize the nomenclature of mother tongues, thus eliciting 1,652 responses which included Sanskrit and various names of caste groups, religious sects, and towns or villages.<sup>23</sup> Of these responses, only 622 of the 849 mother tongues originally identified in Grierson’s 1928 *Linguistic Survey of India* were replicated in the 1961 census. This discrepancy emphasizes both the geographical and the historical variability of mother tongue affiliations in India (Goel and Saini 1972; Pattanayak 1981).

In 1956 the Indian government successfully reorganized its administrative provinces and princely states into linguistic provinces, a strategic move that political scientists often credit for India’s relatively peaceful transition to democracy (Kohli 2001; Manor 2001). However, this administrative decision required a further numerical reduction in mother tongues to match the number of regional/provincial languages. In

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<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 3.

1969 the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), a language policy think tank, urged the federal government to officially recognize only fifteen regional “mother tongues” by excluding foreign, non-scriptive, non-spoken, and dialectal languages from consideration (Rao 2000).<sup>24</sup> In 1971, the Indian Constitution ratified 18 languages (including Sanskrit, Urdu, and Sindhi) as official languages of regional business and administration in India (Goel and Saini 1972).<sup>25</sup> The 1981 census reported a total number of 105 mother tongues (which is much reduced from the 1652 mother tongues in 1961), including 19 Indo-Aryan, 17 Dravidian, 14 Austro-Asiatic, and 53 Tibeto-Burmese languages (Khan 2000).<sup>26</sup>

To demarcate its provincial boundaries, data from census questionnaires and field surveys were used to analyze the mother tongue affiliations of the residents of border villages. For example, the 1951 census asked residents living in villages located halfway between the provinces of West Bengal and Orissa to identify with one of three mother tongue affiliations: Bengali, Oriya, or Santhali (a tribal language) (Arputhanathan 1955; Mitra 1956). Villages with majority Bengali-speakers would be placed within the provincial boundaries of West Bengal, while villages with majority Oriya-speakers would be placed within the provincial boundaries of Orissa. The provincial delineation of Tamil Nadu and other provinces in the Madras Presidency followed a similar protocol.

Starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, nationalist leaders in Tamil Nadu deployed gendered tropes and images to cultivate sentiments of ethnolinguistic unity and

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<sup>24</sup> The CIIL now emphasizes that “mother tongue” need not be coterminous with “regional language”. The CIIL is currently advocating for increased government funding for all mother tongue education programs, including those which involve non-regional languages (Rao 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Sanskrit, Urdu, and Sindhi are the only three scheduled languages which are not recognized as regional languages. Nonetheless, Urdu is the second most spoken language in five provinces, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh (Khan 2000). See Appendix 4.

<sup>26</sup> Most of the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burmese languages would be classified as tribal languages, while most of the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages would be classified as social dialects.

devotion among speakers of the Tamil mother tongue. Whereas in pre-modern times Tamil was worshipped as a sovereign male persona whose language displayed a power “beyond the total comprehension and control of its human speakers”, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Tamil was worshipped as a female goddess whose language displayed a power “no longer deriv[ing] from the gods, but from the ‘imagined’ community of ‘the people,’ its speakers” (Ramaswamy 1998:85;87).<sup>27</sup> This female goddess was known both as *Tamiltāy* (mother Tamil) and *tāymoḷi* (mother language). Images of *Tamiltāy* would sometimes disarticulate into the multiple icons of goddess, mother, and queen personas, each of which respectively corresponds to religious, nationalist/ethnic, and classicalist ideologies of belonging (Ramaswamy 1997, 1998). Together, the gendering of the “mother tongue” as a native Tamil goddess/queen/mother successfully invokes different spatiotemporal scales in its production of the Tamil Nadu nation.

Due to the success of this language devotion movement, most residents of Tamil Nadu readily identify with Tamil as their mother tongue. Variations within the Tamil mother tongue category are ideologically subsumed within the nesting sub-category of caste or regional dialect, with some dialects seen as indexing relatively higher or lower scales of purity. For example, rural dialects are generally perceived to be purer than urban dialects (such as the Tamil-English mixed code spoken in Chennai) (Krishnan 2004). Dialects spoken in border regions are generally believed to be less pure than dialects spoken in central regions of Tamil Nadu (such as Madurai). Although higher-caste dialects are generally considered to be purer than lower-caste dialects, the one

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<sup>27</sup> Previously in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, bhakti poets instead described the Tamil language as a divine and sovereign male persona who would be granted the homage and adulation of gods by performing miraculous acts. These bhakti poems were intended to critique the mounting influence of Sanskrit in the Telugu-speaking Nāyaka court of 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> century Madurai.

exception is the high-caste dialect of Brahmin Tamils (whose Dravidian blood is always in question) (Annamalai 1979). Finally, dialects of illiterate villagers are generally deemed to be less pure than dialects of literate townsfolk (Cody 2007). Because these scalar differences in linguistic purity are structured by the logic of “central-peripheral” social relations, they are unlikely to interfere with the centralized reproduction of a unifying mother tongue affiliation.

### ***Standardizing the Tamil Mother Tongue in Sri Lanka***

The island of Ceylon was first ruled by the Portuguese (1517-1660), second by the Dutch (1660-1802), and third by the British (1802-1948). In contrast with the East India Company’s gradual acquisition of a vast and ethnolinguistically diverse Mughal empire in India, prior to colonial rule Sri Lanka had been divided into three linguistically-distinct regional polities: the Tamil-speaking kingdom of Jaffna, and the Sinhalese-speaking kingdoms of Kandy and Kotte. Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial rulers, who annexed each of these kingdoms piecemeal, maintained these native political boundaries by recognizing the three “Principal Nationalities” of Tamils, Kandyan Sinhalese, and Low Country Sinhalese (Arudpragasam 1996).

In 1833, the British colonial government partitioned the island into two linguistically-defined administrative regions: one in northeast Ceylon and one in southwest Ceylon. The northern region neatly corresponded with the territorial boundaries of the pre-existing Jaffna kingdom, while the southern regions corresponded with the Kandyan and Kotte kingdoms. The eastern and western coastal trading regions, with their mixed social composition of Tamils and Sinhalese, were more difficult to classify. Due to its large presence of Tamil-speaking Moors, the eastern region was

eventually designated as a Tamil area and became part of the northeastern region.

Accordingly, the western coastal regions were designated Sinhalese areas and became part of the southwestern region.

Later, the British colonial government also attempted to standardize Ceylonese ethnic and racial affiliations.<sup>28</sup> In 1871, the colonial census recorded a total of 78 nationalities and 24 races, a statistic which reflects Ceylon's lengthy history as a cosmopolitan trading center and former Portuguese, Dutch, and British colony. By 1881, however, the choice of ethnic/racial affiliation had been reduced to seven categories, including European, Sinhalese, Tamil, Moor, Malay, Vedda, and other. In 1925, after the Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalist movement had sufficiently gained in strength, ethnic distinctions between Sinhala-speaking Kandyans and low-country Sinhalese were eliminated from the census. By emphasizing a common Sinhalese ethnolinguistic identity, nationalists sought to demonstrate the majority status of the Sinhalese within Sri Lanka. In conjunction with the administrative reorganization of the island, these census reports set a precedent for recognizing two majority populations of Ceylon: the Sinhalese and the Tamils (Arudpragasam 1996).

In the early 1900s, Tamil and Sinhalese lower-class elites joined forces to seek better employment and educational opportunities for Tamil and Sinhala monolingual citizens. This mother tongue movement, which was known as the *swabasha* movement, announced the beginning of Ceylonese nationalist agitations against British colonial rule:

...in February 1926, A. Canagaratnam, a Legislative Council member from the Northern Province, moved a motion that cited the disparities between the English and vernacular media schools and called for "English, Sinhalese, and Tamil [to] be made language subjects in all schools, the mother tongue of the students being

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<sup>28</sup> In contrast with India, the British did not ask for information about caste identities, believing the low-caste composition of Sri Lanka to be relatively homogeneous.

gradually adopted as the medium of instruction in all schools of all grades. In March 1932, G.K.W. Perera, a Buddhist member of the State Council, also moved a resolution that called for its standing orders to be amended so that the vernacular languages could be used in the legislature, insisting that it was not appropriate “for people to come here and represent – to claim to represent – the interests of the people of this country if they do not understand the language. (DeVotta 2004:46)

These resolutions eventually compelled the British colonial government to pass a law guaranteeing free universal education to all Ceylonese in 1939. As a result, literacy in Tamil, Sinhalese, and/or English rose from 17% in 1881 to 65% in 1953, the highest rate in all of South Asia at that time (DeVotta 2004).

By the 1940s, the swabasha movement had transitioned into the Sinhala-Only movement. Rather than collaborating together to create a unitary Ceylonese identity, many Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalists and, in response, many Tamil nationalists instead emphasized their mutually divergent histories, languages, and racial identities. Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalists claimed that Sri Lanka was originally inhabited by a race of Sinhala-speaking aborigines who were later conquered by the Damilas, or Tamil-speaking invaders from India. In turn, Tamil nationalists claimed they were the descendants of an ancient Dravidian race which once ruled over the entire kingdom of Eelam. For both Sinhalese-Buddhist and Tamil nationalists, admitting that for several millennia many Sri Lankans were multilingual speakers and of mixed Tamil and Sinhala parentage would threaten their agendas to assert the existence of a pure Sinhala race or a superior Tamil nation (Arasaratnam 1994; Bose 1994; Pfaffenberger 1994; Rajan 1995; Rajasingham-Senanayake 2001).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Sri Lankan Burghers are recognized to be distinct ethnic population of mixed Sinhala and European (Portuguese, Dutch, and/or British) descent.

In 2001, the census recognized a total of nine ethnic categories, including Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamil, Indian Tamil, Sri Lankan Moor, Burgher, Malay, Sri Lankan Chetty, Bharatha, and others (Sivathamby 2005). Although the census portrays the Sinhalese as an ethnolinguistically unified group, it does not extend the same consideration to Tamils. Tamil nationalists have since denounced the census' differentiation of Tamils into Sri Lankan Tamil, Indian Tamil, and Sri Lankan Moor sub-groups as a strategy to encourage dissension within the Tamil Eelam movement (Sivathamby 2005).

To cultivate sentiments of language devotion to the Tamil mother tongue, Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists have also invoked gendered icons of the Tamil language. According to Fuglerud (1999), the institution of gender, along with caste and seniority, is the main hierarchical principle governing Jaffna Tamil society. He describes an image of young woman on a wall in Jaffna whose body is depicted in the form of the Eelam nation:

...in a popular drawing appearing on walls around Jaffna, Eelam is portrayed as a young woman breaking free from the chains tying her to the southern part of the country. With her face in the Jaffna peninsula, the Tamil areas on the western and eastern coasts appear as her long, free-flowing hair. (Fuglerud 1999:167)

The drawing of Eelam as a vulnerable woman is meant to elicit sentiments of indignation and protectiveness from Tamil men. By iconically associating the mother tongue with both mother and nation, Sri Lankan Tamil men are visually and viscerally reminded of their filial, patriotic, and moral duty to protect language/nation/mother.

Fuglerud also describes how this gendered metaphor is being reproduced in the Norwegian Tamil diaspora through the iconic linking of the sweetness of the Tamil language and the chastity of Tamil women:

This comparison between language and the young woman is not exceptional or idiosyncratic. It is a comparison which rests on two key polysemic words which are recurrent in praising both the qualities of the Tamil language and, at least for Tamil men in Norway, the qualities of young Tamil women. These words are *kannimai* which means young, youthful, but also virginal, pure, chaste, and *inimai*, which means sweet, delightful, but also sensual and erotic. Thus the purity of the Tamil language comes to be seen in terms of the sexual purity and faithfulness of women. (Lakshmi 1990 in Fuglerud 1999)

At the same time, Fuglerud explains that the Tamil language must also embody the maternal virtues of the mother to demonstrate its capacity to reproduce the nation.

During the annual Great Heroes' Day (*Māvērer Nāl*) commemoration that is simultaneously broadcast and ritually synchronized in Sri Lanka and its Tamil diasporas on November 27<sup>th</sup>, televised images of mothers are seen placing garlands on pictures of their martyred children. Fuglerud (1999) suggests that these televised images strategically replicate well-known Sangam poetry about grieving mothers, thus emphasizing the reproductive continuity of the Tamil nation from pre-modern times.

Even though all Tamil-speakers in Sri Lanka identify with the Tamil mother tongue, linguistic variation in Tamil colloquial styles is interpreted as potentially superseding this commonality. For example, Tamil-speaking Moors are recognized as speaking a variety of Tamil that is lexically influenced by Arabic:

The Muslims of Batticaloa region also speak Tamil as their mother tongue, but with slightly different intonation and a specialized vocabulary, much of it Arabic-derived, for kinship terminology, verbal etiquette, and Islamic religious practices. (McGilvray 2001:7)

Despite the LTTE's efforts to the contrary, most Moors have rejected the use of the term "Muslim Tamil" and choose to identify simply as "Moors". Their matrilocal/matrilineal kinship structure and their Islamic religious practices are daily reminders of the cultural and religious differences that also exist between them and Hindu and Catholic Tamils

(McGilvray 2008). Estate Tamils (or Indian Tamils) are also regarded as speaking a distinct variety of Tamil that Sri Lankans refer to as Indian Tamil (Gair and Suseendrarajah 1998). Only in the last few decades have Sri Lankan Tamils even recognized their common ethnicity or language with Estate Tamils, many of whom are lower-caste and lower-class in status. Up until now, Estate Tamils have not joined allegiances with the LTTE, preferring instead to build their own political parties such as the Ceylon Indian Congress, the Ceylon Workers Congress, the Freedom Party, and the United National Front.

Among all of Sri Lanka's regional populations, only Jaffna Tamils are considered to speak an authentic form of Tamil:

...Jaffna Tamil, located in the northernmost part of the country, notably the Jaffna peninsula, is the variety commonly thought of as the one most 'characteristic' of Sri Lankan Tamil, primarily because of the preponderance of Jaffna people among Tamil professionals, civil servants, and educators in Sri Lanka." (Gair and Suseendrarajah 1998:171)

Gair and Suseendrarajah, in describing pronominal verbal forms that are unique to Jaffna Tamil, reject the claim made by Steever (1988) that these verbal forms are retentions of Classical Tamil and instead conclude that "we cannot at present offer an explanation buttressed by sufficient historical evidence for how and by what stages these pronominal verb forms came about" (Gair and Suseendrarajah 1998:179). Nonetheless, it is common for Tamil scholars to emphasize that Jaffna Tamil has retained "archaic features of the language that were lost in the course of its history in other countries" (Kalainathan 2000:301). By virtue of its "retention" of classical literary elements, Jaffna Tamil is believed to be more primordial and pure than all other Tamil mother tongues. In response to these fractious divisions within the Tamil Eelam movement (and recent

military incursions by the Sri Lankan army in peripheral zones of the Tamil Eelam territory), Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists have centrally positioned the Jaffna Tamil mother tongue as an icon of the timeless and enduring Sri Lankan Tamil heritage.

### **Conclusion**

Through the gendered and spatiotemporalized tropes of literary standards and mother tongues, Tamil nationalism has produced an enduring representational economy in which classical, literary, textual, and purist signs are interpreted as icons of an ancient Tamil society, whereas modern, colloquial, oral, and hybrid signs are interpreted as icons of contemporary Tamil society (see table 1). From this representational economy, two distinct moral visions of nationhood have developed. One moral ideology of the nation adheres to a liberal understanding of historical progress by envisioning linguistic change as a sign of social and moral evolution. Another moral ideology of the nation adheres to various primordialist understandings of temporal change by envisioning linguistic antiquity and continuity as signs of social and moral prestige.

**Table 2: Representational Economy of Tamil Societies**

	<b>Ancient Tamil Society</b>	<b>Contemporary Tamil Nation-State</b>
<b>Type of literature</b>	Classical/Poetry	Modern/Realism
<b>Linguistic style</b>	Literary	Colloquial
<b>Linguistic medium</b>	Textual	Oral
<b>Linguistic form</b>	Purist	Hybrid

After more than sixty years of Indian and Sri Lankan independence, the people of Tamil Nadu and Jaffna are currently facing divergent political realities. While Indian Tamils have successfully elected pro-Tamil political parties to both provincial and federal levels of government, pro-Tamil political parties have been increasingly marginalized or ejected from within the Sri Lankan parliamentary system. Paramilitary organizations

continue to operate as proxy governments in the disputed regions of northern and eastern Sri Lanka, whereas in Tamil Nadu separatist parties such as the DMK and AIADMK have largely abandoned their quest for political sovereignty. By devolving power to its linguistic provinces, India's federal government has successfully avoided civil war in South India (Weiner).<sup>30</sup> Sri Lanka's federal government, by refusing to devolve power to the LTTE, has exacerbated the conditions for civil war in Sri Lanka. The current endorsement of populist literary standards and a unified yet differentiated mother tongue by the modernist regime of the Tamil Nadu state, as well as the endorsement of a classicalist literary standard and purist mother tongue by the primordialist regime of the Tamil Eelam nation, both represent strategic combinations of text-like and talk-like linguistic icons in the pursuit of divergent nationalist objectives.

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<sup>30</sup> Exceptions to this rule include the civil unrest in Kashmir and the northeastern provinces of India.

### Chapter 3

#### Linguistic Expertise and Moral Normativity in Quebec

“*Je me souviens*” [I remember] is the official motto of Quebec. This enigmatic motto was first proposed by Eugène-Étienne Taché, a 19<sup>th</sup> century surveyor/civil engineer/architect working for the Department of Crown Lands in British Canada. According to Québécois nationalists, the motto refers to the British conquest of New France on the Plains of Abraham in 1759. Others have suggested that the motto was derived from the phrase “*Je me souviens que né sous le lys, je croîs sous la rose*” [I remember that born under the lily, I grow under the rose]. In fact, Taché had engraved similar words on a commemorative medal that he designed for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Quebec City, where he writes “*Dieu aidant, l'oeuvre de Champlain née sous les lis a grandi sous les roses*” [God helping, Champlain’s work born under the lily has grown under the rose].

Taché, as a French Canadian working for the British Crown, represents a morally ambivalent figure for those who have been taught that Quebec’s history unfolded through a series of prolonged and bitter conflicts between French settlers and English rulers. The discursive polarization of French versus British cultures, Catholic versus Protestant religions, and seigneurial civil codes versus uniform civil codes has presented a tidy representational economy for legitimating sentiments of alienation and displacement upon which contemporary Québécois nationalism is built. Only recently have Quebec scholars begun to dismantle these discursive categories in the attempt to present a more

historically accurate view of pre-modern and modern social relations in Quebec. For my part, I seek to dismantle assumptions of semiotic fixity and moral essence that have accompanied the discursive representation of Quebec's linguistic landscape. To assert Quebec's right to independence, 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalists have had to "prove" two undeniable facts: (1) that there is a normative Québécois nation, and (2) that the Québécois possess the requisite "expertise" to lead this nation-state. These epistemological and ontological criteria were met by developing a suitably "native" vernacular and "expert-like" literary standard to respectively ratify the moral normativity and linguistic expertise of this emergent nation-state.

These ideals of linguistic expertise and moral normativity in nationalist Quebec have emerged out of ongoing efforts to standardize the relationship between English, European French, Québécois French, and Québécois joul. Even though they are not officially described as a diglossic system, these four languages are nonetheless treated as such through various second-order rationalizations. One second-order rationalization claims that each language, from left to right, indexes a lower scalar order of expertise and a higher scalar order of moral normativity. The two middling languages, European French and Québécois French, are described as both expert-like and morally normative and are thus competing for the status of literary standard. The outliers of English and Québécois joul, on the other hand, are described as possessing either expert-like or morally normative qualities. Hence, English is considered as the most prestigious yet most inauthentic language in Quebec, while joul is considered to be the least prestigious yet most authentic language in Quebec.

A related language ideology suggests that qualisigns of linguistic expertise and moral normativity are iconically linked to the oral and textual expression of these languages. Oral forms of communication, as well as oral-like languages, are believed to embody the moral voice of the folk, while textual forms of communication, as well as text-like languages, are believed to embody the codified standards of the nation-state. Through both of these language ideologies, the resultant sociolinguistic compartmentalization of spoken and written competences in English, European French, Québécois French, and Québécois jòal have been crucial in defining Quebec as a “literary nation” and the Québécois as an “oral folk.” In this chapter, I trace the emergence of these contemporary interpretations of linguistic form, medium, and practice to key sociohistorical events and political initiatives of pre-modern and modern Quebec.

### **Moral Narratives of Quebec’s History**

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ideals of moral normativity had been standardized by the Catholic Church. After the demise of the Catholic Church’s authority in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, ideals of moral normativity became increasingly linked to those of linguistic expertise. The Durham Report of 1838, by introducing the idea of antagonistic French-speaking and English-speaking races, represents a watershed moment in the inception of Québécois linguistic nationalism. Since this moment, language has become the primary iconic signifier of a modern Québécois national identity. Even as Quebec has diversified into a multilingual nation, the public use of the French language remains the primary modality for belonging as a Québécois citizen.

### ***Rule of the Catholic Church***

After the conquest of New France in 1759 and the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the British Crown seized control of Quebec's legislature, judiciary, and trade. These actions compelled many French-speaking intellectuals and business leaders to repatriate back to France, thus creating a leadership vacuum within the French-speaking population. Reformist religious orders such as the Jésuites, the Sulpiciens, the Ursulins, the Congrégation Notre-Dame, the Franciscains, and the Hospitalières de la Miséricorde-de-Jésus, many of whom had already played prominent roles in founding, settling, and governing New France, were granted authority over its civil governance by British governors. In 1774 the Act of Quebec guaranteed freedom of religion to all Catholics and seigneurial rights to all landowning clergymen, thus ensuring the clergy's authority within French Canada for centuries to come.

As landowners, clergymen soon acquired ample financial resources to expand their authority beyond the spiritual domain. At the peak of its influence in the 1840s, the Catholic Church was heavily involved in activities of industrial speculation and capitalist investment, especially within the cities of Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and Montreal.<sup>31</sup> Even after the signing of the Act of Confederation in 1867 and the naming of Quebec as a Canadian province, the Church maintained its considerable financial and administrative clout. In fact, what had begun as an administrative collaboration between Catholic clergy, French seigneurs, British bureaucrats, and trans-Atlantic merchants in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries had since evolved into an ideological partnership between pro-capitalist Catholic clergy, industrialists, government bureaucrats, and elected officials in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>31</sup> The Catholic Church also reached a peak in popularity in 1950, right after the end of World War II.

Most rural parishioners, however, were oblivious to the Church's profitable business alliances. Rather, the Church's public investments in hospices, orphanages, hospitals, and religious schools were taken as irrefutable evidence for the clergy's philanthropic and upright moral character. During mass, Catholic clergymen would regularly denounce the dual evils of global capitalism and British colonialism and encourage the strict observance of Catholic traditions, French language use, and a pre-industrial and rural lifestyle. Village priests, whose panoptic churches were always located in the village center, could easily survey, identify, and threaten to withhold communion from residents deemed to be moral miscreants. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Catholic Church would refer to the vices of secular entertainment, art, and literature, in addition to the sins of alcoholism, divorce, and pre-marital sex, as plagues of a modern, urbanizing lifestyle.

According to the Church's primordialist vision of history, social change is akin to moral degeneration. Dickinson and Young refer to this narrative of history as a "conservative national ideology":

The popular classes resisted being told what to think and so adhered to their network of family, tavern, friendly society, labour union, and neighbourhood. To combat such independence, lay and clerical intellectuals formulated a unifying, conservative national ideology rooted in Catholicism, the French language, the preindustrial family, and an idealization of rural life. Women became important deputies in propagating this ideology in the enclaves of both convent and domestic life. (Dickinson and Young 2000:156)

What these Quebec historians fail to emphasize is that this conservative ideology is also rooted in a temporalized representational economy which presupposes a polarized opposition between "modernist" and "classicalist" attributes of morality. In pre-modern Quebec, "classical" signs include the rural household, the fecund mother, the French

language, and patriarchal tradition, all of which are endowed with God’s eternal blessing. “Modern” signs, instead, include the industrialized city, the English language, feminism, and secular forms of entertainment, all signs of man’s spiritual degeneration.

**Table 3: Temporal Representational Economy of 18th to 20th century Quebec**

	Classicalist Signs	Modernist Signs
Family	Large	Small
Residence	Rural	Urban
Ideal Persona	Mother or nun	Feminist
Language	French	English
Economy	Pre-industrial	Industrial
Social Values	Patriarchal tradition	Social change
	God	Secularism

As this table makes evident, the proper observance of gender roles has long been a central component to the Catholic moral order. The Catholic clergy taught that a woman’s role was to procreate and to guide her family in observing the sacraments, whereas men were expected to enroll in institutions of religious or classical education and financially support their family and church. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when other Canadian provinces began to offer family planning services, the Catholic Church explicitly prohibited French Canadian Catholic women from practicing birth control or working in the public sector. Despite these prohibitions, many French Canadian women had joined suffragist organizations and entered the salaried labor force by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their actions, by destabilizing the Church’s moral authority, also helped to institutionalize the ideology of secular feminism as a foundational liberal principle of modern governance.

The contemporary “neo-traditionalist” folk band *Mes Aïeux* examines the ethics of secularization, urbanization, and feminism from a retrospectively “primordialist” point of view. In the following stanza from their hit song “Dégénération”, the band suggests that

feminism, in addition to introducing personal liberties, may have also brought upon the moral degeneration of French Canadian women:

*Ton arrière arrière grand-mère elle a eu 14 enfants  
Ton arrière grand-mère en n'a eu quasiment autant  
Et pis ta grand-mère en n'a eu 3 c'était suffisant  
Pis ta mère n'en voulait pas, toé t'étais un accident  
Et pis toé, ma 'tite fille tu changes de partenaires tout le temps  
Quand tu fais des conneries, tu t'en sauves en avortant  
Mais y'a des matins tu te réveilles en pleurant, quand tu rêves la nuit ..... d'une  
grande table entourer d'enfants... (Mes Aieux 2005)*

Your great-great grandmother had 14 children  
Your great grandmother had about the same amount  
And your grandmother had 3, that was enough for her  
Your mother didn't want any children, you were an accident  
And you, my young girl, you change lovers all the time  
When you screw up, you get an abortion  
But sometimes you wake up crying in the morning, after having dreamt... of  
having a big table seated with lots of children (my translation)

With smaller families and looser morals in each consecutive line, the temporal structure of this song diagrammatically embodies the voice of a primordialist historical narrative. Although currently a minority voice, this primordialist moral ideology was the dominant, elite, and majority voice of Quebec up until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Rise of French Secular Nationalism***

John George Lambton Earl of Durham, the author of the *Report on the Affairs of British North America* (also known as the Durham Report), played an important role in promoting the goals of linguistic rather than religious nationalism in Quebec. In the aftermath of dual rebellions against the British Crown in Lower Canada (Quebec) and Upper Canada (Ontario) in 1837-1838, Lord Durham was commissioned by Queen Victoria to investigate the political, economic, and social causes of this colonial unrest. Segments of the resulting “Durham Report”, which was published by the House of

Commons in February 1839, first appeared in Canadian newspapers on October 9, 1838, a “*date memorable dans l’histoire du Canada*” according to its official French translator, Marcel-Pierre Hamel of the *Société Historique de Montréal* (Hamel 1948:24). Durham summarizes his recommendations to the British Crown in the following extract:

*Je visais...à elever la province du Bas-Canada à un caractère tout a fait britannique, à en attacher la population à la souveraineté de la Grande-Bretagne, en la faisant participer à ces hauts privilèges, qui ont si longtemps fait la gloire du peuple anglais. J’espérais conférer à un peuple uni une jouissance plus étendue d’un gouvernement libre et responsable et noyer les miserables jalousies d’une petite communauté et les odieuses animosités d’origine, dans les sentiments plus élevés d’une nationalité plus noble et plus compréhensive.* (Hamel 1948: 24)

In this proclamation, he proposes three important changes in the governance of Canada: (1) the assimilation of French Canadians through the unification of Lower Canada and Upper Canada into a single administrative unit, (2) the implementation of a system of responsible government, and (3) the replacement of French civil codes with municipal-based civil institutions (Wallace 1948). Even though Durham resigned from his post soon after the report was published, subsequent governor-generals of Canada eventually implemented all three of his recommendations.

In reading this report, French Canadians felt betrayed by the Durham Report’s misinterpretation of French Canadian culture, history, and their social relations with British Canadians. Durham’s advisory commission, which was over-represented by British Loyalists and Montreal business leaders, sought to negatively portray the Patriot rebellion of Lower Canada as racially motivated rather than economically or politically motivated. Durham adopted his commission’s point of view by presupposing the existence of two bitterly opposed races/nations in Lower Canada, the French-speaking race and the English-speaking race:

*Je m'attendais à trouver un conflit entre un gouvernement et un peuple; je trouvai deux nations en guerre au sein d'un même Etat; je trouvai une lutte, non de principe, mais de races. Je m'en aperçus: il serait vain de vouloir améliorer les lois et les institutions avant que d'avoir réussi à exterminer la haine mortelle qui maintenant divise les habitants du Bas-Canada en deux groupes hostiles: Français et Anglais. (Durham in Marcel 1948: 67-68)*

Even though Patriot leaders included both French and English Canadians, Durham believed that the rebellion in Lower Canada was caused by the animosity of French Canadians toward their English-speaking rulers:

*Les Canadiens français ont essayé de dissimuler leur hostilité à l'émigration et à l'introduction des institutions anglaises par le truchement d'une guerre contre le Gouvernement et contre ceux qui l'appuyaient. (Durham in Hamel 1948:72)*

In reality, Hamel suggests, Montreal business leaders and other English-speaking Loyalists were threatened by their minority status within Lower Canada and sought to unite the two provinces in order to achieve majority status in a newly English-dominant Canada.

To validate the merits of Canadian unification, Durham had to first explain how French Canadians would benefit from the imposition of British culture and institutions:

*There can hardly be conceived a nationality more destitute of all that can invigorate and elevate a people, than that which is exhibited by the descendants of the French in Lower Canada, owing to their retaining their peculiar language and manners. They are a people with no history, and no literature. (Durham 1839[2000]:288-299)*

Lacking intellectuals, literature, and history, Durham described the French Canadian population as blindly clinging to morally antiquated prejudices and customs of the Old Regime:

*Ces gens tenaient aux anciens préjugés, aux anciennes coutumes, aux anciennes lois, non par un sentiment de leurs heureux effets, mais avec cette aveugle ténacité d'un peuple mal éduqué et stationnaire. (Durham in Hamel 1948:81)*

*Ils sont restés une société vieillie et retardataire dans un monde neuf et progressif. En tout et partout, ils sont demeuré Français, mais des Français qui ne ressemblent pas du tout à ceux de France. Ils ressemblent plutôt aux Français de l'Ancien Régime. (Durham in Hamel 1948:82)*

Durham's paternalistic comments towards French Canadian subjects resemble those of other British colonial liberalists and reformers in South Asia during the late 18<sup>th</sup> to mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

English-speaking British settlers, on the other hand, were depicted by Durham as highly educated individuals with refined customs, enterprising spirits, and progressive literary minds which marked them as natural leaders of Canadian society:

The great mass of the Canadian population, who cannot read or write, and have found in few of the institutions of their country, even the elements of political education, were obviously inferior to the English settlers, of whom a large proportion had received a considerable amount of education, and had been trained in their own country, to take a part in public business of one kind or another.

Given the supposedly recalcitrant natures of the French Canadians who only partially obey the autocratic whims of the Catholic Church, Durham concluded that the general population could not be expected to voluntarily choose British culture and traditions over French culture and traditions. For this reason, Durham proposed that French Canadians be forced to assimilate to British civil law by enclosing them within a majoritarian English-speaking state.

Already, Durham observes, more French Canadians have learned to speak English than English Canadians have learned to speak French, a fact that Durham attributes to the superiority of English literature and philosophy:

*La littérature familière aux uns et aux autres est celle de leur langue maternelle. Les idées que les homes puisent dans les livres leur viennent d'autres sources. A cet égard, la diversité du langage produit des effets différent de ceux qu'elle a dans les relations entre les deux races. Ceux qui ont réfléchi sur la force de l'influence de la langue sur la pensée peuvent concevoir comment les hommes qui*

*parlent un langage different sont portés à penser différemment.* (Durham in Hamel 1948:90)

The literature with which each is the most conversant, is that of the peculiar language of each; and all the ideas which men derive from books, come to each of them from perfectly different sources. The difference of language in this respect produces effects quite apart from those which it has on the mere intercourse of the two races. Those who have reflected on the powerful influence of language on thought, will perceive in how different a manner people who speak in different languages are apt to think; and those who are familiar with the literature of France, know that the same opinion will be expressed by an English and French writer of the present day, not merely in different words, but in a style so different as to mark utterly different habits of thought. (Durham 1839[2000]:36-41,45-54)

Durham's opinion that differences in literature and, more fundamentally, language are responsible for the divergent world-views of French and English races is founded in the ideas of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century German Romanticism. In particular, German political philosopher Johann Herder is credited with first defining the folk-nation, or the *Volk*, as a polity that is primarily founded on sentiments of ethnolinguistic affiliation. Herder's writings contradicted French political philosophy which, as most notably expressed by Ernest Renan in 1882, regards linguistic, ethnic, and racial affiliations as sentiments that must be transcended (and even forgotten) in order to form a nation-state.

That the 20<sup>th</sup> century Sapir-Whorf hypothesis continues to be over-simplistically interpreted as "language determines thought" confirms the global dominance of Herderian ethnolinguistic nationalism, rather than Renanian civic nationalism, among (non-francophone) colonial and post-colonial states. Prior to Durham's report, however, it would be incorrect to assume that French Canadians saw themselves as belonging to a distinct nation of linguistic compatriots. It is much more likely that sentiments of camaraderie grew out of their shared experiences (sometimes shared with English-speaking settlers) as colonial subjects of the British Crown and as devotees of the

Catholic Church. In fact, the relative normativity of political and economic alliances between French-speaking and English-speaking settlers prior to the Union Act of 1840 underscores the relative novelty of French linguistic nationalism in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this subsequent period of social transformation and reform, French linguistic nationalists appropriated Durham's narrative of linguistically-opposed races/nation in their recounting of Quebec national history.

As the Industrial Revolution belatedly arrived in Quebec in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many rural French Canadians migrated to the rapidly developing cities of Montreal, Trois-Rivières, and Quebec City in search of wage labor. In Montreal, rural French Canadian migrants encountered wealthy English Canadian capitalists and English-speaking European immigrants for the first time. Up until the mid 1960s, most immigration to Canada came from the British Isles (including Scotland and Ireland), the United States, and southern and eastern Europe. However in response to new economic pressures, the Immigration Act of 1967 broadened the range of source countries to allow in more skilled immigrant labor:

Through this new legislation the Canadian government removed all formal criteria of preference based upon race, nationality, or ethnicity, and established a formally non-discriminatory basis for the selection of immigrants...Subsequent to its enactment, selection was based upon a point system, whereby an individual applicant was assessed according to the requirements of the labour market, his or her occupation skills, education, age, language ability. (Indra 1980:164)

Later in 1976, the Canadian government further amended this act to facilitate the entry of refugees and assisted kin members into Canada (Wagle 1993). Thus, whereas in 1881 the non-British or non-French identifying population amount to only about 10% of the total public, by 1991 42% of the Canadian population claimed non-British or non-French ancestry.

Competition for wage labor between English-speaking immigrants and French Canadians, in addition to the lording presence of English-speaking bosses, fueled the growth of an ethnolinguistic nationalist sentiment among French Canadians. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century French Canadian nationalists were comprised of blue-collar workers, feminist suffragists, and liberal intellectuals whose livelihoods had been most directly impacted by the modernization and urbanization of Quebec society. These nationalists sought to “improve” Quebec society by ushering in a new socialist regime in which Catholic patriarchal traditions would be abolished and replaced by secular institutions. Despite their criticism of the Durham Report, French Canadian nationalists had nonetheless internalized its underlying liberalist ideology: the belief that social change signifies historical progress.

At first, French Canadian nationalists criticized only English-speaking capitalists for disproportionately accumulating wealth, status, and power in Quebec society. When the Church began to prohibit parishioners from participating in various social reform movements such as labor union strikes, anti-draft agitations, and suffrage rallies, French Canadian nationalists later exposed the Church’s historically complicit relations with British colonial rulers and English capitalists. This public knowledge triggered a large-scale exodus of French Canadians from the Catholic Church in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Langlois et al. (1990), “the number of Catholics who went to church at least twice a month dropped from 88 percent in 1965 to 46% in 1975, and to 38 percent in 1985” (352). Today, the presence of gutted out churches-turned-shopping malls in

downtown Montreal testifies to the dramatic demise of the Catholic Church's moral authority and the dawning of a new secularist nationalist era in Quebec.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, French Canadian nationalists proceeded to replace confessional institutions with French secular institutions. In doing so French, not Catholicism, gradually became the official iconic signifier of French Canadian identity, and socialism, not capitalism, became the official economic agenda of the modern Quebec state. First in 1964, the newly formed *Ministère de l'Éducation* (MEQ) seized control of the school commission from the Catholic clergy (McNicol 1993). Also in the 1960s and 1970s, government officials de-privatized public utility industries and nationalized financial institutions. As more women began to exercise their rights to vote, hold property, attend university, divorce, and practice birth control, Quebec's fertility rate plunged from an average of 3.9 children in 1955 to 1.5 children in 2007 (Marcil-Gratton and Lapierre-Adamcyk 1983). Through the decades, the sacrament of marriage would be increasingly flouted in favor of secular forms of civil unions and domestic partnerships. By 2006, the number of newly registered common law unions (611,850) exceeded more than half the number of newly registered legal marriages (1,156,930) (Canada 2006).

Nationalists also built or expanded upon segregated networks of French versus English schools, hospitals, libraries, universities, banks, television stations, and theatres in Montreal (see Table 2).<sup>32</sup> These monolingual domains have their historical roots in the voluntary self-segregation of English-speaking capitalists and Orthodox Jews of Montreal during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when both groups first established their own schools,

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<sup>32</sup> Even if patrons of a language-medium institution are bilingual, they will be expected to behave as if they were monolingual speakers. It is thus common practice for a nurse at an English hospital or a teacher at a French school to refuse to speak in another language to a monolingual patient or parent.

colleges, hospitals, places of worship, libraries, banks, and even residential neighborhoods. Even though there were French-medium and English-medium schools in Quebec since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that these schools were seen as belonging to two ideologically opposed systems. By 1998, all public institutions in Montreal were assimilated into either English-medium or French-medium school boards.

**Table 4: Sociolinguistic Compartmentalization in Montreal**

	<b>French-medium</b>	<b>English-medium</b>
<b>School Board &amp; University</b>	Commission scolaire de Montréal	English Montreal School Board
	Université de Montréal	McGill University
	Université du Québec à Montréal	Concordia University
<b>Hospital</b>	Hôpital Sainte-Justine	Montreal Children’s Hospital
	Hôpital Saint-Luc du CHUM	Montreal General Hospital
	Hôpital Notre-Dame du CHUM	Royal Victoria Hospital
<b>Bank</b>	Caisses Desjardins	Royal Bank of Canada
	Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec	Bank of Montreal
	Banque nationale du Québec	
<b>Cinema</b>	Quartier Latin	Cinéma du Parc
	Ex-Centris	AMC Forum 22
	Cinémathèque Québécoise	Cinéma Banque Scotia Montréal
<b>Radio Station</b>	CKOI	Mix 96
	Radio-Energie	CHOM
	Société Radio-Canada	CJAD
<b>Television Station</b>	Société Radio-Canada	CTV
	TVA	CBC
	TQS	Global
	Télé-Québec	
<b>Theatre</b>	Théâtre du nouveau monde	Centaur Theatre Company
	Théâtre du rideau vert	
	Théâtre Denise-Pelletier	

These institutions promote the belief that ethnolinguistic groups are naturally inclined to participate in socially, economically, and residentially-segregated domains. I refer to this belief as the “language ideology of sociolinguistic compartmentalization”. Similar to the role of the Arizona Tewa kiva (Kroskrity 1998), Quebec’s monolingual domains help preserve the purity of linguistic and cultural forms. Furthermore, when

these purist linguistic and cultural forms are indexically linked to a common speaker, both speaker and language are misinterpreted as iconic signs of one another (Irvine and Gal 2000). This language ideology, which I refer to as the “ethnolinguistic language ideology,” has played a dominant role in modern nationalist movements throughout the world (Anderson 1983; Blommaert and Vershueren 1998; Milroy 2001; Philips 2000; Silverstein 1996, 2000; Spitulnik 1998). Together, both language ideologies enforce the belief that French embodies the moral essence of the Quebec nation.

### *Diversification of Quebec*

Despite nationalist assertions concerning the purity and homogeneity of the French Quebec nation, the territory and (later) province of Quebec has always been racially and ethnically diversified. In fact, both racial and linguistic distinctions have often played a role in the classification of Quebec’s inhabitants. From the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, French-speaking settlers in Quebec were first known as “*les habitants*” and later as “*les Canadiens*” (Canadians). The latter label distinguishes between white Canadians, i.e. the French, and non-white inhabitants of Canada, i.e. Native Canadians and the Métis. Gradually, as English-speaking immigration to Quebec picked up during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Canadians became known as French Canadians and English-speakers became known as English Canadians. By the mid twentieth century, French Canadian separatists and nationalists who rejected the legitimacy and authority of the Canadian federation began to refer to themselves “Québécois”.

In response to growing nationalist sentiments in Quebec, Prime Minister Pearson organized a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. Later in 1969, his successor Prime Minister Trudeau signed a law that recognized both English

and French as official languages of Canada (McNicol 1993:68). Both acts were promptly criticized by minority leaders for failing to recognize the “multicultural” contributions of non-settler populations to the development of the Canadian nation (McNicol 1993; Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002). Many British-Canadians were opposed to policies of multiculturalism on the assumption that they would dilute British identity and English language use in Canada. Many French Canadians were opposed to multicultural policies in which French Canadians “would be one...ethnic group(s) among many” (Milroy 2001:82).

In 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau attempted to resolve these debates by drafting a national policy on multiculturalism that is subsumed under the legal framework of official bilingualism (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002:108). This policy requires that provincial governments allocate funds to ethnic organizations and to English or French language schools for newly arrived immigrants. Trudeau multicultural policy was also attacked on several fronts. Leftist scholars criticized its superficial reach in addressing problems of racism, while aboriginal leaders and Québécois nationalists claimed that it violated the terms of their federal treaties and agreements. Through the next few decades multiple concessions to these grievances were made, including the formation of an investigative committee on race relations, the inclusion of the word “multiculturalism” in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the implementation of the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, and the establishment of a Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship in 1989 (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002).

Through the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, French Canadian nationalists were divided between competing pro-separatist (sponsored by the *Parti Québécois (PQ)*), pro-socialist

(sponsored by the Liberal Party), and pro-populist (sponsored by the *Action Démocratique du Québec* (ADQ)) camps. In 1976, the people of Quebec elected the first separatist party to provincial power, the Parti Québécois. Upon entering office, Parti Québécois leaders organized two public referendums to decide on the future of Quebec's political sovereignty. The first referendum in 1980 attained 40.44% of the vote in favor of secession, while the second referendum in 1995 attained a tantalizingly close 49.42% of the vote in favor of secession. Prime Minister Chrétien responded to these threats of secession by abolishing the Department of Multiculturalism and by instating a new Department of Canadian Heritage. Chrétien's administration emphasized the governing principles of civic unity, social equity and integration, and neoliberalism in his new vision for Canadian diversity.

After the last referendum in 1995, the Parti Québécois experienced a notable electoral decline. The current political party in power in Quebec is the pro-federalist and increasingly pro-capitalist Liberal Party, with the ADQ as its minority opposition party. The PQ's declining popularity can be attributed to the manner in which the results of the 1995 referendum were handled. In a statement that he later rescinded, Premier Jacques Parizeau emphatically blamed "moneyed interests" and "*la vote ethnique*" for the second referendum's defeat: "*C'est vrai, c'est vrai qu'on a été battus, au fond, par quoi? Par l'argent puis des votes ethniques, essentiellement*" [It is true, it is true that we have been defeated, but by what? By moneyed interests and the ethnic vote, essentially.] (Uni 2008). At the time, Parizeau's comments echoed a widespread belief that ethnic minorities and Montreal capitalists are uniformly pro-English and pro-federalist in their political allegiances. Even if this were the case, minorities' "nay" votes could not

account for even 25% of the total count.<sup>33</sup> Instead, Parizeau's accusation reveals his moral anxiety concerning an influential if minority "anglophilic" and "pro-federalist" French-speaking voting bloc. By blaming the referendum's failure on Quebec's less politically empowered or socially integrated minorities or on the vague referent "moneyed interests", Parizeau attempted to shield this pro-federalist voting bloc's presence from public scrutiny.

Over the years, the Québécois' concerns with immigration have prompted the provincial government to seize partial control over its provincial immigration policies. Through a series of pacts that culminated in the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord, the Canadian government affirmed the right of the Quebec government to impose its own selection criteria on immigrants and refugees seeking residence in Quebec. These selection criteria have enabled the Quebec government to favor immigrants with linguistic competences in French. In exchange, the Quebec government has agreed to admit demographically consistent levels of immigration to Quebec.

In reality, immigration to Quebec has notably decreased throughout the past five decades, from 11.5 per thousand inhabitants in 1957, to 7.8 in 1966, 2.1 in 1984, and 3.9 in 1988. These low rates are primarily due to the government's difficulty in retaining non-French-speaking immigrants within Quebec. From 1971 to 1981, when Québécois linguistic nationalism was at its peak, only 70.2% of all immigrants decided to remain in Quebec, ranging from only 31.9% of Chinese immigrants to 97.2% of French-speaking Mauritian immigrants. From the 1960s through 1980s, new source countries for Quebec immigrants included Haiti, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Vietnam, Portugal,

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<sup>33</sup> According to the 2006 Census, 79% of Quebec's population speaks only French as their mother tongue (Statistics 2006d).

Greece, and Poland. In the following decades, rates of Asian immigration doubled while rates of European immigration halved. Currently, despite the Quebec government's best efforts to recruit more French-speaking immigrants, most recent immigrants are neither native speakers of French nor English:

The proportion who spoke neither English nor French increased from 26,9% in 1973 to 36,6% in 1987, reaching peaks of 45,8% in 1979, 53% in 1980, and 46% in 1988. (Langlois et al. 1990: 539)

The vast majority of Quebec immigrants settle in metropolitan Montreal, with 75% of all immigrants living in Montreal in the early 1960s, up to 80% in the early 1980s, and to above 90% in 1987 (Langlois et al. 1990). Currently, Montreal's largest immigrant populations are from southern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (Statistics 2006c).

The recent diversification of Quebec society has prompted the provincial government to introduce a new classificatory system in which residents of minority ethnic and racial backgrounds would be recognized as Québécois citizens yet differentiated according to linguistic affiliation.<sup>34</sup> The government adopted the use of purely linguistic labels, such as “francophone,” “anglophone,” and “allophone”, in classifying its population. A francophone is therefore someone who predominantly speaks or identifies with the French language, likewise an anglophone with English and an allophone with a language other than English or French. In practice, however, individuals are also classified into linguistic categories on the basis of their skin color and region of origin. Thus, francophones are usually equated with white or black citizens of French Canadian, African, or Haitian ancestry, anglophones with white or black citizens of British,

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<sup>34</sup> Interestingly enough, the use of the label “autochthones” or “aboriginal” to refer to Canada's indigenous populations does not similarly index their linguistic affiliation.

American, or Caribbean ancestry, and allophones with non-white and non-black citizens and immigrants of Asian, Middle Eastern, or Latin American ancestry.<sup>35</sup>

Even though this linguistic terminology is still used today, it is gradually being replaced by more explicitly racialized labels such as *Québécois de (vieille) souche* to refer to Québécois of old “stock” and *néo-Québécois* or *minorités visible* to refer to non-white Québécois (Clavel 2008; Coté 2008; Forum 2007). Many minorities prefer to use hybridized labels, such as Tamil-Québécois or Italo-Québécois, to represent their intersectional identities (Handler 1988, Heller 1998).<sup>36</sup> These hybridized labels also differentiate between a speaker’s ethnolinguistic identity as Tamil, for example, and their civic identity as Québécois. Such interpretations correspond to an emergent language ideology in which the use of a public language iconically signifies a person’s civic identity, while the use of a private language iconically signifies a person’s ethnic identity.<sup>37</sup> The current regime in Quebec, which itself is a hybridization of Herderian ethnic nationalism and Renanian civic nationalism, successfully plays to both nationalist and multicultural interests in multilingual Montreal.

### **Building the Nation, Embodying the Folk**

As the preferred destination for many French-speaking immigrants, Montreal currently ranks as the second largest French speaking city in the world. Encounters between different French-speaking interlocutors have resulted in a sharpening awareness of native and non-native French stylistic contrasts. In general people judge “foreign”

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<sup>35</sup> Jews are usually not included in this triadic classificatory system either.

<sup>36</sup> I alternatively refer to 1<sup>st</sup> generation Tamil immigrants as Indian Tamils or Sri Lankan Tamils (given their self-identification) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation descendants of Tamil immigrants as Indian Tamil-Québécois or Sri Lankan Tamil-Québécois (given their citizenship status).

<sup>37</sup> Given this logic, people who speak English as their public language are not referred to as Québécois but as Canadians.

French registers, such as Parisian French or African French, to be “purer” in linguistic form while “native” French registers, such as joul and Québécois French, are judged to be more “authentic” in style. Each of these languages can be positioned along inverted scales of normativity and expertise, with European French trumping Québécois French and joul in terms of its purist or expert-like forms and joul and Québécois French trumping European French in terms of their authentic or normative style. Recursively, Québécois French is seen as purer or more expert-like in form and joul as more authentic or normative in function. These complementary interpretations depict Québécois French enabling as an iconic sign of the Quebec nation-state and joul as an iconic sign of the Québécois folk. At the same time, English co-exists with all of these French varieties as the indomitable language of social prestige.

### ***Hierarchies of French and English***

After French was declared an official language of Canada in 1969, the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois continued to agitate for greater French language rights at both federal and the provincial levels of government. In 1974, the Quebec government passed Bill 22, declaring French to be the sole official language of Quebec. According to this law, all Québécois were expected to publicly communicate in French. In 1977 the Charter of the French Language (also known as Bill 101 or *Loi 101*) introduced a corpus of language policies which affirmed the normative use of French in Quebec. First, Bill 101 mandated the use of spoken French in all public institutions, including those of education, business, commerce, entertainment, health, etc. The law also set a controversial precedent for integrating immigrants into French-medium rather than English-medium schools. A second controversial stipulation was that the written

language of business, ranging in specificity from informal memos to official correspondences, was to be henceforth conducted in French. Finally, Bill 101 mandated that exterior commercial signs be written in French text, thus issuing a decree to remove all bilingual or English signs from public view.<sup>38</sup>

Through these provisions, Bill 101 changed the valorization of French from low-status colloquial language to high-status literary language. First, in becoming the primary spoken and written language of school instruction, media discourse, and government discourse and in assuming greater primacy in business interactions, French was transformed from mere colloquial language to official administrative language. Correspondingly, Montreal's textual façade was also visibly changed from English to French to reflect this new official status. Commercial store signs in downtown Montreal are almost always written in French, while bilingual commercial signs in Montreal's multiethnic neighborhoods almost always display larger-sized French font. Such efforts have also promoted the interpretation of French as a literary language. Even the oral ambience of Montreal has shifted somewhat in French's favor, as monolingual English-speakers have been compelled to learn French to remain competitive on the domestic job market. These bilingual speakers are both boosting the normativity of French language use in Quebec and demonstrating the increasing relevance of multilingual expertise in its rapidly globalizing economy.

Despite this progress in upscaling French, English continues to enjoy greater prestige than French. Even though English is no longer used in an official administrative capacity in Quebec, it nonetheless remains secure in its status as the international

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<sup>38</sup> After more than a decade of protests by Montreal business leaders, this law has been since amended under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms to permit bilingual or multilingual signs, but only if the French text showed "greater visibility" or "marked predominance."

language of science, business, and global communication. For this reason, many upper class Québécois de souche families have opted to enroll their children in English-medium private schools rather than French-medium public schools. For children with lesser financial means, many choose to attend an English-medium CEGEP (pre-university) or university. These colleges and universities permit students to submit assignments in the language of their choice, thus facilitating their transition from writing in French to writing in English. Despite this flexibility, academic texts and conferences, as well as international business affairs, are primarily conducted in English. At the same time, even some upper-class Québécois de souche are keen to speak English in public to flaunt their elite or educated status.

The escalating number of bilingual Québécois de souche among the upper classes is being matched by a declining number of bilingual Québécois de souche among the lower classes. During my fieldwork in Montreal, I would often spend time with Nathalie, a monolingual Québécois de souche woman of 35 years. This single mother currently works as a dental technician in the predominantly French-speaking city of Laval, a densely-populated city immediately north of Montreal. Nathalie wants to learn English so that she can secure a better paying job in Montreal, but she has no English-speaking friends with whom to practice. Nathalie's employer has recently denied her request to pay for English language classes, the cost of which is prohibitively high for lower and even middle class people. Throughout Montreal, opportunities for monolingual French-speakers like Nathalie to speak English are increasingly limited. Before Bill 101, bilingual Québécois de souche would frequently accommodate monolingual English-speaking interlocutors by code-switching to English at the beginning of the conversation

(Heller 1988). Nowadays, as the number of bilingual speakers in Montreal has increased, this type of accommodation is less common.

Because French language instruction in English-medium schools is generally of good quality (sometimes even better quality than French-medium schools), some English-medium students are even better at writing French than French-medium students. At the same time, the poor quality of English language instruction at French-medium schools disadvantages Québécois de souche students who often graduate from high school unable to speak English. One English-medium school principal assesses this situation when describing the performance of francophone students at his school:

*Ces élèves peuvent être très à l'aise à l'oral, mais beaucoup moins à l'écrit, dit-il. Il faut parfois travailler encore plus fort sur la grammaire avec eux qu'avec des anglophones.* (Trudel 2007)

[These students might be very much at ease in speaking French, but much less so in writing French, he says. Sometimes we have to work even harder on grammar with them (francophones) than with anglophones.]

By suggesting that francophone students can easily acquire oral but not written expertise in French, the principal presents an interesting paradox: native French speakers experience more difficulty in learning their written language than non-native French speakers. This assessment promotes a diglossic-like compartmentalization between the literary-like competences of English speakers and the oral-like competences of French speakers.

### ***Joual as Folk Language***

In Quebec, non-prestigious, native French vernaculars are usually referred to as *joual*. The word “joual”, itself produced as a degenerate phonological articulation of “cheval” (horse), functions as an iconic sign of “degenerate” horse-like speech. This

notion of linguistic impurity is also implicit in its grammatical description as a contact language. According to most linguists, joul evolved out of prolonged linguistic and cultural contact between French settlers and their descendants (who spoke a variety of 17<sup>th</sup> century French from northwestern France) and English settlers and their descendants (who spoke a variety of American English from the northeastern United States) (Papen 1998). According to folk interpretations, however, joul is the colloquial language of Montreal's uneducated working class and Quebec's rural populations. Sometimes, simply the inclusion of liturgical profanity is sufficient to index the quality of joul-like talk by a French speaker. In this sense, joul is depicted as a socially or morally depraved language, much like some varieties of American slang:

*Le joul n'est au fond rien d'autre que la version argotique ou populaire de ce français d'ici. Tout comme l'argot ou le verlan vis-à-vis du français de France, tout comme le "slang" vis-à-vis de l'anglais américain" (Droit 2008).*

[At its base joul is nothing other than the slang or popular French of here. Much like the difference between slang or street talk and the French of France, much like the difference between American English and slang. (my translation)]

Some even believe that all Québécois speaks joul as their native colloquial language.

Journalist Robert Saletti writes: "*Le Québec est encore une société joulisante, quoi que laissent croire l'Office de la langue française ...*" (Saletti 1998). [Quebec is still a joul-speaking society, regardless of what the Office of the French Language wants you to believe. (my translation)]

In the 1960s and 1970s during an era popularly known as the Quiet Revolution, many writers, playwrights, journalists, and other intellectuals proudly proclaimed joul to be the most authentic moral voice of the Québécois people. These artists and intellectuals, many of whom spoke and published texts in joul, were well-received by

both literate and semi-literate audiences. In fact, *La Tribune* journalist Serge Denis attributes the Québécois de souche's ethno-linguistic affiliation with joul to the popular success of these literary works:

*C'est dans les années 60 au moment de la Révolution tranquille, marquée par l'arrivée d'une nouvelle classe instruite. C'est à ce moment que les Québécois ont pris conscience qu'ils existaient en tant que collectivité. Ça a donné lieu à un phénomène d'identification autour du joul. Il s'agissait d'un phénomène essentiellement littéraire avant de devenir un phénomène d'identification.* (Denis 2008)

It is during the 1960s at the moment of the Quiet Revolution that a new educated class arose. At this moment the Québécois began to perceive their existence as a collectivity. This caused people to identify with joul. The Quiet Revolution was a literary phenomenon before it became an identity phenomenon. (my translation)

The most well-known of Quebec's dramatists, Michel Tremblay, wrote the famous play "Les belles-soeurs" entirely in joul. The following extract demonstrates how Tremblay textualized joul's non-standard phonology, lexicon, and morphology:

*Ah ! J'te dis, j'vas avoir une vraie belle chambre ! Pour le salon, j'ai un set complet avec le stirio, la tv, le tapis de nylon synthétique, les cadres... Ah ! Les vrais beaux cadres! T'sais, là, les cadres chinois avec du velours... C'tu assez beau, hein ? Depuis le temps que j'en veux ! Pis tiens-toé ben ma p'tite fille, j'vas avoir des plats en verre soufflé!* (Tremblay 1972:22)

Hey, I tell you, I'm going to have a really nice room! For the living room, I have the complete set with stereo, television, synthetic nylon rug, frames... Ah! Real, beautiful frames. You know what I am talking about? Those Chinese frames made with velvet... Isn't that beautiful, no? I've wanted that for so long. And hold on tight, my young friend, I am going to have blown glass dishes! (my translation)

The use of "toé" instead of "toi" exemplifies the unique phonology of joul, "tv" instead of "télé" or "television" exemplifies the unique lexicon of joul, and "j'vas" instead of "je vais" exemplifies the unique morphology of joul.

Writers such as Tremblay were convinced that the unabashed textualization and vocalization of joul would help liberate Quebec's underclass from its colonial and post-

colonial subjugation. Michelle Lalonde's much-revered poem "Speak White" is widely cited for articulating this revolutionary perspective. According to Lalonde (1979), capitalist oppressors can be identified by the sound of their "speaking white". Within Quebec, such oppressors include both French and English-speaking elites who devalue the normative use of joul. Lalonde implores subalterns to resist their social, economic, and/or political tyranny by not speaking the oppressor's language, i.e., by refusing to "speak white". In the context of 1960s and 1970s Quebec, this act of resistance is exemplified in the choice of joul as written and spoken language.

Monolingual joul speakers have internalized both self-affirming and self-deprecating evaluations of their language. For example, Nathalie is both a proud and verbally expressive speaker of joul and reader of Michel Tremblay's literature, as well as self-conscious speaker of joul who code-switches to Québécois French when speaking to upper-class clients. Other monolingual joul speakers who are unable to code-switch from joul to English or to Québécois French suffer in socioeconomic status. For four months I shared an apartment with Mario and Joseph, two 25 year old childhood friends who grew up in a small rural town in the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean region north of Montreal. Both migrated to Montreal in the early 2000s to pursue university studies in computer programming. After trying without success to secure jobs in the thriving video game industry of Montreal, Mario and Joseph now work as electronic repair technicians. According to a friend of mine who works at Ubisoft, the largest video game company in Montreal, the video game industry hires mostly English-speaking or bilingual-speaking employees, a choice that reflects their international clientele. Despite having learned English in grade school, Mario and Joseph are unable to hold a conversation in English.

Mario and Joseph are also disadvantaged by speaking a socially-devalued style of French unique to the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean region. Often I could not comprehend Mario or Joseph's speech, despite being a native speaker of joual and fluent in Québécois French. Louise, Joseph's girlfriend, explained that the variety of French spoken in the Lac-St-Jean region is known for its use of archaic idiomatic expressions no longer comprehensible to Montreal residents. Even Louise, who is a Montreal native, experienced difficulty at first in understanding Joseph's highly idiomatic style of speech. The people of the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean, who are also known for their propensity to inbreed with third-degree cousins, are frequently the butt of jokes by Montreal residents. In fact, both linguistic and mating practices of the people of Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean are discursively interpreted as iconic signs of their archaic and morally backwards culture. Through such evaluations, regional linguistic variation is reinterpreted through a temporalized and moralized lens, thus generating a representational economy of iconic equivalences between 1) archaic, rural, and monolingual Québécois de souche folk, and 2) progressive, urban, and bilingual Montreal residents.

### ***Québécois French as Literary Standard***

By the 1980s and 1990s, however, Quebec had embarked upon a new era of political, economic, and social stability as a secularized, socialized, and *francisé* state. The success of Bill 101 has introduced new educational and occupational opportunities for middle and upper-class monolingual French-speakers, many of whom have become bilingual speakers of English and a prestigious variety of French. In their attempt to emulate the linguistic behavior of European French elites, this new generation of nationalist elites began to speak in a Canadian-stylized register of literary French. This

purist register, commonly referred to as Québécois French or simply Québécois, resembles both literary French and spoken European French in its syntax and morphology. Its indigenous authenticity, on the other hand, is conveyed by a distinctively Canadian lexicon and phonology (Cox 1998; Jobin 1987; Lesage 1991; Mougéon and Beniak 1994; Papen 1998).

Québécois elites emphasize the relative impurity and grammatical deviance of joul phonology, with its non-indigenous phonemes (such as diphthongs), lexical anglicisms, and unique morphology and syntax, from a literary French standard. Such denunciations portray joul as an uneducated and low-status register that indexes its speakers' educational and even moral backwardness. Monolingual joul speakers experience the effects of this linguistic prejudice when applying for jobs. A few years ago the former mayor of Quebec, Andrée Boucher, instituted a mandatory policy requiring applicants for government jobs (including the police force) to pass a written French exam (Allard 2006). Rejected police force applicants were shocked to learn that the government wanted to hire Québécois French speakers rather than joul speakers (Allard 2006).

Due to the widespread radio and television broadcasting of journalists', intellectuals', and government employees' speech, Québécois French is fast becoming the national standard of Quebec. Joul literature, once viewed as the textual embodiment of a revolutionary moral ethos, is now instead perceived as a sign of scholastic inaptitude. Even Michel Tremblay writes less frequently in joul, a trend that literary scholar Bruno Vercier describes as Tremblay's "dés-oralisation" (Vercier 1988). In the last decade, two camps of linguistic purists have attempted to define Quebec's literary standard. The first

group, who are referred to as “linguistic nationalists” or “aménagistes”, seeks to institutionalize a Québécois French literary standard. The second group of linguistic purists, which includes many French-speaking immigrants, seeks to institutionalize an international French literary standard. Both linguistic nationalists and linguistic purists classify French varieties in terms of their text-like (or talk-like) qualities. Therefore, what is at stake in this competition is not only the right to decide which colloquial language best signifies the textual qualities of a literary standard, but also the right to iconically represent the speakers of the literary standard as up-scale in their linguistic practices.

Linguistic nationalists’ arguments for a Québécois French standard consist of three logical components: (1) Linguistic variation and linguistic change are normative features of “colloquializing” francophone societies:

*De Montréal à Dakar, en passant par Paris, Bruxelles et Alger, les francophones habitent une langue dont la norme écrite était le point de référence depuis trois siècles. Or, on assiste actuellement à une inversion où c'est l'oral qui s'impose de plus en plus. Cela ne signifie pas qu'on écrira en joul ou phonétiquement, mais cela signifie que les francophones s'autorisent de plus en plus de libertés, même quand ils n'appartiennent pas à l'élite des écrivains.* (Nadeau and Barlow 2007)

From Montreal to Dakar, and passing through Paris, Brussels, and Algiers, for three centuries francophones are living with a language in which the written standard has been the point of reference. Now, we are living an inversion in which the oral language is increasingly imposing itself. This doesn’t mean that we write in joul or that we write phonetically, but it does mean that francophones are authorizing more liberties, even when it doesn’t come from elite writers. (my translation)

(2) Québécois French has been natively spoken by French Canadians for more than four hundred years, as can be seen in the archaic “*Ancien Régime*” lexicon still in use today (LaCharité 2004; Roux 2004). In 2001 linguistic nationalists at the *Office de la langue française* rejected the replacement of Québécois French lexicon with European French

lexicon, citing the historical importance of the former in the continuity of Québécois culture (Lévesque 2001). (3) Québécois French embodies both the literary qualities of a written standard and the colloquial qualities of a spoken language. As a hybridized linguistic form that represents the best of both “text” and “talk”, Québécois French is depicted as both prestigious and globally comprehensible:

*Ce français standard québécois serait le français standard écrit et parlé dans toute la Francophonie avec la même grammaire et la même syntaxe mais assorti de mots utilisés uniquement au Québec...* (Dutrisac 2008)

This Québécois French standard will be the French standard both written and spoken throughout *la francophonie*, with the same grammar and syntax but with an assortment of words used only in Quebec... (my translation)

In 2005, the Quebec government subsidized the research and development of a *Dictionnaire général et normatif du français québécois* and proposed to standardize the use of Québécois French textbooks in Quebec’s public school system (Corbeil 2005; Cajolet-Laganière and Martel 2005).

These proposals have provoked the indignation of the second group of linguistic purists, who warn of the eventual “ghettoization” of Quebec within *la francophonie* (Poirier 2004). In response, they have proposed the following counter arguments: (1) Linguistic variation and linguistic change, while natural aspects of oral communication, are not normative features of written communication. Nation-states endorse literary standards to prevent linguistic change and to ensure the use of a unifying language among all citizens. (2) Grammatical deviations from the literary standard should be corrected through school instruction, through which students are taught to speak a prestigious language that will enable them to successfully compete in the international job market. To support this claim, linguistic purists cite a recent study in which 76.8% of Québécois

were found to prefer school instruction in the “international French” standard (Paquot 2008). (3) Québécois French and joul are grammatically incorrect, sub-standard varieties of French (Meney 2004; Meney 2005; Paquot 1992, 2001):

*Et s'il faut enseigner la langue standard québécoise écrite, faudra-t-il enseigner l'absence d'accord des participes passés, l'orthographe sonore, l'inutilité de la syntaxe? Langue québécoise standard «parlée». Voilà une proposition encore plus surréaliste. Un Marocain ou un Sénégalais vous dirait qu'il ne comprend pas pourquoi il devrait, pour devenir Québécois, mal parler le français.*  
(Courtemanche 2008)

And if we have to teach the written Québécois standard, must we teach the absence of past participle agreement, spelling by sound, the uselessness of syntax? Spoken Québécois standard. This is an even more surreal proposal. A Moroccan or a Senegalese would say that he doesn't understand why, in order to become a Québécois, he must speak French poorly. (my translation)

These sub-standard varieties will inevitably promote the destandardization of the literary French standard (Paquot 1992).

Already, people employ phoneticized abbreviations of spoken joul phonemes and morphemes rather than phoneticized abbreviations of written French phonemes and morphemes in internet chat sites in Quebec:

*c* = *c'est*  
*passke* = *parce que*  
*ya* = *il y a*  
*yen* = *il y en...*  
*chu(e)* = *je suis (le "e" s'ajoute quand le je est de sexe féminin)* (Caouette 2003).

it is  
because  
there is  
he has  
I am (my translation)

“C” and “passke” correspond to the joul-like pronunciation of “c'est” and “parce que,” and “yen,” “ya,” and “chu” correspond to the joul-like morphological reduction of “il y

en,” “il y a,” and “je suis.” Some linguistic purists attribute francophone schoolchildren’s poor performance in French writing composition to their habit of “writing as they speak”:

*Premièrement, notre si belle langue ne cesse de se détériorer. Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui sont effectivement de moins en moins aptes à parler et à rédiger des textes correctement. Combien mettent par écrit, avec une formulation identique et sans aucunement modifier leur structure, les mots entendus oralement? Une trop grande masse d'individus, pour utiliser l'expression, "ne savent pas écrire ". Fautes de syntaxe, d'orthographe, d'accords... elles y sont toutes. Des données troublantes obtenues par le journal La Presse en inquiètent plus d'un. Seulement 43 % des élèves des écoles publiques et 65% de ceux des écoles privées réussissent le volet orthographique de l'examen. (Opinion 2008)*

First, our very beautiful language is still deteriorating. Nowadays young people are actually less capable of properly speaking and writing. How many of them write, by replicating and without modifying the structure of the words that they hear spoken orally? Too many individuals, to use the expression, “don’t know how to write.” Mistakes in syntax, spelling, agreement...they include all of these. Some troubling statistics collected by the *La Presse* newspaper have worried many people. Only 43% of public school students and 65% of private school students pass the spelling portion of exams. (my translation)

What these linguistic purists fail to note is that, because Québécois French is not natively spoken by most Québécois de souche, many monolingual joual-speakers find it difficult to write this literary-like language. One schoolteacher from Trois-Rivières supports a current governmental initiative to reintroduce weekly French dictations in public schools as a necessary corrective for monolingual joual-speaking schoolchildren (Bergeron 2008).

### ***Mediated Representations of Vernacular Speech***

The linguistic practices of the Quebec media have been similarly scrutinized by linguistic nationalists and linguistic purists. A recent study has found that television and radio news journalists generally produce phonetic sounds comparable to the international French standard. Similarly, contemporary television sitcoms are found to employ less stigmatized phonetic sounds and fewer colloquial expressions than in previous decades

(Arts 2005; Canada News Wire 2006). Despite these findings, much of television and radio programming remains a popular venue for linguistic experimentation in joul and other forms of colloquial speech. The iconic association of joul with popular culture was first articulated in *Les insolences du Frère Untel* (1960), when the author associated the speaking of joul with “*rock and roll, au hot-dog, à la mode des partys et à balades en auto*” [with rock and roll, hot dogs, hip parties, and automobile cruises. (my translation)] (Caouette 2003). Popular radio and television shows and commercial advertisements strategically use joul, both in its spoken and written forms, to emotively connect with viewing and listening publics. In some contexts, the use of joul conveys an intimate or familial setting which elicits sentiments of fondness or social attachment. At other times, joul is caricatured as a slovenly or bestial language, thus provoking either laughter or derision.

Lionel Meney, a linguist of French origin, describes his aggravation upon hearing Québécois actor Patrick Huard speak in joul at the 2005 Jutra film awards: “*Sera-t-il possible qu'un jour, au Québec, on puisse dire, dans un gala, des choses intelligentes et drôles sans tomber dans le joul?*” [Is it possible that one day at a gala in Quebec we can say something intelligent and funny without speaking joul? (my translation)] (Meney 2005). In the same editorial, Meney sarcastically asks if it will be necessary to add French subtitles in order to broadcast the award ceremony on TV5, the international television station of *la francophonie*. Meney’s query most probably fell on deaf ears, since international appeal is often not the primary intent of most entertainment shows produced in Quebec.

For example the popular success of *La Petite Vie*, the highest-rated comedy sitcom ever to play on French-medium television in Quebec, is attributed to its strategic use of burlesque tropes, plays on words, and ironic portrayals of working-class French Canadian culture understandable only to joul speakers (Loiselle 2006). As Moman Paré, one of the main characters, states in the first episode, "La langue c'est les entrailles d'un peuple" [language is the bowels of a people]. This show, which was broadcast on Radio-Canada from 1993 to 1998, was both written and starred by comedian Claude Meunier. Loiselle (2006), in her analysis of Meunier's satirical writing style, describes how he simultaneously valorizes and criticizes French Canadian working class culture by contrasting the contextual usage of French and English as articulated by his joul-speaking characters:

Along with pseudo-French-from-France and pseudo-English, Meunier also packs his texts with wordplay that derives its humorous effects from the rich tapestry of cultural connotations attached to certain words and sounds. (ibid 2006:7)

The Paré family's failure to properly speak English, Québécois French, or European French underscores their socioeconomic segregation and cultural isolation. Residing in a working class neighborhood located somewhere in Montreal, the Paré family repeatedly exposes its inability to participate in the multicultural and multilingual expansion of this globalizing city. Hence, the double meaning of "la p'tite vie" – an expression which refers to both the charm and banality of provincial life.

Meunier's character, Popa "Ti-Me" Paré, is from a pre-Quiet Revolution generation in which the prestige of English reigned supreme. Often, Popa speaks in a variety of joul that is marked by lexical anglicisms and liturgical vulgarity. His comical obsession with the contents of his "*sacs à vidange*" (garbage bags) and his trademark

expression “*baptême de baptême!*” depict him as an unsavory and even bestial character.

The following exchange between Popa and his friend Pogo in the episode “New You”

demonstrates his habitual use of anglicisms:

(Pogo): *Qu’est-c’est ça, mon homme?*

(Popa): *Ça, mon homme là, ça mon homme, c’est une télécommande, que j’ai patenté moi-même, c’est un télérideau en fait. Ça mon vieux, ça, ça actionne les rideaux, le lavabo, le tapis, name it. Check ben ça là, check ben ça là.*

(Pogo): What’s that, my brother?

(Popa): This, my brother, you know, this, my brother is a remote control that I invented myself. In fact, it is a remote control for the curtains. This, my friend, this, this activates the curtains, the sink, the rug, name. Check this out now, check this out now.

The highlighted verbs “*patenté*” and “*actionne*” stem from the English words “patent” and “action”, while “name it” and “*check ben ça,*” have become common idiomatic expressions in Québécois joul.

In another episode, Popa reveals that his knowledge of English is limited to such clichéd expressions. One night when Moma and Popa are vacationing in Plattsburgh, they watch a black man walk by their hotel room. Assuming that he wants to mug them, Popa preemptively throws first Moma’s wallet and then her purse directly at the black man (whom they refer to as Luther King). Each time he does this, Popa interjects with a non sequitur such as “the price is right” (a popular American show in Quebec at the time) and “fuck away”. Popa’s ignorance of American culture, his prejudice toward Black Americans, and his inability to speak English signify his utter cultural isolation both within and outside of Quebec. Ultimately, Popa’s and Moma’s ignorance and xenophobia toward this black man are seen as comedic in light of their ludicrous decision to take a vacation in the dollar stores of Plattsburgh rather than accept an all-expense paid trip to China.

In contrast, Popa's children came of age after the Quiet Revolution when joul, Québécois French, and European French were equally vying for social influence. Hence, they are less prone to speak in English and will instead hyper-correct their French. When daughter Caro hosts a television talk show for the first time, she unsuccessfully imitates a high-status European French accent by (mis)producing liaisons (a morphological feature that is often omitted in joul and Québécois French):

*(Caro): Bonsoir. Bienvenue à Bonsoir avec un gros B... Ce soir notre émission porte sur le couple. Ce célèbre duo presque aussi vieux qu'Adam t'et t'Eye. ...Alors, on va-t-y aller avec vous monsieur Paré...La-dessus, nous allons tous-t-aller-t'à-t'une pause publicitaire.* (quoted in Loisele 2006:6)

*(Caro): Good evening. Welcome to Good Evening with a big B...Tonight the subject of our show is couples. This famous duo is almost as old as Adam and Eve...So, we'll start with you Mr. Paré...And now, we will take a commercial break.*

Her hyper-corrections, which are highlighted in grey, resemble more closely the joul-like syntax of “*on va-tu y aller?*” rather than the European French pattern of liaison.

Réjean, Popa's son-in-law, demonstrates the characteristic use of this joul syntax when greeting Popa in the episode “*Le souper avec une vedette*”:

*(Réjean): Pis, qu'est-ce qu'y chante de bon?*

*(Popa): Hé, boy!*

*(Réjean): Y est-tu assez sué nerfs à son goût?*

*(Popa): Oui monsieur, mets-en!*

*(Réjean): Eille, c'est-tu platte qu'on peut pas aller souper avec vous-autres?*

*(Réjean): So, what's on your mind?*

*(Popa): Oh boy!*

*(Réjean): Man he's on edge.*

*(Popa): Yes sir, you bet!*

*(Réjean): Hey, isn't it too bad that we can't go to dinner with you guys?*

Réjean's greeting, whose humorous effect is initially conveyed by his peculiar use of the third person pronoun to refer to himself, accentuates the distinctiveness of his joul

morphology and syntax as non-normative (highlighted in gray). Such features include the morphological reduction of “*il*” (he) to “*y*” (and “*elle*” (she) to “*a*”), the syntactic use of “*tu*” as an interrogatory place marker, the lexical substitution of the inclusive pronoun “*nous*” with the exclusive pronoun “*on*”, and the signification of plural “*vous*” and “*nous*” with the morpheme “*autres*”.

Réjean, who is an unemployed and relatively uneducated man, finds little reason to speak anything other than joul in his daily life. However Popa’s successful son, the banker Rénard, deliberately speaks in Québécois French while disdainfully addressing his less prosperous relatives. Yet even at his core, Rénard is shown to be a speaker of joul. In the episode “*Le roast de Rénard*”, Rénard unintentionally switches to joul in a fit of anger after being accused of being cheap:

(Rénard): *Et ca, c’est-tu cheap ça, pitcher mon p’tit change?... Tiens, d’abord, tiens. Ça, c’est-tu cheap ça?*  
(Réjean): “*M’a t’en prendre un.*”

(Rénard): And, is it cheap when I throw away my change? Take it, then, take it. This, is this cheap?  
(Réjean): I’ll take one.

This juxtaposition between Réjean and Rénard, the former a lovable yet good-for-nothing son-in-law and the latter an unlovable yet successful son, validates the use of joul as the normative and authentic language of the Québécois folk, while acknowledging its socially undesirable indexical qualities.

### **Linguistic Expertise and Moral Normativity**

This analysis of *La Petite Vie* reveals the characters’ broad range of metapragmatic and metalinguistic awareness concerning the oral use of language. Hyper-correction from joul to European French or Québécois French requires a conscious

alteration of morphology, syntax, lexicon, and phonology. Among these grammatical shifts, those involving morphology and syntax are among the most socially meaningful while those involving lexicon and phonology are among the least socially meaningful. These trends correspond to linguists' expectations that speakers are more readily conscious of differences in lexicon than other linguistic levels (Silverstein 1979). Not surprisingly the use of joul lexicon, which most people can deliberately incorporate, carries much less social stigma than the use of joul syntax, morphology, or phonology, which is much more difficult for a native joul speaker to deliberately change. For this reason, Québécois French-speakers can incorporate joul lexicon into their speech without sounding uneducated or vulgar. In fact, the peppering of Québécois French speech with joul or Canadian-specific lexicon is often what gives this language its regional authenticity and stylistic familiarity (de Villers 2005; Corbeil 2005).

Lionel Meney, who compares French and Québécois lexicon in his *Dictionnaire québécois-français*, rejects the claim that Québécois French is different from European French on account of its lexicon (Meney 2004):

*Cette "langue standard québécoise" est un véritable mythe, dont on parle depuis des décennies, mais que personne, à ce jour, n'a été capable de décrire, pour laquelle il n'existe ni grammaire ni dictionnaire. (Meney 2008)*

[This "Québécois standard" is an actual myth that we have talked about for centuries but no one to the present has been able to describe, and for which there doesn't exist a grammar book or a dictionary. (my translation)]

According to Meney, French grammatical variation is not systematic across Quebec, making it impossible to ascertain where joul ends and where Québécois French begins. It is precisely for this reason that the Paré family and many other monolingual joul speakers throughout Quebec are unable to productively code-switch, either

metaphorically or situationally, between joul and Québécois French (see Gumperz 1982). The writers of *La Petite Vie*, on the other hand, possess the requisite metalinguistic expertise to reproduce sociolinguistic distinctions as verbal art. As illustrated by the phenomenal success of *La Petite Vie*, much of French Quebec's entertainment industry relies upon the audience's intuitive understanding of grammatical and pragmatic contrasts to construct socially meaningful and often humorous texts.

A favorite and relatively politically-correct form of sociolinguistic mockery in Quebec is reserved for Parisian French speakers, perhaps the most disliked of all European immigrants in Quebec. One day at a dinner party at Nathalie's house, several of Nathalie's friends humorously imitated this European French accent. One imitator had been in a previous romantic relationship with a Frenchman. In demonstrating how the Québécois and the French ask to use the bathroom, she altered both her choice of lexicon and phonology. Hence, "les toilettes" became "le W.C." and the affricated "t" in "tu" became an unaffricated "t." Nathalie, on the other hand, does not have experience speaking with European French immigrants and remained uncharacteristically silent throughout the conversation.

Other Montreal residents are able to expertly reproduce or describe grammatical and phonological differences between Québécois French, joul, and European French. In my apartment in Côte-des-Neiges, I encountered many such metalinguistic experts. One expert was my roommate Sylvia, a university student of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Chinese ancestry who is fluent in joul, Québécois French, English, and Cantonese. Sylvia has attended French-medium school and university all her life. My second roommate was Julie, an international exchange student from France who is fluent in European French and

English. Together we would speak in a variety of French and English registers that indexed a multiplicity of social identities.

In the beginning, I would mostly speak in joul with Sylvia and Julie. Sylvia once remarked how bizarre it was to witness an Indian woman speak joul with an “American-accent.” Sylvia often speaks in Québécois French with university students and professors and code-switches or code-mixes in Québécois French, joul, and English when speaking with her friends. Julie always speaks European French or English, finding it impossible to utter a single sentence in Québécois or joul. Apart from me and Sylvia, most of Julie’s interlocutors were other French, Swiss, and Belgian exchange students. Even though Julie had watched Québécois films when in France, she told me that she was not sufficiently prepared for the grammatical peculiarities of Québécois styles of French. Julie would often complain to me that her fellow Québécois students and university professors did not speak proper French. According to her, only Québécois news reporters were capable of speaking proper French.

Near the end of our four month co-habitation, Marc, who is Julie’s boyfriend from France, came to visit us for a week. One day, Julie, Marc, and I visited a *cabane à sucre* (maple sugar shack) in the Laurentian countryside. After enjoying a meal of maple syrup-flavored meat, potatoes, beans, and dessert, we went outside to listen to a tutorial on the making of *tire*, a maple syrup candy. The owner of the *cabane à sucre* spoke in joul, so I had to translate his explanation into Québécois French for Marc to understand. Julie, by this point, was familiar enough with joul to understand the gist of his explanation. A few days later while at home talking with Sylvia, Julie and Marc asked why the Québécois insert “tu” everywhere in their speech. Sylvia and I laughed and gave

examples of how to use “tu” as an interrogatory marker. In exchange, Julie and Marc “taught” us how to pronounce words such as “*aéroport*” (which the Québécois pronounce as “*aréoport*”) *à la française*. Neither Sylvia nor I were even aware that we habitually invert the “r” and “é” in “aéroport”.

A few weeks later, Sylvia invited her friend Marie to spend a few days at our apartment. Marie, whose father is French and mother is Haitian, speaks mostly in European French. Marie is also fluent in English, a language she uses to converse with other ethnic minorities. Between themselves, Marie and Sylvia usually code-mix in English and French. Sylvia also code-switches between English and Cantonese when speaking to her parents, who do not understand French. In general, Sylvia’s and Marie’s oral competences place them at a level of linguistic expertise qualitatively higher than most other Québécois. Sylvia is particularly attuned to the social and economic value of this multilingual expertise, choosing to also study Polish and Arabic abroad. At the same time, Sylvia’s and Marie’s multilingual expertise also place them in a precarious social position as minority citizens of Quebec. By challenging the language ideologies of sociolinguistic compartmentalization and ethnolinguistic belonging, Sylvia and Marie unwittingly accentuate the morally suspect and non-normative qualities of their belonging within nationalist Quebec.

According to Ochs and Schieffelin (1984), experts are socially and linguistically competent persons who are successfully emplaced, or socialized, within a particular cultural scene. According to Zigon, morality is the “unreflective mode of being-in-the-world” (Zigon 2007:8). From a linguistic anthropological perspective, therefore, morality could be explained as the “unreflective mode of being-in-the-world” of a

linguistic expert. Within the multicultural setting of the globalizing city of Montreal, however, these concepts of expertise and morality take on alternative and even contested meanings. In a society where only certain types of linguistic expertise are recognized as being iconic of certain types of moral normativity, divergent moral attitudes and displays of metalinguistic knowledge can be quickly interpreted as threats to the ideological coherence of the nationalist project.

Ethnographic entanglements in my investigation of minority linguistic practices in Montreal exposed such deep-rooted societal anxieties about the ontological and epistemological status of experts and novices. These entanglements first precipitated in response to my request to the *Commission Scolaire de Montréal* (CSDM) to conduct research on Tamil heritage language classes in French-medium primary schools. After six months of jumping through bureaucratic hoops, I was finally granted permission by the CSDM to pursue my research project, pending the final approval of the school principals. I immediately contacted two of these principals, both of whom had been supplied with a copy of my research proposal. Surprisingly, in phone call after phone call I was told that the principals were unavailable to speak with me. Soon enough, I received a phone call from the research director of the CSDM informing me that both principals had declined to participate in my research project, claiming that it had “*trop un contenu politique.*”

In hindsight, I realize that I could have avoided revealing the political nature of my research project by not including my original dissertation grant proposal in the school board application. In this grant proposal, one can easily discern my intent to analyze the language ideologies informing the racial and ethnic classification of Quebec’s citizenry.

In particular, my proposal raised the following questions pertaining to multilingualism in Montreal. (1) If anglophones are at least functionally bilingual in French and English, at which point does an anglophone become a francophone? (2) Since many allophones speak French and/or English in both public and private venues, what is the linguistic basis for labeling this person as an allophone?? (3) Does “francophone” refer to a person’s level of spoken and/or written expertise in French? (4) Given that Montreal youth regularly code-mix between French, English, and/or other languages, how does one classify their sociolinguistic personas?

In the end, my failure to negotiate a moral agenda compatible with the goals of the CSDM is primarily due to my expressed interest in recording the “hybrid” linguistic practices and unconventional language attitudes of Tamil youth. In disregarding the importance of Quebec’s *de facto* policies of sociolinguistic compartmentalization, I broke faith with Québécois teachers and bureaucrats who are notoriously nationalist in their politics. In addition, my proposed methodology to analyze the underlying structures and meanings of conversational practice could have been interpreted as evidence of an exclusive metalinguistic expertise that is inaccessible, and hence irreproachable, to teachers and bureaucrats. Perhaps if I had been able to actually *talk* with the school principals, the familiar drawl of my joul speech and Québécois accent would have reassured them of the benign moral intentions of my research. Instead, we were first acquainted through the words of a *text* which, through its history of (con)(en)textualization, inadvertently embodied the voice of an outside expert rather than fellow Québécois.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter describes how the Québécois came to privilege language as their primary signifier of social identity and, in the process, develop an acute sensitivity to grammatical and pragmatic differences in linguistic styles and registers. Much has been written about the linguistic distinctiveness of Canadian French varieties and the role that language has played in the development of a 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalist consciousness in Quebec. What Quebec scholars and Québécois folk have failed to note, however, is that oral and literary linguistic competences in Quebec are ideologically compartmentalized and hierarchically juxtaposed through the (de)valuation of spoken and textual forms and media. Such acts of ideological regimentation produce classificatory structures that resemble those produced by the overtly diglossic classification of languages (and speakers) in South Asia.

This unit, which has explored the relationship between language, expertise, and normativity at the scale of the nation, describes how literary standards have come to embody the expert voice of the state and colloquial languages, or mother tongues, have come to embody the normative voice of the nation in Quebec and South Asia. The scale of the nation, which is often taken to be the most normative and expert-like scale of analysis for many historians and anthropologists, preconditions scholars to reproduce the very language ideologies that they claim to study. In the next unit, where the scale of analysis is shifted to local and trans-local scales of belonging, I shall examine how these language ideologies are reproduced, contested, or transformed to reflect the evolving social, moral, and political interests of diasporic social actors.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Scales of Belonging of Montreal Tamils**

My first day of fieldwork in Montreal led me to Muthu, the president of CUTAM (Concordia University Tamil Mantram) and the man responsible for giving me my first and most elementary lesson in Montreal Tamil diaspora politics. When I informed him that I was interested in studying Tamil language education in Montreal, he asked me to specify which group of Tamils. Because, as I was told, there are two groups of Tamils in Montreal: Sri Lankan Tamils (of which Muthu is one) and Indian Tamils. Similarly, there are different associations to which Tamil students at Concordia University belong: CUTAM for Sri Lankan Tamils and the Indian Students Association and Tamilagam for Indian Tamils. Finally, he explained that even the languages of Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil are qualitatively different. I quickly rebounded from hearing this surprising news by stating that I wished to compare the linguistic experiences and attitudes of Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils. Nonetheless, I remained puzzled about the reasons for this ethnonational divide for a long time.

Upon returning to the University of Michigan after completing my fieldwork, I would describe this ethnonational divide to colleagues as an unexpected phenomenon, especially given the common language, culture, and even religion (in some cases) of both populations. Of course, as a senior colleague pointed out to me quite matter-of-factly, there is nothing altogether surprising about this scenario. In fact, ethnonational affiliations are ideologically prominent in today's nationalist world order. He suggested

that I consider the example of how Bengalis and Bangladeshi immigrants self-segregate in the United States, although I immediately discounted this on account of their religious differences. I instead considered how Spanish-speaking, Arabic-speaking, and Urdu-speaking immigrants selectively form social networks, sometimes within and sometimes across ethnonational lines (Shryock and Abraham 2000, Bailey 2000, Dávila 2001).

Given the dearth of linguistic anthropological research on the process of diaspora formation, I could not be sure whether there exists an identifiable pattern of diasporic settlement with respect to language practice and affiliation. In other words, is the ethnolinguistic language ideology that has been so prominent to experiences of national belonging equally prominent to experiences of diaspora belonging? Or, do other local and global-scale distinctions in socioeconomic class, caste, religion, politics, and gender instead determine diasporic settlement patterns and social relations?

In this chapter, where I present the first part of my analysis of Tamil diaspora settlements in Montreal, I suggest that the answer is contingent upon the specific socioeconomic, political, and moral landscape in which immigrants are situated and from which they originate. Both Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils hail from regions that have and continue to experience Tamil linguistic nationalisms as state-endorsed political ideologies. Also, both Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils have migrated to a province that is still very much in the throes of its own French linguistic nationalist movement. In fact, given the institutional dominance of the ethnolinguistic language ideology and the language ideology of sociolinguistic compartmentalization in Quebec, it *should* come as a surprise that Montreal Tamils do not adhere to this model. Yet, rather than over-emphasize these ideological conjunctures between homeland and diaspora, I instead trace

the roots of their eventual disjuncture to three key factors: (1) the divergent conditions of Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil migratory experiences, (2) the relative homogeneity of the two populations, and (3) the mediated positioning of Tamils as racialized minorities in Quebec.

Crucial to my analysis is the matter of a prominent language ideology which claims that Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils speak different languages. In Montreal, Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils are not only made to appear as distinct ethnonational groups, they are also made to appear as distinct ethnolinguistic groups. The roots of this language ideology, Gair and Suseendrarajah claim, lie in the relative isolation between both populations:

Jaffna Tamil has been sufficiently isolated from the Indian forms of the language for it to have developed a distinct character, so much so that Indians encountering it for the first time are likely to think that they are hearing some other Dravidian language such as Malayalam. (Suseendrarajah 1967:5 in Gair and Suseendrarajah 1998:171)

Kalainathan further explains, in a somewhat contradictory fashion, that the mediating influence of Sinhala on Tamil, as well as the independent development of distinct features, marks “Sri Lankan Tamil as very different from all other varieties used in other countries” (2000:301).

Sri Lankan Tamil has been in close contact with Sinhala language unlike the Indian Tamil. Tamil has had more influence on Sinhala. On the other hand, Sinhala language did not influence Tamil language. But a few Sinhala borrowings can be seen in Sri Lankan Tamil. (ibid: 302)

Malayalam, a Dravidian language closely related to Tamil, is known to be grammatically influenced by the Indo-Aryan language of Sanskrit; likewise, the Dravidian language of Sri Lankan Tamil is thought to be somewhat lexically influenced by the Indo-Aryan language of Sinhala. The interpretation of an iconic equivalence between the Indo-

Aryan/Dravidian interfaces of Sri Lankan Tamil and Malayalam is a probable outcome of first encounters between Indian Tamil interlocutors (who are familiar with Malayalam but not Sri Lankan Tamil) and Sri Lankan Tamil interlocutors.

However according to the views of Jaffna Tamils in Montreal, only the languages of Colombo Tamil, Batticaloa Tamil, and Trincomalee Tamil incorporate Sinhala loan words. Jaffna Tamil, on the other hand, is a purist style of Tamil that is grammatically distinct on account of its pronominal verbal forms, as well as person-number affixes and inflectional negative forms (Gair and Suseendirajah 1998). While Gair admits that “this variation within Sri Lanka Tamil remains largely unstudied in detail, despite some initial attempts (especially Zvelebil 1959, 1959-60, 1960, 1966; Suseendirajah 1970, 1973a, 1973b; Thankanjayarajasingham 1973)”, folk language ideologies concerning the ethnonational basis of Tamil linguistic variation abound (Gair and Suseendirajah 1998:170-171). In the Montreal Tamil diasporas, for example, some have even stated that Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil are two distinct languages.

In conversations with K. Karunakaran, a prominent Indian Tamil sociolinguist at the University of Michigan, he emphatically affirms that Jaffna Tamil is but one of many dialects which fall under the inclusive rubric of “Tamil” (personal communication). In this chapter, I am less concerned with proving the veracity of ideological categories such as “Tamil dialects” and “Tamil languages” as with describing the social and other semiotic factors motivating these classifications. At the same time, I also seek to account for the socioeconomic and political ramifications of their institutionalization in the Montreal Tamil diasporas. I argue that the formation of two institutionally-segregated, ethnonational Tamil diasporas in Montreal has authorized an overarching nationalist

framework under which subsidiary localized and globalized scales of belonging can be interpreted and acted out. Therefore, caste, class, religious, and other social status distinctions are regarded as indexing dialectal differences, rather than linguistic differences, and as indexing nesting sub-groups, rather than distinct social groups, within the overarching ethnonational group of Sri Lankan Tamil or Indian Tamil. For interlocutors who socialize across this Tamil ethnonational divide, their linguistic repertoires are usually interpreted as a sign of metalinguistic expertise rather than evidence for a common Tamil *lingua franca*.

These diasporic language ideologies operate in a similar manner to the nationalist language ideologies of modern Tamil Nadu, where the government recognizes dialectal differences within the overarching Tamil “mother tongue” nation. The LTTE, on the other hand, has not been able to successfully enforce the ethnolinguistic unity of its regional and religious Tamil groups on the basis of a common “mother tongue” or “literary standard” in Sri Lanka. In Montreal, however, the relative homogeneity of the Jaffna Tamil immigrant population enables the LTTE leadership to discursively project a unified Sri Lankan Tamil nation on the basis of its ethnolinguistically unified diaspora. In this manner, the Montreal diaspora functions as an essential and even central site in the legitimization and perpetuation of the Sri Lankan Tamil nationalist project.

A subsidiary language ideology is that Sri Lankan Tamils speak “literary Tamil” or “written Tamil” and Indian Tamils speak “colloquial Tamil” or “spoken Tamil”. The viability of this diglossic-like language ideology in Montreal depends on the social segregation and functional divergence of linguistic competences between Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils, with the former specializing in the colloquial Tamil language and

the latter specializing in the literary Tamil language. By erasing the fact of a common literary language, this language ideology both reproduces and naturalizes segmentary divisions between Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils into the next generation.

Furthermore, by compartmentalizing Tamil ethnonational variation into a diglossic classificatory system of textual versus oral, literary versus colloquial, classical versus modern and purist versus hybridized styles, the recursive compartmentalization of Tamil sub-groups along divergent spatiotemporal scales of belonging is achieved. These acts of spatiotemporal regimentation, by indexing specific geographic and historical orientations, iconically mark Tamil sub-groups as morally and spatiotemporally incommensurable. From such semiotic manipulations, certain moral and political claims can be made about the social histories and cultural traditions of different groups of Montreal Tamils.

### **Tamil Migration and Settlement Patterns**

Although some Tamil diasporas have taken on modern characteristics, Tamil diasporas are themselves not modern phenomena. Since the beginning of recorded history, Tamils have migrated from their homeland in present-day South India to almost every continent in the world. Much like the old Hadrami diaspora about which Ho writes, many generations of Tamil migrants have participated in the resettlement of homes that remain morally linked to one another through a genealogical “trail of absences” (Ho 2006:18). Also, much like the new diasporas of the post-Warsaw Pact era, recent Tamil migrants have also engaged in settlement patterns that endorse exclusionary regimes of (trans)nationalist belonging.

In total, one could describe five distinct Tamil migrant cohorts that are defined in terms of their settlement patterns. The first cohort, whose migratory history spans from 200 BCE to the 20<sup>th</sup> century CE, is comprised of various middle caste groups of merchants, bankers, traders, and agriculturalists from distinct regions within Tamilagam and later Tamil Nadu. For example, many Vellāla agriculturalists, Karaiyar fisherman, and Chettiar bankers and traders first settled in the northern region of Sri Lanka in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, while Chettiar bankers and traders from the Chettinad region of southern Tamil Nadu and from the northern region Sri Lanka settled throughout Southeast Asia and parts of Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These migrants are economically prosperous business folk, professionals, and landowners who were culturally and socially integrated into their host societies.

The second cohort, whose migratory history spans from 1830 to 1920, consists of lower-caste and lower-class indentured workers, some of whom were recruited through the *kangani* system to work in the colonial plantations of South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, Singapore, Guyana, and Trinidad (former British colonies), Réunion, Martinique, and Guadeloupe (former French colonies), and Dutch Guyana and Sumatra (former Dutch colonies). These (mostly) male indentured workers were later assimilated into the lower class rungs of their host societies and socially and institutionally segregated from upper-caste and upper-class Tamil professionals, merchants, and agriculturalists.

My analysis focuses on the following “newer” diasporas which co-exist with these “older” diasporas. The third cohort, whose migratory history spans from circa 1910 to 1980, is comprised of upper-middle class Brahmin and other high caste Tamils who left Tamil Nadu during and in the aftermath of the Self-Respect and Dravidian

movements. They sought government posts, university admissions, or lucrative employments in globalizing cities throughout India and the West. Included in this cohort are a small number of upper class and upper caste Tamils who migrated from Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and Africa to the West. The fourth cohort, whose migratory history spans from the 1940s to the present, consists of Dalit Tamils fleeing drought stricken or economically deprived villages and towns in rural Tamil Nadu. Many of these low caste Tamil settled in large urban slums within the Indian cities of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, and Bangalore, where they were socially and residentially segregated from Brahmin Tamils (Charusheela 2007). The fifth cohort, whose migratory history spans from 1983 to the present, consists of Tamil refugees fleeing the civil war in Sri Lanka. While many first fled to temporary refugee camps in Tamil Nadu, most have since sought asylum in cities and towns within North America, Europe, and Australia (Inbanathan 1997).

### ***Indian Tamil Migrants***

Montreal's Indian Tamil population is comprised of two distinct waves from within this third cohort of Tamil migrants. The first migrant wave includes Brahmin Tamil professionals, students, and families who immigrated to Montreal from the 1960s to the 1990s (Canada 1991b). Many of their ancestors had originally immigrated from their ancestral village within Tamil Nadu to a major Indian city, such as Delhi, Bombay, and Madras, in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most educated and English-fluent among this group later sought jobs as scientists and engineers in international companies situated in global cities and global city-regions within North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Australia. In the global city-region of Montreal, Indian Tamil

professionals first settled in downtown Montreal and later, after starting a family, bought homes in the South Shore or West Island suburbs.

Historically, most Brahmin Tamils who reside in Indian global city-regions are members of the upper-middle or upper classes. Inbanathan (1997) describes how Delhi Brahmin Tamils send their children either to private English schools or to Tamil-medium schools run by the Delhi Tamil Educational Association. In Delhi, Tamil-medium schools teach Tamil in the elementary grades and English in the secondary grades. Hemanth, a non-Brahmin Indian Tamil who is originally from Chennai, explains that choice of school is solely determined by family finances. His father, who is a Tamil schoolteacher, sent Hemanth's older brother to a Tamil-medium school and later, when he possessed the financial means, sent Hemanth and his younger brother to an English-medium school. Many Brahmin Tamils in Delhi (especially the older generations) do not learn Hindi, which is both the local language and the national language of India. Instead, they speak in English and Tamil within social networks that are primarily composed of other Brahmin Tamils.

The Sundarans and the Viswanathans are typical Iyengar Brahmin Indian Tamil families living in Montreal. Lalitha Sundaran and her husband Mohan Viswanathan are family practice physicians who live in the upper-middle class enclave of Mont Royal within central Montreal. Both Lalitha and Mohan were born, raised, educated, and now work in the Montreal metropolitan area. Lalitha was raised in the predominantly French-speaking South Shore town of St-Bruno-de-Montarville, where she attended French

immersion elementary school and English-medium secondary school.<sup>39</sup> Mohan was raised in the predominantly English-speaking West Island town of Dollard-des-Ormeaux, where he attended English-medium public school. Lalitha and Mohan met while studying medicine at McGill University. Lalitha's father, Dr. Sundaran, was raised in New Delhi before coming to the University of Waterloo in Ontario in the late 1960s to study for his doctoral degree in computer engineering. Lalitha's mother works as a teacher in a local CEGEP. She was raised in Bangalore before marriage, after she also attended the University of Waterloo to study for her doctoral degree in chemistry. Both of Mohan's parents, who are from Bangalore, completed their doctorate and post-doctorate studies at the University of California at Berkeley in the early 1970s before settling in Montreal.

The second migrant wave consists of graduate students and young professionals who have settled in Montreal since the late 1990s and early 2000s. These graduate students are currently pursuing studies in engineering, pure sciences, computer science, and biotechnology at McGill University, Concordia University, and the Université de Montréal. Although a few have emigrated to Canada as married couples or with young children, most students and professionals are single men and women who seek to work internationally after receiving their degrees in Montreal. They are mostly from middle or upper-middle class urban families of upper-caste Hindu or Christian backgrounds. Indian Tamil graduate students and young professionals usually reside in downtown Montreal or in urban neighborhoods that are proximate to a university campus.

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<sup>39</sup> French immersion public schools were first introduced in 1968 by the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal to assist "anglophone" students in becoming functionally bilingual in French and English. (Schauber 1995)

One Indian Tamil graduate student, Aditya, arrived in Montreal on September 2, 2001 to pursue his master's degree in building engineering at Concordia University. Aditya is an upper-caste Vaishnava Hindu who was raised in the former French colony of Pondicherry. His mother, who currently works as a homeopathic doctor and previously worked for the central government in Pondicherry, was born in a mixed Tamil-speaking and Telugu-speaking town (which used to be within the Madras Presidency but currently lies within Andhra Pradesh). Although Aditya refers to Telugu as his "mother tongue" because he speaks to his mother's family in Telugu, Aditya was raised to speak, read, and write in Tamil. His father, from whom his mother is separated, is a businessman from the Manali business district of Chennai. Aditya explains that "nobody stays there now...all of our roots have moved everywhere."

Aditya has himself moved from city to city, first studying architecture at the University of Madras in Chennai and then working for one year as an assistant editor for the *Construction Journal of India* in New Delhi before finally coming to Montreal. After applying to nine master's programs in the U.S. and Canada, he eventually enrolled at Concordia University because it was "the best education for a cheap price." When first arriving in Montreal, he found there were very few Indian Tamil graduate students:

Canada was not a hot spot at that time. For Indians, it was still a new place to explore. When I came, I was the only Tamil guy. There were two Tamil guys before, but the year I came, I was the only guy. They came in ones and twos. The next year after my batch, we had at least six, seven people. No more than that, ten people. Ten Tamil people, I am not saying Indian. From Tamilnad. So that was a large increase and that was the time that the US has this problem of restricting the visas. I came on 2<sup>nd</sup> September [right before the 9/11 events.] Then people started focusing on Canada. A lot of people started to come to Canada after that.

Through word of mouth, Concordia University and Université de Montréal soon became known for their leading and even cutting edge programs in engineering and bioinformatics. Aditya explains how he helped to establish a yahoo group to assist incoming Indian international students locate apartments near downtown Metro stations, obtain student visas, find Indian grocery stores and other shops, and adjust to city life in Montreal.

1<sup>st</sup> generation Indian Tamil graduate students generally find that they have little in common with 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamils of their own age group. Aditya, who interacts regularly with 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Tamils through his work with the Indian Tamil organization of Tamilagam, believes that 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamils possess a more “classicalist” cultural attitude while 1<sup>st</sup> generation Indian Tamils possess a more “modernist” cultural attitude:

It took me a long time to meet the second generation Indian that are born here. Not many people I have met so far even. Very less...Culturally we are different, though we both are Indians, origins wise. Their Indian is not synchronized with our Indian. They are more classical. I mean like, if they are Indian, if they take only the Indian part, their only Indian part is very classical. And our only Indian part is more everything. May not be classical even [laughter]. Theirs is more refined. Not language. Language wise, they only get what their parents speak so, uh, that you cannot really get the pure part of it. But the other part, like the classical music or classical dance, they go for the real pure stuff. So like, they have teachers here who teach them pure... I have a couple of friends who go for Bharat Natyam. They are good in it, they do good stuff. I know a person who went back to India to learn veena. That is a big surprise for us. That surprises because we don't know that. Maybe 10 or 20% do this, even that 20% who do classical stuff, they don't spend 100% on classical stuff. They have other stuff going on, right? That's not really the common stuff in India, right? The common stuff in India is like a balance of all of these. There are people who are completely Westernized, in India even. The second generation has a different perception of India...They are brought up here, so they have this culture, too much imbibed in them, which we don't have, we are trying to learn them.

As a non-Brahmin, Aditya had not been socialized into this “classicalist” paradigm endorsed by earlier waves of Brahmin Tamil immigrants. Arjuna, a Brahmin Tamil Saivite who studies micro mechatronics systems (MEMS) at Concordia University, recognizes that this emphasis on classical Tamil culture is “a traditional Brahmin Tamil family thing. So it is compulsory to study.” He himself has studied veena and Carnatic music since a young age and is now actively involved in the arts association of Bharatiyar Sangeet Sangam Montreal. These single men, who are both friends, set aside Brahmin and non-Brahmin differences in the spirit of Indian Tamil camaraderie.

### ***Sri Lankan Tamil Migrants***

Montreal’s Sri Lankan Tamil population is comprised of three distinct migrant waves. The first migrant wave introduced a mixture of upper-caste professionals and students to Montreal in the 1970s and early 1980s (Canada 1991a). These Tamil migrants, many of whom were originally from Colombo, settled in middle class suburbs in the south shore and west Island of Montreal, much like their Indian Tamil contemporaries. They usually participate in social and religious networks comprised of other Sri Lankans, including the Sinhalese, and other South Asians of similar religious and caste backgrounds. The second migrant wave consists of early asylum seekers from Colombo and Jaffna, many of whom are middle-caste and middle-class landowners or professionals who left Sri Lanka at the onset of the civil war in the 1980s. Tamils migrating from Jaffna primarily settled in the urban neighborhoods of Côte-des-Neiges, Beaubien, and Parc-Extension in Montreal, while the smaller group of Colombo Tamils scattered throughout the metropolitan Montreal area.

As violence in Jaffna escalated in the subsequent decades, an increasing number of Jaffna Tamils sought asylum in Canada. Changes in the asylum recruitment process had rendered it easier for rural and non-landowning castes to undertake this journey abroad, and, as Canada was among the least difficult sites in which to be granted asylum, many headed for the Canadian cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Cheran 2000, 2007; McDowell 1996). Cheran (2000) explains that Toronto disproportionately received higher caste refugees and Montreal disproportionately received lower caste refugees. In Montreal, Sri Lankan Tamil refugees settled in pre-established Jaffna Tamil neighborhoods within Côte-des-Neiges, Parc-Extension, and Beaubien, where earlier migrants helped them to apply for asylum, rent apartments, and secure employment. At this time, the earlier refugee cohort also began to purchase their first homes in the Ville St-Laurent, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, and Pierrefonds suburbs of Montreal. Given these patterns of migration and settlement, there are currently several different “Little Jaffna” Tamil neighborhoods in Côte-des-Neiges, Parc-Extension, Beaubien, Ville St-Laurent, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, and Pierrefonds in Montreal.

In many respects, patterns of Sri Lankan Tamil migration to Montreal mimic patterns of Sri Lankan Tamil migration to other asylum sites in Europe and Australia. McDowell (1996), Fuglerud (1999), and Daniel (1996), in writing of the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas in Switzerland, Norway, and Britain, respectively, each notes a marked decrease in caste and class status between progressive waves of asylum seekers. In the case of Switzerland, McDowell describes the changing socio-economic and caste profile of migrants:

What emerges from this categorization of Tamil asylum migrants is that in purely economic terms the majority of Tamils entering Switzerland between 1983 and

1991 belonged to the lower middle class of Tamil society. However, in the late-1980s, and into the 1990s, the socio-economic profile of migrants changed as a greater proportion of entrants came from a rural background, received less education, attained fewer qualifications, were engaged in manual and laboring work and were of a low caste. (McDowell 1996:139)

Similarly, Daniel notes how different waves of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to Britain self-segregate into residential neighborhoods differentiated by caste and class status differences.

What does make Canada distinct from other asylum sites is that, for many asylum seekers, it is the preferred final destination in a lengthy series of chain migrations. Many Sri Lankan Tamil refugees spend years hopping from country to country before finally settling and purchasing a home in Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver. For many war-weary refugees, living in Toronto's or Montreal's "Little Jaffna" neighborhoods is the closest experience to belonging to a Tamil nation or homeland that they can hope to achieve. As expressed by one of Daniel's British Tamil informants, "In Toronto and Montreal there are places called 'Little Jaffna.' That is enough of a Tamil nation for me. Wherever there are enough Tamils, there is a Tamil nation" (1996: 175-176). Daniel explains that British Tamils prefer to remain financially solvent and to liquefy their assets to prepare for the eventuality of moving to Canada.

Pavalan, a 1.5 generation Sri Lankan Tamil man of 26 years old, first immigrated to Montreal in 1987 at age 11. At the advice of an uncle who works as a truck driver in Toronto, he, his younger sister, and his parents left Jaffna and came straight to Montreal. On his mother's side, one aunt moved to Singapore, one uncle moved to Dubai, and one brother moved to Canada. Eventually, all of them reunited in Canada, where they bought homes and started local Tamil businesses. On his father's side, his uncles, aunts, and

cousins are dispersed throughout Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, and France. One cousin, who has moved from Jaffna to Colombo and then to Paris, is seeking to be sponsored by Pavalan's father in order to move to Montreal. Upon settling in Montreal, Pavalan's family first rented an apartment in Côte-des-Neiges. A few years later, they moved to an apartment in the Sauvé district located next to the textile factory where both parents work. Again in a few years, the family purchased their first home in the West Island suburb of Dollard-des-Ormeaux. Pavalan is currently working as a security guard at the Trudeau International airport to help his parents finance an even larger home in Pierrefonds that is under construction.

### **Social Networks and Scales of Belonging**

In most Tamil societies, people belong to a variety of social networks which each index a different scale of belonging. From the local to the global, these include the patrilineal kin group (which indexes the local scale of the household), the jāti group (which often indexes the local scale of the village), the ethnolinguistic group (which indexes the intermediate scale of the region or the nation), and the religious group (which often indexes the global scale of the trans-nation). In Montreal these scalar indexicalities are hierarchically arranged to reflect the political and social reality of the diaspora, such that caste and religious distinctions are subsumed under an overarching ethnonational framework. These semiotic manipulations are accomplished through the work of ethnonational Tamil organizations and, at times, disrupted by local and trans-local religious, caste, and gender dynamics.

### *Ethnonational Organizations*

In the old Tamil diasporas of South Asia and Southeast Asia, upper-caste and upper-class Chettiar Sri Lankan Tamil merchants and Vellālar Sri Lankan Tamil landlords have self-segregated from lower-caste and lower-class Indian Tamil indentured laborers (Daniel 1996; Lee and Rajoo 1987). The reverse has been the case among the new Tamil diasporas of North America, Europe, and Australia, where upper-class and upper-caste Indian Tamil immigrants usually self-segregate from lower and middle-caste and lower and middle-class Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. In Montreal, the strategic segregation of Brahmin Indian Tamils from lower and middle caste Sri Lankan Tamils is institutionally reinforced through the growth of divergent Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas.

To account for their segregated diaspora experiences, Montreal Tamils commonly refer to status differences between both Tamil groups. In general Indian Tamils belong to an elite and homogeneous socioeconomic stratum of Montreal society, where they work as salaried scientists, doctors, and engineers, live in upper-middle class suburban homes, and socialize with other Brahmin Tamils or Indians of similarly high socioeconomic, educational, and class status. Indian Tamils further demonstrate their elite status by publically speaking in English, a linguistic competence the 1<sup>st</sup> generation acquired by attending English-medium schools in India. In Montreal, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamil children also attend English-medium public or private schools. The few exceptions are, as in Lalitha's case, when parents deliberately enroll their children in French-immersion schools. At Lalitha's school, she said, "francophone and anglophone students wouldn't sit together in the cafeteria. There were a lot of fights between the two groups." Even

though Lalitha speaks both French and English, she identifies as an anglophone and speaks only in English with her friends.

Hemanth, a Chennai Tamil doctoral student in chemistry at the Université de Montréal, explains that “South Indian Tamils are crazy for English”:

English represents power and superiority. They know Tamil but they speak in English because they see it as a modern thing. People believe that if you don't know English, you can't survive in this world. And knowing English gives you more opportunity to travel.

Due to their relatively mobile residency within India, many Indian Tamil immigrants have previously cultivated a sense of national belonging with non-Tamil Indians. Aditya and Makesh, who speak or understand Telugu, both have a lot of Telugu friends in Montreal, while Arjuna, who learned to speak Hindi when visiting his mother's family in Bombay, socializes with Hindi-speaking North Indians in Montreal. In 2002, Aditya and a few other Indian graduate students founded the Indian Students Association (ISA) at Concordia University. ISA is a cultural and social organization that hosts cultural shows and other social activities that emphasize pan-Indian, or sometimes pan-Hindu, themes. At the time of my research, Hemanth was in the process of putting together a yahoo group for Indian students studying at the Université de Montréal. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamils also participate in Tamilagam Quebec, an association which organizes cultural and religious activities for Montreal's Indian Tamil population.

Recent Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are relatively less fluent in English and possess lower educational credentials than Indian Tamils. University quotas and the casualties of war have significantly impeded the education of many Jaffna Tamils, who upon seeking asylum in the West are often informed that they lack accredited university degrees or even the multilingual competences to secure a white-collar job (Daniel 1996; Sivathamby

2005). Thileepan, a computer systems engineering student at McGill University, describes himself as the only Sri Lankan Tamil doctoral student in all of Montreal. He excelled in his studies at the University of Peradeniya and was offered a fellowship to pursue higher studies in Canada. Yet even Thileepan's education was interrupted for two years in the 1990s, while fighting in Jaffna was most fierce.

Most Sri Lankan Tamil refugees (both men and women) seek employment in factories, restaurants and other service industries, or as small business owners of convenience stores, car repair garages, grocery shops, video rental shops, clothing and textile stores, and restaurants. According to Cheran, the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas in Toronto and Montreal are constantly reminded of their patriotic duty to support Tamil-owned businesses:

Local Tamil politicians and business owners, real estate agents, physicians, and dentists appeal to the community to support Tamil-owned business. 'Be a Tamil, buy from a Tamil, show solidarity with Tamils' is an explicit call to simultaneously support Tamil ethnic business and Tamil nationalism as one of the Tamil community newspapers proclaims: the growth of Tamil business is the growth of Tamils. (Cheran 2007:161)

Pavalan's father, who worked as a naval engineer in a Greek shipping company in Sri Lanka, could not find comparable work in Montreal on account of his unaccredited engineering degree. He now works as a machinist at a textile factory in the Sauvé district, where Pavalan's mother also works packaging socks for distribution. Pavalan believes that his parents could have secured better paying jobs if they were able to speak English or French. He describes with disgust how middle-class Sri Lankan Tamil engineers, doctors, and other professionals "show-off" by speaking in English, even in the temple.

Sri Lankan Tamil refugee children in Montreal, who are obliged to attend French-medium public schools by law, are often held back a few grades upon being placed in remedial, French-immersion classes. Pavalan recalls his experience in this remedial class:

French is most difficult to learn; when I came to Canada in 1990 I was put into a welcome class. Everyone was put there, grades one, three, five, six, all together in one group, everyday. For one or two years we stay there, then they see how well we pass the tests. It was very difficult. Also, my parents were moving around too fast, and I kept going from school to school, so I had to redo several class grades; a lot of kids are repeating because French grammar is difficult.

At 26, Pavalan has not yet completed his university studies. In comparison his younger sister, who started French-medium public school in Montreal in the first grade, is academically on-track at Concordia University.

Jaffna Tamil refugees invest heavily in their children's education so as to improve their social status. Many 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil youth are currently enrolled in engineering, business administration, and pure science undergraduate and master's degree programs at Concordia University, while a few are also enrolled at the more prestigious McGill University. In 2001, the student organization of CUTAM was established to respond to the escalating number of Sri Lankan Tamil students at Concordia University. Upon becoming president of CUTAM in 2004, Muthu transformed CUTAM from a political organization into a cultural organization. Currently, CUTAM's primary objective is to provide a social network for Concordia's Sri Lankan Tamil students and their families by sponsoring events such as movie nights, sports competitions, and talents shows.

In the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami, CUTAM members raised \$10,000 for the humanitarian relief of tsunami victims in Sri Lanka and South India. At

other times, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) also raises money for the humanitarian relief of war victims and tsunami victims in Sri Lanka. The TRO is directly affiliated with the Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec, a Montreal-based organization which operates under the management of the World Tamil Movement (WTM). In turn, the World Tamil Movement operates as the civil branch of the LTTE by actively promoting the cultural and political interests of the Tamil Eelam movement in the diaspora. The Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec, whose headquarters is located on rue Van Horne in Côte-des-Neiges, is the oldest extant Sri Lankan Tamil organization in Montreal. Representatives from the WTM attend all Sri Lankan Tamil religious and cultural events, where their presence is signaled by TRO fundraising booths and Tamil Tiger flags.<sup>40</sup>

In Toronto, the Canadian Tamil Congress, “formed in 2000 to represent Tamils in Canada and to advocate Tamil self-determination in Sri Lanka, claims and aspires to be the ‘unified voice of Tamils’ (<http://www.ctconline.ca>) in Canada” (Cheran 2007: 160). In Montreal, where the Canadian Tamil Congress is less active, the World Tamil Movement strives to de-emphasize caste and religious divisions and emphasize the ethnonational unity of Sri Lankan Tamil sub-groups by highlighting their shared cultural and linguistic traits. That most Sri Lankan Tamils in Montreal are from Jaffna facilitates the erasure of their cultural, religious, political, and linguistic diversity. Cheran estimates

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<sup>40</sup> Because I ended my fieldwork in April 2006, I do not know if the Tamil Tiger flag is still being flown at public events in Montreal. I did attend one Sri Lankan public event in July 2007 during which the local population protested this Canadian policy. The LTTE flag was not flown during this event.

that the majority of Canadian Tamils publically support the LTTE and the WTM military and political efforts in Sri Lanka.<sup>41</sup>

A telephone survey of Tamils in Canada that was commissioned by the World Tamil Movement (WTM) in Toronto revealed that 74 percent supported the establishment of a separate state for Tamils in Sri Lanka (Smaller World Communications 1996). In addition, all Tamil language newspapers and radio stations use Tamil Eelam as a reference point for home. (Cheran 2000:170)

Despite these public approval ratings, many anti-LTTE factions nonetheless exist among Toronto and Montreal's Sri Lankan Tamil population:

Their oppositional counter-memory being articulated by some writers, poets, and journalists in the diaspora focuses on the "erased" events and episodes of the Tamil struggle. Their resistance to the Tiger version of nationalist narratives exposes the fact that any project of nationalist hegemony cannot be total... The little magazines that are an important source for liberation narratives do not commemorate the Great Warriors Week but commemorate the massacre of the Muslims at Kattankudy in the eastern province by the Tigers in 1990 and the expulsion of the Muslims from the north in 1991. (Cheran 2000:207)

Recently in 2006, the Human Rights Watch published an investigative report of LTTE fundraising activities in Canada (Toronto) and the United Kingdom, claiming that extortion and coercion often accompany the door-to-door fundraising tactics of the WTM (Becker 2006). Overall, the LTTE, the WTM, and CTM have been highly successful in promoting their political agenda in the Canadian diaspora.

### ***Religious and Caste Distinctions***

Through the work of these ethnonational organizations, religious and caste affiliations have been subsumed within the institutional logic of the overarching ethnonational group. For example, Montreal's Indian Tamil population is divided into

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<sup>41</sup> For the personal safety of my informants, I have purposefully omitted specific examples of their dissenting attitudes toward the LTTE.

Saiva and Vaishnava Hindu sects.<sup>42</sup> Despite these sectarian and minor caste differences, Indian Tamils worship together at the Hindu Mandir, an Indo-Canadian temple that caters to a mixture of Vaishnava and Saiva ritual styles, or at the Hindu Mission of Canada, a pan-Hindu temple that Indian Tamil rent on Fridays. Both Saivites and Vaishnavites participate in the Tamilagam celebrations of *Puttāṇṇu* (Tamil New Year), *Dīpāvali* (Tamil festival of lights), and *Pongal* (Tamil harvest festival). Only in their marital practices are Vaishnavite Iyengar Brahmins and Saivite Iyer Brahmins exclusively endogamous, a trend that nonetheless appears to be decreasing in Montreal and other diasporas (Inbanathan 1997).

In Montreal, there is a small population of Vaishnavite Iyengars who trace their ancestry to the Bangalore region of Karnataka. Known as Hebbar Iyengars, they speak a variety of Tamil that is grammatically influenced by Kannada. Hebbar Iyengars generally belong to both Tamilagam and Kannada Koota organizations. The Viswanathans and the Sundarans came to know each other through these ethnonational organizations. Although the Sundarans are not Hebbar Tamils like the Viswanathans, Mrs. Sundaran was nonetheless raised in Bangalore and speaks Kannada fluently. After marrying Lalitha, Mohan found that he would unconsciously switch from Hebbar Tamil to Lalitha's Delhi Tamil when speaking to his own family:

I was in the computer store with my father and brother. I spoke in Tamil so that the salesperson wouldn't understand what I was saying. I unconsciously used a non-Hebbar Tamil word to say something about buying the computer. My father and brother didn't understand me so I repeated it twice; finally all of them realized what I was saying and why it was difficult to understand – that I wasn't using the Hebbar Tamil dialect.

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<sup>42</sup> Disputes between Saivites and Vaishnavites in South India date for over a millennium and were particularly vociferous in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to most Saivites, Vaishnavism is not an indigenous religion of South India. Vaishnavites fiercely contest this claim by tracing the origins of Vaishnavism back to the Tamil bhakti period of the early first millennium C.E.

Usually, Drs. Sundaran and Viswanathan speak to each other in Kannada, Tamil, Hebbar Tamil, and English, leading Lalitha to incorrectly assume that Hebbar Tamil is a corrupted “half-Tamil and half-Kannada” language. Mohan disagrees with her assessment, although privately he wonders if he will lose his caste dialect at the expense of Lalitha’s “purer” Delhi Tamil dialect.

Even among the Sri Lankan Tamil population of Montreal, which is approximately 66% Saivite Hindus, 27% Roman Catholic, and a much smaller percentage of Protestants and Muslims, religious and caste differences do not interfere with the reproduction of the Sri Lankan Tamil nation (Canada 1991a).<sup>43</sup> Before the mid 1990s, Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus worshipped at the Hindu Mission of Canada, while Sri Lankan Tamil Catholics worshipped at local neighborhood churches. Currently, many Sri Lankan Tamil Catholics also worship at Ste-Cécile’s Church, which is rented on the weekends by the Our Lady of Deliverance Roman Catholic Sri Lankan Tamil mission. Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus worship at one of three Sri Lankan Tamil Saiva temples: the Thiru Murugan temple, Sri Durgai Amman temple, and Ganesha temple. In general, Sri Lankan Tamils do not attend Tamilagam events and Indian Tamils do not worship at Sri Lankan Tamil temples or churches.

The decision to participate in ethnationally segregated places of worship may have less to do with a sense of ethnonational loyalty as with a sense of caste rank. Daniel (1996) and McDowell (1996) have both suggested that Tamil Hindu caste distinctions are more pronounced in the diaspora than in the homeland. This increased emphasis is due to the absence of cultural and institutional sanctions which maintain the *de facto* segregation

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<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, I did not interact with many Tamil Muslims and Protestants; therefore I am unable to provide statistics on these populations.

of caste groups. Without such sanctions, the process of “Sanskritization” takes over, thus prompting a “‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, [to] change [sic] its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, ‘twice-born’ caste”, and, correspondingly, prompting upper caste Tamils to vacate places of worship whose memberships are being encroached upon by lower-caste Tamils (Srinivas 1952:6).

According to Srinivas (1952), models of Sanskritization depend on the locality’s dominant caste group. Thus, in addition to Brahmin models of Sanskritization, there are also Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra models of Sanskritization. McDowell describes the institutional dynamics of a Sudra model of Sanskritization among the Sri Lankan Tamil of Switzerland:

... in 1993 there was a campaign to halt the building of temple in every Swiss town because, campaigners believed, it was an initiative by a group of “untrained and unworthy priests to suck money from the community”. However, more importantly, it represented a development in which Hindu priests were seen to be actively engaged in assisting lower-class Tamils to improve their caste status, to adopt a new class identity through the employment of low-rank priests and the use of usurped caste symbols, thus breaking the bond between the Vellala and their Brahmins, which for so long underpinned the Vellala dominance in Tamil society. (1996:229-230)

Whereas in Switzerland Vellāla elites seek to maintain their caste dominance by limiting the proliferation of temples, in Montreal upper-caste elites encourage the self-segregation of Tamil Hindus into separate caste-specific places of worship. Because in Montreal Brahmins represent the locally dominant caste among Indian Tamils and Vellālars represent the locally dominant caste among Sri Lankan Tamils, the ethnonational segregation of Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils automatically enforces the caste segregation of Brahmins versus non-Brahmins. In addition, each Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu temple tends to have its own caste-specific membership.

Father Joseph, who runs the Our Lady of Deliverance mission, explains that Tamil Catholic churches are also organized by caste. In fact, Tamil Catholics will first ask other Tamil Catholics the name of their ancestral town and church to infer their relative caste status.<sup>44</sup> In Montreal, some upper caste Sri Lankan Tamil Catholics would prefer to attend English-language mass at St. Andrew's church in Côte-des-Neiges rather than Tamil-language mass at the Our Lady of Deliverance mission, where they would interact with parishioners of different caste backgrounds.<sup>45</sup> St. Andrew's Church, which is predominantly attended by Filipino immigrants and presided by Canadian priests, also has an Indian Tamil deacon who tends to upper-caste Sri Lankan Tamils' cultural and spiritual needs. However, Indian Tamil Catholics do not worship at either St. Andrew's Church or Ste-Cécile's Church and instead attend church in their local neighborhood.

### *Gender Dynamics*

The reproduction of the Tamil nation in the Montreal diaspora also depends upon the successful reproduction of its gender ideologies. At times, however, local and trans-local gender dynamics between unmarried males and females can disrupt the intergenerational reproduction of the ethnonational group. Because the presence of wives and sisters is seen as essential to maintaining the moral order of Tamil society, single Tamil men who are recent migrants are often perceived as potential threats to the diaspora's moral order. In general, family men and women are encouraged to avoid

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<sup>44</sup> In nearby metropolitan Toronto, where Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas are more populous, standards of caste and ritual purity appear to be less universally stringent. The Ganesh temple in Toronto is a congregational-style Tamil temple where people of both Vaishnavite and Saivite sects and both Indian and Sri Lankan nationalities regularly worship and interact (Coward 2000).

<sup>45</sup> Among Tamil Catholics, Karaiyars are the dominant and most upwardly mobile jāti (McDowell 1996). Many Karaiyar Tamils originally migrated from urban sites within the coastal regions of northern Sri Lanka. Although many rural Karaiyars in Sri Lanka are fishermen, urban Karaiyars have joined other lower-middle class professions in teaching, government service, trade, and factory labor. Other Tamil Catholic jātis include the Colombo Chettiars and the Parathavar Bharathas (Sivathamby 2002).

interacting with single Sri Lankan Tamil men. McDowell (1996) explains how upper-caste Sri Lankan Tamil families in Switzerland will not visit temples where there are a lot of single Tamil men. Father Joseph also informed me that many of the Tamil Catholic families who worship at St-Andrew's Church do so to prevent their daughters from mingling with lower-caste Tamil Catholic boys at Ste-Cécile's Church.

Unmarried women are also perceived as threats to the reproduction of Jaffna Tamil society, where icons of Tamil tradition and moral virtue are gendered female. According to a prominent female Tiger, the ideal feminine persona (*karpū*) of Jaffna Tamil society embodies qualities of chastity and conjugal fidelity, including "shyness, timidity, ignorance, passiveness, and obedience" (Fuglerud 1999: 109). Sri Lankan Tamil men worry that diaspora women may be morally tainted by improper sexual contact with Tamil men or, worse, Western men. This fear prompts parents and brothers to rely upon trans-national kinship and caste networks to find spouses in India, Sri Lanka, or abroad who are not familiar with their daughter's social activities. For example Selvamani, an outspoken Sri Lankan Tamil woman of 25 years, was recently wedded to a Tamil man who lives in Tiruchy, India. In general, even diaspora Tamil men are reluctant to marry diaspora Tamil women. They instead seek wives from upwardly mobile castes in Jaffna, where there is a "strong preference for marrying children out of the country, particularly daughters" (1999:102).

Among Jaffna Tamil Catholics in Montreal, whose women wear western clothing, overly westernized Sri Lankan Tamil girls and women are viewed with alarm. During the month of September 2005, I observed catechism classes at the Tamil Catholic mission. Father Joseph teaches an upper-level class to five girls and six boys ages 14

through 16. In a relaxed and often joking manner, Father Joseph reviews Biblical history and discusses Christian and Tamil moral themes with these youth. The boys, who sit on one side of the table, enthusiastically respond to Father Joseph's questions, while the girls, who sit on the other side of the table, gossip amongst themselves and make snide comments. Once, when Father Joseph asked a girl to comment on her recent trip to Sri Lanka, she said in a snippety voice, "Nothing is different. Everything is good" and went back to talking with her friends.

When I returned to observe this same class two weeks later, it was instead being taught by Father Michael. Father Michael is a Sri Lankan Tamil priest who was invited to temporarily replace Father Joseph for a few months. In comparison with Father Joseph, Father Michael's pedagogical approach is strict and no-nonsense. At the beginning of class, Father Michael asked the girls to recite the opening prayer. Two of the girls deflected responsibility onto a third girl, who finally whispered the prayer in a very soft voice. Next, Father Michael asked his students to summarize the story of the "calming of the seas" from the Scripture of Mark. Even though they were instructed to read this story at home, none had prepared for the assignment. Furthermore, even though most of the boys had brought their textbooks to class, not a single girl had her textbook with her. During the lesson the girls would often talk and laugh with each other, and several times Father Michael chastised them to be quiet.

By the end of class, I could see that Father Michael was exasperated with the situation. As we debriefed, he explained that in his entire career as priest he has never encountered such disrespect. He was particularly upset with the manner in which some of the girls had spoken to him, stressing that it was important for them, as Christian

women, to learn proper etiquette. He compared the moral laxness of these girls to the spiritual decrepitude of Québécois society, where Catholic churches and cathedrals are being sinfully used as shopping centers. For Father Joseph, the direness of the young Tamil girls' lack of etiquette was an issue that the Catholic Tamil mission needed to immediately address.

Indian Tamils, while sharing many of the same gender ideologies as Sri Lankan Tamils, appear to be less alarmed about changing gender dynamics both in the homeland and in the diaspora. There are at least two unmarried, female, 1<sup>st</sup> generation Indian Tamil graduate students who are currently studying at Concordia University and Université de Montreal. These women are involved and highly respected members of the Tamilagam community. According to Hemanth, they both speak “good Tamil.” When I asked Hemanth who speaks “bad Tamil”, he said that Chennai Tamil girls are notorious for speaking bad Tamil and speaking in English:

I asked girls, why? Everyone does it. The underlying reason is that they want to show their modernity. Just modern. Even guys do, but it is mostly seen in girls. But guys don't, they can't do it very well. Guys make fun of this. If a guy meets a girl in the city, he will want to speak to her in English. And the same person when he goes home he will speak proper Tamil.

In contrast with Father Michael's reaction, Hemanth emphasizes the playfulness rather than the direness of this courting ritual. Their opposing reactions suggests that tropes of social change and modernity are perceived as less threatening to the reproduction of the Tamil Nadu state than to the Tamil Eelam nation. In this manner, the actions of diaspora Sri Lankan Tamil women, and to a lesser extent diaspora Sri Lankan Tamil men, are overtly scrutinized by Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora leaders for signs of moral anomalies.

## **Integrating Tamils into Québécois Society**

For similar reasons, the Québécois de souche have scrutinized Montreal Tamils and other ethnic and racial minorities for signs of moral anomalies which would interfere with the reproduction of the Quebec nation. Until recently, many Québécois de souche would not hesitate to claim that they are the “*nègres blancs de l’Amérique*” (“white niggers of America”). This phrase was first coined by Québécois writer/journalist Pierre Vallières in 1968 to refer to the large French Canadian underclass in relation to their English-speaking (Canadian and American) overlords. In the present time, however, this phrase fails to capture the morally righteous tone of the 1960s and 1970s. After the political backlash of the 1995 referendum, Québécois nationalists have since re-examined their policies and attitudes concerning the integration of ethnic and racial minorities into Québécois society. Native groups have been most forceful in accusing the Quebec government of pursuing imperialist and discriminatory policies (Coon Come 1995). In reaction, the pro-separatist Parti Québécois has made an effort to diversify its party by encouraging ethnic and racial minorities to join the movement for an independent Quebec.

### ***Racializing Tamils***

Sometime during my pre-fieldwork visit in the summer of 2002, I was invited to a dinner party at the house of some Québécois de souche friends. During the party, a middle class Québécois de souche woman was complaining to her friends about her company’s new CEO. This woman, who is a bona fide member of the Parti Québécois, works as the office manager of an international pharmaceutical company in an affluent West Island suburb of Montreal. In an effort to increase productivity, the board of

trustees had recently hired a man from Sri Lanka to manage the company. This woman expressed her indignation with the board's decision in the following manner: "*Y'ont engagé un maudit Sri Lankais! Pourquoi pas un Canadien ou même un American? Ben non, il fallait engagé un Sri Lankais.*" [They hired a damn Sri Lankan. Why not an American or even a Canadian? But no, they had to hire a Sri Lankan.]

In hindsight I believe that this woman was unaware that her comments would offend me, even though she knew that I was planning to conduct research on Montreal Tamils. In fact, it is entirely possible that she does not know that Tamils can be of Sri Lankan nationality. A few weeks later, one of my Québécois de souche relatives informed me that "les tamouls", especially those who live in Côte-des-Neiges and Parc-Extension, have a bad reputation for being thugs and criminals (Côte 2004; Presse 2004). These two incidents first suggested that the racialization of Tamils in Québécois society would play a significant role in their localized experiences of belonging as Montreal residents.

Recently, the government-appointed Bouchard-Taylor commission has been charged with the task of constructing a new moral discourse on interethnic and interreligious tolerance in Quebec. Since 2006, the Bouchard-Taylor commission has travelled to different Quebec cities and towns to collect diverse citizens' opinions on the topic of "reasonable accommodations" (Canada News Wire 2007a; Orfali 2007; Roy 2007). "Reasonable accommodations" refers to a constitutional initiative to standardize (i.e. limit) the expression of religious and cultural activities in Quebec's public institutions and spaces (Canada News Wire 2007b). In a publicly televised debate on "reasonable accommodations" on March 26, 2007, political candidates from the *Parti*

*Liberal, Parti Québécois, and l'Action Démocratique du Québec* affirmed their party's moral commitment first to women's rights, second to secularism, and third to religious and cultural tolerance (Presse Canadienne 2007c). In response, local scholars and activists have argued that these "liberal" discourses sensationally depict religious minorities as threats to the modern secular state.

In January 2007 the Bouchard-Taylor Commission stopped in Hérouxville, a small rural farming town of 1,338 Québécois de souche inhabitants. There, they were presented with a list of the town's limits to religious tolerance:

*... "on ne lapide pas les femmes ", qu'une femme " peut être soignée par un homme médecin " ou l'inverse, que dans les écoles " les enfants ne doivent porter aucune arme (...) symbolique ou non " et que les enseignants accomplissent " leurs fonctions à visage découvert ". (Girard 2007)*

... "we do not stone women," that women "can be treated by a male doctor" or vice versa, that in schools "children should not wear any weapons (...) symbolic or not" and that teachers serve "their function with their face uncovered." (my translation)

Through the remainder of the year, Montreal residents, minority organizations, and politicians, including the premier of Quebec Jean Charest, vehemently criticized this "code de vie" for its racist and intolerant attitude toward religious minorities (in particular Muslims and Sikhs) (Perreault 2007; Presse Canadienne 2007c; Voix de l'Est 2007).

The most scathing critique came in the form of the comedy sketch entitled "Hérouxville", which was broadcast on the television show "Bye Bye 2007," which is produced by *Rock et Belles Oreilles* (RBO) (Presse Canadienne 2008). The sketch begins with the scene of a man and woman driving in a car and singing the Québécois folk song "Dégénération". The woman (W) is wearing a head scarf and the man (M) is wearing a fez and a long kurta, clothing meant to signify their Muslim religion and/or their Arab

ethnicity. All of a sudden, their car stalls. In deciding what to do next, the couple speaks to one another in a non-Canadian variety of French. They use lexicon such as “*essence*” and “*p’tite merquez*” to signal the non-Canadian style of their register:

*W: Qu’est-ce qui y a?*  
*M: Panne d’essence*  
*W: Calme-toi ma p’tite merquez.*  
*M: Mais, où sommes-nous exactement?*

W: What’s wrong?  
M: We ran out of gas.  
W: Don’t worry, my little spicy sausage (pet name).  
M: But we are we exactly? (my translation)

A street sign reads “*Bienvenue à Hérouxville, Population: Juste assez*” [Welcome to Hérouxville. Population: Just enough] and the announcer then states, “*Les films de peur vous présente “Hérouxtyville,” la p’tite ville intolérante*” [We present to you the horror film “Hérouxtyville”, an intolerant town].

The couple exits the car and is suspiciously greeted by a truck driver (T) from this town of Hérouxville:

*T: Tu parles d’un heure pour conduire en pydjama.*  
*M: C’est un costume traditionnel.*  
*T: Parce que l’Halloween c’était ya deux mois.*  
*(M and W look at each other and laugh)*  
*T: C’est quoi votre char?*  
*M: Une Hyundai.*  
*T: Un char étranger. Bougez pas. (On intercom in truck): Hé le gros. Une famille de tamouls dans un char de chop suey. J’ai ramasse-tu?*

T: Talk about a time to be driving around in your pajamas!  
M: This is traditional clothing.  
T: Because Halloween was two months ago.  
(M and W look at each other and laugh)  
T: What kind of car do you have?  
M: A Hyundai.  
T: A foreign car. Don’t move. (On intercom in truck). Hey, big guy. A Tamil family in a chop suey car. Do I pick them up?

In this exchange, the linguistic juxtaposition between the belligerent joul speech of the truck driver (with its trademark lexicon – *char, pydjama* – syntax – *ramasse-tu* – morphology – *un heure, ya* – and phonology – “*dj*”) and the polite, educated French of the “Muslim” man emphasizes a marked difference in their social status. The truck driver’s cultural ignorance is made most evident when he mistakes this couple for a Tamil family. In the closing frame, the announcer states in a loud, formal voice: “*À Hérouxville. Tout c’qui est pas d’icitte on n’en veut pas!*” [In Hérouxville. Anything that is not from here, we don’t want.]

This phrase, by laminating Québécois French phonology onto highly stigmatized joul morphemes (“*c’qui*” and “*icitte*”), produces a double voiced register with an ironic tone. At the most obvious level, this ironic tone conveys the RBO writers’ criticism of Hérouxville xenophobia. At a more subtle level, this ironic tone presupposes the relative ignorance of rural Québécois de souche folk with respect to Montreal city folk. By mistaking Muslims Arabs for Tamils, RBO writers suggest that the people of Hérouxville know nothing about the people they refer to as “*les étrangers.*” At the most subtle level, RBO writers also imply that Arabs and Tamils are among the most racialized ethnic minorities in contemporary Québécois society.

In Montreal the word “*tamoul*” functions as a linguistic icon for the most foreign and morally inscrutable qualities of ethnic/racial minorities, while the physical Arab/Muslim person functions as an embodied icon of those same traits. The following newspaper article corroborates this analysis:

*Bahjat Muhtaseb, un commis efficace d'origine palestinienne promis à un poste de gérant au supermarché Maxi de Côte-des-Neiges a été fréquemment injurié par ses compagnons de travail et menacé par l'un d'entre eux. Il a été traité de "Tamoul", "d'animal", de "camel rider", de "christ d'Arabe" et de "voleur de job"*

*par trois collègues, qui ont été sévèrement mis en garde par leur employeur, la compagnie Provigo. (Dugas 2003)*

Bahjat Muhtaseb, a hard working store clerk of Palestinian origin who had been promised the position of manager at the Maxi supermarket in Cote-Des-Neiges, has often been insulted by his co-workers and threatened by one of them in particular. He was called a “Tamil”, “animal”, “camel rider”, “fucking Arab,” and “job stealer” by three colleagues, who have been severely punished by their employer, Provigo Corporation. (my translation)

This supermarket, which is located in the heart of Côte-des-Neiges (and only two blocks from my apartment), has many Tamil cashiers and clientele. In this setting, referring to a Palestinian man as a “*tamoul*” should not be interpreted as a sign of cultural ignorance but as a sign of racial bigotry. Similarly, Muhtaseb’s labeling as a “fucking Arab” functions less as an ethnic appellation than as a racial slur.

### ***Normalizing Sri Lankan Tamils***

Outside of Côte-des-Neiges, Parc-Extension, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Pierrefonds, and Ville St-Laurent, most Québécois de souche have little (if any) personal contact with Tamils. Nonetheless, the Québécois de souche are keenly aware of their growing presence in Montreal. To the non-discerning Québécois de souche observer, the demarcated waves of first Indian Tamil and then Sri Lankan Tamil immigration appear as one seamless stream of Tamil migration. By virtue of sharing a common Tamil language, Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils are usually perceived as belonging to a single ethnolinguistic population. Even though Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils themselves can readily distinguish between both ethnonational populations, the Québécois de souche do not possess as same intimate knowledge of Tamil history. When I asked Aditya how he discerns between Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils, he replied:

First their looks even. I can't pinpoint their appearance. But I can find a Sri Lankan person, if I see a person I can tell. The worst one is that I am mistaken as Sri Lankan in and around Montreal. By French people and by English people. They first ask me, oh you're from Sri Lanka, no I am from India. [laughter]

Aditya concludes that the Québécois de souche assume he is Sri Lankan because of his dark complexion and use of the Tamil language.

According to the foundational principles of Canadian multiculturalism, provincial governments are required to financially assist ethnic minorities in establishing their own cultural and linguistic institutions (Ujimoto 1980). Yet because an ethnolinguistic ideology of social classification informs Quebec policy, many sources of funding are preferentially given to ethnolinguistic rather than ethnonational groups (Helly 1996; Helly 2001; Taddeo and Taras 1987). Thus, any two minority groups with similar ethnolinguistic ascriptions are faced with a strategic decision: (1) to emphasize their ethnonational identity and maintain internal distinctions, yet lose government funds, or (2) to emphasize their ethnolinguistic identity and minimize internal distinctions, yet receive government funds.

Because Sri Lankan Tamils greatly outnumber Indian Tamils in Montreal, the local francophone media usually treat Sri Lankan Tamil as the presumptive Tamil group. Some reporters even use the terms "*tamoul*" and "*Sri Lankais*" interchangeably (Blanchette 2005; Chamberland 1998; Régis 1999; Trottier 1998). Unfortunately, the media's portrayal of Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants has not always been favorable. After the illegal arrival of a few Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in 1983, the Canadian media branded them as illegal "boat people" (Colpron 1988; Regan 1992). Twenty years later, the media still promote racialized stereotypes of Tamil refugees through the sensationalist reporting of violence, poverty, and terrorist-like behavior in their neighborhoods of

residence (Cauchy 2003; Côte 2004; Daily News 1995; Laroche 1997; Tasso 1986; Tasso 1987; Tasso 2004). This mediated racialization of Tamil groups has been similarly noted in other countries with sizeable populations of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, including the United Kingdom (Daniel 1996).

Exacerbating the public's negative perception of Sri Lankan Tamils is their presumed political endorsement of the LTTE. Tamil activists have attempted to combat these stereotypes by educating the Canadian public about the LTTE and the Sri Lankan civil war (Première 2006). Such radio and television broadcasts have succeeded in garnering some sympathy for the Tamil Eelam movement, especially among pro-nationalist or pro-separatist segments of the Québécois population. However after April 10, 2006, when newly elected Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper officially declared the LTTE and the WTM to be terrorist organizations, such intercultural dialogues were discontinued (Canadian Broadcasting 2006a). Cheran describes the effects of the prime minister's decision from the Toronto Tamil perspective:

...the LTTE has been added to the federal list of terrorist entities, and Tamil organizations have been subject to heightened scrutiny by security agencies, and a generalized chill has resulted in the suppression of many overt expressions of Tamil nationalism, including the display of flags, LTTE paraphernalia, as well as the mounting of certain cultural events and public mourning and commemoration of Tamil martyrs day. (Cheran 2007:163)

Two days later, the Canadian police raided the WTM office in Côte-des-Neiges to collect lists of local fundraisers and sponsors (Canadian Broadcasting 2006b; Canadian Television 2006). In the media's coverage of this event, local Sri Lankan Tamil residents faced possible prison sentences if their names were found to be financially affiliated with the LTTE or WTM.

To distance themselves from these negative stereotypes, some Indian Tamils have purposefully avoided interacting socially with Sri Lankan Tamils. One Indian Tamil graduate student, Nita, refuses to even speak with Sri Lankan Tamils and shuns all Sri Lankan Tamil events.<sup>46</sup> Being of the age to remember Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassination by a (presumably) LTTE suicide bomber in Chennai in 1991, she remains deeply suspicious of the LTTE's presence in Montreal and only identifies as Indian, not Tamil. In publically de-emphasizing their Tamil linguistic identity and emphasizing their Indian national identity, Indian Tamils have had to forego public funding for Tamil language schools. Consequently, even though 2<sup>nd</sup> generation youth are learning to speak a colloquial style of Indian Tamil at home, very few have learned to read, write, speak, or even understand literary Tamil. Sri Lankan Tamils, on the other hand, have successfully secured government funds to build at least ten Sri Lankan Tamil language schools where 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil youth study how to read, speak, and write literary Tamil and colloquial Jaffna Tamil.

### **Diglossic Differentiation of Tamils**

The diglossic-like compartmentalization of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation linguistic repertoires, such that Sri Lankan Tamil youth are seen as acquiring greater literary Tamil expertise and Indian Tamil youth are seen as acquiring greater colloquial Tamil expertise, is recursively replicated at various scalar levels in the ethnonational differentiation of Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils. At one scalar level, Indian Tamils are seen as acquiring “globalizing” literary expertise in French and English, while Sri Lankan Tamils are seen as acquiring “nationalist” colloquial expertise in French and English. At another

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<sup>46</sup> Most fundraisers are sponsored by the World Tamil Movement and the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization.

scalar level, Indian Tamils are seen as speaking an impure, colloquial language and Sri Lankan Tamils are seen as speaking a pure, literary language. This is closely related to the view that Indian Tamils speak a “modernist” style of Tamil while Sri Lankan Tamils speak a “classicalist” style of Tamil. The resultant language ideology that 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Montreal Tamils endorse is that Indian Tamils speak “spoken Tamil” and Sri Lankan Tamils speak “written Tamil”.

### ***Tamil as Dialect, Tamil as Language***

For the differentiation of Tamil ethnonational groups to be recognized by the Québécois public, Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils must be shown to possess qualitatively different political views, moral perspectives, and linguistic preferences. Through a process of self-differentiation, Sri Lankan Tamils have depicted themselves as pro-French in linguistic preferences and pro-separatist in political views. First, many Sri Lankan Tamils publically sympathize with Québécois separatism, while some are even affiliated with the Parti Québécois. Second, most 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil children attend French-medium public school, where they learn to write literary French and speak joul. They also learn to speak colloquial Tamil through informal peer interactions. Third, many 1<sup>st</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamils are monolingual Tamil speakers who do not speak much English. It is common to hear 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil youth refer to themselves as Québécois. Indian Tamils, on the other hand, have depicted themselves as pro-English and pro-federalist. First, most Indian Tamils identify as Canadian citizens and vote for pro-federalist parties in provincial and federal elections. Second, most 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamil children attend English-medium public or private schools, where they learn to write literary English (and literary French)

and speak colloquial English. Third, most Indian Tamils are fluent speakers of English, which they use as their public language of communication.

These trends suggest that Sri Lankan Tamils have cultivated greater expertise in lower-status yet native forms of French and English, while Indian Tamils have cultivated greater expertise in higher-status yet non-native forms of French and English. Given the dominant representational economy of Québécois nationalist culture, such facts would suggest that Indian Tamils having globalizing and modernist aspirations (like the Montreal anglophone businessman), while Sri Lankan Tamils have nationalist and primordialist aspirations (like the Québécois de souche rural folk). When considered in light of the dominant representation economy of Tamil nationalist culture, the globalizing and modernist sensibilities of Indian Tamils are interpreted as a sign of their proclivity to speak in an impure or colloquial style of Tamil, while the nationalist and primordialist sensibilities of Sri Lankan Tamils are interpreted as a sign of their proclivity to speak in a pure or literary style of Tamil. Variants of this language ideology have been expressed by my Montreal Tamil informants.

For Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils who socially interact in Montreal, their linguistic differences are described as being dialectal in nature. For example, Aditya plays in an intramural cricket team where 90% of his teammates are Sri Lankan Tamils. At first, Aditya found his teammates difficult “to move with” and did not speak to them in Tamil. As the cricket season progressed, Aditya would be invited to dinners and other social gatherings with his Sri Lankan teammates. He then concluded that “once you know [Sri Lankan Tamils], they are the best”. He refers to their Tamil dialect as literary-like and classically derived:

As far as language is concerned, yeah in the beginning it was a little bit difficult. The thing is, like, I had my Tamil language course like until 12<sup>th</sup> grade in India. I was in English-medium school. I had that one course that comes from all the way from 1<sup>st</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I was good in Tamil at that time. So I know the, what do you call them, the classical Tamil part, the literature, so if you know that thing, then it is easy to grasp the Sri Lankan Tamil. Because that's the platform. The classical Tamil is the platform and we diversified from that this way and they diversified from that in a different way, so if you put a link, this way you can really get at what they mean, except for a few words which you really don't know, but the other words are mostly derived from these words, but basically you... whenever they speak I try to grasp from the classical, like I try to equalize the words that they have in the classical and those with what they say. I try to come up with the oral distance.

Aditya also shares an apartment with his Sri Lankan Tamil friend, Thileepan. Thileepan is a doctoral student at McGill University who is pursuing a Ph.D. in computer systems engineering. Aditya explained that, by virtue of speaking in Tamil with Thileepan and his cricket teammates, he can now understand the Sri Lankan Tamil dialect.

Thileepan, on the other hand, claims to be able to strategically code-switch between Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil. From February through April 2005, I would meet with Thileepan once every few weeks for Tamil conversational practice. During this time, I was familiarized with some of the grammatical and lexical differences between colloquial Jaffna Tamil and colloquial Indian Tamil.<sup>47</sup> Thileepan (and most other Sri Lankan Tamils) had been frequently exposed to the Indian Tamil dialect by watching Kollywood movies and listening to Indian Tamil radio stations in Sri Lanka.<sup>48</sup> In comparison, Aditya's only prior exposure to the Jaffna Tamil dialect was through one Jaffna-based radio program to which he listened infrequently during his youth.

Others have described the difference between Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil as a type of regional dialectal variation. Arjuna is an Indian Tamil man from Chennai

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<sup>47</sup> I was trained in the Madurai style of colloquial Tamil through study at AIIS.

<sup>48</sup> Kollywood is the name of Chennai's Tamil film industry.

who admits that “though I grew up in Chennai, though I speak Tamil as my mother tongue, I don’t know Tamil officially. I don’t know the nuances of the language.”

Arjuna plays on Aditya’s cricket team and is also friends with Thileepan. He refers to “way of speaking [as] completely different”:

I am friends with lot of Sri Lankan Tamils. Their Tamil is completely different. We cannot match their Tamil. Our way of speaking is different. Their way of speaking is completely different. One roommate of Aditya his name is Thileepan. I could not understand the way he spoke. [makes garbled noise] Even now I ask him three times or something and only then I am able to understand.

Arjuna claims that Thileepan cannot recognize the phonemic distinction between “ɻ” and “ɻ̣”.

Already his language is a bit fast. Thileepan will say “valaipalam” instead of “valaipalaṃ”. I ask him to repeat. Not only me. I think it is the case with many guys.

For Arjuna, who is a Brahmin Tamil from Chennai, the ability to phonetically articulate /ɻ̣/, or “ɻ̣”, is a sign of the speaker’s prestige.

Hemanth, another Chennai native, finds the dialect of colloquial Sri Lankan Tamil to be utterly incomprehensible on account of its purity:

Sri Lankan Tamil is very pure. It has not got polluted. I am coming from Chennai. It is the worst place to speak Tamil. Even people from South India, especially from Madurai, they will laugh at us. So I try to change myself when I speak to those people. Because it is very slang and colloquial language... so many dialects... When I first met Sri Lankans here, it totally like I didn’t even understand, they were laughing at me. So, it is very different. “

Hemanth is quite self-conscious of being mocked when he speaks in Chennai Tamil, which he describes as a very impure dialect of Tamil. Muthu explains that Indian Tamils like Hemanth incorporate a lot of English lexicon into their colloquial speech, much in the same way that the Québécois do when they speak joul. He equates Sri Lankan Tamil speech to the French spoken in France, which he assumes to be a purer style.

Arjuna, Aditya, and Makesh all admit to using English lexicon when speaking in colloquial Indian Tamil, as is habitual among upper-class, urban speakers in India.

Among 1<sup>st</sup> generation Indian Tamils graduate students, only Aditya claims to have retained his ability to write literary Tamil. He attributes this skill to his solid education in Tamil literature in grade school. Hemanth, even though he used to write Tamil poetry in India, sheepishly admits to having forgotten some of the Tamil scripts and even how to construct literary Tamil sentences. For 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamils who have never learned literary Tamil and who do not communicate with Sri Lankan Tamils, they believe that Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil are two distinct languages. For example Mohan, whose mother tongue is Hebbar Tamil and who has no knowledge of literary Tamil, states, “Sri Lankan Tamil, which in our opinion is a completely different language.” Marianne, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamil Catholic who was raised in France and Quebec, claims that “Indian Tamils speak spoken Tamil, and Sri Lankan Tamils speak more like written Tamil.” Marianne’s mother, upon hearing this statement, corrected her by explaining that Sri Lankan Tamils speak a more classical style of Tamil than Indian Tamils. Because Marianne does not read or write Tamil, she was unable to understand her mother’s distinction.

Together, these above statements point to the existence of an emergent language ideology which describes Indian Tamils as speaking a colloquial, modern, and impure style of Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamils as speaking a literary, classical, and purist style of Tamil. This diglossic-like compartmentalization of linguistic repertoires reproduces a “modernist” and “primordialist” division between Tamil sub-groups, where Indian

Tamils endorse a modernist vision of social change and Sri Lankan Tamils endorse a primordialist vision of social continuity/degeneration.

Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora leaders have attempted to standardize this primordialist moral framework by socializing youth and children to identify “old”, “pure”, “literary”, and “devotional” semiotic forms as superior to “new”, “hybrid”, “colloquial”, and “secular” semiotic forms (and vice versa for Indian Tamil diaspora leaders). In the following sections, I describe two different narrative performances which outline the spatiotemporal dimensions of these primordialist and modernist narratives. My analysis relies upon Agha’s (2005b) concept of “enregisterment” to suggest that the guided interpretation of contrasting (en)textualized voices within chunks of discourse can creatively entail motivated iconic and indexical linkages between linguistic type, social persona, and spatial or temporal structures.

### ***Temporalizing Sri Lankan Tamil as a Literary Language***

Every Sunday at the Thiru Murugan temple in Dollard-des-Ormeaux, about seventy 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil-Québécois children and youth between the ages of four and eighteen attend Tamil language school. There they are instructed to speak, read, and write a purist and literary style of Sri Lankan Tamil. In the pre-class assembly of one Sunday session, I audio-recorded a performance in which an elderly school principal directs her students in prayer, song, and moral exegesis. During this discourse event, the principal aligns signs of linguistic purity and primordialism to distinctions in the categorization of elder versus youth expertise, textual versus oral media, literary versus vernacular morphemes, and religious versus secular morality. These alignments

fabricate an interpretative cultural framework (Irvine 2005) through which Sri Lankan Tamil is temporalized as an ancient, purist, and religiously moral literary language.

In the first segment of this performance, the principal (P) assists her students (S) in reciting a prayer in classical Tamil from the 8<sup>th</sup> century text, *Tiruvacakam*. In the second segment, everyone collectively sings a school song in literary Tamil. Finally in the third segment, the principal narrates two well-known Tamil fables in literary Tamil. The first fable takes place in a generic medieval Tamil kingdom and the second fable takes place in a colonial Sri Lankan town visited by Mohandas Gandhi. At the end of each narration, the principal code-switches to a vernacular style of modern Sri Lankan Tamil when commenting on the fable’s moral lesson. Thus, through the opening alignment of classical, textual, and medieval voices and the closing alignment of modern, oral, and contemporary voices, the temporal structure of this entire discourse event is seen as moving from classical to modern styles, textual to oral genres, and medieval to contemporary themes (see Table 1).

**Table 5: Temporal Structure of Tamil School Performance**

	From classical to modern styles	From textual to oral genres	From medieval to contemporary themes
1 <sup>st</sup> segment	classical style	textual genre	8th century devotional text
2 <sup>nd</sup> segment	literary style	textual and oral genres	temple school song about preserving Tamil culture and arts
3 <sup>rd</sup> segment	modern style	oral genre	medieval secular fable, then colonial secular fable, then contemporary moral lesson

The initial turn sequence of the first discourse segment establishes a hierarchical model for interpreting this temporal structure as a degeneration of semiotic form. When the principal recites a line of the opening prayer and students imitate each phrase, they create an inter-generational footing that authorizes the elderly principal’s role as expert

instructor and the youth's role as novice students. Students contextually align themselves to this social hierarchy by standing in stationary rows of increasing height and age facing the principal. Taller, older, more advanced students are presumed to possess a more extensive knowledge of literary and classical Tamil than shorter, younger, less advanced students. The principal, who often circulates around the student assembly to monitor individual behavior, diagrams her 2<sup>nd</sup> order metalinguistic knowledge (Silverstein 2003) of the Tamil language. In contrast, her circumscribed students are depicted as possessing only a 1<sup>st</sup> order indexical knowledge of a Sri Lankan Tamil vernacular spoken in Montreal.

Other co(n)textual elements are incorporated into this representational economy (Keane 2003) to suggest that "older" semiotic forms (i.e. texts, speakers, genres) are more expert-like than "newer" semiotic forms. The marking of "old" and "new" types relies upon the didactic interpretation of indexical links between material form and historical period. For example, the temporal period of the opening prayer could be interpreted as "new" due to its modern-day oral animation or as "old" due to its pre-modern textual authorship. This uncertainty is partly resolved through the narrative's temporal framework, where written genres are seen as historically antecedent to oral genres. The principal reinforces this interpretation by code-switching from a literary Tamil style when narrating the text (thus embodying a textual "primary source") to a vernacular style when metadiscursively commenting on its content (thus embodying an oral "secondary source"). Collectively, these devices imply that the prayer's primary or primordial context is anchored in the classical period and its secondary or degenerative context is anchored in the modern period.

Closer analysis of these narrative acts of code-switching reveals a motivated iconic link between qualisigns of purity and moral excellence and the formal properties of literary Tamil morphemes.<sup>49</sup> In the third segment, the principal transitions in mid-sentence from the literary style (in capital letters) used to narrate the first fable to the modern vernacular style (in bold letters) used to emphasize the moral necessity (*-num*) of proper social behavior:

P:     ELLĀRUM NALLAVARKALĀyitanum     P: we must act in a way that  
        NANMAIYĒseyyōnum....                 benefits everyone

In this example, the principal’s use of the recognizable Sri Lankan Tamil morpheme *ōnum* rather than the literary morpheme *ānum* signals a temporal shift in periodization from a pre-modern literary style to a modern vernacular style. Her ease in transitioning from literary to vernacular Tamil mid-word also creates the impression of a close evolutionary affinity between pre-modern Tamil morphemes and modern Sri Lankan Tamil morphemes. By virtue of its absence, the corresponding Indian Tamil morpheme *ānū* (whose nasal phoneme is replaced by a nasalized vowel) is interpreted as having a more distant, (i.e.) degenerative, genealogical relationship to its literary progenitor.

The moral themes of this primordialist narrative are further reinforced by iconically linking temporal indices of classical Tamil literature and Saiva devotionalism. Although much of classical Tamil literature was originally secular in content (Britto 1986), this performance instead depicts classical Tamil as first evolving from the writings of Saiva religious scripture. The *Tirukkural*, which was written circa 200 B.C.E. to 500 C.E. and is comprised of secular poetry, is ubiquitously considered to be the masterpiece

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<sup>49</sup> According to Peirce’s first phenomenological trichotomy, qualisigns are signs of “firstness” which exist by virtue of an abstracted quality.

of classical Sangam literature. At the opening of Tamil schools in south Asia, students are often expected to recite couplets from the *Tirukkural* as a directive for proper moral behavior. In this case however, the principal directs students to recite the school's opening prayer from the 8<sup>th</sup> century devotional Saiva text, *Tiruvacakam*. This decision signifies her attempt to assert the primordial influence of Saiva religious morality rather than secular ethics on the development of classical Tamil literature and ancient Tamil culture. By extension, her choice of this devotional text favorably distinguishes Sri Lankan Tamil Saiva religious morality from both Indian Brahminical Hinduism and Québécois secularism.

The performers' increasing use of Sri Lankan Tamil deictic markers by the second and third segments indexes the gradual emergence of a "purified" Sri Lankan Tamil register from the foundational literary style. As a general rule, literary Tamil utilizes both exclusive (*nāngaḷ* and *eṅgaḷ*) and inclusive (*nām* and *nama*) first person plural pronouns, whereas vernacular Sri Lankan Tamil utilizes only exclusive first person plural pronouns. In the following excerpt of the school song, even though students are singing in literary Tamil they preferentially employ exclusive first person plural pronouns (in italics) over inclusive first person plural pronouns (in bold):

S:	<p>paṅbāri kalaikal tamiḷ pēṅal  pāṅguraṅ māṅnam <b>nām</b> ulaiappōm  sēṅdiram ellām tamiḷ vaḷarkkum  <i>eṅgaḷ</i> sīriya paṅbinai kāttiruvōm</p> <p>vāḷiya vāḷiya vāḷiyavē  <i>eṅgaḷ</i> kalaikalin kalvi kaḷakamadu</p>	<p>by nurturing Tamil culture, arts, language  with honor we will toil  everyone, joining together, Tamil will grow  we will safeguard our excellent qualities</p> <p>prosper, prosper, prosper long!  our arts education association (refrain)</p>
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This shifting between exclusive and inclusive pronouns is inconsistent with the unchanging deictic ground between speakers and addressees, all of whom are members of

the same Sri Lankan Tamil temple. While perhaps this usage is nothing more than a grammatical glitch by speakers unaccustomed to using inclusive pronouns, it nonetheless signifies the burgeoning presence of an exclusively Sri Lankan Tamil voice within an otherwise literary text.

By the end of the third segment, the principal has completely transitioned into speaking the Sri Lankan Tamil vernacular by employing distinctly Sri Lankan Tamil morphemes (in bold), phonology (in italics), and lexicon. After narrating the fable of Gandhi's visit to pre-Independence Sri Lanka in literary Tamil, the principal code-switches to modern Sri Lankan Tamil to emphasize its moral lesson:

P:      *adāvadu tīya seyalkalē pāṛkkāte*      therefore you should try not to do bad things  
         *keṭṭade pēsāde – pēsapaṭādu....*      or speak badly – don't speak badly

The literary-like phonetic articulation of the “r” in *pāṛkkāte* (rather than the Indian Tamil *pākkāte*) and the inclusion of the morpheme *paṭādu* (rather than the Indian Tamil *kūṭādu*) in *pēsapaṭādu* confirms the regional specificity of this Tamil language and its speakers as Sri Lankan in origin.

Overall, the temporal unfolding of this performance iconically imitates the degenerative logic of the primordialist historical narrative. In seeking to diglossically differentiate between Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil vernaculars, this performance seeks to authenticate the moral worth of an ancient Sri Lankan Tamil linguistic and cultural heritage. Mahalingam et al. write, “Asian Americans sometimes use the ‘ancientness’ of their culture to further legitimate their ‘model minority’ image” (2006:151-152). For the leaders of Montreal's Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, the “oldness” and “purity” of their literary and religious heritage are considered as signs of a primordial morality which legitimates their inclusion within Québécois and Tamil societies.

Diaspora children and youth, who are the most prized heritage of this dispersed Sri Lankan Tamil nation, are encouraged to study literary Tamil and to speak pure Tamil, at least until the homeland of Tamil Eelam is reclaimed.

### ***Mapping Indian Tamil as Vernacular Styles***

The language socialization of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamil youth relies upon discursive mapping techniques which are instead intended to represent the Indian Tamil language as a regional assortment of modern colloquial styles. In this ideological context, the importance of speaking or teaching literary Tamil decreases in significance. In fact, Montreal's sole Indian Tamil language teacher, R. A. Krishnan, has devised an unconventional course syllabus and series of textbooks to teach vernacular Indian Tamil rather than literary Tamil, even adopting a Romanized script rather than the Tamil script to represent linguistic forms. In the introductory preface to his "Spoken Tamil Grammar Book", Krishnan describes the diglossic peculiarities of Indian Tamil styles and provides a functionalist interpretation of their divergence from literary Tamil:

Another distinct special feature of Tamil is that the spoken language is quite different from the written one. This has come up because the written part, particularly the verb forms and case endings, is very complicated to use practically, especially when spoken in the rapid rate that day-to-day life requires. To solve this problem, different communities in various Tamil speaking regions have shortened it in their own way for ease of expression. As a result of this, the spoken language widely differs by both region and community. [Krishnan 2004:5]

Because, as he puts it, literary Tamil is "very complicated to use practically", morphological reduction enhances the vernacular's communicative function and democratic accessibility. In Krishnan's interpretative framework, diglossia is a relic of the past that needs to be modernized through grammatical and stylistic changes in the use of Tamil.

Krishnan also writes that he adopts as his textbook standard “the spoken language used by street shopkeepers in Chennai, the capital and the largest city of Tamil Nadu, India” (2004:5). Rather than describing Chennai Tamil as a corrupted language as it is widely perceived in most Tamil societies, this textbook explains the rules by which Chennai interlocutors mix Tamil and English to create the hybrid style of Tanglish. Brahmin Indian Tamils such as Krishnan share a long history of borrowing lexicon and phonology from high-prestige Indo-European languages such as Sanskrit, Hindi, and English and, in general, they do not consider Chennai Tamil to be particularly corrupt (Annamalai 1978; Annamalai 1989; Kachru 1998).

In fact among upper-caste or upper-class Indian Tamils, linguistic expertise is indexed by a speaker’s ability to appropriately code-mix or code-switch between different regional registers of Tamil or English. Krishnan’s own linguistic expertise is less based on his academic qualifications than his familiarity with different regional varieties of Tamil, including Kerala Tamil, Chennai Tamil, Coimbatore Tamil, Delhi Tamil, and Jaffna Tamil. He even writes textbook supplements for students interested in studying a specific regional style of Tamil. These regional styles are the products of a long history of Indian Tamil migration, which produced distinct Tamil settlements and language varieties throughout the world.

Krishnan’s own patrilineage exemplifies the type of cosmopolitan sensibility that is increasingly being linked to the mobile experiences of Indian Tamil elites. Krishnan’s paternal ancestors are from a small village in the Coimbatore district of northwestern Tamil Nadu. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, his great-great-grandfather moved to Burma in search of employment. After World War I, the Krishnan family moved back to India and

settled in a small town in Kerala. Krishnan was born in Kerala, and there he attended Malayalam-medium school for a few years. At home, Krishnan would speak to his mother in Kerala Tamil and to his father in the caste dialect of Brahmin Tamil. Later, when Krishnan's father took a government job in Delhi, Krishnan attended Tamil-medium school. Although Krishnan would speak in Hindi with his friends, his father forbade him to speak Hindi at home. Krishnan recalls how his father would hit him for disobeying this rule. Even though many of Krishnan's Tamil friends eventually married Hindi or Punjabi-speaking women, his father insisted that he marry a Brahmin Tamil woman from Tiruchy, Tamil Nadu. Early in their marriage, Krishnan's wife, who speaks a Tanjavore Tamil dialect, could not communicate with Krishnan's mother, who speaks Kerala Tamil. After many years of co-residence, both women learned the other's dialect.

During his career as a civil engineer, Krishnan has travelled the world in search of the most lucrative jobs. While he was employed by Exxon-Mobil Corporation, Krishnan would live abroad for several years at a time at different sites in Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and North America. During his stay, Krishnan would try to learn the local language. So while he was living in the Congo, he learned to speak Lingala; and during a short stint in Calcutta, he learned to speak a bit of Bengali. Now as a retiree living in Montreal, Krishnan works part time as a court-certified translator and interpreter in French, English, and Tamil. Most of his cases involve asylum hearings, criminal investigations, or welfare cases which involve Sri Lankan Tamils. Through such work, he has become familiar with Colombo and Jaffna registers of Tamil.

For the October 2005 Deepavali celebration, Krishnan helped Arjuna and several other graduate students write a play that condenses 2000 years of Tamil migration into a

single narrative event. This play depicts the mythical god-heroes, Ram and Sita, touring the Tamil-speaking world in search of Deepavali's spiritual meaning. During their travels, Ram and Sita encounter interlocutors who speak different regional dialects of Tamil (i.e. Jaffna Tamil, Singapore Tamil, Chennai Tamil, and Montreal Tamil). Overall, the play stages a modernist vision of historical progress by spatiotemporally aligning the following themes: (1) the transnational migration of Indian Tamil interlocutors, (2) the development of newly hybridized local vernaculars, and (3) the globalization and modernization of Tamil language and culture.

When arriving in Canada, Ram and Sita encounter an Indian Tamil-Canadian boy who mixes Tamil and English and speaks with a Canadian accent. The audience laughs heartily if not approvingly at this recognizable caricature of their own children's linguistic experimentation. The fact that both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation actors from Montreal are able to imitate different regional styles underscores their metapragmatic expertise, rather than their lack of linguistic competence, in Tamil. Only the imitation of Jaffna Tamil poses difficulties for these Indian Tamil actors, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil actor was asked to perform this role. This casting anomaly reinforces the belief that Sri Lankan Tamil stands apart from other Tamil dialects, either as a separate language or as a classical style that is no longer accessible to modernized Indian Tamils. Exclusive of Sri Lankan Tamils, the universal expansion and intelligibility of colloquial Tamil speech are portrayed as signs of the successful globalization and modernization of Tamil society.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described how the ethnonational differentiation of Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil speakers and languages is caused by three factors: (1) the divergent conditions of Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil migratory experiences, (2) the segmentary-like social stratification of both populations, and (3) the mediated positioning of Tamils as racialized minorities in Quebec. I also trace the semiotic formation of the diglossic-like language ideology, in which Indian Tamils are believed to speak “spoken Tamil” and Sri Lankan Tamils are believed to speak “written Tamil,” to the interdiscursive intersection of Tamil and Québécois representational economies on modernist versus primordialist signs. Finally, I suggest that the division of Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils into “modernist” versus “primordialist” cohorts informs the enregisterment of Indian Tamil colloquial styles and Sri Lankan Tamil literary styles as morally and spatiotemporally incommensurable. The next chapter further explores this theme of spatiotemporal incommensurability by describing how the Montreal Tamil neighborhood, or *ūr*, is spatiotemporally positioned with respect to homeland, cityscape, and global diaspora.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Building the Montreal Tamil ūr**

The institutional sites that comprise the Montreal Tamil diasporas are a particularly revealing vantage point from which to investigate how interlocutors strategically align signs of social status, processes of local emplacement, and ideologies of linguistic purism to scales of social belonging. First, the geographic and historical dimensions of emplacement are unique in diaspora contexts. In contrast to nations, diasporas emerge from decentered yet structured sociopolitical processes that produce durable semiotic configurations of different material types (Blommaert, et al. 2005; Ho 2006). Second, these decentered processes enable interlocutors to navigate more freely between hierarchically-scaled spaces and temporalized-modes of interaction, a mobility that is further facilitated by the globalizing flows of Montreal's cityscape. In this chapter, I describe how the linguistic practices and discursive performances of different sub-groups of interlocutors in Montreal's Tamil diasporas are rearranging the spatiotemporal relationships among boundaries between linguistic form, interlocutor, and context.

The ability to manipulate frames and framing devices is largely based on the relationship between social actor and social space. Sometimes, framing dynamics are more easily manipulated by actors who regularly inhabit a space than by actors with more ephemeral ties to a space. At other times, actors with access to higher-scale participant frameworks enjoy greater control over the interpretive process than actors with access to lower-scale participant frameworks. Sassen (1990) notes that, in global cities, up-scaling

processes of global capitalism generally dominate and structure the spatial landscape. Yet within the global city-region of Montreal, up-scaling processes of globalization often compete with down-scaling processes of localization and inter-scaling processes of diaspora formation. It is thus important to analyze how these scalar interactions actually configure social space in the Montreal Tamil diasporas.

In his work with Indo-Mauritians, Eisenlohr (2006) writes that processes of diaspora formation necessarily produce ongoing reinterpretations of history and geography. These reinterpretations entail multiple and even shifting spatiotemporal orientations between diaspora(s) and homeland(s). Accompanying such spatiotemporal shifts are semiotic shifts in the indexical values of linguistic practice and knowledge. Blommaert (2007) refers to these latter shifts as interpretive changes in the value and validity of linguistic competences and socio-spatial identities. Together, these scalar shifts often succeed in destabilizing interlocutors' metapragmatic rationalizations of language, social identity, and place.

In the last chapter, I described a variety of discursive and institutional strategies used by Montreal Tamils to temporalize and spatialize their languages and moral perspectives. In particular, I described how Sri Lankan Tamil institutions aurally emphasize the primordialism and boundedness of their diaspora experience through temporalized performances of literary Tamil, while Indian Tamil institutions aurally emphasize the deterritorialization and cosmopolitanism of their diaspora experience through spatialized performances of colloquial Tamil. The effectiveness of such "place-making technologies" (Green et al. 2005) in the Montreal Tamil diasporas are also undergirded by strategic decisions concerning the moral and linguistic socialization of its

inhabitants. In this chapter, therefore, I examine how Montreal social spaces are transformed into Tamil *ūr*s through the multi-scalar regimentation of sociolinguistic and moral norms. I describe how Sri Lankan Tamil institutions draw from Québécois and Tamil language ideologies to affirm both the minority rights of Quebec's Sri Lankan Tamil population as well as the sovereign rights of the Sri Lankan Tamil Eelam nation.

Through the semiotic alignment of cultural, linguistic, and moral icons, the semiotic template of the Tamil *ūr* succeeds in affixing the essence of moral Tamil personhood to multiple space-times. Sri Lankan Tamils facilitate this process by erecting textual façades which visually mark the Montreal Tamil *ūr* as ancestral village, diaspora neighborhood, and homeland. In the first two sections, I show how the Tamil *ūr* shifts between its role as ancestral village and diaspora neighborhood. First, I describe how the physical layout of the Montreal Tamil *ūr* materially embodies the essence of the ancestral village. Afterward, I describe how textual façades in the Tamil *ūr* differentially inscribe Tamil and Québécois nationalist language ideologies by iconically linking its centers and peripheries to higher or lower-scaled polities. In the final section, I describe how leaders of the World Tamil Movement performatively entail chronotopes of iconic and indexical alignments to alternatively differently imagine their nation and diasporas as sacred geographies or Tamil homelands.

## **Centers and Peripheries**

### ***Theorizing the Tamil ūr***

Daniel, who conducted an ethnographic study of the Tamil Nadu village of Kalappūr (1995), describes the Tamil *ūr* in the following manner:

One of the most important relationships to a Tamil is that which exists between a person and the soil of his *ūr*. To understand this relationship, we must begin with

an analysis of the meaning of this spatio/territorial concept in both its lexical content as well as in its use. At the outset, it must be said that the term *ūr* can by no means be easily defined, but perhaps the closest approximate definition would be, a named territory that is (1) inhabited by human beings who are believed to share in the substance of the soil of that territory, and (2) a territory to which a Tamil cognitively orients himself at any given time. (Daniel 1995: 63)

Daniel also suggests that the *ūr* is a “person-centric view of reality” (ibid 70) in which constituent substances are seen as having a mediating influence on each other. For example, the soil of an *ūr* is believed to possess both *kuṇam* (intrinsic qualities) and *putti* (surface-level consciousness), together which render the *ūr* more or less compatible with human and non-human *jāti* types.<sup>50</sup> Certain human *jāti* groups are believed to be intrinsically more compatible with certain *ūrs* than other, such that these inhabitants are recognized for their greater “*ūrness*” than other inhabitants. Srinivas (1952) would refer to these *jāti* groups as the village’s dominant caste.

For migrant Tamils who abandon their *conta ūr* (ancestral village), concerns of compatibility play an important role in their choice of new *ūr*. Daniel explains how migrant Tamils undertake such decisions:

When a person thinks of travelling to a new *ūr* (whether a new village or a new country), his first thought is to try to discover if one of his people (which could mean one of his countrymen, his fellow villager, or preferably a fellow caste member or kinsman) has successfully settled there. This attempt to locate one’s own people in a new *ūr* is not motivated by any desire to establish ties of friendship or even acquaintance with the people. Rather, it is based on the assumption that if the new *ūr* is compatible with one of one’s own, there is a good change that it will also be compatible with oneself. Of course, the more similar the bodily substance of the person in the new *ūr* is to one’s own substance, the surer the indication of *ūr* compatibility. Therefore, it is best to locate at least a fellow caste member if not a close kinsmen in the new *ūr*. (ibid 82)

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<sup>50</sup> The translation of *jāti* as caste, according to Daniel, is incorrect. Instead, *jāti* should be translated as genus in the sense that it refers to the classification of human beings, plants, animals, and inorganic materials (Daniel 1995).

Sometimes, migrant Tamils will seek to enhance their compatibility with the new ūr by either changing their own putti or altering the ūr's kuṇam. These efforts may incite antagonism between resident members of the ūr's dominant jāti and migrant members of the rising jāti. Due to the inherent difficulty in altering an ūr's kuṇam, however, rising jāti groups only infrequently succeed in usurping the village, town, or city's dominant jāti.

Considerations of ūr compatibility similarly play a role in the chain migration of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. To further qualify my prior statement about Sri Lankan Tamil refugees' preference for Canadian cities, I suggest that interpretations of "iconic" compatibility propel this directionality of the Sri Lanka to Canada migratory circuit. In particular, these semiotic interpretations both presuppose and entail an indexically-linear as well as iconically-bounded space for simultaneously experiencing sentiments of local and trans-local belonging within and across the global Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Therefore, even when refugees are unable or unwilling to pursue this journey to its logical end point, a number of linguistic goods (such as dictionaries, language syllabi, educational multimedia, Charismatic or devotional speakers, and religious texts) are facily transported along this virtual route, thus maintaining its imagined existence as a Sri Lankan Tamil global diaspora. In this particular modality of space-time regimentation, the directionality of travel and mobility is crucial to establishing moral valences of belonging.

In my interviews with Sri Lankan Tamils, I would often ask questions pertaining to the quality of life in Montreal with respect to other Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora sites. Pavalan, a 1.5 generation Sri Lankan Tamil man who volunteers as the business director

of the Murugan Temple, favorably compared Montreal to both Toronto and Paris. After exploring both of these cities while visiting relatives, Pavalan concluded that the Montreal lifestyle was “easier”, “more open”, and “goes with the flow,” whereas Toronto was too “busy” and Parisian culture was too “strong.” If Pavalan’s responses are taken as descriptions of each city’s kuṇam or putti, Montreal becomes exceptional for its ūr-like malleability with respect to its migrant jātis. Pavalan, who often collaborates with the mayor of Montreal and other important politicians through his work as the temple business manager, praises the Québécois government for attending their cultural and religious events and demonstrating an interest in Sri Lankan Tamil culture. In his words, it is this spirit of “working together” that has facilitated the integration of Sri Lankan Tamils into Montreal society.

Despite this relative facility, integrating into Montreal society still involves the risky task of altering one’s putti (without fundamentally changing one’s kuṇam) to be compatible with Montreal’s kuṇam. Manifest changes in an individual’s putti and kunam are routinely subject to moral evaluations by members of different gender, caste, and national cohorts. In the last chapter, I described how single men and single women cohorts are singled out as moral aberrations of the immigration process. In this chapter I describe how efforts to achieve compatibility in ūrness spark internal competitions between different caste jātis to claim and transform Montreal’s urban spaces into jāti-compatible diaspora neighborhoods. The resultant remapping of Montreal’s residential districts into distinct Tamil ūrs thus represents a key aspect of the Montreal Tamil diaspora formation process.

A second key aspect of the diaspora formation process is related to the forms of institutionality which render this ūr-like quality visually and aurally recognizable. In describing British Tamil diaspora neighborhoods, Daniel (2000) writes that “institutions can generate an agentive moment as long as they contain within them the signs of a human being” (190). By “speaking” and “writing” in different Tamil vernaculars, Montreal’s Tamil institutions publicly embody signs of human sociality which multivalently depict the Tamil ūr as Montreal diaspora neighborhood, ancestral Tamil village, and Tamil Eelam homeland.

First, the institutional layout of the Montreal Tamil diaspora iconically resembles the institutional contours of Tamil village social life. According to Daniel (1995), centers are more prominent than borders in defining the Tamil ūr. Family homes and shops are usually clustered in the village center, while Hindu temples and shrines are clustered near the village periphery. There, temples and shrines can protect inhabitants from the infiltration of malign, external forces. According to this cultural framework, borders are interpreted as transient psychosomatic entities from which centrally-clustered villagers need protection, rather than need to defend. The inverse layout can be witnessed in traditional Québécois villages, where Catholic churches designate the village center and homes, which encircle the church, constitute the village’s periphery. According to this cultural framework, the village’s sense of moral cohesion is anchored by the pivotal presence of the church (Dickinson and Young 2000).

The spiritual guidance of the church also functions as a moral compass for maintaining kin and other social relationships. One Saturday afternoon during a brief respite from my research activities, I travelled with my mom and my aunt to our conta ūr,

or maternal ancestral village of Petite-Rivière-St-François. This small hamlet of a village is situated several hours north of Quebec City along the mouth of the St-Lawrence River. Our decision to drive to La Petite-Rivière-St-François was a spontaneous one, and upon arriving in the village we had no way of contacting our relatives or locating our ancestral home. My aunt suggested that we drive to the village church and ask any passerby to direct us to the Lavoie family home. As she predicted, the first passerby immediately recognized my mom and aunt's genealogy and personally escorted us to our great-aunt's home.



**Figure 2: View of la Petite-Rivière-St-François**

In metropolitan Montreal, a city which has expanded through the amalgamation of small villages, churches are still affixed to the neighborhood center. For this reason, Montreal has acquired the epithet of “*la ville aux cent clochers*” [“city of a hundred bell towers”]. Now mostly vacated by the Québécois de souche, these churches are mostly used by minorities for their own religious purposes. Sri Lankan Tamils have rescaled Montreal's spatial grids by orienting their residential, social, and commercial institutions toward the center of the Tamil neighborhood and by placing their temples and churches

along the periphery of the neighborhood. From this position, temples and churches guard residents from a multitude of local, regional, and global foreign agents, including other Tamil jātis, other ethnic minorities, other Québécois, and other city folk, whose kuṇam and putti are semiotically incompatible with their Tamil ūr. In this manner, Montreal Tamils are reproducing the scalar parameters of their ancestral village within the cityscape of Montreal.

***The Center: Tamil Homes, Schools, and Petty Shops***

For eight months I lived in Côte-des-Neiges, a Montreal district that Meintel et al. (1997) describe as a quintessentially multicultural. Since its integration into the Montreal metropolis in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, different waves of immigrants have claimed different residential pockets within Côte-des-Neiges.<sup>51</sup> In the northwestern periphery of Côte-des-Neiges in an area demarcated by Chemin Côte-des-Neiges and Rue Victoria (from east to west) and Rue Jean-Talon and Chemin Côte-Ste-Cathérine (from north and south) is the largest Tamil ūr in Montreal. There, one can find Sri Lankan Tamil families residing in low-rent apartments located next to Tamil petty shops and cultural institutions (including the headquarters of the Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec) (see Table 6). My apartment was located in the middle of this neighborhood, right across the street from the Plaza Côte-des-Neiges where Tamil families socialize and shop.

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<sup>51</sup> Other ethnic minorities living in Côte-des-Neiges include Filipinos, Vietnamese, Afro-Caribbeans, Laotians, and Bangladeshis. In the southern and eastern neighborhoods of Côte-des-Neiges one can find different residential pockets of Arab, European, Hasidic Jewish, and Québécois de souche households and commercially-owned venues.

**Table 6: Tamil Petty Shops along Rue Victoria in Côte-des-Neiges**

<u>Intersections</u>	<u>Grocery</u>	<u>Clothing</u>	<u>Restaurant</u>	<u>Other</u>
<b>Bouchette and Barclay</b>	Aliments Exotiques de Mtl, Inc			
<b>Plamondon and Carlton</b>	A.S. Poissons Marché Emmy		Resto-Bar	Voyage Ceican
<b>Carlton and Kent</b>	Marché Victoria Oriental (Mtl) ENG			
<b>Linton and de la Peltrie</b>		Boutique Pirapa	Restaurant Ruby	Bijouterie KPS
<b>de la Peltrie and Bourret</b>				Lucky Tele-com
<b>Cote-Ste-Catherine and Dupuis</b>	Marché Rebecca			
<b>Dupuis and Saint-Kevin</b>	Marché Jolée		Restaurant Jolée	

In Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, petty shops are commonly found on main roads bordering a residential neighborhood. These petty shops function as both convenience store and local fruit and vegetable stands where men and women go to buy incidentals and local goods.<sup>52</sup> According to a recent study conducted by Microsoft Research India, petty shops (in addition to tailor and construction materials stores) are among the more sustainable enterprises in poor rural and urban India, due primarily to their locally appropriate costs and clear market values (Challenges 2008). I would add that petty shops are financially successful due to their residentially proximate and central location within the Tamil ūr. In Côte-des-Neiges, Tamil grocery stores and other petty shops cater specifically to the local Tamil residential neighborhoods in which they are situated.

East of the Tamil ūr in Côte-des-Neiges is the Université de Montréal campus. Sociologists, anthropologists, and linguists from the Université de Montréal often conduct ethnographic research on ethnic groups and shopkeepers living within the Tamil

<sup>52</sup> In Tamil Nadu, some petty shops are run as cooperatives that are partially funded by private and public loans.

ūr of Côte-des-Neiges. Several research institutions, including the *Groupe de recherche Diversité Urbaine* (GRDU) and the *Groupe de recherche ethnicité et société* (GRES), are specifically devoted to the study of ethnic diversity in urban settings. Affiliated with these projects is the research of Marie McAndrew, a professor of education and ethnic relations at the Université de Montréal. In 1991 she piloted the first study of the Montreal PELO (*Programme d'enseignement des langues d'origine*), a state-funded heritage language program.<sup>53</sup>

I first learned of McAndrew's research when browsing through the francophone newspaper, *Le Devoir*, during my first year of graduate school in 2001. In 1991, McAndrew had first published research on the Montreal PELO. In this manuscript, she described the historical evolution of heritage language classes in both French-medium and English-medium primary schools since 1977. As a follow-up project, I intended to conduct a closer ethnographic study of the Tamil PELO in two French-medium primary schools in the Côte-des-Neiges school district. These schools include École-des-Nations on the corner of rue Vézina and rue Victoria and École Simonne-Monet on the corner of rue Dupuis and rue Légaré. There is also an English-medium school, Coronation Elementary School, on the corner of rue Van Horne and rue Victoria which offers Tamil PELO classes.

Due to the setbacks which I described in Chapter Three, I instead chose to conduct ethnographic research at a Tamil PELO school in the nearby Tamil ūr of Parc-Extension/Villeray. First during the summer of 2005, I lived in an apartment in Villeray, which is a mixed residential-commercial district inhabited by mostly middle-class

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<sup>53</sup> Although I tried several times to communicate with McAndrew about my research on the Tamil PELO, her secretary repeatedly informed me that the professor was too busy to correspond or meet with me.

Québécois de souche, Italians, Portuguese, South Americans, and Haitians. Along St-Laurent Boulevard, there are several jewelry, furniture, and textile factories where Sri Lankan Tamil men and women work. The French-medium secondary school of École Lucien-Page, which is located on the corner of boulevard St-Laurent and rue Jarry, has many Tamil students. Very few Tamil families actually reside in Villeray, preferring instead to live in the adjoining district of Parc-Extension.

In the winter of 2006 I lived in Parc-Extension, a district demarcated by Rue Jean-Talon on the south and Boulevard St-Laurent on the west. Parc-Ex is usually referred to as the “Little India” of Montreal, although in reality the term “Little South Asia” would be more appropriate, considering that Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, and Pakistanis, in addition to a few Indian Punjabi Sikhs, reside there.<sup>54</sup> Parc-Ex currently ranks second among all Montreal districts in its number of Sri Lankan Tamil residents (Trottier 1998). The name “Parc-Extension” is derived from the fact that this residential neighborhood is an extension of Parc Jarry. The park, which separates the districts of Villeray and Parc-Ex, is bordered by rue Jarry on the north, rue Faillon on the south, boulevard St-Laurent on the east, and the Canadian Pacific Railway on the west (see table 6).<sup>55</sup> In Montreal’s municipal layout, this urban park is located at the periphery of two distinct neighborhoods:

*N'allez pas dire à un résidant de Villeray que son quartier porte le nouveau nom “Villeray/Parc-Extension”. Il va vous envoyer un de ces regards, avant de lancer, un brin dédaigneux: “Ne nous associez surtout pas à Parc-Extension...” Et si vous lancez la même phrase à un résidant de Parc-Extension, il s'esclaffera à*

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<sup>54</sup> In addition to South Asians, there are many Africans, Arabs, and Greeks who live in the district. In fact, several decades back most of Parc-Ex was comprised of Greek households. Currently, these Greek households are cloistered in the northern and western neighborhoods of Parc-Ex, where many Tamils also live.

<sup>55</sup> Among Montreal residents, Parc Jarry is best known for hosting the annual Roger’s Cup pro-tennis competition.

*coup sûr. Ce n'est pas que les citoyens des deux quartiers fusionnés en 1994 par l'administration Bourque soient totalement contre cette idée, mais ils estiment qu'ils sont tellement distincts l'un de l'autre qu'on ne peut parler d'un seul quartier. (Trottier 1998)*

As Trottier describes, according to its residents Villeray/Park Extension is an administrative district, not a unified community.



**Figure 3: View of Villeray from Parc Jarry**

In the layout of the Tamil ūr, however, this urban park instead becomes a central aspect of Tamil social life. Rather than separating two neighborhood districts, Parc Jarry adjoins Tamil institutions and spaces across both districts into a coherent Tamil ūr. My apartment in Villeray was located two blocks north of Parc Jarry, while my apartment in Parc-Extension was located two blocks west of Parc Jarry. In the many soccer, baseball, cricket fields, bike paths, and walking trails of Parc Jarry, I would often meet Tamil families who were playing sports and socializing. Cricket tournaments, which are tremendously popular among South Asian youth, are frequently held in Parc Jarry during summer months (Montreal Mirror 2008b).



**Figure 4: South Side of Parc Jarry**

About six blocks west of Parc Jarry is the English-medium school of Parker Elementary. This is the only public school in Parc-Ex which offers Tamil PELO classes (see Figure 4).<sup>56</sup> One block south of Parker Elementary is a French-medium school, École Barclay, which also has a large number of Sri Lankan Tamil students (see Figure 5). Nilima, who is one of the Tamil PELO teachers at Parker Elementary School and who lives in Parc-Ex, walks her two boys to school at École Barclay every day. According to Nilima, she and other Sri Lankan Tamil parents had previously asked the principal at École Barclay to offer Tamil PELO classes, yet the school principal refused due to a lack of funds. Ironically, Nilima had voluntarily chosen to enroll her children in French-medium school (she had the option of sending them to English-medium school) before learning that Tamil PELO classes would only be instead offered at the nearby English-medium school.

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<sup>56</sup> Parker Elementary school also offers Urdu and Greek PELO classes.



**Figure 5: Parker Elementary School**



**Figure 6: École Barclay**

Next to both of these schools are various Tamil petty shops. Most of Parc-Ex's Tamil-owned petty shops are located on four parallel streets which transect the ūr. These streets include rue Jean-Talon (where the majority of Tamil establishments are located), rue Saint-Roch, rue Jarry, and rue Liège. Rues Jean-Talon and Jarry adjoin the

residential area of Parc-Ex with Tamil social, educational, and work spaces in Villeray. In contrast with Côte-des-Neiges, where Tamil petty shops are predominantly Sri Lankan and Indian in focus, Tamil petty shops in Parc-Ex diversify their merchandise to also attract clients from other ethnic groups (see Figures 7, 8). This marketing strategy is probably due to this less dense and more recently established settlements of this Tamil ūr.



**Figure 7: Marché Abinaya Store Sign referring to Ceylonese, Oriental, Antilles, Spanish, Chinese, and Canadian Foodstuffs**



**Figure 8: Marché Thurga Store Sign referring to Sri Lankan, Indian, African, and Caribbean Foodstuffs**

Even the online business directory, *Vanikam*, provides an abbreviated list of Tamil establishments in Parc-Ex and a more extensive list of Tamil establishments in Côte-des-Neiges.<sup>57</sup> For example Marché Jeevini, a medium-sized Tamil grocery store located on Rue St-Roch in Parc-Ex (see Figure 10), is among those businesses which are listed in this directory (see Figure 9), while Marché Thurga and *Marché Abinaya* are not. Even

<sup>57</sup> Vanikam lists Tamil-owned businesses in major Canadian cities (including Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver), as well as New York City (Vanikam 2008a).

though Vanikam claims to have been updated twelve times since its first publication in 1997, gaps in the 2008 edition testifies to the transitory and dynamic institutionalization of Montreal Tamil ūrs.



**Figure 9: Ad for Marché Jeevini in *Vanikam***

Given the financial sustainability of Tamil petty shops in Montreal, many Sri Lankan Tamil families are related to at least one Tamil business owner. Marché Jeevini is owned by the parents of Nila, who is a Tamil PELO student at Parker Elementary School. Two blocks away on Rue Jean-Talon there is another, much larger Tamil grocery store called *Marché Thurga* (see Figure 11). Muthu's older brother is one of the owners of Marché Thurga. Steven, a Tamil Catholic youth who lives in Ville St-Laurent, has an uncle who owns an auto repair shop off of rue Jean-Talon in Villeray. Pavalan has two uncles who own Marché Décarie in Côte-des-Neiges and Jaffna Foods in the West Island. Studies of Tamil businesses in Montreal and Toronto reveal that these kinship

ties are essential in amassing credit to open the shop and creating demand for specialized commodities (Cheran 2000, 2007). Cheran further notes that, in the Toronto Tamil diaspora, the discursive politics of “cultural alienation and nostalgia...has economic advantages for diasporas...It is no wonder then, the price of vallarai, murungai, and ponnankaani – leafy vegetables that grow in abundance in Sri Lanka and India which consumers generally pick themselves at will, are among the most expensive produce at Tamil grocery stores!” (2007: 162).



**Figure 10: Marché Jeeveni**



**Figure 11: Marché Thurga**

Tamil petty shops have also emerged as a public yet enclosed space for women to financially contribute to the home and local economy. Nilima's brother owns a small clothing/book store *Fantaisies Nickes* located on Rue Jean-Talon one block away from Marché Thurga (see figure 12) where the Tamil PELO teachers at Parker Elementary purchase Tamil story books and audiovisual teaching materials. When Nilima is not teaching Tamil language classes at Parker Elementary, she assists her brother and sister-in-law in managing the store. Other Sri Lankan Tamil mothers are obliged to seek other sources of wage labor to supplement their family's income. Kalamathi is a middle-aged woman who works several days a week at Voyage Ceican Travel, a Sri Lankan travel agency on Rue Victoria, to help in financially supporting her teenage son, incapacitated sister, and ailing mother (Ceican 2008). Sundari, a Tamil PELO teacher who replaced Nilima during her maternity leave, has to teach Tamil at two public schools to supplement her husband's income as a petty shop owner.



**Figure 12: Fantaisies Nickes Clothing Store**

Some Tamil establishments, such as the Sri Lankan Tamil restaurant Spicy Land, employ family labor without ever returning a profit. This restaurant, which was situated across the street from Marché Thurga on Rue Jean-Talon, opened and closed in the span of a few months in 2005. In speaking to Nila, a waitress at Spicy Land, I learned that her family hoped to market the restaurant among both Tamil and non-Tamil clients. Nila had purposively returned to Montreal after completing her university studies in Toronto to help her sister's family launch this restaurant. By the spring of 2006, when I sought to conduct a follow-up interview with Nila, I found that the restaurant had gone out of business. As of yet, Parc-Ex does not possess a large enough Tamil clientele to profitably operate a Sri Lankan Tamil restaurant. Furthermore, their failure to attract a diversified Québécois clientele (who are generally unfamiliar with Sri Lankan or Tamil cuisine) or to offer specialized services for Tamil clients exacerbates these sub-optimal conditions.

More successful North Indian restaurants in Parc-Ex, which include several Punjabi, Pakistani, and Gujarati sit-down and fast food restaurants, easily attract a diverse Québécois clientele who are habituated to the culinary aesthetics of north Indian cuisine. The sole successful Tamil restaurant in Côte-des-Neiges, *Restaurant Jolee*, has diversified its business plan to include a sit-down restaurant, fast-food counter, and catering service, all of which are situated right next to the thriving Marché Jolee (see figure 13). Similarly, the Sri Lankan Tamil restaurant, Ganesha Party Palace, in Ville St-Laurent offers a more upscale and spacious restaurant/banquet hall that can be rented for Tamil functions and celebrations. Both of these Tamil establishments have become pivotal social and commercial centers of their respective Tamil ūrs.

**Restaurants - Montreal** R

Authentic South Indian & Sri Lankan cuisine prepared with the finest of ingredients, by experienced cooks.

**Restaurant**   
**JOLEE**  
**Dine-in Take Out & Catering**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Vadai</li> <li>➤ Rolls</li> <li>➤ Cutlet</li> <li>➤ Rice &amp; Curry</li> <li>➤ Buriyani</li> <li>➤ String Hopper</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Puttu</li> <li>➤ Dosai</li> <li>➤ Masala Dosai</li> <li>➤ Idly</li> <li>➤ Rotti</li> <li>➤ Kothu Rotti</li> </ul>
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**Figure 13: Ad for Restaurant Jolee**

After living several years in Parc-Extension or Côte-des-Neiges, many Sri Lankan Tamils seek to move to the suburbs. Among Montreal’s suburbs, Dollard-des-Ormeaux (DDO), Pierrefonds, Laval, Ville St-Laurent, and Beaubien have become prime real estate markets for Tamil families who are seeking to purchase their first homes. Sri Lankan Tamil real estate agents widely publicize their services in the on-line business directory, Vanikam, and post flyers at Sri Lankan Tamil functions (Cheran 2007). I found the following ad tucked under my car windshield wiper at a Tamil Catholic function in Rigaud, Quebec (see figure 14). The ad, which is written in French on one side and English on the other, includes the closing signature உங்கள் நண்பன் காந்தன் at the bottom of the flyer. This phrase, which translates as “your friend Kanthan,” and Kanthan’s portrait will guarantee his patronage by Tamil clients.



**Figure 14: Real Estate Ad for East Montreal**

Kanthan Vilvaratnam’s real estate office is located in the middle of a small Tamil ūr in the Rosemont-Beaubien district of eastern Montreal. Nesbitt Elementary School, which offers both Tamil and Italian PELO classes, is located only three blocks away from Vilvaratnma’s office (École Nesbitt School 2008). This Tamil language school, as well

as the low cost of living, would be an attractive incentive for Tamil families to buy a house in this district, which is a bit further away from Tamil petty shops and establishments than homes in the principal ūrs of Côtés-des-Neiges, Parc-Extension, and Dollard-des-Ormeaux. Even though Tamil ūrs in places such as Rosemont-Beaubien are currently at the periphery of the diaspora, these residential neighborhoods are rapidly expanding through new investments in new cultural and religious institutions that seek to reposition these ūrs from the periphery to the center of the Montreal Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora.<sup>58</sup>

### ***The Periphery: Tamil Places of Worship***

At the periphery of each Tamil ūr are the churches and temples where Sri Lankan Tamils go to worship. Many Sri Lankan Tamil Catholics worship at the Our Lady of Deliverance mission, which is temporarily housed at Ste-Cécile's Church. Ste-Cécile's Church is located in the center of the Villeray district; however, according to Tamil diaspora standards, Ste-Cécile's Church is located at the periphery of the Parc Extension/Villeray Tamil ūr. Since 2001, Father Joseph has been chaplain of the Our Lady of Deliverance Tamil Catholic mission. During our first meeting in July 2005, Father Joseph narrated the history of Montreal's Tamil Catholic mission.

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<sup>58</sup> Nila, the waitress at Spicy Land Restaurant, was born and raised in Laval, a sprawling and rapidly industrializing suburb directly north of Montreal that currently measures as the third largest city of Quebec. I spent quite a bit of time both living and socially interacting with the residents of Montreal. While the number of immigrants and ethnic minorities in Laval has been steadily increasing since the turn of the millennium, Laval is still considered to be the urban antithesis of Montreal. Predominantly monolingual French-speaking and Roman Catholic, Laval is an urban strong-hold of both the liberal and separatist *Parti Québécois* and the conservative and populist *Action Démocratique du Québec* (Montreal citizens currently favor the Parti Liberal, the pro-federalist yet liberal political party currently in power). According to the 2006 Census, only 0.15% (or 545 people) of the population in Laval speaks Tamil as the "mother tongue" (Statistics Canada 2006a). However Statistics Canada also writes that "[Montreal's] surrounding municipalities, such as Laval, Longueuil, Brossard, Dollard-des-Ormeaux and Côte-Saint-Luc, saw an increased share of new immigrants; 15.0% of newcomers in 2006 lived in these surrounding municipalities, up from 11.2% in 2001" (ibid 2007).

For several decades, Montreal's Tamil Catholic population has had neither priest nor deacon to tend to their religious needs. In the late 1990s, several Sri Lankan Tamil families requested that Fathers Arulmoli and Selvan, two Indian Tamil priests who were studying in Montreal, conduct a private mass for them in Tamil. Soon after, these priests created and registered the Our Lady of Deliverance mission with the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Montreal. When Father Selvan later migrated to the United States in 2001, he requested that the Jaffna diocese send a replacement priest to the Montreal mission. The diocese belatedly responded by asking the Sri Lankan Tamil Catholic residents of Montreal to issue a formal request for a replacement priest. After an additional few months delay to obtain a Canadian visa, Father Joseph finally arrived in Montreal to find the Tamil Catholic mission in disarray.

With only an incomplete list of former parishioners, Father Joseph set out to register all Sri Lankan Tamil Catholics in Montreal as members of his mission. At the time of our interview, a total of 258 families were registered with the Our Lady of Deliverance mission, among whom 80% regularly attended church services. These Catholic families come from all over the metropolitan Montreal region, including the neighboring suburbs of Laval, the south shore, and the West Island, to attend Sunday mass. For example both of Nila's parents, who live in Laval, and her sister, who lives in Parc-Ex, are active members of the Tamil Catholic mission. Nila, who does not understand the literary Tamil homilies, does not attend mass as often.

When I asked Father Joseph if there are many Sri Lankan Tamil families who live in proximity of Ste-Cécile's Church, he stated that most Tamils live either in Parc-Extension or elsewhere to the west of them, but not in Villeray. In fact, Ste-Cécile's

Church is situated at the eastern-most periphery of all major Tamil ūrs in Montreal, including Côte-des-Neiges, Villeray/Parc Extension, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, and Ville St-Laurent. In Côte-des-Neiges, Tamil Catholic families also have the choice to attend English mass at St. Andrew's Church. This church, which is located on Chemin Côte-des-Neiges, is situated at southeastern periphery of its Tamil ūr. To receive the major sacraments of baptism, marriage, first communion, and funeral, many of St. Andrew's Tamil parishioners will nonetheless seek the services of Father Joseph at the Our Lady of Deliverance Tamil Catholic mission.

This Tamil Catholic mission is therefore entrusted with the highest spiritual authority and responsibility in ensuring the moral purity of the entire Montreal Sri Lankan Tamil Catholic diaspora. The danger of attending local neighborhood churches, as Father Joseph explained to me, is that Tamil children and youth are negatively influenced or tempted to follow other cultural views and social norms. To diminish this likelihood, the mission sponsors numerous activities geared toward the moral, spiritual, and social growth of Tamil youth. Every Sunday, the church hosts Tamil language and Catholic catechism classes. Also on every Saturday, young children can take Carnatic music and Bharatha Natyam dance classes at the church. Also, every few weeks the Tamil Catholic youth group organizes different social activities for children and youth. In August 2005, the Tamil Catholic youth group organized a cricket tournament at Parc Jarry.

As the size of the Tamil Catholic mission continues to expand with each new wave of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, the mission's need for a larger Tamil church has become apparent. At the time of my research, the mission was in the process of raising

\$400,000 to purchase Ste-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus Church in Villeray. One day in August 2005, Father Joseph invited me into his office to discuss the progress of these fundraising efforts. Father Joseph informed me that the mission had already amassed \$150,000 in funds, with church families each donating \$1000 and Tamil businesses each donating \$5000 or \$10,000. The Our Lady of Deliverance youth group raised and additional \$18,000 by canvassing Tamil stores and businesses in Toronto.

Tamil families and businesses in Montreal and Toronto have also contributed to the institutional growth of Hindu temples, which are also situated at the periphery of Montreal Tamil ūrs. David Sommerset, a master's student at the Université du Québec à Montréal who studies Saiva devotionalism, acquainted me with their history. Both Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils, upon first arriving in Montreal in the 1970s and 1980s, worshipped at the Hare Krishna Temple and Hindu Mission of Canada. In time, as different factions developed among Sri Lankan Tamil devotees, one group of Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus founded the Sri Durgai Amman temple and another group, the Saiva Mission of Quebec, founded the Thiru Murugan temple. A few years later, a Sri Lankan Tamil priest from Toronto settled in Montreal and founded the Ganapathi temple.

In March 2005, David introduced me to priests and devotees of each of these temples. The first temple, the Sri Durgai Amman temple, is tucked away behind an overpass on rue Jean Talon near the southeastern periphery of the Parc Extension/Villeray Tamil ūr (see figure 15). Surrounding the temple grounds are several industrial lots and commercial warehouse and within the temple grounds is an enclosed parking lot. A much smaller temple, the Sri Maha Ganapathi Temple Society, was built in the Ahuntsic district of Montreal. This temple is located in an industrial neighborhood

situated only two blocks from the textile factories where many Sri Lankan Tamils work.<sup>59</sup> Both of these temples are easily accessible by metro and public transportation, thus enabling devotees from other Montreal neighborhoods to easily visit these places of worship.



**Figure 15: Sri Durgai Amman Temple**

The third temple, the Montreal Thiru Murugan Temple, is situated on several acres of land at the southeastern periphery of the Dollard-des-Ormeaux/Pierrefonds Tamil ūr. This suburban-style ūr is the wealthiest of all Montreal Tamil ūrs, comprising lower-middle class apartments, lower-middle class to upper-middle class homes, and a few Tamil grocery/video stores.

The first half of the Murugan temple, whose square and functional building style resembles the Sri Durgai Amman temple, was officially consecrated in November 1995. It is the sole Hindu Saivite temple in Montreal that has Tamil-style gopuram on its front façade. Temple grounds also include an outdoor water tank for the sanctified washing of the gods, an adjacent plot of land for processions and annual festivals, and a large

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<sup>59</sup> In the past two years many Montreal-based textile factories have shut down to open factories overseas where wages are cheaper (Montreal Mirror 2008a).

parking lot. An addendum to the first temple, which was strictly built according to the ritual standards of *ākama cattiram*, was officially consecrated in May 2006. This \$3.5 million project was funded by wealthy donors from Jaffna and local business owners and families in Montreal. For its construction, the board imported stones, statues of gods, and Indian Tamil temple-caste laborers from both India and Sri Lanka. Currently, the new temple building functions as the main puja hall and the original temple building houses the temple board office and a mess hall (see Thiru 2008).

Each temple possesses qualities that are viewed as iconically compatible with its devotees and the Tamil *ūr*. For example, the grandeur of the Murugan temple reflects the wealth and stature of its *ūr* and its devotees (see figure 16). At times, local *ūr* residents are more compatible with another *ūr*'s temple. This is because caste and personal relationship, as well as temple location, all influence the choice of place of worship. Kalamathi, even though she lives and works in Côte-des-Neiges, worships at the Murugan Temple in Dollard-des-Ormeaux. Selvamani, who lives in Côte-des-Neiges with her family, instead worships at the Sri Durgai Amman temple in Parc-Ex. According to Pavalan, about 70-75% of Murugan temple families reside in the West Island suburbs of DDO and Pierrefonds, while another 25-30% resides in other districts or regions of metropolitan Montreal.

In general, such deviations in the iconic mapping of *ūr*ness onto devotees, temples, and neighborhoods are not considered morally problematic. This is because, in addition to being iconically distinct, all three of these temples are contiguous to one another. Chains of spatiotemporal contiguity are ritually enacted through the synchronized movement of devotees among all three temples, a movement that entails

both moral obligations and social hierarchies between each place of worship. In the summer months, Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu temples jointly coordinate annual festivals in June (for the Durgai Amman temple), July (for the Ganapathi temple) and August (for the Murugan temple). These immensely popular outdoor festivals are attended by several thousand Hindus (and some Catholics) from all over Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, not just by regular devotees (see figures 16 and 17).



**Figure 16: Annual Festival at the Thiru Murugan Temple**



**Figure 17: Annual Festival at the Thiru Murugan Temple**

The spatiotemporal directionality of this pilgrimage circuit is crucial in configuring moral/social obligations and hierarchies within the Montreal Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Therefore, it is not by accident that the last annual festival is held at the Murugan temple, which boasts to being the first, largest, and most authentic Tamil Saivite temple in all of Quebec (Thiru 2008c). Furthermore, the addendum to the Thiru Murugan temple is the only Hindu Saivite place of worship in Montreal which ritually adheres to the purist *ākama cattiram* standards. Because most Thiru Murugan temple devotees belong to the Vellāla caste, which is the dominant caste in Jaffna Tamil society, these claims of spiritual and material superiority can also be interpreted as efforts to enforce traditional caste hierarchies in the Montreal Tamil diaspora.

The Murugan temple is also the only Sri Lankan Tamil Saivite temple in Quebec which uses a personal website to advertise events and, most importantly, to visually and textually document the moral and spiritual expansion of its establishment:

<http://montrealmurugantemple.faithweb.com/>. The following ad for the 2007 Murugan temple annual festival brags of its grandiose feats (see figure 18):

The highlight of the festivities will be the Car Festival (Ratha Yatra) scheduled for Aug 18, 2007. Events on this day will begin at 9 a.m. At 12 noon, Our Lord will begin the procession in the *largest and most ornate Temple Car in North America*. Kavady dancers and ceremonial musicians will lead the procession while chanters of devotional music will follow in the wake. (Thiru 2008b, my emphasis)

On March 28, 2008, another special ceremony was held to consecrate the addition of a golden Murugan *vel*, a sharp-pointed lance which signifies “penetrating spiritual knowledge” in Saiva cosmology. This golden *vel*, which was specially imported from India, was hailed as adding “significant value in our spiritual consciousness” (Thiru

2008c). Distinguished Saiva Siddhanta scholars and priests from South Asia and within the diaspora were invited to bless the vel and the temple.

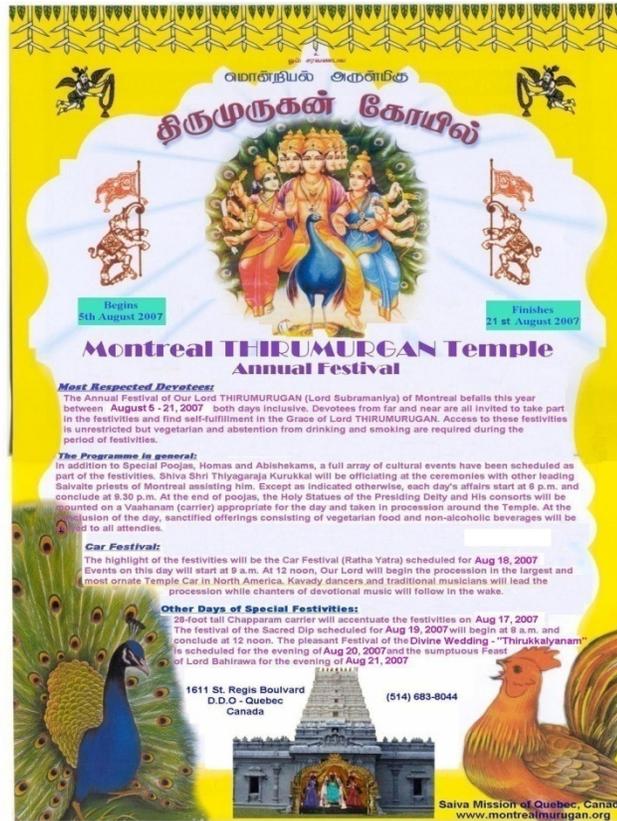


Figure 18: Ad for Annual Festival at Thiru Murugan Temple

Material embellishments to the puja sanctum or temple façade also serve to display the temple's (and its devotees') wealth to the global Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Given Canada's paradigmatic status as a tolerant and prosperous place of asylum, temple board members are mindful of their transnational audience when designing or advertising special events. For example, the temple's official website notes that priests from Canada, India, Sri Lanka, Denmark, and the United Kingdom collectively performed pujas at the temple consecration ceremony in May 2006 and that this event was attended by devotees from all over the world (Thiru 2008c). Attendees are even encouraged to

purchase a commemorative Canadian stamp, the price for which is listed in CAD, USD, Euros, and Pounds (but not Rupees) on the website.

Finally, the Murugan temple board is also mindful of its competitors from the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. At the time of my research, the Montreal Murugan temple claimed to be the largest Sri Lankan Tamil Saivite temple in all of North America, bigger even than the Saivite temples of Toronto (where there are the most Jaffna Tamils outside of Jaffna). In David's opinion, this spirit of competition between the Montreal and Toronto Tamil diasporas will eventually produce an even larger temple in Toronto, and so on and so forth. In this context, annual temple festivals and other special events within the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto region are aimed toward demonstrating the temple's (and the region's) spiritual ascendancy. If successful in achieving global recognition as being the purest, most morally sanctified, and most grandiose place of worship, that specific temple, along with its devotees and ūr, can claim the moral status of "ancestral village."

### **Integrating the Diaspora into Montreal Society**

To be recognized by the Quebec state as a legitimate diaspora neighborhood, the Tamil ūr must be both morally and sociolinguistically integrated into Montreal society. Depending on its scalar position within the Montreal cityscape, Sri Lankan Tamil institutions differentially draw from both Québécois and Tamil language ideologies to affirm the minority rights of Quebec's Sri Lankan Tamil population as well as the sovereign rights of the Sri Lankan Tamil Eelam nation. In general, Tamil institutions and establishments located at the periphery of Montreal districts or neighborhoods are less subject to the disciplinary influence of the Québécois nationalist regime and more to the

Tamil nationalist regime, and vice versa for centrally located institutions and establishments. Textual façades help to standardize the directional orientation between diaspora(s) and nation(s) by iconically linking its centers and peripheries to higher and/or lower-scaled polities. The textual design of Tamil store signs and advertisements reflects the competing influences of Québécois and Tamil language ideologies. In the Montreal Tamil ūr, the misalignment of an *implicitly* diglossic Québécois language ideology with an *explicitly* diglossic Tamil language ideology reveals important disjunctures in the orientation of diaspora, nation, and hostland.

### ***Textual Facades***

Of the many Tamil, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Middle Eastern, Caribbean, African, and Greek grocery shops, restaurants, clothing stores, furniture warehouses, and video stores of Parc-Ex, only those who are able to distinguish between Tamil, Urdu, Bengali, Arabic, Roman, and Greek scripts can immediately identify their ethnic affiliation. For the undiscerning Québécois shopper, it is the unfamiliarity, or exoticness of scripts and window displays that attracts their attention (see figure 19). In comparison with downtown “ethnic” stores and restaurants (who do not need exotic scripts to sell their fare), marginally located “ethnic” stores and restaurants of Parc-Ex (which sell “ethnic goods” at a comparatively low price) must also market their textual facades as an integral aspect of their service commodity.



**Figure 19: Bengali Clothing Store**

To the Québécois nationalist, these store signs signify the successful integration of ethnic minorities within a French nationalist regime. According to Bill 101, bilingual French-Tamil stores signs and advertisements must meet the following requirements. (1) The store's name must be written in French at the top of the sign. (2) The font size of French script must also be larger than the font size of Tamil script. Most Tamil signs follow a format similar to the sign shown in Figure 20, where the smaller Tamil store name is positioned underneath the larger French store name. Only occasionally will one find a trilingual French, Tamil, and English store sign (see figure 21). In a region where moral norms of belonging are linked to linguistic expertise in French, the act of successfully writing store signs is an exercise in the Tamil minority's capacity (and intention) to belong to Québécois society.



**Figure 20: Sign for Sri Durka Furniture Store**



**Figure 21: Trilingual "Boutique Pirapa Fashion" Store Sign**

One day while eating dinner at Spicy Land, I explained to Nila that it would be difficult to locate her restaurant without a store sign. Nila, who is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation native speaker of Québécois joul, explained that her brother-in-law was waiting for her assistance to write the sign in French before hanging it outside. Due to his lack of schooling in French, the brother-in-law is not able to transliterate between French and

Tamil. Furthermore, in contrast with English, there are no accessible transliteration standards between French and Tamil. As a result, morphological and phonetic differences between joul, Québécois French, and European French are often misinterpreted as differences between colloquial and literary forms of French, thus producing mistakes in orthography or pronunciation. Even though these mistakes are detectable only to those who can speak and write several varieties of Tamil and French (such as myself), they nonetheless reveal the disjuncture between Tamil and Québécois language ideologies of “text” and “talk”.

Take for example how *Marché Jeevini* (see figure 9) is also spelled as *Marché Jeeveni* (see figure 10). This variation reflects a lack of consensus on whether to translate the short vowel  $\text{ḡ}$  [ɪ] as /i/ (which is articulated as the shorter vowel [ɪ] in spoken joul but as the longer vowel [i:] in Québécois or European French) or as /e/ (which is articulated as the shorter vowel [ə] in French but as [e] in Tamil). When translating from Tamil to English, the former rule is usually adopted. This is because the literary English script “e” signifies a short [ɪ] vowel, in contrast with /ee/ which signifies a long [i:] vowel. Even in many varieties of colloquial English, /e/ can signify a variety of sounds close to [ɪ], including [ʌ] and [ɪ] in American English (Dumas 1987). In Figure 9, the /r/ in “marché” has been omitted in the Tamil transliteration of [ma:ʃe]. By dropping the /r/, this transliteration produces a highly stigmatized lexeme commonly spoken in joul. Because the owners of *Marché Jeevini* are probably not aware of such lexical differences between Québécois French and joul, one must conclude that they had made a deliberate choice to transliterate “marché” into the colloquial form most recognizable to Montreal Tamils who are illiterate in French.

Similarly, difficult choices in phonetic translations from French to Tamil arise when Sri Lankan Tamils are required to textually represent non-indigenous phonemes, such as the [ʃ] in “marché”. According to the purist ideals of Tamil linguistic nationalism, non-Dravidian phonemes should not infiltrate the literary standard. The following signs demonstrate the different extent to which considerations of Tamil linguistic purism have influenced the transliteration of “marché” in Figures 7, 8, 9, 10:

- Figure 7: mārshē
- Figure 8: mārshē
- Figure 9: mārcē
- Figure 10: mācē

The owners of the grocery store Marché Jeevini have avoided using a Sanskritized script to represent the phoneme <ʃ> (see figures 8 and 9). They instead endorse the Tamil purist tradition of indigenizing foreign Indo-European phonemes into native Tamil phonemes/scripts, such as ஶ [s]. In contrast, both the owners of Marché Abinaya and Marché Thurga, the largest Tamil grocery store in Montreal, (as seen in figures 6 and 7) have used the Sanskritized script ஶ் /sh/ to represent <ʃ> in “marché”. This suggests that Tamil purist concerns are less important than French purist concerns to these larger-scale business owners.

In Figure 8, one notices two conflicting trends. In the first part of the phrase, the transliteration of the phoneme <ʃ> produces an “impure” Tamil script form. In the second part of the phrase, the transliteration of க், or /kk/ in “Thurga” produces a “purist” Tamil script form (by writing the voiced [k] consonant rather than the Sanskritized voiceless /g/ or ஶ் consonant). When comparing figures 8 and 22, one notices a greater emphasis on orthographic and phonological purity in the latter case. In Figure 22, the goddess’s name is spelled as “Durkai” not “Thurga”. The final vowel ஐ is

common in literary Tamil, while the final vowel of அ, /a/ or ஈ /e/ is common in both colloquial Tamil and in Indo-Aryan languages. Given that Marché Thurga customers are not only Tamil-speaking folk, but South Asians of different linguistic backgrounds, it was perhaps deemed prudent to write “Thurga” in its most recognizable South Asian form. In the case of Figure 22, which is a picture of a temple sign, considerations of ritual and linguistic purity would be paramount. Hence, it is not surprising that the sign utilizes literary-like phonemes to convey its close alignment with the purist language ideologies of the Sri Lankan Tamil homeland.



**Figure 22: Sign for Sri Durgai Amman Temple**

### **Orienting Diasporas and Homelands**

Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora leaders have produced multiple chronotopes of varying iconic and indexical alignments to respond to the shifting political realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Either by creating chronotopic equivalences or by suturing chains of proximity with the Eelam homeland, these iconic and indexical regimentations of diasporic space-time are carefully orchestrated to achieve different political effects. In the following sections, I describe how the World Tamil Movement’s synchronization of Black July

protests and their standardization of literary Tamil teaching standards have enabled the Montreal Tamil diaspora to be simultaneously experienced as a sacred geography with the Tamil Eelam homeland. I also describe how the temporal staging of diaspora-homeland circuits, such as the Rigaud-Madhu peace pilgrimage and the Sri Lankan-Canadian war-time genealogy, pinpoint the scalar positionality of dispersed sites within the global Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. The following case studies suggest that the Montreal-Toronto-Ottawa region is fast emerging as a secondary homeland for Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, a political eventuality that is as much demographic fact as it is semiotic fact.

### ***Sacred Geographies and Pilgrimage Circuits***

In Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, the World Tamil Movement has established numerous schools for teaching literary Tamil to second generation children. A small market also exists for the production and distribution of Tamil textbooks and audiovisual teaching materials, commodities that attest to the monetary value of purist and literary norms of Tamil speech among the diaspora. For all of these reasons, the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto region is often portrayed by its diaspora leaders as a site where the purity of the Sri Lankan Tamil language (and culture) can be strictly maintained. The World Tamil Movement, by synchronizing annual Tamil testing dates and standardizing the Tamil language curriculum throughout the global diaspora, demonstrates its ability to strategically (re)orient the spatiotemporal scales through which Sri Lankan Tamils relate to one another.

Until April 10, 2006, when the Prime Minister banned the LTTE and WTM, the Canadian government had endorsed a laissez-faire policy with respect to Sri Lankan

Tamil nationalists. On July 25, 2006, an event memorializing the original anti-Tamil pogrom in Colombo some twenty years earlier, a few hundred Sri Lankan Tamils gathered at a Montreal public square to protest the Canadian government's recent actions. Similar demonstrations had been previously organized by Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas in Europe and Australia right after their host governments had banned the LTTE (Whiteman 2006). Yet the chronotopic calibration of Montreal's anti-Harper protest with the globally-synchronized Black July protests (held on the exact date of the original anti-Tamil pogrom) lent an iconically-charged significance to this particular demonstration.

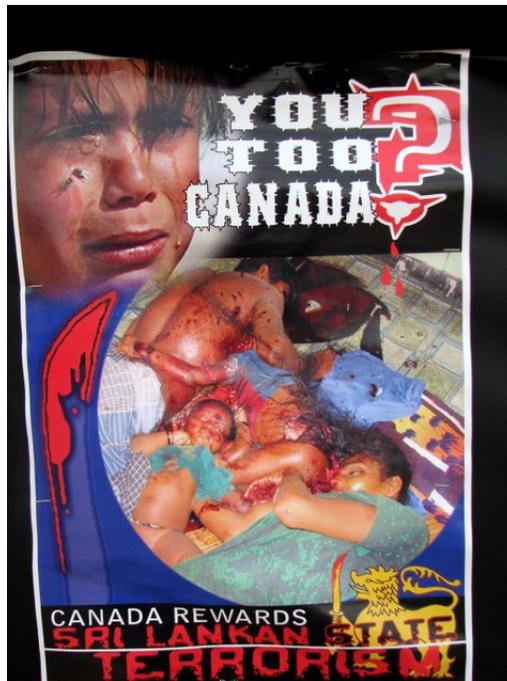
This public protest, in addition to critiquing Canadian federal policy, also attempted to reframe the spatiotemporal context of the Sri Lankan civil war as an ongoing ethnic conflict also transpiring in Montreal. The resultant message is that, while it is one thing to outlaw the LTTE from European nations where Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas are relatively small and remittances are few, it is quite another matter to outlaw the LTTE from its secondary homeland and diasporic headquarters within Canada. Despite the noticeable absence of LTTE symbols, the organization of this public event nonetheless signaled to the Canadian government that the LTTE was still very much active in the Canadian diaspora by virtue of the ongoing war in Sri Lanka.

Through the use of visual and discursive tactics, protestors mapped out an indexical chain of human rights violations perpetrated first by the Sri Lankan government and lastly by the Canadian government. The dramatic staging of the original pogrom experience, the plastering of vivid images of massacred and mutilated women and children, and the visible picketing against Canadian foreign policy all functioned as contextualization cues pointing toward a spatiotemporal chain of distinct yet historically

causal events -- (1<sup>st</sup>) 1983 pogrom in Colombo, (2<sup>nd</sup>) the 1990s battles in Jaffna, (3<sup>rd</sup>) the (then) current conflict in Batticaloa, and (4<sup>th</sup>) Harper's 2006 decree in Montreal (see figures 23, 24, 25). By temporally linking Canada's anti-LTTE ban to preceding war events, these protestors were reminding Montreal Tamils of their indelible status as racialized Tamil refugees. The message was clear: the LTTE need the Canadian Tamil diaspora as much as the Canadian Tamil diaspora needed the LTTE.



**Figure 23: Images of Massacred Women and Children at the Black July Memorial**



**Figure 24: Poster Critiquing Canadian Foreign Policy at Black July Memorial**



**Figure 25: Skit of Colombo Pogrom at Black July Memorial**

After returning from my fieldwork, I kept myself informed of political developments in the ever unfolding Tamil Eelam war. My preferred source of journalistic information is the on-line newspaper, Tamilnet.com. Despite being openly biased in favor of the LTTE, Tamilnet's news reporting not only keeps me abreast of

events transpiring in Sri Lanka but also helps me to interpret shifting orientations between homeland and diaspora as configured by the media/state apparatus. On April 3, 2008, an article from Tamilnet.com captured my attention. It read, “Our Lady of Madu has become a refugee in her own land” (Tamilnet 2008b). The article explained how the image and statue of the Virgin Mary had been removed from its sanctuary within the shrine of Madhu after being targeted by hostile fire from the Sri Lankan army. The LTTE called upon the international community, singling out its allies in Tamil Nadu and Norway in particular, to strongly condemn these acts of violence against the “holy land” of Madhu (Tamilnet 2008b, 2008c, 2008d). Furthermore, the LTTE referred to the Sri Lankan government’s latest tactical strategy as a form of “ethnic cleansing” intent on achieving nothing less than the “temporal and spiritual conquest of Tamils” (Tamilnet 2008d).

Lankaweb, the diasporic voice of Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalists, claims that the Madhu shrine is no holy land, dating less than two hundred years old and built on top of the Buddhist-Hindu holy site of Pattini Devale (Gamage 2008). The LTTE accused Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalists of attempting to down-scale the shrine’s 500 year history and to portray Catholicism as a non-indigenous religion in order to “Sinhalicize” the region:

But, more than the fear of destruction, the pricking question now it seems, is the attempt of Sinhala nation to confiscate pilgrim sites, and Sinhalicise them, to deal with myths counter to it. (Tamilnet 2008d)

According to Tamil nationalist historiography, west coast Catholics were forcibly “Sinhalicized” three generations ago when the Sri Lankan government eliminated Tamil

language services and erected military blockades between Mannar and Jaffna. Saiva temples located outside of the LTTE-controlled zone were similarly Sinhalicized:

Those who could look at how Kathirkaamam (Kataragama), once the most favoured pilgrim place for Tamil Saivites, has been confiscated from their predominance and how all the ancient temples behind the Tamil Saiva myth, such as Thiruketheesvaram (Maanthai), Thirukkoa'nesvaram (Trincomalee), Nakuleasvaram (Keerimalai) and Maaviddapuram are denied to devotees, being inside of 'High Security Zones', could understand the fear of Tamil Christians about Madu. (Tamilnet 2008d)

In its 500 year history, Our Lady of Madhu had been a safe haven for Tamil Catholics fleeing Dutch persecution in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and military crossfire in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The current occupation of Madhu raises fears among Tamil Catholics that, after the loss of this shrine, there will be no more places of refuge in Sri Lanka remaining.

During intermittent times of peace, including during the cease fire of 2002-2006, Sri Lankans of different religious faiths would annually undertake the pilgrimage to Madhu to pray for peace and seek healing. The soil of this shrine, in which the statue of the Virgin Mary was first planted in 1670, is believed to possess miraculous healing properties that have been reported to cure even poisonous snake bites. In 1870, the Bishop of Mannar declared that they would hold an annual feast day for Marian devotees and pilgrims on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Yet over the centuries the August 15<sup>th</sup> feast day, which is on the Day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has usually drawn the largest crowds. Currently, August 15<sup>th</sup> is considered the last and most important pilgrimage festival in the Sri Lankan Tamil Catholic calendar.

Narratives of Madhu also play an important role in the national and religious imaginations of Tamil Catholic refugees, whose relative immobility have rendered it

difficult for them to undertake annual peace pilgrimages to Madhu. In reading these articles, I immediately recalled how Father Joseph, a former priest of the Mullaitivu Catholic diocese of northeastern Sri Lanka, sought to recreate the sacred geography of the Madhu peace pilgrimage within the Canadian diaspora. His search for an iconically comparable site led him to the Marian shrine of Rigaud, Quebec. As he explained to me, Father Joseph found that both Rigaud and Madhu shared similar baptismal moments and spiritual properties through their historical development (Fête 2008).

Rigaud, a small agricultural town located just 45 minutes east of Montreal, was named after the last governor of New France, Pierre François de Rigaud, the Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnal. Even after Rigaud surrendered Montreal to the British at the end of the Seven Year's War in 1760, Catholic devotional tradition remained strong in rural Quebec. In fact, a local Rigaud legend claims that God had transformed a field of potatoes into stones to punish those farmers who did not observe the Sabbath. In 1874 Brother Ludger Pauzé, who was inspired by the story of Bernadette at Lourdes, planted a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in an isolated location in the hillside of Mont-Rigaud (Fête 2008). Upon learning of his actions, Pauzé's superior sent devotees to pray at this new Marian site. Annual pilgrimages have long been a mainstay of Catholic religious practice in Quebec, with the "most important pilgrimage sites in Quebec – Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, thirty-five kilometers east of Quebec city; Cap-de-la-Madeleine near Trois-Rivières; and St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal – all [having their] origins as popular shrines in the early years of French colonization"(Dickinson and Young 2000:239). Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, pilgrimages to Rigaud have also acquired a large following,

with devotees from all over Quebec visiting the shrine in the hopes of being blessed by the healing powers of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Through the rhematic interpretation of indices of spatiotemporal contiguity, Father Joseph has been able to construct chronotopic equivalences between the Madhu peace pilgrimage in Sri Lanka and the Rigaud pilgrimage in the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto area for his Tamil Catholic parishioners. Father Joseph's propensity to see iconicity in spatiotemporally-displaced signs is not limited to this event. In his earlier work as the parish priest of the small fishing town of Mullaitivu, Father Joseph had to exorcise the ghosts of soldiers whose corpses still littered the church grounds in order to free the church from its gory past. By denying or acknowledging the iconicity between spirit and physical site, Father Joseph can create or deny sacred geographies and pilgrimage circuits at will.

Even the narrative structure of Father Joseph's personal life history takes shape through the rhematicized interpretation of spatiotemporally-displaced signs. In the following "faith sharing" narrative (which I paraphrase below), Father Joseph describes his reasons for joining the seminary:

When I was 6 years old my mother was pregnant with child. I very much wanted to have a little sister and I wagered all of my relatives that the child would be a girl. The day of the birth all of our relatives assembled at the hospital to wait. Soon, I was overjoyed to see that I had a little sister. Her name was Ananthi. I collected the money from my wager and bought a gold chain for her. I didn't know it at the time, but my father was sick with blood cancer. Three years later when I was 9 years and my sister was three, my father died of cancer. My four brothers and sisters and I were gathered around his death bed when my father requested that one of his sons become a priest.

The parish priest of my village, which is located close to the town of Palali [in northern Jaffna], was an old French missionary. He had previously requested that some of the local boys help him with mass. One day when the Father did not arrive in time for mass, they sent me out to find him. I found the priest had fallen

off of his bicycle somewhere. I helped him get up and brought him back to our church. As we were walking the priest said to me, “I am looking for a young boy to become a priest and to follow in my footsteps. We need to train native priests to serve the people here.” At the time, there were mostly European missionary priests serving in Jaffna.

Both the priest’s and my father’s requests stayed with me until, at the age of 12, I decided to join the seminary. Although the seminary was within walking distance of my home, I lived at the seminary hostel. During this time, I missed my little sister very much. I didn’t realize that she had become sick until one day in 1977, when I was 15 years old, they came to my hostel to tell me that Ananthi had also died of blood cancer. My sister was only 9 years old.

Father Joseph’s narrative emphasizes three repeating and spatiotemporally intertwining story lines: (1) a close relative dying of blood cancer, (2) his call to faith, and (3) encounters with French Catholics. Prior to hearing Father Joseph’s narrative, I was asked to share my own faith story. In doing so, I had unwittingly provided the “missing pieces” to his narrative:

I was born in Montreal in 1977 to a French Canadian mother and Indian father. My mother, when she was ill with leukemia, asked me to embrace God and Catholicism. Now that I have returned to Montreal, I have decided to fulfill my mother’s wish. This is why I asked you [Father Joseph] to teach me the catechism.

Later, Father Joseph confessed to me that I bear a striking resemblance to his little sister, Ananthi, who died in the same year that I was born. The circular iconicity of our joint narratives convinced Father Joseph that the directionality of his travels from Sri Lanka to Quebec appeared to have an almost pre-ordained, even sacred character.

Ho, in his historical ethnography of the Hadrami diaspora, suggests that the directionality of travel and mobility has moral consequences. He writes, “Like genealogy, pilgrimage is movement given moral meaning: the former gains meaning through time; the latter, across space” (2006:xxv). Ho also suggests that certain types of diaspora, namely old diasporas, expand their discursive field through activities of travel

or mobility, whereas other types of diasporas, namely new diasporas, contract their discursive field through activities of travel or mobility:

The earnings of Indian millionaires in California's Silicon Valley and Irish working men in Roxbury, Massachusetts, fuel intractable ethnic conflicts back home. Recidivist long-distance nationalism may travel far, but they hardly expand the time and space of social life (Anderson 1998; Schiller and Fouron 2001). In the global village, they narrow rather than expand the space for internal debate. In old diasporas, in contrast, the space for internal debate is often a large one, as the case below suggests. (Ho 2006: 5)

However, as Ho later suggests, discourses of mobility are themselves subject to the biases of those who seek to objectify and represent them:

The discourses of mobility, by the pervasiveness, are ways in which movements are represented and objectified. This creates the conditions of possibility for movements to be channeled, controlled, diverted, and argued over. (ibid 2006: 22-23)

Thus, discourses of Tamil displacement and alienation, as Cheran (2007) rightly concludes, have fueled the ethnic/racial animosities of the Sri Lankan civil war. In contrast the Rigaud-Madhu pilgrimage, which is attended by Tamils of different religious backgrounds, is an inclusive movement aimed at putting an end to the Sri Lankan civil war. By deliberately holding the Rigaud peace pilgrimage a few weeks before the Madhu peace pilgrimage at a geographically and spiritually similar locale, Father Joseph has successfully aligned the local Rigaud religious pilgrimage within the grander (and more morally expansive) cause of the Madhu peace pilgrimage.

On July 30, 2005, 2000 - 3000 devotees from the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto region participated in the second annual peace pilgrimage to the Sanctuaire Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes at Rigaud, Quebec.<sup>60</sup> I attended the pilgrimage with Marianne who, in having witnessed many Marian processions while living in France, could explain the

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<sup>60</sup> According to Marianne, Marian processions in France are attended by both Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils, and are not political in nature.

significance and context of each ritual or activity to me. During the processional, we sat in outdoor pews facing the outdoor altar. During the processional, several men carried an ornately dressed statue of the Virgin Mary from the base of Mont-Rigaud to the main altar of the sanctuary. They were followed in line by altar boys and women who were singing Tamil hymns (see figure 26). After the statue reached the main altar, Father Joseph performed the mass in literary Tamil. During his homily, Father Joseph asked the devotees to pray for an end to the war in Sri Lanka.

Father Joseph was assisted by four other clergymen, including Father Afonso of Saint Andrew's church in Côte-des-Neiges, another Tamil priest from Sri Lanka, another Sri Lankan Tamil priest from Australia, and a Québécois de souche priest. The presence of five officiating priests and deacons from Montreal, Sri Lanka, and Australia collectively indexed the outermost spatial nodes of the Sri Lankan Tamil global diaspora. After mass, all five priests genuflected before the statue of the Virgin Mary (see figure 27). Soon after, crowds of Catholics and Hindu devotees approached the main altar to touch the statue, hoping to be blessed or healed by the Virgin Mary. Later, everyone joined together to feast and socialize in the fields located in front of the main shrine.



**Figure 26: Processional of Virgin Mary at Rigaud**



**Figure 27: Priests Genuflecting before Virgin Mary at Rigaud**

Several weeks later, the statue of the Virgin Mary was similarly venerated during the feast of the Day of the Assumption at Madhu, Sri Lanka. 200,000-300,000 devotees participated in this pilgrimage which was, unfortunately, to be the last peaceful

pilgrimage to Madhu. In 2006, the Sri Lankan army prevented hundreds of pilgrims from crossing the Madhu checkpoint to reach the Marian shrine, and tens of thousands of pilgrims already at Madhu were blockaded for several days after the end of the festival (Tamilnet 2006). Father Joseph, who had returned to Sri Lanka in the fall of 2005 to renew his visa, was unexpectedly detained there for more than half a year and only reinstated the Rigaud pilgrimage in July 2007.<sup>61</sup> Few pilgrims had dared to travel to Madhu in August 2007, which was caught in the crossfire between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army. By the spring of 2008, the Sri Lankan army controlled the town of Madhu, thus prompting the Mannar bishop to flee with the statue of the Virgin Mary to Jaffna.

As I write this chapter, Father Joseph is presently organizing a peace pilgrimage to Rigaud in July 2008. During times of war, the temporal synchronization of trans-local pilgrimages between Rigaud and Madhu facilitates the geographic displacement of “peace work” onto more secure diaspora sites like Rigaud. Accompanying this shift in the directionality of the pilgrimage circuit, however, is an ideological shift in the moral conceptualization of the Tamil Catholic homeland. Just as the Sri Lankan government can no longer recognize the Madhu shrine as a securitized “peace zone”, Sri Lankan Tamil Catholics can no longer imagine the Madhu shrine as a sanctified holy land/homeland without the presence of the Virgin Mary. In the absence of a holy land, the sacred geographies of the Montreal-Toronto-Ottawa Tamil diaspora may eventually substitute those of Sri Lanka to entail a secondary Tamil homeland. Only time will tell if the war in Sri Lanka will transform this theoretical conjecture into a political reality.

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<sup>61</sup> My conversations with Karine Trudel, a master’s student at the Université de Montréal, suggest that the 2007 pilgrimage was very similar to the 2005 pilgrimage.

## **Conclusion**

Sacred geographies and pilgrimage circuits are the particular modalities of space-time regimentation through which moral valences of the Tamil homeland are standardized and de-standardized. Overall, the spatiotemporal regimentation of local and trans-local scales of belonging in the Montreal Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora results in ideological acts of convergence and divergence, synchronicity and disjuncture, together which emphasize the mutability of the diaspora-homeland-hostland orientation. Through the metaphor of the Tamil ūr, I have shown how rhematic interpretations of iconic likeness, or ūr-like compatibility, are motivated by conflicting (or competing) moral and political concerns for integration and dis-integration with Québécois and Eelam societies. This unit, which seeks to account for the social patterning of “text-like” and “talk-like” forms at the local and trans-local scales, suggests that processes of linguistic de-standardization, as well as hybridization, are carefully concealed from public scrutiny within the details of diaspora social life.

## **Chapter 6**

### **A Tamil Heritage Language Industry**

In the post-nationalist and post-colonial spaces which emerge at the scalar interstices of Montreal, the knowledge that “language is a form of social action” has itself become a form of social action. In other words, metalinguistic awareness of the market value of “metalinguistic awareness” has become a prized commodity among those seeking to influence the course of Montreal’s nationalization, diaspora formation, or globalization. In this political contest, people must not only be aware of what they know about the grammatical and pragmatic differences of languages, they must also be aware of how much they know with respect to their interlocutor. Such third order rationalizations of language use are increasingly evident in discourses, institutions, and services endorsed by the state/media apparatus of Quebec.

Currently, post-referendum Montreal has become increasingly vulnerable to linguistic and ideological shifts triggered by the city’s rapid globalization and ethnic diversification. Montreal residents, many of whom are exceedingly aware of the perils and prizes of “minoritization” and “majoritization” that may result from encounters between interlocutors with different linguistic competences and different social status, often rely upon the business of “culture work” to standardize moral judgments of cultural and linguistic practice. Shryock, in explaining the political context of museum “culture work” in post 9/11 Arab Detroit, describes this inescapable dialectic of minoritization and majoritization:

...paranoia has long been a defining feature of the relationship between the United States and its Arab Muslim immigrants, who are typically assumed to be anti-American if they identify with, or merely resemble, Arabs and Muslims who live abroad. I would develop this claim further, however, suggesting that fears of Arab/Muslim Otherness (and a pressing need to allay them) have become the defining feature of “culture work” commissioned and endorsed by Arab community leaders in Detroit. The unfortunate result has been that “Americanization,” for Arab Muslims, consists of incessant attempts to prove that “we are people just like you,” while experiences drawn from the shared social frameworks of everyday life – whether these are Arab, America, Arab American, Muslims, or all of them together - respond, in a clear voice, “no, you are not like us, and we are not like you. (Shryock 2004: 282)

Similarly, the heritage language industry of Montreal is a state/media-endorsed “culture work” institution which seeks to standardize status relations and moral judgments between minority and majority Quebec citizens.

In general, the mass mediation of cultural and linguistic forms as “heritage artifacts” affirms the disciplinary powers of the nation-state to reify languages and speakers as purified entities, rather than emergent semiotic formations. Crucial to this agenda is the indoctrination of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation minorities into the language ideology of ethnolinguistic affiliation. In this chapter, I begin by describing how Montreal’s heritage language industry markets its heritage language classes as both “knowledge-based” and “identity-based” commodities to minority youth and children. By learning to speak, read, or write a purified heritage language, minority youth and children are promised to be favorably transformed in their epistemological and ontological statuses as Québécois citizens and diaspora citizens.

Depending on the literary or oral focus of instruction, heritage language programs also socialize minority youth and children into either “primordialist” or “modernist” cohorts. In this manner, minority youth and children are further indoctrinated into the language ideology of sociolinguistic compartmentalization. In this chapter I suggest that

Sri Lankan Tamils, who have successfully petitioned for the inclusion of literary Tamil language classes in French-medium and English-medium public schools, are discursively positioning themselves as a “primordialist” group within Quebec. Indian Tamils avoid being similarly labeled by foregoing the services of state-funded heritage language programs and by instead developing home-based curricula for teaching colloquial Tamil. This division of linguistic labor, with Sri Lankan Tamils entrusted to protect the literary standard and Indian Tamils entrusted to modernize the mother tongue, is recursively projected onto male and female cohorts and older and younger generational cohorts.

Sometimes, however, these orderly processes of social reproduction are interrupted by the language activities of current or former heritage language students. Upon acquiring multilingual competences in both literary and colloquial styles, many heritage language students find themselves disrupting boundaries between language form, context, and social identity in their daily communicative encounters. In fact, some interlocutors may even attempt to use their multilingual repertoires to up-scale or down-scale the frame of the interaction and, thus, change the relative rank of their metalinguistic expertise. Ultimately, I suggest that the division of profits from Montreal’s heritage language industry depends on how “competing” interlocutors strategically align signs of social status, processes of local emplacement, and ideologies of linguistic purism to favorable scales of social belonging.

### **Primordialist and Modernist Cohorts**

Ethnic and racial minorities in Quebec are stereotyped in different ways. First and foremost, Québécois will always distinguish between French-speaking and English-speaking minorities. Afterward, they will also distinguish between non-visible and

visible racial minorities. Third, I argue, they will distinguish between “primordialist” and “modernist” immigrants. “Primordialist” immigrants are ethnic minorities whose linguistic and moral attitudes appear to be temporally rooted in antiquity. Primary targets of primordialist stereotypes are religious minorities who display embodied signs of their faith. On the other hand, “modernist” immigrants are ethnic minorities who appear to have temporally transcended these cultural traditions and have socially integrated within a secularist Québécois society.

In reality, all ethnic and racial minorities (including Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils) have both primordialist and modernist inclinations. For example, studies show that the majority of South Asians are interested in both maintaining cultural traditions and integrating within Canadian (and Québécois) societies:

Considering their participation in religious activities, use of heritage languages, maintenance of customs and traditions, and attachment to family and social networks, it is not surprising that in 2002, the majority of South Asians (69%) felt a strong or very strong sense of belonging to their ethnic or cultural group...Nevertheless, most South Asians also report a strong sense of belonging to Canada, their province and municipality. In fact, no other visible minority group felt as strongly about belonging to Canada as did South Asians. Almost 9 in 10 (88%) indicated a strong or very strong sense of belonging to Canada, compared with 83% of Blacks, 77% of Chinese and 80% of people who were not in a visible minority group. South Asians were also more likely than other Canadians to report a strong or very strong sense of belonging to their province (74%) and town, city or municipality (70%). (Tran et al. 2005:24)

Among South Asians, however, different sub-groups possess varying attitudes toward issues of tradition and integration.

Through their active participation in the heritage language industry, Sri Lankan Tamils emerge as a more primordialist-oriented group than Indian Tamils. Their emphasis on teaching literary Tamil contrasts with Indian Tamils’ emphasis on teaching colloquial Tamil as heritage language. Even their divergent pedagogical strategies seem

to point to primordialist versus modernist language ideologies. For Sri Lankan Tamils, teaching literacy is seen as a co-requisite for developing fluency in the colloquial language. Hence, Sri Lankan Tamil teachers instruct children to write and speak a purist form of Tamil at an early age. Even within the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas, generational differences in linguistic practice are interpreted as primordialist or modernist in orientation. According to Muthu, there are four generational cohorts in the Montreal Tamil diasporas: children (ages ~4-13), youth (ages ~14-25), adults (~26-60), and elders (~61-onward):

The oldest group speaks almost always in Tamil and barely speaks English or French. They are 40 years and above in age. The second group includes people who recently came from Sri Lanka, and they are beginning to attend college or high school or work. They speak in Tamil to each other, but also know English to some extent. The third group includes people who came to Montreal at a young age and went to primary and secondary school here. They learned to speak Tamil from their parents. Many of them cannot read or write Tamil. They usually speak French or English amongst themselves. The last group includes those who were born here and did their entire education in French or English.

Youth are singled out for their multilingual expertise in colloquial forms of English, French, and Tamil, while elders are singled out for their literary Tamil expertise.

For Indian Tamils, teaching the mother tongue is generally regarded as a prerequisite to developing the child's intellectual interest in literary Tamil. In Chapter Four, I described how Krishnan teaches "spoken Tamil grammar" to 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamils, many of whom passively understand but do not speak Tamil at home. Lengthy conversations with Krishnan have revealed key aspects of his pedagogical approach to teaching Tamil. First, he believes that literacy is a skill that should be developed only after the student fully masters the spoken language. For this reason he conducts his lessons in the regional dialect most familiar to the student, whether it is

Kerala Tamil, Chennai Tamil, or Delhi Tamil. Furthermore, he relates grammatical concepts and pragmatic features of Tamil language use to French, English, and other Indian languages spoken natively by the student (and in which he is a certified interpreter). Finally, he encourages students to code-switch between English and Tamil for greater ease of communication. His modernist approach to teaching Tamil, in addition to his extensive multilingual and metalinguistic expertise, have rendered Krishnan as one of the most publically recognizable figures of the Montreal Indian Tamil diaspora.<sup>62</sup> In fact, Krishnan's classes have become so popular among college-aged youth that, by the end of my research in Montreal, he was being recruited by a local university to teach college-level Hindi. By recognizing his "mother tongue" expertise, the Quebec academy extends its endorsement to Quebec's heritage language industry.

### *Heritage Language Schools in Quebec*

Since the mid 1900s, Greeks and Orthodox Jews have established Greek and Hebrew language schools in their Montreal neighborhoods. Despite the longevity of such minority language schools in Montreal, it was not until 1977 when the Quebec government implemented its first publicly-funded heritage language program known as the *Programme d'enseignement des langues d'origine* (PELO), that a universalist language ideology on the relationship between minority language and social belonging would be proposed. Specifically, this concept of the "heritage language" (or "*langue d'origine*") imposes language-based distinctions for differentiating between ethnic and racialized types of Québécois citizens. As a consequence, all minority children (i.e. those

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<sup>62</sup> Krishnan was interviewed for several television documentaries about the Indian diaspora of Montreal.

whose ancestry is not traceable to France or Great Britain) are institutionally recognized as possessing a heritage language identity other than French or English.<sup>63</sup>

Since then, many minority students have studied “their” heritage language at French-medium or English-medium public schools in Montreal.<sup>64</sup> Through such heritage language instruction, minority children are socialized to reproduce both language ideologies of ethnolinguistic belonging and sociolinguistic compartmentalization in their identification as heritage language citizens. In other words, students learn that the public usage of Québécois French marks their civic identity as a resident of Quebec, while the private usage of their heritage language marks their ethnic identity as a minority citizen of Quebec. Learning a heritage language thus facilitates the integration of ethnic and racial minorities into Québécois society by permanently affixing their minority position within the larger Québécois collective. Such semiotic orchestrations by Quebec policy-makers demonstrate the manner in which representations of linguistic heterogeneity can be discursively regimented so as to articulate with ethno-national interests.

Initially, the introduction of the PELO had prompted the skepticism of citizens who correctly suspected that the Parti Québécois government sought to pacify minority voters outraged by the passage of Bill 101 a few months earlier. Diaspora leaders, especially those who resented the state’s intrusion into the management of Montreal’s

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<sup>63</sup> This population includes second, third, and fourth generation descendants of early waves of European immigrants (such as Hasidic Jews, Italians, Greeks, Poles, and Portuguese), first and second generation descendants of mid-to-late twentieth century immigrants from South, East, and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean (such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotians, Lebanese, Jamaicans, Indians, and Haitians), and first generation descendants of the latest wave of immigrants/refugees from South America, Africa, and South Asia (such as Chileans, Mexicans, Ghanaians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Sri Lankans). Native Canadians are also included in this group.

<sup>64</sup> There was a movement in the 1990s to open PELO classes to “non-heritage students”. Even though the law now permits such students to participate in the PELO, their numbers remain small. This is primarily because PELO pedagogy is tailored toward students with some familiarity with the heritage language and not toward 2<sup>nd</sup>-language students.

multicultural affairs, accused the government of attempting to discredit community-based forms of heritage language instruction. As time progressed, however, a new political climate gradually emerged in Montreal. Researchers have since confirmed an increase in the public use of French in Montreal in the aftermath of Bill 101 (Béland 1999; Castonguay 1994). Also, many ethnic and racial minorities nowadays are referring to themselves as “Québécois”, a label that previously signified only white French Canadians (Helly and Schendel 2001). These trends suggest that public opposition to Bill 101 (and the PELO) has subsided as Montreal residents have grown increasingly accustomed or even appreciative of the mandates of a bilingual lifestyle.

The PELO’s rising popularity also attests to the Quebec government’s success in designing and enforcing mutually compatible nationalist and multicultural political agendas as preemptive responses to the inevitable globalization of Montreal society. Just as Montreal’s immigrant population has multiplied and diversified over the past three decades, so have its PELO classes. In 1978 the *Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal* (CECM) school board offered PELO classes in Greek, Italian, and Portuguese. By 2002 the same school board, now known as the *Commission scolaire de Montréal* (CSDM), offered an additional twelve languages, including Spanish, Vietnamese, Laotian, Arabic, Chinese, Tagalog, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Sinhala, and Tamil (McAndrews 1991). The inauguration of the Tamil PELO class in 1998 ushered in the latest wave of refugees and immigrants from South Asia.

The successful introduction of a new PELO class requires passing through several bureaucratic steps. First, school principals must decide whether or not their school will offer PELO classes and, if so, how many and which ones. After receiving the principal’s

permission, parents are then required to petition their school board for government funds. In this petition, parents must demonstrate a critical level of interest in the PELO class among the local neighborhood. If the school board approves their petition, parents can then work with the school principal to locate an accredited teacher from the local diaspora. The school board's emphasis on hiring accredited teachers reinforces the PELO's (and the Quebec state's) interpretation of linguistic expertise as a specialized commodity rather than a public good. Unfortunately, as the PELO director of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) confessed to me, accredited Tamil teachers can be difficult to come by. Of the two language teachers that work at Parker Elementary School, only Nilima is an accredited teacher from Sri Lanka, where she previously taught high school home science and geography. Vasanthi, who has a bachelor's degree in commerce, does not possess prior teaching experience.

My interviews with the PELO directors of the EMSB in June 2005 and the CSDM in June 2002 revealed additional information about the government's stance toward heritage language education and multilingual language acquisition. Both PELO directors were well-versed in the cited literature on heritage language education (Association Canadienne d'Éducation 1991, Azzam 1986, Cummins 1983, Fleury 1999, Globesnky and Azzam 1987, McAndrew & Gress-Azzam 1987) and multilingual language acquisition (Bhullar 1988). In fact, copies of these articles were provided to me by the EMSB's PELO director. Upon closer inspection of these articles, it becomes apparent that they selectively uphold ideological positions that are favorable to the institutionalization of Québécois nationalist and multicultural agendas. For example, by claiming that heritage language acquisition does not interfere with majority language

acquisition, these articles appease pervasive moral concerns about the impending *dé-francisation* of Montreal by minority youth (Econosult 1981).

When I first described my unsuccessful collaboration with the CSDM to the EMSB director, he alluded to important ideological differences between the English Montreal School Board and the *Commission Scolaire de Montréal*. I now realize that the English Montreal School Board, as a minority institution whose political interests are not aligned with Québécois nationalism, would be less invested in perpetuating language ideologies of ethnolinguistic belonging and sociolinguistic compartmentalization at the expense of critical pedagogical research. Armed with this hindsight, I applied to the EMSB for permission to conduct research at a Tamil PELO class in an English-medium school. Overall, this process proceeded much more smoothly. During a school board meeting with EMSB commissioners, we collectively elaborated our mutual interests in issues of pedagogy and language acquisition, thus establishing a common moral ground for my research project. Soon enough, I was granted permission from the EMSB and the principal of Parker Elementary School to observe and audio-record Tamil PELO classes.

PELO classes differ widely in their medium and context of instruction. For one, they can be offered from two to four times a week, either before school, during the lunch hour, or after school. PELO classes also differ in their emphasis on teaching oral or textual linguistic skills. Among earlier immigrants such as Italians and Greeks who mostly speak English or French at home, PELO classes focus on teaching oral skills such as speaking and listening comprehension. These youth and children are socialized to believe that their “mother tongue” (i.e., the spoken language of their maternal ancestors) is their heritage language. Among more recent immigrants whose children already speak

their “mother tongue” at home, PELO classes focus on teaching literacy skills such as reading, writing, and, in cases of diglossia, speaking the literary language. These children are instead socialized to believe that the literary standard is their heritage language.

### ***Tamil PELO Classes at Parker Elementary School***

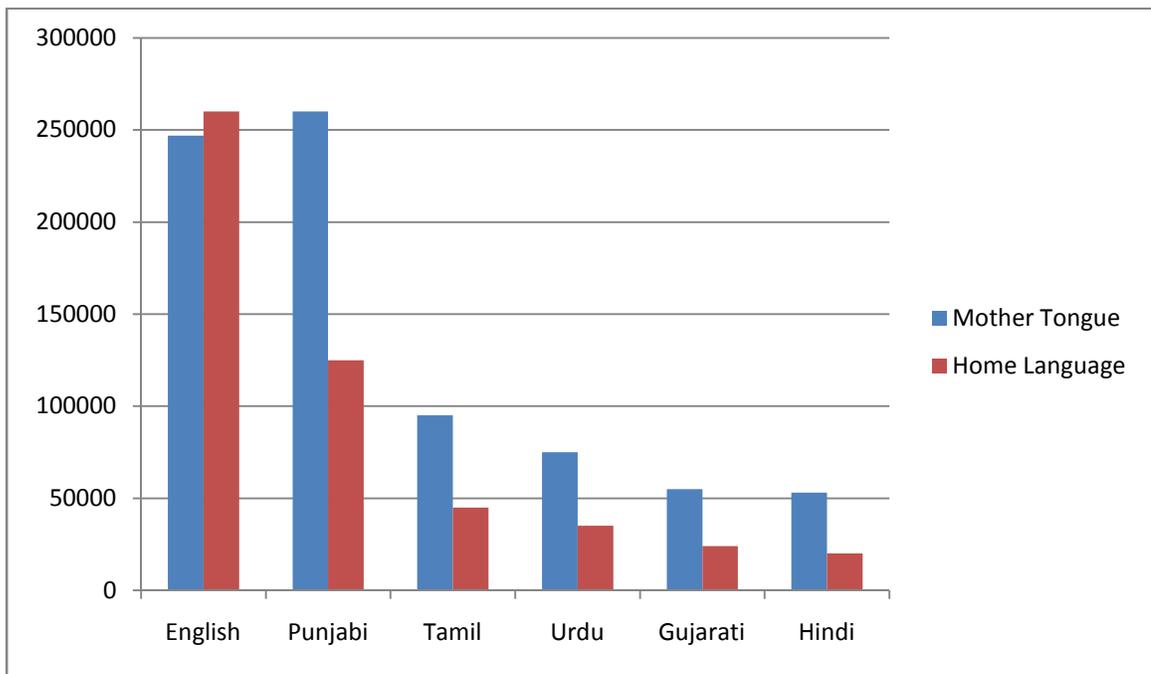
The Tamil PELO at Parker Elementary School, which is held every Tuesday and Thursday after school from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM, participates in the latter type of heritage language instruction. In reality, not all children who attend Tamil PELO classes at Parker Elementary School can speak or even understand Tamil. Even though all of the 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students that I interviewed identified with Tamil as their mother tongue, several of them also professed to speak mostly in English or French at home. Tran et al. confirm this trend in their own study of South Asian linguistic attitudes in Canada (see figure 28):

When asked in the EDS how important it was to them that their child learn to speak their own first language, 58% of South Asian parents responded that it was important. On the other hand, many South Asians who first learned a heritage language now use English at home, either as their only language (29%) or in addition to a heritage language (40%), indicating that the use of English clearly becomes prominent over time. In addition, data from the 2002 EDS show that nearly 7 in 10 (69%) South Asians converse with their friends most often in English. (Tran et al. 2005: 223-23)

According to Vasanthi, out of the forty or so Sri Lankan Tamil children who are enrolled at Parker Elementary School, less than half participate in the Tamil PELO. Vasanthi attributes this low level of enrollment to a lack of parental interest. Such parents, upon anticipating that their children will eventually live and work in North America, prefer to enroll them in after school French or English tutoring classes rather than Tamil PELO classes. In fact, on my first day of school observations, I overheard a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student

inform her PELO teacher that she would have to miss Thursday classes to attend her French tutoring class.

Tamil PELO students are divided into two cohorts: novice and intermediate students. The novice cohort, which includes 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, is taught by Vasanthi. The intermediate cohort, which includes 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, is taught by Nilima. Generally, the students' public school grade level matches their Tamil PELO grade level. The one exception is Karthik, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade boy who was retained in the novice class after failing to pass the Tamil PELO matriculation standards.



**Figure 28: Mother Tongue and Home Languages of South Asians in Canada (Tran et al. 2005)**

According to the *Beginning Tamil* curriculum guide, the matriculation standards for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Tamil PELO instruction are to familiarize students with their standardized (i.e. literary) heritage language and identity. By specifying that Sri Lankan Tamil children should learn to orally “communicate in the standard language” and “learn

the written language”, the curriculum guide instructs Tamil PELO teachers to teach children literary Tamil:

**Global Objectives (ORAL and WRITTEN)**

The main objectives of this program are: to preserve the heritage language and culture, to enable students to *communicate in a standard language* in situations related to their environment, and to learn the *written language*.

**Aims (ORAL and WRITTEN)**

The role of this program is to: maintain and improve the student’s basic knowledge of the language and his or her specific language abilities, and to help the student develop the attitudes required to cultivate an interest in the heritage language and to appreciate and identify with the culture. (CECM 1998:12, my emphasis)

The curriculum guide further specifies that “the student should be able to communicate orally (in standard language) to persons familiar to him or her, on the following topics”:

1) me, you, and our families, 2) my school, 3) seasons, 4) time, 5) health and hygiene, 6) recreational activities, 7) food and drink, 8) animals, 9) clothing, 10) my home, 11) special celebrations (ibid: 12) (see figure 29).

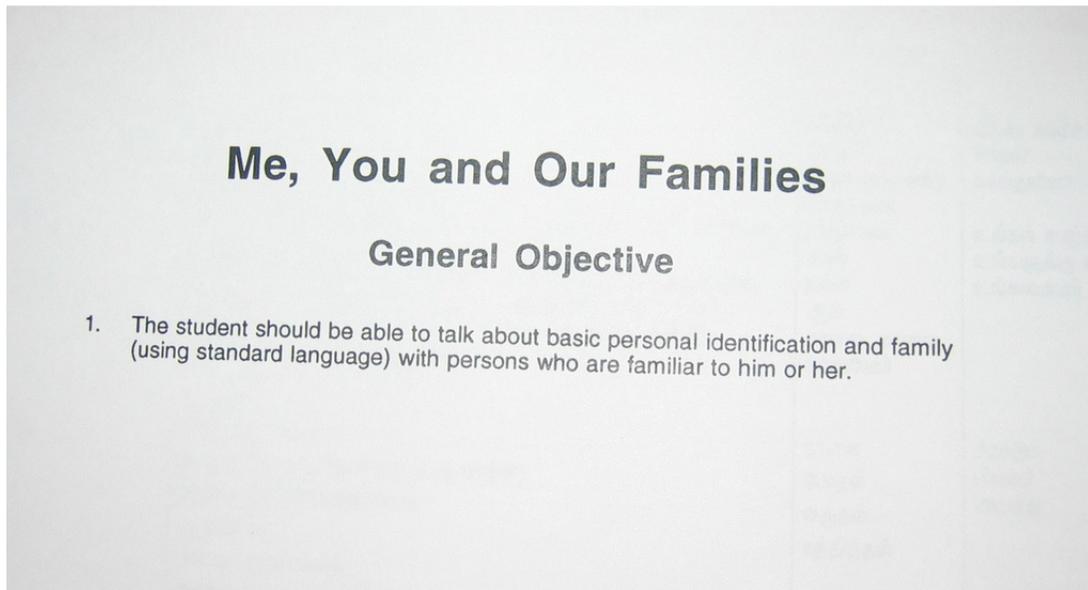
Me, You and Our Families			
TERMINAL OBJECTIVE	MINIMAL CONTENT		
	COMMUNICATIVE (EXAMPLES)	LEXICAL	GRAMMATICAL
The student should be able to:			
1.4 ask someone to identify/ identify family members and relationships;	யார் இவர்? யார் அந்த மனிதர்? இவர்கள் யார் யாரென்று சொல்லுங்கள். இவர்கள் என் பெற்றோர்; இவர் என் அம்மா, இவர் என் அப்பா. இவன் என் தம்பி. இவள் என் தங்கை. அவர் எங்கள் பாட்டி. அவர்கள் உங்கள் சகோதரர்களா? அந்த மனிதர் உங்கள் தகப்பனா?	(குடும்ப உறவுமுறைகள்) மனிதர், பெண்மணி சிறுவன், சிறுமி சொல்லுதல்	யாரென்று, யார் யாரென்று <b>கட்டுப்பெயர்கள்:</b> இவர், அவர், இவர்கள், அவர்கள் இவன், அவன், இவள், அவள் <b>கட்டுப் பெயர்ச்சங்கள்:</b> இந்த, அந்த <b>பால் வேறுபாடுகள்:</b> அவன் - அவன் - அவர்கள் <b>வினாவாக்கல்:</b> சகோதரர்களா? தகப்பனா?
1.5 express ignorance of a person's identity;	எனக்கு அவரை யாரென்று தெரியவில்லை; யார் அவர்? எனக்கு அவர் பெயர் என்னவென்று தெரியாது.	தெரிதல்	தெரியவில்லை, தெரியாது தெரியும் என்னவென்று
1.6 ask someone to give/ give information such as age, address, telephone number, place of birth, etc;	உங்களுக்கு எத்தனை வயது? எனக்கு ஏழு வயது ஆகின்றது எனக்கு வயது ஏழு உங்கள் தொலைபேசி இலக்கம் என்ன? உங்கள் முகவரி என்ன? எனது தொலைபேசி இலக்கம்... ..எனது முகவரி (விலாசம்)... .. உங்கள் பிறந்த இடம் எது? எனது பிறந்த இடம் கனடா. நான் கனடாவில் பிறந்தேன்	(இலக்கம்: 1-10) வயது தொலைபேசி இலக்கம் முகவரி (விலாசம்) பிறந்த இடம் ஆகுதல் பிறத்தல் இலங்கை, இந்தியா	எத்தனை வயது? முகவரி என்ன? பிறந்த இடம் எது?

Figure 29: Curriculum Guide for Beginning Tamil PELO Class

With respect to its writing objectives, the curriculum guide specifies that “the student should be able to understand texts that relates to the themes presented in this program” and that “the student should be able to write texts relating to his or her needs and interests, and to the themes presented in the oral modules” (ibid: 14).

The curriculum guide’s focus on “familiar” or “familial” themes, i.e. those which correspond to students’ home and religious lives, reinforces the language ideology of private /public domains instrumental in all liberalist forms of governance (Gal 2005). More specifically, this topic list bears a striking resemblance to the word lists assembled by 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalists/philologists when attempting to identify the native core of South Asian language families. Just as nationalists would later use these core word lists (which were perceived as unchanging and purist in form) as the lexical

foundation of their literary standards, heritage language teachers are similarly encouraged to use these familial topics to construct a “private” social domain in which the literary standard can be normatively employed within French nationalist Quebec (see figure 30). This “private” social domain discursively overlaps with the social space of the Tamil ūr.



**Figure 30: CECM Curriculum Guide for Beginning Tamil PELO Class**

Vasanthi, who teaches the novice cohort at Parker Elementary School, attempts to closely follow these curriculum guidelines in her instructional methods. For one, she deliberately speaks solely in Tamil during class and insists that her students address her in Tamil.<sup>65</sup> Despite her best efforts, however, on January 19, 2006 I estimated that students responded to her questions in Tamil only 70% of the time. In general students speak to each another in English, although at times they may speak briefly in Tamil. Among this cohort of nine students, one girl, Sarmini, and one boy, Tharshan, never once spoke in Tamil and even appeared to experience difficulty in understanding Tamil. On January 19<sup>th</sup>, Sarmini remained silent during the entire class period, while Tharshan

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<sup>65</sup> Vasanthi has limited competence in English and no competence in French.

asked his friend several times to translate the teacher's instructions into English. After class, Vasanthi attributed Sarmini's and Tharshan's poor speaking skills to their parents' lack of encouragement, and not to their own lack of grammatical knowledge of Tamil. By assuming that all of her students are native experts in speaking their "mother tongue", she ignores her students' need for further instruction in the colloquial Tamil language.

Vasanthi's primary teaching objective is to teach her students basic literacy skills in literary Tamil. First, she teaches students to identify and write the Tamil alphabet. One day when Vasanthi was returning a graded quiz on the Tamil alphabet to the class, Prakash (one of the more fluent students in colloquial Tamil) saw that Sarmini had received a score of 2 out of 20 on her quiz. When he asked her in English why this was the case, she declined to respond and instead slowly inserted the quiz into her folder. Since then, both she and Tharshan (who also received a low score on his quiz) were told to practice writing the Tamil alphabet while Vasanthi teaches the rest of the class how to write words and construct simple sentences in literary Tamil.

At the time of my research, Vasanthi was in the process of teaching her students literary Tamil phonemes. In both the novice and intermediate classes, Sri Lankan Tamil students experience difficulty in distinguishing between the consonants  $\text{t}$  and  $\text{t}$ ,  $\text{n}$ ,  $\underline{\text{n}}$ , and  $\text{n}$ ,  $\text{l}$ ,  $\text{l}$ , and  $\text{l}$ , and  $\text{r}$  and  $\text{r}$ , and between long and short vowels. Much like other second-language learners of Tamil whose native language is English or French, Tamil PELO students cannot phonemically recognize these different sounds. On January 19<sup>th</sup>, Vasanthi taught her students to distinguish between  $\text{t}$  and  $\text{t}$  ( $\text{ட}$  and  $\text{த}$ ). She first asked for examples of words ending with the sound "tai" ( $\text{டை}$ ). After a student had correctly written his/her example on the board, Vasanthi phonetically emphasized its /t/ sound:



Phonological purity has long been one of the trademarks of the Tamil literary standard in Tamil Nadu, more so than Sri Lanka. In fact, even though Sri Lankan Tamils often claim that their language is lexically and grammatically purer than Indian Tamils', Indian Tamil vernaculars are generally regarded as being phonetically purer than Sri Lankan Tamil vernaculars. In Tamil Nadu, the ability to correctly articulate the rhotic consonant ழ /ɻ/ is considered a testament to the interlocutor's spoken linguistic expertise. Colloquial varieties of Sri Lankan Tamil, as well as colloquial varieties of Malaysian Tamil, have not retained this phonemic distinction between ழ and ழ. For this reason, Sri Lankan Tamil PELO teachers do not refer to the articulation of /ɻ/ as // as a phonological mistake. Consequently, Vasanthi spends more effort enforcing the purity of Tamil lexicon than in enforcing the purity of Tamil phonemes.

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, Vasanthi distributed a worksheet with pictures of a radio, television, telephone, newspaper, and fax machine and asked students to furnish the Tamil names of these objects. Because these words are commonly referred to by their English names (by both Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils), none of the students could provide the correct answer. Two weeks later on February 2, 2006, Vasanthi once again introduced Tamil neologisms for objects commonly referred to by their English names:

முத்திரை	stamp
தபால்	letter
தபாலகம்	post office
வங்கி	bank

At the end of class, Vasanthi, Nilima, and I discussed her students' poor performance on this exercise. When I asked them to compare Sri Lankan Tamils' and Indian Tamils' usage of Tamil neologisms and English lexicon, they each expressed a different point of

view. Vasanthi believes that Indian Tamils are better at using Tamil neologisms for technological or “modern” objects, while Nilima insists that Indian Tamils more frequently use English lexicon than Sri Lankan Tamils. Through their exposure to Indian Tamil speech in radio, television, and film produced in Tamil Nadu, these women have reached diverging interpretations of Tamil sociolinguistic diversity. Their lack of first-hand knowledge of colloquial Indian Tamil is exacerbated by the sociolinguistic segregation of Indian Tamils and Sri Lankans within Montreal.

Similarly, the institutional isolation of Tamil PELO teachers from other Tamil language schools in the diaspora permits them to develop divergent pedagogical styles in the use of French or English in the classroom. Generally speaking, Nilima is less concerned than Vasanthi with enforcing that intermediate students speak only in Tamil. In fact, Nilima and her students often code-mix in Tamil, English, and French in order to facilitate the class’s understanding of the lesson. Nilima also speaks to her students in colloquial Jaffna Tamil, even when teaching them to read and write in literary Tamil. Although several of her students are conversationally fluent in colloquial Tamil, none of them are conversationally fluent in literary Tamil. Nilima often has to translate words or phrases from literary Tamil into colloquial Tamil to assist her students in recognizing their meaning.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Nilima began class by writing the date, **24 ஐத 2006**

**செவ்வாய்**, on the board:

**T: okay nān *dētu* eḷutukiratu**

okay I am writing the date

Out of habit, she uses the Tamil-phoneticized English word for date, “*dētu*” instead of the more commonly used Tamil word, “*tēti*”. While writing on the black board, Naveen,

who is one of the more conversationally fluent students, calls out the date in colloquial Jaffna Tamil:

**S: *ɸicher* iruvatinālu tai sappay kilame** teacher Tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of tai month

By articulating the phonemes /v/ as /p/, /ai/ as /ɛ/, and /ɻ/ as /l/, the boy is orally communicating in a style of Tamil that is phonologically distinct from the literary standard. He also adds the epenthetic vowel /Ē/ at the end of naɻ, a standard feature of all colloquial Tamil varieties. Rather than translate Naveen’s phrase into literary Tamil, Nilima guides the students to repeat the date in a half literary, half colloquial style of Tamil:

**T and S: iruvatinālu tai sevvay kilamai** tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of tai month

Hence, “iruvatinālu” remains a colloquial form, “sevvay” becomes the literary form, and “kilamai” becomes the colloquial Sri Lankan Tamil pronunciation of the literary form. This hybridization of Tamil “text” and “talk” helps to transform students’ innate knowledge of colloquial Tamil into a metalinguistic knowledge of literary Tamil.

Nilima similarly alternates between literary and colloquial Tamil when teaching students to write compound words. Later that day, she assigned them a worksheet which requires students to combine two root words to create a compound word. To help them get started, Nilima wrote an example on the board: கத்திரிக்காய் = கத்தரி + காய் and then told its meaning in literary Tamil:

**T: kattirikkāy enṛāl eggplant** kattirikkay means eggplant

Another student, Sonali, then called out another example in colloquial Tamil, the pronunciation of which Nilima corrected by emphasizing the /ai/ sound of its literary Tamil form:

**S: vālēppalam**

**T: vālai paḷam vālai paḷam** banana

She then wrote on the board, வாழைப்பழம் = வாழை + பழம் and then described to students how bananas or plantains in Sri Lanka are sometimes sweet, sometimes not.

Sonali interrupted her to say, “Teacher I have never went to Sri Lanka.” Nilima ignored her and then said, “*okay another example collu*” [okay say another example]. She then wrote on the board: மணியோசை = மணி + ஓசை.

**S: appaṭṭiṇṇu enna ṭicher** what is the meaning teacher

**T: maṇiyōṣe ding ding**

**S: bell bell sound**

**T: ippo nān solradē ellām sollu** now say it like I say it  
**maṇiyōcai maṇi ōṣe** bell sound bell sound  
**nāṅgaḷ appaṭṭinnu colluvōm** we will say it in the same manner

Framed by the student’s question in colloquial Tamil, Nilima responds by alternating between providing a colloquial-style pronunciation (maṇiyōṣe) and a literary-style pronunciation (maṇiyōcai) of the word, thus taking turns to familiarize students with both the meaning and the phonology.

Vasanthi, on the other hand, enforces a “no code-mixing or code-switching” rule in her classroom. In fact, she often tells her students to stop speaking when they begin to code-mix or code-switch in Tamil and English: கதைக்கு குடாது or “kataikku kuṭātu”. The verb “kataikka”, which means “to talk/speak”, is an example of a pre-modern literary Tamil lexeme which has been retained in modern colloquial Jaffna Tamil. Literate and highly educated Indian Tamils will usually understand the meaning and recognize the source of this word, leading some of them to incorrectly assume that Sri Lankan Tamils

speak a classical literary language.<sup>66</sup> For Vasanthi, who is unaware of the source of Sri Lankan Tamil lexicon, her hyper-emphasis on lexical purity sometimes comes at the expense of its linguistic primordially.

On January 26<sup>th</sup>, Vasanthi taught her advanced students how to construct simple sentences in the Subject-Object-Verb word order of literary Tamil. Students were instructed to write their own sentences using examples of parts of speech. For புல் / மேய்ந்தது / பசு, Sharath wrote புல் மேய்ந்தது பசுகிறது. When reading his sentence aloud to the class, he finished by saying “period” in English. Vasanthi insisted that Sharath say “muṭṭu pulli” instead of “period”. Ironically, “muṭṭu pulli” is both a recent linguistic neologism and a recent cultural import. Classical Tamil literature, upon which the purist literary standard is based, never employed punctuations at the end of its poetic verses (Kandiah 1978). It is only when European missionaries introduced the genre of the novel in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century that such literary conventions were adopted by Tamil writers. In this example, Vasanthi’s ideological emphasis on Tamil linguistic purity inadvertently detracts from the primordially of the Jaffna Tamil dialect.

Even though the creation of Tamil prose grew out of a reaction to European liberalist claims of literary and intellectual superiority, the genre of the Tamil short story and novel eventually became a popular literary media in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka, and the diaspora (Annamalai 1979). Both Vasanthi and Nilima frequently use Tamil storybooks bought from Nickes Fantaisies for their lessons. Vasanthi, rather than reading the story to her students in literary Tamil, translates and paraphrases it in colloquial Jaffna Tamil. On January 19<sup>th</sup> while narrating a story about a monkey and a bee to her students, Vasanthi

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<sup>66</sup> Many Indian Tamils, who instead use the colloquial lexeme, “pēsā”, to say “pēsā kuṭātu”, would not understand the meaning of “kataikku kuṭātu”.

periodically stopped to ask her students listening comprehension questions about the plot and characters. Vasanthi's star pupils, Jeevitha and her brother Prakash, answered most of these questions correctly. When asked to write all of the nouns from the story on the board, Prakash immediately jumped to the board and wrote the following words:

பெயர்க்க்சொல்	nouns
குரங்கு	monkey
தேனீ	honeybee
தேன்	honey
மரம்	tree

Vasanthi then asked Prakash to convert these words into their plural form. In the first three cases, this simply involves adding the morpheme “-gal”, which Prakash easily accomplished. In the last two cases, the correct conversion from singular to plural form requires knowledge of literary sandhi rules, which Prakash had not yet learned.<sup>67</sup> When Prakash expressed his dismay in learning that he had failed to provide the correct answer, Vasanthi reassured him that was not due to his faulty knowledge of colloquial Tamil, but instead due to his incomplete knowledge of literary Tamil.

Nilima's intermediate students, on the other hand, are supposed to have basic knowledge of literary sandhi rules, as well as basic competence in reading, writing, and speaking literary Tamil. In reality, Nilima's students continue to struggle to meet these curriculum standards for the master of literary Tamil. For example, when reading paragraph-length texts, students would often sound out each word syllable-by-syllable in a colloquial Jaffna Tamil-style intonation. Furthermore, they often could not understand the meaning of the text until Nilima translated it into colloquial Tamil.

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<sup>67</sup> Sandhi rules explain phonological changes that accompany the agglutination of morphemes in literary Tamil.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Nilima announced that students would have to read aloud the story assigned for homework:

**T: ippo ninga vāciccu  
ruci vācirunga**

now that you have read (the story)  
prove it by reading (out loud)

**S: no teacher, no teacher please**

The chorus of protests that Nilima’s directive elicited is both due to the students’ negligence in preparing for the assignment and their difficulty in reading literary Tamil. Nilima explained that everyone would compete for points based on their performance. The first student to volunteer was Nitya, one of the most diligent students in the class:

**S: mayil paṛavaigaluḷ mikavum  
alakanatu mayil.  
itu iḷangai intiyā mianmār  
malēsiya pōṇṛa nāṭuviḷē vāḷkiṛatu**

the peacock is the most beautiful  
bird  
it lives in the countries of Sri Lanka,  
India, Myanmar, Malaysia

Nitya stumbled over Tamil-phoneticized loan words, such as intiyā, mianmār, and malēsiya, and literary Tamil phonemes, such as the “ṛ” in pōṇṛa and the “ḷ” in vāḷkiṛatu. She completed her recitation in 31 seconds and was awarded the highest score of four points for her relatively fast speed and accuracy of pronunciation. Immediately following Nitya was Naveen, who is perhaps the most conversationally fluent student in Nilima’s class. Naveen completed the same recitation in 45 seconds and was only awarded three points for his effort. In addition to stumbling over the same words as Nitya, Naveen also had difficulty articulation “mikavum” (which translates as “romba” in colloquial Tamil), “alakanatu”, and naṭuviḷē (which is pronounced as /naṭule/ in colloquial Tamil).

In this classroom competition, as well as in most Tamil PELO activities, students’ academic success is measured in terms of their ability to bridge the gap between textual and oral competences. Tamil PELO teachers generally regard their students’ oral

competence in colloquial Tamil as their natural birthright, and hence rely upon this “mother tongue” expertise to develop students’ literary expertise. Likewise, literacy is regarded as a skill that enhances the child’s ability to communicate (both orally and textually) and, thus, enhances his/her sense of ethnolinguistic belonging. Tamil PELO teachers creatively weave together students’ expertise in Tamil “talk” with their growing knowledge of Tamil “text” in their effort to socialize Sri Lankan Tamil children into a “primordialist” heritage language identity.

### ***Tamil Mother Tongue Schools***

Given the alarming rate at which 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Tamil children and youth appear to be abandoning their mother tongue for English or French and their cultural traditions for western values, Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora leaders are less concerned with cultivating Tamil children’s heritage language identity as Tamil-Québécois as they are with cultivating their knowledge of a pure Tamil literary standard. For this reason, the WTM has established their own “mother tongue schools” within Montreal’s Tamil ūrs. In addition to functioning under the close supervision of the WTM, “mother tongue schools” differ from “heritage language schools” in that they are taught by volunteers who possess mother tongue expertise in Tamil rather than pedagogical expertise. These mother tongue schools also offer instruction from the 1<sup>st</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade, with upper grade levels taught by volunteers with specialized expertise in literary Tamil.

At every Sri Lankan Tamil political function in Montreal, a representative of the World Tamil Movement exhorts parents to speak to their children in Tamil and to send them to Tamil language school. The urgency of this demand is comprehensible in light of Sri Lanka’s protracted civil war. In order for the Tamil linguistic nationalist

movement in Sri Lanka to be successfully sustained into the next generation, sentiments of Tamil ethnolinguistic belonging must be cultivated among the children of the global Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Although I was unable to obtain statistics on this matter, I would surmise that less than 25% of Sri Lankan Tamil schoolchildren in Montreal actually attend Tamil language schools. Included in this estimate are Tamil children and youth who may have previously attended Tamil language school but did not advance very far in its grade levels. For example, Selvamani attended Tamil language school at the Tamil Eelam Association of Quebec in Côte-des-Neiges for three or four years, but never learned to write much more than the Tamil alphabet. Among those children who do not have not attended Tamil language school, many of them are nonetheless socialized to speak in colloquial Tamil with parents, grandparents, and other older relatives.

In 2003, the global leaders of the World Tamil Movement leaders convened to draft a standardized syllabus for the Tamil language education of “western” Sri Lankan Tamil children. Recognizing that children of refugees living in countries such as Canada, France, Denmark, Norway, and Australia have different educational objectives and linguistic skills to master than children living in India or Sri Lanka, it was deemed necessary to develop pedagogical materials adapted to their multilingual and multicultural circumstances. These pedagogical materials include a standardized syllabus, student workbook, teacher’s manual, and home instruction CD-ROM. All pedagogical materials are published by the Academy of Tamil Arts & Technology and the Ontario Academy of Fine Arts in Scarborough, Ontario and are distributed throughout the global Tamil diaspora. The WTM also coordinates an annual matriculation exam at the end of May for all global diaspora students. Only after receiving a passing certificate

from the World Tamil Movement is a student permitted to move onto the next grade level.

In the spring and summer months of 2005, I audio-recorded and observed a few Tamil language classes at the Murugan temple in Dollard-des-Ormeaux. Mrs. Ramanathan, once a highly esteemed school principal in Jaffna, is now the director of the School of Heritage Studies at the Murugan temple (Thiru 2008a).<sup>68</sup> Every Sunday afternoon from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM, 125 students attend Tamil language class in the basement hall of the Murugan temple.<sup>69</sup> Mrs. Ramanathan also teaches religion class on Saturdays. At the beginning of each class session, Mrs. Ramanathan leads children in speaking and singing prayers of worship for Tamiltāy, the Tamil goddess. After finishing their prayers, a few children place vermilion powder on their foreheads before joining their classmates for their Tamil lesson.

On March 27, 2005, I was given the opportunity to observe and, at times, speak with teachers and students of different grade levels of this Tamil school. The following notes describe the main teaching objective and general student characteristics of each grade level:

Kindergarten (1 girl, 2 boys)

Female teacher is leading the kids in a nursery rhyme song. She asks them to repeat each verse several times. Then she asks students the meaning of basic vocabulary, such as city, country, and world. A little girl of age 3 or 4 is the most enthusiastic participant. One boy is having difficulty understanding the teacher.

1<sup>st</sup> grade (5 girls, 5 boys)

Female teacher narrates a story, verse by verse, and asks the children to repeat each word or phrase.

2<sup>nd</sup> grade (5 girls, 5 boys)

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<sup>68</sup> I have used her actual name because it is published in the official school website.

<sup>69</sup> There are always fewer students that attend during the summer months because many families leave Montreal for summer vacation.

Students are practicing to write the Tamil alphabet in their workbooks. Some children speak to their friends in French and to the female teacher in Tamil.

3<sup>rd</sup> grade (7 girls, 2 boys)

Male teacher dictates short phrases and sentences and students write them in their notebooks.

4<sup>th</sup> grade (3 girls, 2 boys)

Female teacher asks children to read a short story and answer comprehension questions in their workbook. Two girls take turns reading a short story from their workbooks. Girls claim that they are very good in Tamil and that they are proud to speak Tamil. Boys appear to have difficulty reading and speaking Tamil. One boy is unable to understand English and prefers to speak in French. Another boy said that he is proud to be fluent in French, even if he is not fluent in Tamil.

6<sup>th</sup> grade (2 girls)

I interrupt their lesson to speak to the two girls. The girls speak to each other in French, to me in English, and to the female teacher in Tamil.

8<sup>th</sup> grade (4 girls)

Female teacher reviews the students' quizzes in which students had to write a short essay. Today they will learn how to write letters to their parents about Tamil and Canadian holidays. One girl says that she is proud to speak Tamil because it makes her feel special. She believes that learning Tamil makes it easier to learn French (and vice versa). Three of the girls go to French immersion school and one girl goes to English-medium school.

9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades (1 girl, 2 boys)

Male teacher reads a short story to the students. Their homework assignment is to write a several paragraph summary of the story in Tamil. This advanced class meets about once a month. The teacher is studying for his MA in engineering at Concordia University. He used to write articles and poetry in Tamil.

These observations indicate that from kindergarten through tenth grade, students at the School of Heritage Studies are more frequently exposed to oral and textual forms of literary Tamil than PELO students. Even though both PELO teachers and “mother tongue” teachers speak to their students in colloquial Jaffna Tamil, the latter do not translate literary texts into colloquial Tamil. Therefore, whereas Vasanthi paraphrases short stories into colloquial Tamil, the kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers at the School of Heritage Studies read to their novice students in literary Tamil. In both types of

schools, children begin learning the alphabet in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and learning words and phrases in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. However, because “mother tongue” students are grouped into distinct grade levels, they master these literacy skills more quickly than heritage language students. The greatest contrast in the performances of PELO students and mother tongue students can be detected at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, when the latter begin to read literary Tamil with greater fluency and phonetic accuracy than the former. For students who continue to study Tamil beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, their level of literary Tamil expertise continues to surpass equivalent grade levels of PELO students.

To determine if this curriculum is standardized across all Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora institutions in Montreal, in the fall of 2005 I observed a few classes at the Tamil language school of Our Lady of Deliverance Tamil Catholic mission. Every Sunday afternoon from 2:30 PM to 5:00 PM, 156 Tamil children and youth attend Tamil language class and catechism class in the basement of Ste-Cécile’s Church. Parents with mother tongue expertise in Tamil teach 1<sup>st</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade language classes, while Father Joseph and another teacher teach the catechism in English. When parents asked Father Joseph if their younger children could be taught the catechism in their school language, a French-speaking Sri Lankan Tamil nun was invited to teach the catechism in French. At one point, the Tamil Catholic mission even offered French language classes to parents of French-medium schoolchildren.

I conducted my classroom observations on September 4, 2005, the second class session of the new academic year. In total there were nine work stations, each with table and white board, located around the perimeter of the church basement. Each work station had one teacher and 6 to 12 students. Except for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> grades, all teachers

were middle aged women in the thirties through fifties. The upper-level male teachers both appeared to be in their thirties. If not for the difference in attire between Tamil Catholics and Tamil Hindus, the physical layout of the Our Lady of Deliverance and Murugan temple Tamil language schools would be identical.<sup>70</sup>

In both kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes, students were instructed to describe their summer vacations in Tamil. In all of the other classes, teachers used the WTM-distributed workbook to teach students how to speak, read, or write in literary Tamil. The third grade teacher used the workbook to review vocabulary words beginning with the letter “k”. She also pointed to such objects around the room and asked students to state and to write their name on the white board. The teacher would stress the correct pronunciation of the word, emphasizing in particular the different *n*, *ṇ*, and *ṅ* and *l*, *ḷ*, and *ḻ* phonemes. Intermediate grade levels practiced constructing simple sentences or paragraphs, while 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students read a short story and answered reading comprehension questions. By closely following the guidelines of the teacher’s manual, both the Our Lady of Deliverance Tamil language school and the School of Heritage Studies at the Murugan temple reinforced the WTM’s emphasis on the acquisition of literary Tamil expertise.

The most noticeable difference between both mother tongue schools is that most young children at the Our Lady of Deliverance Tamil language school speak to each other in Tamil and French, whereas most young children at the Murugan temple school speak to each other in Tamil and English. This linguistic divergence reflects the different

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<sup>70</sup> The female teachers were either wearing a long skirt and blouse/shirt or a salwaar kameez. None of the female teachers wore a sari. The two male teachers were wearing polo-type shirts and pants. Almost all of the kids (even the girls) were dressed in western clothing. At the Murugan temple, most of the female teachers were dressed in saris and many of the young girls wore salwaar kameezes.

location of each school in the Montreal Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. The Catholic Tamil language school is situated near an urban neighborhood where lower and lower-middle class Sri Lankan Tamil refugees have to send their children to French-medium school. In contrast, the Hindu Tamil language school is situated near a suburban neighborhood where more affluent Sri Lankan Tamil families can afford to send their children to English-medium schools. In general, teachers at the Catholic Tamil mission are more accommodating of children's tendency to code-switch between French, English, and Tamil than teachers at the Murugan temple, where both the goddess Tamiltāy and the god Murugan metaphorically stand guard over the Tamil language.

### **Division of Language Labor**

According to Quebec's language ideology of sociolinguistic compartmentalization, monolingual institutional domains help to maintain the purity of a social group's moral values and linguistic practices. Quebec's heritage language industry contributes to the enforcement of this language ideology by assigning to each monolingual domain a specific task in the maintenance of literary standards or mother tongues. In the Montreal Tamil diasporas, this language labor is divided along ethnonational, gender, and generational lines. 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamil youth are thus expected to study English and colloquial Tamil, while 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil youth are expected to study French and literary Tamil. Similarly, Indian Tamils are expected to enhance the prestige of colloquial Tamil, while Sri Lankan Tamils are expected to preserve the purity of literary Tamil. Finally, women teachers are entrusted with teaching the mother tongue, while male teachers are entrusted with establishing curricular standards. This compartmentalization of language labor facilitates the

complementary enforcement of nationalist, multicultural, and globalization projects in the Montreal Tamil diasporas.

***Ethnonational Divisions in Language Labor***

According to Bill 101, all immigrant children must attend French-medium public schools unless their parent or sibling previously attended English-medium public school in Canada. Recent Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, most of who attended Tamil-medium schools in Sri Lanka and arrived in Montreal with limited competence in English, are usually obliged to enroll their children in French-medium schools in Montreal. In doing so, 1<sup>st</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamils are even further sequestered from participating in the city's prestigious English-speaking social domains. Earlier immigrant cohorts of Indian Tamils, many of whom attended English-medium schools in Montreal prior to 1977, are often able to send their children to English-medium public or private schools in Montreal. Through the legal interventions of Bill 101, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils have linguistically diverged into primarily French-speaking and English-speaking ethnonational groups, respectively.

Although they are socialized into separate monolingual domains, both 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil youth are at least functionally bilingual in English and French. In particular, Sri Lankan Tamil children and youth are among the most fluent, multilingual residents of Montreal. Their spoken and written French, which is learned in the socializing milieu of native French-speaking students and teachers in French-medium schools, boasts a native-like fluency. Although English language instruction in French-medium schools is abysmally poor (owing to the fact that French school boards only hire native-French-speaking teachers), many Sri Lankan Tamil

schoolchildren become conversationally fluent in English through informal linguistic interactions with friends outside of school. In South Asian social networks, it is customary for interlocutors of different ethnolinguistic backgrounds to speak to one another in the *lingua franca* of English.

2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamils, on the other hand, speak French with a recognizably non-native phonology. French language teachers hired by English school boards are often non-native French speakers who studied European French, not Québécois French, as a second language. Therefore, even though Indian Tamil students may learn standard French syntax, morphology, and lexicon, they often lack mastery of Québécois French phonology and pragmatics. Because most of Montreal is functionally bilingual, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamils are infrequently obliged to use French in their daily interactions. Due to their near total language socialization in English-speaking (or Tamil-speaking) domains, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamils exhibit somewhat limited oral competences in French, thus effectively marking them as Canadians and not Québécois.

Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils also linguistically diverge in their oral and textual competences in colloquial and literary Tamil. As a general rule, Indian Tamil children do not attend Sri Lankan Tamil language schools, and vice versa. According to Lalitha and Mohan, sending their children to Tamil PELO class would result in a significant drop in their socioeconomic status. Mohan states:

Tamil PELO classes are offered in schools where the student body is mostly low-income. Indian Tamils live in the suburbs and send their children to schools where there are less Tamils, not enough to make up an entire PELO class.

When I asked how they would educate their children in Tamil, Lalitha replied that she would follow her parents' model by speaking only in Tamil at home. Mohan believes

that it is only natural to speak to young children in Tamil. Dr. Sundaran, however, disagrees with Mohan's assessment. He instead believes that some Indian Tamil parents are socializing their children to speak only in English in the hopes that this linguistic competence will enhance their social status. Other parents, despite their best intentions, do not know how to teach their children to speak in Tamil at home.

For the latter group of parents, Dr. Sundaran has posted some tips on "making children speak Tamil" on the Tamilagam website (Tamilagam 2008).<sup>71</sup> On this website, there are also links to other multimedia instructional materials and resources on the Tamil language. These links include "Ram S Ravindran's Web Based Spoken Tamil", "Ram S Ravindran's LearnTamil PDF File", "Web Based Basic Tamil learning Course (Unicode)", "Sound like a native with these simple rules", "U of Penn-Web assisted Tamil Course", and "South Asian Vowels and Consonants" (Tamilagam 2008). Most of these links emphasize the importance of mastering Tamil phonology and teaching colloquial styles of Tamil. Dr. Sundaran is also involved in a transnational effort to transliterate Tamil classical literature into Romanized script and post these transliterations onto the web, where it will be accessible to the global Tamil diaspora. According to Dr. Sundaran, more than two hundred people from all over the world are currently working on this project. Its popularity suggests that, at least among Indian Tamils, Tamil script is increasingly being viewed as a necessary casualty in the modernization and globalization of the Indian Tamil language.

This notion of linguistic casualty suggests that there is an inverted relationship between criteria of linguistic purity and socioeconomic prestige in the Montreal Tamil diasporas. Among Brahmin Indian Tamils, the ability to code-mix Tamil with English is

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<sup>71</sup> When I checked this website again on June 7, 2008, this page had been de-activated.

interpreted as a sign of socioeconomic prestige (Annamalai 1989). Therefore, Indian Tamil parents' decisions to enroll their children in English-medium private schools, where the prestigious language is taught, and to not enroll their children in Sri Lankan Tamil PELO schools, where a purist register of Tamil is taught, could be viewed as a coherent strategy to maintain their elite status as the higher caste and upper-class Tamil group of Montreal.

However during the Indian Tamil Deepavali celebration in October 2005, frequent reminders from audience members *to tamil pēsunka!* [speak in Tamil] suggest that the valorization of English and the de-valorization of Sri Lankan Tamil is far from uncontested. The prominence of Tanglish speaking (Tamil-English code-mixing) or monolingual English-speaking second generation children was viewed with alarm by some members of the audience. In fact, as described in Chapter Four, Indian Tamils sympathetic to the goals of Tamil nationalism and cognizant of the attractive pull of English among the second generation sometimes laud the fluency and purity with which first and second generation Sri Lankan Tamils speak Tamil. Also, because many Indian Tamils incorrectly believe that Sri Lankan Tamils speak literary Tamil, some presume that the latter group is better equipped to safeguard the Tamil language in a standardized and timeless state. By comparison, the different varieties of colloquial Indian Tamil spoken in Montreal, which have been influenced by English and Hindi lexicon and phonology, are regarded as less grammatically suitable for the reproduction of the Tamil literary standard.

By delegating responsibility for preserving the purity of the Tamil language onto Sri Lankan Tamils and for enhancing the prestige of the Tamil language onto Indian

Tamils, a complementary template for the asymmetrical division of language labor is generated. Ironically, the burden of defending the purity of Tamil from foreign influences is shouldered by a racially marginalized group whose socioeconomic status would significantly improve if more members spoke English or French fluently. Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora leaders are forced to accept this casualty because standards of Tamil linguistic purity are central to their linguistic nationalist movement. Consequently, socioeconomically mobile Indian Tamils, secure in the knowledge that their language is safe under the protective ministering of Sri Lankan Tamils, are free to experiment with and to expand their linguistic repertoires to strategically position themselves as globally-oriented speakers.

### ***Gender Divisions in Language Labor***

In the previously mentioned Deepavali show, two Indian Tamil students performed a humorous skit in which the brother speaks in Tanglish to his elder sister, who in turn responds in a purist Tamil style. The sister, in an Indian-accented Tamil, attempts to educate her younger brother about the cultural traditions associated with the Hindu holiday, Deepavali. The brother, in a Canadian-accented Tamil-English code-mix, good-naturedly admits his cultural ignorance of Deepavali and jokes about his preference for North American popular culture. This comedic enactment suggests that gender inequalities, which cut across both Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas, reflect an additional asymmetry in the division of language labor.

In South Asian societies, the cultural and linguistic socialization of children is customarily delegated to women (hence the term “mother tongue”). An elder sister, who in this skit acts like a second mother, is also expected to participate significantly in the

socialization of her younger siblings. This language ideology, which envisions women as biologically predisposed for acts of linguistic and cultural reproduction, is prevalently endorsed in the Montreal Tamil diasporas. For example, Selvamani volunteers to tutor her younger siblings, cousins, and neighbors in French every Saturday afternoon. Similarly, Mohan testifies to the dramatic improvement in his conversational fluency in Indian Tamil after practicing with Lalitha.

By naturalizing the role of women in the language socialization of children, women's language labor is mostly rendered invisible. This semiotic act of erasure discourages Tamil women from participating in more public and prestigious linguistic activities, an asymmetry that is most evident in the institutionalized gender dynamics of the Tamil heritage language industry. While most participants in Tamil heritage language schools and mother tongue schools are female teachers and students, much of the recognition and prestige for pedagogical and scholastic achievements in later grades is disproportionately garnered by male teachers and students. For example all pedagogical materials, such as workbooks, grammar books, CD-ROMs, websites, and teaching manuals, have been produced and authored by men. Mr. Nesananthar Sundararajah, the sole male Tamil PELO teacher in the EMSB, is given credit for helping to write the Tamil PELO curriculum guide:

We wish to thank all those who contributed to the development of this program, in particular Mr. Nesananthar Sundararajah who adapted the program in Tamil, and Mrs. Françoise Binamé who developed a Level I Program based on MEQ Heritage Language programs (Programmes d'enseignement des langues d'origine – PELO) and coordinated the work in progress. (CECM 1998: 4)

Krishnan continues to receive royalties from the spoken grammar textbook series which has been distributed throughout India.

Gender inequalities are also being reproduced through the linguistic activities of second generation children and youth in the Montreal Tamil diasporas. At the Murugan temple and Our Lady of Deliverance Tamil language schools, women generally teach lower grade levels, where female students tend to be the most active participants, while men generally teach higher grade levels, where there are fewer total students and disproportionately more male students. In my interviews with 4<sup>th</sup> grade students at the Murugan temple school, girls were most proud of their ability to speak Tamil. In my interviews with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students, however, only one male student expressed his interest in writing Tamil essays and read Tamil newspapers and magazines outside of school.<sup>72</sup> At the Our Lady of Deliverance mission, the male-dominated youth group receives special recognition for reciting poetry and participating in drama competitions during the December *olivilā* festival, the Tamil Catholic festival of lights. While these observations are far from conclusive, they nonetheless suggest that gendered divisions in linguistic labor are more than simply literary or nationalist tropes.

### **Heritage Language Commodities**

In the heritage language industry of Montreal, not everyone possesses the requisite metalinguistic expertise to socially or financially profit from the commoditization of their heritage language. Often, the division of profits depends upon the scale in which the heritage language commodity is discursively framed. For example, the value of heritage language commodities which are discursively framed by Québécois or Tamil nationalist institutions is dependent on their signs of literary expertise. On the other hand, the value of heritage language commodities which are

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<sup>72</sup> Such gender discrepancies between students were not observed in the Tamil PELO classes at Parker Elementary School.

discursively framed by the globalizing spaces of the diaspora neighborhood is dependent on their signs of colloquial expertise. Ultimately, the shifting normativity of literary expertise versus colloquial expertise is what characterizes speakers, contexts, and linguistic forms in the Montreal Tamil diaspora.

### ***Localizing, Nationalizing, and Globalizing Scales of Prestige***

Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists, Québécois nationalists, and to a lesser extent Indian Tamil nationalists, have invested in maintaining purist standards for the language socialization of Tamil-Québécois youth. In general, linguistic nationalists regard non-purist multilingual practices by Tamil youth (including code-switching or code-mixing in Tamil, French, and/or English) as disrupting the ideological compartmentalization of the monolingual form and thus interfering with the reproduction of ethnolinguistic affiliations in Montreal and its Tamil diasporas. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear 1<sup>st</sup> generation Tamils publicly lament that 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Tamil-Québécois youth should not mix together Tamil, English, and French.

Consider the following vignette narrated to me by Selvamani concerning her encounter with an upper-middle class, 1<sup>st</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil elder at the Sri Durgai Amman temple:

One day an influential patron of the temple notices that my younger sister and I are sitting on the temple steps, switching between French and Tamil. He immediately chastises us by asking, in Tamil, “Why don’t you girls speak in Tamil?” When he turns around to leave, he resumes his conversation with his daughter in English and Tamil.

The punch line of this story is that the elder’s request for the girls to speak in “pure” Tamil reveals his own preoccupation with social status. That code-switching between Tamil and French but not Tamil and English annoys this elder discloses the fact that (1)

he esteems English, not French, as a high status language, and (2) that his inability to speak French points to his loss of socioeconomic status in French nationalist Quebec. Because the efficacy of purist campaigns is always context-sensitive and boundary-dependent, the elder's attempt to negatively depict French-Tamil multilingualism as eroding the sanctified boundaries of the Sri Lankan Tamil temple is largely unsuccessful. Instead, the sisters exploit the liminality of their peripheral location on the temple steps, their transitory status as youth, and their hybridized identity as Tamil-Québécois to freely narrate this story to me in mixed codes of joul, Québécois French, Sri Lankan Tamil, and English, just after the man in question walks out of the temple.

Even within Tamil diaspora neighborhoods, code-mixing in Tamil, English, and French is viewed as a sign of prestige by multiethnic youth. Despite their segregation into different institutional and social networks, both 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil youth are converging in their efforts to create a hybridized linguistic style of "Montreal Tamil". For their part, Indian Tamil-Québécois youth have followed in their parents' tradition of hybridizing Tamil with the high prestige language of English. Although there is some ambivalence to this practice (especially by young children), most 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents esteem their children's up-scale linguistic repertoires. Sri Lankan Tamil-Québécois youth, who usually acquire greater colloquial expertise in French, English, and Tamil than Indian Tamil-Québécois youth, mix Tamil with both English and French. Again, although there are some ambivalent reactions, many 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents apprehensively regard these linguistic practices as subverting traditional "expert-novice" hierarchies.

When I asked two Sri Lankan Tamil Catholic youth, Ram and Mani, to describe how adults in their church react to their code-mixing in Tamil, English, and French, they both grinned at each other and said, “They don’t like it at all.” Ram, who recently immigrated to Montreal from Jaffna two years ago, is currently more fluent in French than in English. Mani, who attends the same French-medium public school as Ram, is helping Ram to learn French and English. In comparison with Ram and Mani, non-school age Sri Lankan Tamils find it extremely difficult to learn French or English, much less both languages at the same time. By speaking French within the church, Ram and Mani painfully remind monolingual adults of their loss of status outside the walls of this Tamil institution.

One day while eating with David Sommerset at Spicy Land, we met two of Nila’s nephews. Both boys, who are ages nine and ten, speak Tamil, French, and English fluently. They attend French-medium public school in Parc-Ex and attend Tamil language school at the Tamil Catholic mission. They speak to Nila in English, to David and me in French, and to their parents in Tamil. At the time, David explained to me that Tamil children and youth such as Nila and her nephews frequently serve as translators for their monolingual parents, either during doctor visits and school meetings.<sup>73</sup> By rendering translation services for parents, children and youth are temporarily granted the authority of “language expert.” As a result, Sri Lankan Tamil parents have privately complained to me that Sri Lankan Tamil children are becoming more disrespectful and unruly.

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<sup>73</sup> Teachers and hospital staff in Montreal are notorious for refusing to speak with parents in a language other than the official institutional language, even if this person is fully conversant in their client’s language.

The work of translation and interpretation is a type of heritage language commodity that an increasing number of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Montreal Tamils can offer. Nila's father, who is a certified interpreter/translator for the *Palais de Justice* in Montreal, is encouraging his trilingual daughter to follow in his profitable line of business. Lalitha, an Indian Tamil physician who works at an English-medium hospital in Montreal, frequently volunteers with her father to translate for monolingual Sri Lankan Tamil patients in Côte-des-Neiges hospitals. According to Dr. Sundaran, the Jewish General Hospital in Côte-des-Neiges already has several Gujarati and Punjabi interpreters but only one Tamil interpreter. He predicts that as more Sri Lankan Tamil refugees settle and expand their Tamil diaspora in Montreal, the market demand for the Tamil-English-French translators/interpreters will rise.

### ***Changing the Scales of Belonging***

Multilingual Tamil youth are themselves a type of heritage language commodity, albeit one which has retained some degree of authorship over its means of production and consumption. Because the diasporic subjectivities of Montreal Tamil youth transect multiple scales of belonging, their linguistic repertoires and levels of metalinguistic awareness are molded to fit these multi-scalar experiences. When empowered minorities use their awareness of the “blind spots at the centers of power” to “become catalysts of critical creativity”, they often subvert nationalist conventions of linguistic expertise and moral normativity (Daniel 2006:65). Hence, when Montreal Tamil youth deliberately speak in hybridized linguistic registers, they do so in pursuit of their own moral interests.

The following ethnographic vignette introduces four Sivapillai siblings whose eclectic multilingual practices and social identities selectively challenge the underlying

language ideologies of the nationalist Quebec state and Tamil Eelam nation. In particular, the Sivapillais' un-standardized code-mixing and code-switching practices and variable ethnic/racial identifications attest to a semiotic de-coupling of the iconic link between language use and social identity. Their linguistic practices and attitudes instead point toward the emergence of an alternative language ideology, one which emphasizes the mutable boundaries between linguistic forms, practices, and speakers.

Selvamani, the eldest sister of the Sivapillai family, first attended French-medium primary and secondary school and then English-medium college (CEGEP) and English-medium university in Montreal. Born in Sri Lanka, she first migrated with her family to an Indian refugee camp in the early 1983 and later to the Côte-des-Neiges Tamil ūr in 1986. Selvamani identifies first as Indian and second as Québécois, but never as Sri Lankan. She speaks French, English, and Tamil fluently and writes English and French fluently. Selvamani is accustomed to code-switching and code-mixing between Québécois joual and English or between Tamil and English with her friends, between Québécois joual and Tamil with her younger sister Mala, and between Québécois joual, English, and Tamil with her two younger brothers. Currently, Selvamani works at a biotech laboratory in a small Québécois de souche town outside of Montreal.

Her younger sister, Mala, speaks almost entirely in Québécois French or Tamil, but does not code-mix between the two languages. She has attended French-medium primary school, secondary school, and now college in Montreal. She identifies both as a francophone and a South Asian Hindu. Mala's younger brother, Dileepan, is equally fluent in both French and English, having first attended French-medium primary school and then English-medium secondary school. Dileepan closely identifies with other racial

minorities in his neighborhood, particularly those of South Asian and Caribbean descent, which whom he code-switches between Standard Québécois French and black-styled English.<sup>74</sup> The youngest brother, Mani, has recently switched from English-medium primary school to French-medium primary school. He continues to struggle with speaking, reading, and writing in French and prefers to communicate in English. All four siblings speak Tamil fluently, but only Selvamani can read some words in literary Tamil.

By selectively challenging or endorsing ideologies of linguistic purity and sociolinguistic compartmentalization, the Sivapillai siblings have invented a range of social identities and linguistic practices that respond to their needs as minority citizens of Quebec. Selvamani's and Dileepan's intra-sentential code-switching and inter-sentential code-mixing in English, French, and/or Tamil violates the principles of linguistic purism that are integral to Québécois and Tamil nationalisms. Dileepan rejects the racialized dimensions of Québécois linguistic nationalism by cultivating a sense of solidarity with other "visible minorities" (Buchignani 1980). Given their diverse linguistic preferences and practices, it is impossible to classify either sister or brother as francophones, anglophones, or allophones based solely on linguistic criteria.

Mala, on the other hand, strictly adheres to Tamil and Québécois nationalist prescriptions by refusing to code-mix in French, English, and Tamil. Also, by voluntarily attending French-medium schools, Mala has positioned herself as a "model minority." Nonetheless, the fact that Selvamani, Dileepan, and Mani can easily transfer between French and English medium schools challenges the most important objective of Bill 101 – to ensure that 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants preferentially live, work, and study in French.

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<sup>74</sup> According to a study by Tran et al., 80% of Tamils stated that at least 50% of their friends are of Tamil ancestry (2005).

Pauline Marois, the chief of the *Parti Québécois*, has recently proposed to modify Bill 101 to oblige immigrant students to attend French-medium colleges (Dutrisac 2008), thus provoking the ire of ethnic minorities in Montreal.<sup>75</sup>

Arun, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil youth, exploits his multilingual repertoire to express his anger towards Québécois nationalists. In particular, he seeks to challenge the implicit moral superiority of the Québécois de souche interlocutor who assumes, based on his phenotype, that Arun does not speak English or French. By responding with the phrase “*Je ne speak pas English*” or “*I don’t parle français*”, Arun uses his bilingual competence in French and English to upstage/upscale his monolingual Québécois de souche interlocutor. By striking at the heart of the stereotype which marks Tamil minorities as permanent “*étrangers*” in Quebec, Arun exploits his heightened metalinguistic awareness and highly developed sense of irony to stake the conditions of his own belonging.

Similarly Selvamani, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Sri Lankan Tamil who openly identifies as Indian Tamil and as Québécois, has cultivated a multilingual repertoire that purposefully rejects the moral authority of both Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists and Québécois racists. In the following interaction, Selvamani speaks mostly in Québécois French, a little in joul and Tamil, when denouncing the actions of “terrorists” (Sri Lankan Tamils) and “racists” (Filipinos who live in Côte-des-Neiges): [The highlighted words mark specific joul-like qualities, the italicized words mark specific European French-like qualities, and the bold words are in Tamil.]

- (S) Parce que n’importe quand quand j’enregistre ma voix, ça l’aire d’un garçon.  
Alors...**tzé** je me ferrai pas **poigné**...
- (S) **ennatā, ennatā, enna romba ciritā** [laughter]

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<sup>75</sup> As of yet, this proposal has not been endorsed by the Liberal Party, the current political party in power.

- (S) Alors, qu'est-ce que je disais? Bon...lorsque j'étais adolescente, comme depuis secondaire trois, j'avais pas de contact avec des gens de mon pays mais, disons que j'en avais mais c'était pas des meilleurs, alors qu'est-ce qu'on **faisait**, comme, je trouvais ça honteux de mettre le bindi ou bien de parler dans ma la langue ou quoi que ce soit je trouvais ça comme insultant pour moi ...okay.. parce que, **tzé** ils nous traitaient comme paki...**en général** dès que t'était brun avant c'était le terme paki qui était connu.
- (M) **Ç'a** diminué *maintenant*
- (S) Oui, **ç'a** diminué **maintenant**  
Oui, comparer avant oui...  
**Tsé**, ils nous traitaient, ils disaient des mauvais mots, carrément, mais des mauvais mots, **je m'excuse mais là**, ils sont des retardés...
- (S) Because whenever I record my voice I sound like a guy. So...you know, I'm not going be had...
- (S) What, what, what's so funny
- (S) So, what was I saying? Okay....When I was a teenager, like since 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I didn't interact with the people of my country, wait, I did but let's say it wasn't the best, so, what we would do, like, I thought it was embarrassing to wear a bindi or to talk in my language or whatever I found it personally insulting...okay...because, you know, they would call us "pakis"...normally if you are brown...before that that the term they used
- (M) It's not as bad now
- (S) Yes, it's not as bad now, yes, compared to before, yes...  
You know, they would call us, they would say really bad words, I mean bad word...beg your pardon but, you know, they are retarded...

By punctuating her speech with joul-like forms, Selvamani indexes a morally "normative" tone to attack those she considers to be morally deviant. For example, Selvamani says "en général" and "faisait" with a rising joul-like intonation, and "maintenant" and "là" with a joul-like phonology (where the "e" in maintenant is omitted and the "à" in là is pronounced as /ɔ/), as well as uses joul-like lexicon, such as "tzé", and phrases, such "je m'excuse là" and "me ferrai pas poigné." The placement of joul-like forms at the beginning or end of a clause in which Selvamani says something particularly subversive is what entails a sense of drama and moral import to her narrative.

## **Conclusion**

The subversion of linguistic and racial stereotypes is but one of many uses to which Montreal Tamils have applied their linguistic and metalinguistic expertise. In this chapter, I have shown how Tamil language teachers and Tamil language students in Montreal co-produce new relationships between “text” and “talk” in the effort to manipulate (and hence profit from) the “value” and “labor” associated with the production and consumption of the heritage language commodity. As themselves heritage language commodities whose repertoires are shaped by the scalar interfaces of their social lives, Montreal Tamils are presently living in a moment in which ideological regimentation and expansion are but two of many possible outcomes to their semiotic mode-of-being. While the heritage language industry in Montreal continues to enforce conflicting nationalist and globalist, local and trans-local, inclusive and exclusive scales of belonging, the study of heritage language commodity will continue to provide a valuable aperture into understanding the moral limits of modern forms of linguistic representation.

## Chapter 7

### Shifting Scales: Conclusions and Personal Reflections

#### Structures of Feeling

As I shift in narrative scale in order to present my personal reflections and summative conclusions, I am reminded of Williams' (1977) concept of "structures of feeling." In contrast to the "fixed forms" of ideology, institution, experience, and other interpretive formations of semiotic "Thirdness" which constitute the "habitual past" of human sociality, "structures of feeling" are described as emergent and even pre-emergent formations and instances of "presence" which habitually entail the temporal displacement of "past" into "future":

Yet the actual alternative to the received and produced fixed forms is not silence: not the absence, the unconscious, which bourgeois culture has mythicized. It is a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchanged... For structures of feeling can be defined as social experiences *in solution*, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been *precipitated* and are more evidently and more immediately available. (Williams 1977:131, 133-134)

To refer to these semiotic processes as "structures" is to also emphasize that sentiment and other practical modalities of feeling and thought have a durable *social* presence:

They are social in two ways that distinguish them from reduced sense of the social as the institutional and the formal: first, in that they are changes of presence (while they are still being lived this is obvious; when they have been lived it is still their substantial characteristic); second, in that although they are emergent or pre-emergent, they do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action....We are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet

we are also defining a social experience which is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies. (ibid 132)

The “interlocking internal relations” through which emergent structures of feelings relate to historically-situated institutions, ideologies, and experiences are manifest in the very scalar hierarchies which this dissertation examines.

Hence, one of the primary goals of my ethnographic analysis has been to identify the varied and variable “structures of feeling” characterizing contemporary Montreal society, while linking this conjectural analysis to empirical evidence of Montreal’s different institutions and ideologies. Williams explains that such analytic attention to structures of feeling inevitably exposes the inherent “tensions” of social life, where this “tension is as often an unease, a stress, a displacement, a latency: the moment of conscious comparison not yet come, often not even coming” (ibid 130). In this dissertation, I have suggested that such latent tensions can be easily discerned in the social lives of Montreal Tamils. More specifically, by investigating the linguistic and other cultural practices through which Montreal Tamils stake their claim to belong to different scalar orders of society, one gets a sense of the tentative hold that Québécois interlocutors have on their majority or minority status. This uncertainty of status, I propose, is an emergent structure of feeling of contemporary Montreal society, one which induces much anxiety among Québécois and Tamil nationalists who are invested in preserving or promoting certain caste, class, racial, and/or gender hierarchies.

This pre-discursive structure of feeling is manifest in the linguistic activities of the Québécois de souche, who are currently debating a constitutional amendment on the “reasonable accommodation” of ethnic and religious minorities. These debates attempt to

impose limits on how far the normative moral ideologies (and hence status hierarchies) of Québécois society can be challenged by the moral ideologies of Montreal immigrants and other minorities. Note how the “reasonable accommodation” of minorities’ linguistic rights (which are provided for through the *de facto* provisions of heritage language institutions) are not mentioned in these legal discussions. This is because nationalist Quebec is not yet able to imagine itself as an officially multilingual (three or more languages) nation-state, rather than officially monolingual (French only) or even bilingual (French and English) nation-state. In fact, only now are Quebec scholars beginning to investigate the multilingual practices of Montreal youth, even though many Native Canadians and other minorities living in or near Montreal have been practicing multilinguals since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>76</sup> Even arguments debating the grammatical foundation and institutional use of “Standard French” versus “Standard Québécois” are based on an inability to perceive multilingualism (and for some, immigration) as a non-threatening aspect of Quebec social life.

A related structure of feeling emergent among Montreal Tamils is the fear of loss of status as a result of the immigration or refugee experience. For some immigrants, this fear is in response to their inability to maintain the same level of social status previously enjoyed in South Asia. For other 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Montreal Tamils, this fear is elicited by an inability to achieve the same level of social status as other Tamil immigrants (of equal or lower caste or socioeconomic status) living in North America. In the United States, South Asian Americans’ hegemonic appropriation of white culture and endorsement of the “model minority” myth are social-climbing strategies effectively

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<sup>76</sup> At the 2008 CASCA conference in Ottawa, Patricia Lamarre of the Université de Montréal and Kathleen Riley of Concordia University presented preliminary results of sociolinguistic research on Montreal youth multilingual behavior.

modeled on the South Asian cultural practice of Sanskritization (Mahalingam 2006, Prashad 2006, Srinivas 1952). In Canada, where white-black racial relations are less polarized and where there are more unskilled and semi-skilled South Asian immigrants than in the United States, social-climbing strategies are more variable. For Sri Lankan Tamils who have been racialized as permanent “*étrangers*” in Quebec, strategies of social climbing must be conducted within the boundaries of their diaspora neighborhoods. Therefore, an expansion in social status can only be achieved by first expanding the sociopolitical and economic space and/or centralizing the scalar orientation of the Tamil ūr within Montreal. For Indian Tamils who identify solely or primarily as Indian, strategies of social climbing are neither bounded by the scale of their neighborhood, region, or even nation-state, as they successfully mimic the strategies of other high-caste compatriots in the United States, South Asia, and elsewhere.

Williams suggests that once “the social explanation [of the structure of feeling is] fully admitted, the intensity of experienced fear and shame [will be] now dispersed and generalized” (ibid 134). My ethnological comparison and genealogical inquiry into the divergent structures of feeling pertaining to the Montreal Tamil diasporas thus seeks to elucidate (and perhaps assuage) those moments of unease which arise in encounters between “unfamiliar” (i.e. previously segregated) interlocutors in a post-colonial and globalizing world. However, by transforming feelings into fixed categories of discourse, this dissertation inevitably simplifies the semiotic latency of these emergent structures. In other words, by regimenting Montreal Tamils’ evolving linguistic experiences and attitudes into a singular narrative, this exercise in objectification cannot help but fail to

miss the moving target which approximates the changing and hybridizing social world of Montreal Tamils. Williams explains:

There are the experiences to which the fixed forms do not speak at all, which indeed they do not recognize. There are important mixed experiences, where the available meaning would convert part to all, or all to part... These are often more recognizable at a later stage, when they have been (as often happens) formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations. By that time the case is different; a new structure of feeling will usually already have begun to form, in the true social present.” (ibid 130,132)

Nonetheless, by collecting and analyzing evidence of linguistic practices and ideologies emerging from the scalar interstices of bounded inter-discursive formations such as colony, nation, global city-region, and diaspora, this dissertation attempts to convey a certain “processual-like” and “unpredictable” quality characterizing the emergent structures of feeling of contemporary Montreal society.

### **Social Space as Inter-Discursive Artifact**

By tracing the historical genealogies of different chronotopes of space-time inhabited by Montreal Tamils, I have shown how both “nation” and “diaspora” are deeply contextualized and historicized artifacts whose apparent “boundedness” and “newness” are the inter-discursive products of interlocutors’ communicative practices. In fact, I would suggest that such projects of spatiotemporal regimentation are fast becoming a central preoccupation of diaspora leaders operating within modern nationalist regimes. Thus, Ho’s distinction between newer and older diasporas could be explained in terms of the political and institutional relationship between diaspora and nation-state, such that the relative scale on which diaspora leaders operate under the centralizing jurisdiction of the modernist nation-state would match the relative scale on which these leaders invest in linguistic and other semiotic signs of modernity or antiquity. In Montreal, the peripheral

municipal location, de-centralized physical layout, and Tamil-script façades of the Sri Lankan Tamil ūr index its diaspora leaders' peripheral position within the modernist Quebec nation-state. On the other hand, the modernist language ideologies of Indian Tamils and the multilingual repertoires of younger generations of Montreal Tamils index both of these groups' centralizing roles in the economic and social development of Montreal and Quebec society.

My theorization of social space as an inter-discursive artifact also relies on an understanding of how the semiotic qualities of “text” and “talk” are inscribed in institutions and ideologies which render nations, diasporas, and global city-regions visibly and orally recognizable. Throughout its history, Montreal's heritage language industries have been sustained by a variety of language ideologies which define its monolingual institutional domains as sociologically and morally complementary. For example, contemporary Québécois nationalists are able to endorse complementary goals of civic nationalism and ethnolinguistic nationalism by promoting two language ideologies - one where public language use equates civic identity and one where “heritage language” or “mother tongue” use equates ethnic identity. At the same time, the popular language of Quebec - also known as *joual* - is visually and aurally transformed into a high-status literary standard - also known as Québécois French - whose official use in textual productions is partly legislated by the nationalist government. Through these mutually reinforcing and complementary institutions and ideologies of talk and text, the nation appears as a discursive amalgam of folk and state, of popular sentiment and codified structures, and of primordial origins and a modernizing future.

Through their participation in such sociolinguistic institutions, ethnic and racial minorities are simultaneously socialized as Québécois citizens and ethnolinguistic Others. As ethnolinguistic Others, Montreal minorities may be further racialized as permanent “*étrangers*” or impermanent “*étrangers*.” In other words, white and non-white minorities whose linguistic, religious, and/or cultural practices are deemed morally incompatible with French political secularism are marked as inassimilable or “primordialist” in essence, whereas white and non-white minorities whose linguistic, religious, and/or cultural practices are deemed morally compatible are marked as assimilable or “modernist” in essence. To a certain extent, minorities may attempt to strategically position themselves within either cohort through the display or performance of textual or oral forms or practices. By teaching literary Tamil and displaying “foreign script” textual facades in diaspora neighborhoods, Sri Lankan Tamils are aligning themselves within Montreal’s primordialist cohort. Concurrently, Indian Tamils are aligning themselves within Montreal’s modernist cohort by teaching and speaking in a hybridizing form of colloquial Tamil. The complementary in this division of language labor, where Indian Tamils are entrusted to modernize (and thus increase the socioeconomic prestige of) Tamil and where Sri Lankan Tamils are entrusted to preserve the purity (and thus maintain the moral prestige of) Tamil, enables all Montreal Tamils to profit (however unevenly) from the institutional growth of separate Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas.

Several language ideologies have helped to transform the sociolinguistic domains of both Montreal Tamil diasporas into morally- and spatiotemporally-distinct monolingual domains. The first language ideology is that of Tamil diglossia, a

structuralist concept incipiently conceived through the colonial philological classification of South Asian language families and more fully developed through post-colonial policies of language standardization. Pre-colonial distinctions between classical, literary and colloquial styles of Tamil were first reformulated as High and Low registers of Tamil by missionaries and philologists in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later, 20<sup>th</sup> century Tamil nationalists selectively drew from these representational economies, where poetic literary styles are believed to be older, purer, and more sacred than prose-like colloquial styles, which are instead believed to be newer, more impure, and more realistic, to differentiate between the stylistic genres of *eḷutu tamīḷ* (written Tamil), *mēṭtai tamīḷ* (staged Tamil), and *pēccu tamīḷ* (spoken Tamil) and the period styles of classical Tamil, literary Tamil, and modern Tamil.

An emergent belief among 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Montreal Tamils, in which Indian Tamil is seen as a colloquial-styled “spoken” Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil as a literary-styled “written” Tamil, represents the latest reformulation of this diglossia language ideology. Even though Montreal Tamil youth are increasingly converging in their multilingual practices by code-mixing and code-switching in Tamil, English, and/or French, their language socialization in segregated monolingual domains of the Indian Tamil or Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas obstructs their recognition of these linguistic similarities. Through these collaborative acts of (mis)recognition, Quebec’s nationalist language ideology of ethnolinguistic belonging is effectively subsumed within the overarching logic of ethnonational belonging. In this manner 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Montreal Tamils interpret differences in linguistic style between Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils at the higher scalar order of “language”, whereas 1<sup>st</sup> generation Montreal Tamil immigrants

who still interact across ethnonational boundaries interpret differences in linguistic style at the lower scalar order of “dialect.” Other social distinctions of caste, class, religion, and gender, further subsumed within the overarching scale of the “ethnolinguistic nation”, are interpreted as indexing linguistic differences at the lower scales of dialect or accent.

### **Discourses of Belonging**

The recognition of two distinct Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic groups in Montreal is the unexpected byproduct of divergent circumstances of political governance and migration in colonial and post-colonial South Asia. Due to their ethnolinguistic nationalist bias, the Québécois media is prone to depict Tamils, or “*les tamouls*”, as a single ethnolinguistic group. Even in pre-colonial South Asia there exists a long tradition of referring to a globally dispersed Tamil nation that is unified through a common literary and (to a lesser extent) cultural and religious history. Yet by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British had seized control of two very politically dissimilar colonies in India and Sri Lanka. Much of colonial Ceylon initially welcomed the onset of British rule after having experienced centuries of religious persecution, first by Portuguese and later by Dutch colonialists. The British quickly recognized the existence of separate religious and caste groups as distinct races within Ceylon, each of which roughly corresponded with pre-colonial territorial dynasties of Jaffna, Kandy, and Kotte.

In India, the establishment of the British Raj in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century led to the subjugation of local rulers who were increasingly unreceptive to the growing influence of European missionaries and merchants. Later, as British colonial rulers fell under the influence of European liberalism, they began to view the study and standardization of

Indian languages as crucial to the “modernization” of Indian subjects. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, British colonial rulers and Indian nationalists demarcated a finite number of Indian mother tongues and, in the process, delimited the boundaries of ethnolinguistic territories which would later be recognized as Indian provinces. The creation of the ethnolinguistic province of Tamil Nadu in 1956 by the Indian federal government ultimately helped to defuse the movement for Tamil linguistic separatism in India.

In contrast, the establishment of Sinhala as the sole official language of Sri Lanka in by Sinhalese-Buddhists nationalists in 1956 instigated the current movement for Tamil linguistic separatism in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, there is no colonial precedent for Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists to claim a unified ethnolinguistic identity as prerogative for a separate nation, one which would include the different “races”, i.e. caste, national, and religious groups, of Tamils in Ceylon. To this end Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists have instead turned toward its Tamil diasporas, where populations tend to be at least regionally homogeneous, in order to promote their ideology of ethnolinguistic unity. In the Montreal diaspora, a majority Jaffna population projects the image of a culturally and linguistically unified Sri Lankan Tamil nation, thus legitimizing the existence of Tamil Eelam through the linguistic activities of its displaced citizens.

As a global city-region, however, Montreal is much more than mere receptacle for promoting nationalist language ideologies and political projects. Throughout this dissertation, I have shown how the Montreal cityscape offers a multitude of possibilities for belonging to different social scales, both temporal and spatial, and for performing a variety of sociolinguistic personas. I further suggest that the particular semiotic

conjunctures and disjunctures forged by the intersecting scales of the global city-region (which is both vertically and horizontally stratified with respect to the world economy) have heightened the metalinguistic awareness of Montreal residents to a level above the rest of Quebec. This is not to say that such heightened metalinguistic awareness can be generalized to the entire Montreal population or even fixed to a certain linguistic level, nor is it to say that this awareness is always communicatively productive. In fact, for every intended hybridization of linguistic style by Montreal Tamil youth there are also unintended linguistic hybridizations, where slippages between literary-like and oral-like forms in written texts and colloquial speech represent a case unique to the Montreal Tamil diasporas.

Some may even argue that hybridization of English, French, and other languages is a habitual and even normative practice within the scalar space of the Montreal global city-region, where purist sociolinguistic hierarchies of “allophone”, “francophone”, and “anglophone” (in order of increasing status) are being replaced by the sociolinguistic hierarchies of “monolingual”, “bilingual”, and “multilingual” speakers (in order of increasing status). Therefore, one cannot ignore how hybridized linguistic practices are dependent upon the social reproduction of purist categories to convey their subversive quality. Such complementarity between hybrid and purist linguistic categories and such collusion in their language labor may lead one to question what is essentially subversive or dangerous about the “in-betweenness” of the liminal site. I am reminded of Selvamani’s memory loss of early childhood years in Sri Lanka and her periodic blackouts while visiting Sri Lanka to answer this question. Selvamani’s shifting scales of liminality, from the Montreal diaspora site of her youth, where she ultimately succeeds in

cultivating a sociolinguistic persona that is morally compatible with the diversifying Quebec nation, to that of her homeland, where she is unable or unwilling to integrate her past and future selves as a Sri Lankan Tamil refugee, suggests that emergent structures of feeling of “liminality” are as much of a moving target as other institutions and ideologies of emplacement.

My own structure of feeling of “liminality”, by virtue of being raised both as a “Das” and a “Lévesque” in Montreal and later in the United States, can be narrated as a discourse of belonging whose inter-generational genealogy passes over moments of emplacement and displacement that broadly resemble the themes of this dissertation. I purposively place this personal vignette at the end of my dissertation for two reasons. First, I believe that the recounting of my family’s genealogy should be viewed more as a literary device and less as an autobiographical account of my own choosing. In other words, I fashioned my narrative after the narratives of Montreal Tamils, much in the same way that Father Joseph fashioned his faith sharing story after my own. This iconicity helps to highlight potential areas of personal bias which may have influenced my interpretation of the ethnographic and linguistic evidence. Second, I organized the overall narrative structure of this dissertation so as to move from larger to smaller nesting scales of analysis, thus seeking to disrupt the reader’s expectation for a metanarrative of “displacement” that is commonly found in diaspora studies. My family’s genealogy, as the closing words of this dissertation, instead serves as a personal affirmation of the discourses of belonging which motivate both anthropological study and personal endeavors for the emplacement of minorities in Montreal.

## **Personal Encounters**

My maternal grandfather Lévesque was raised in an agricultural farm in the village of St-Pacôme, a tiny municipality located within the logging county of Kamouraska in northern Quebec. As a young man he laid tracks for the Canadian Pacific Railway, a job that he allowed him to travel through the region. One day he arrived at the village of Petite Rivière St-François, where he met my maternal grandmother. This small fishing village is located on the opposite side of the St. Lawrence River within the Charlevoix region of northern Quebec. My maternal grandmother, the youngest daughter of the Lavoie fishing family, lived in a small house on the western riverbank of the St. Lawrence. A few years after their marriage, my maternal grandparents left their ancestral villages to seek wage labor in the city. Hence, they joined many other rural French Canadians who, in the post-WWI period, abandoned their traditional peasant occupations and rural lifestyles to relocate to lower-middle class neighborhoods in Montreal. Upon arriving in Montreal, my grandfather worked as a carpenter and my grandmother as a seamstress. They lived in French-speaking neighborhoods that were encircled by wealthier English-speaking neighborhoods. Neither grandparent had completed much education, remaining for their entire lives only passably literate in French and monolingually fluent in joul.

My mother was one of seven children raised in a typical lower-middle class, Roman Catholic, French Canadian family of post World War II Montreal. She completed her studies at a French Catholic high school and, upon graduation, began to work as a secretary to financially support her family. Her siblings, half of whom did not finish secondary school, sought jobs in manual labor (for the men) and the service industry (for

the women). All siblings are proficiently literate in French and colloquially fluent in joul, although none are able to speak Québécois French. All but one sister can speak English, an expertise they developed in the context of the workplace. For example, all of her brothers learned English by interacting with English-speaking bosses and clients in Montreal. My mother, on the other hand, worked as a medical secretary in a French-medium hospital. When she met my father in 1972, she could only speak a few words of English.

My father was raised in a middle class, Hindu family in the West Bengal town of Malda. Malda Town is currently situated at the international border of India and Bangladesh, while the surrounding Malda District was divided between both nations at the time of Partition in 1947. In the 1930s, my paternal grandfather migrated from his ancestral village in the Bangladeshi part of Malda District to Malda Town to practice law. Through this move, he also sought to escape the ignominy of his *sudra* heritage as the orphaned son of a petty artisan. Upon arriving in Malda Town, he temporarily joined a communal movement through which fellow *jāti*-kin contested their low-caste status by adopting the non-Bengali *vaishya* caste name of Agarwal. At the time of Partition in 1947, my paternal grandfather transferred his property from the East Pakistani region of Malda District to the Indian region of Malda Town. With an international border now severing him from contact with his ancestral village, my paternal grandfather further distanced himself from his *sudra* status and successfully built a career as the district attorney of Malda Town.

As a child, my paternal grandfather had been awarded multiple scholarships to pursue primary and higher education in both Bengali and English-medium schools.

Through his study in the arts, sciences, and law, he became multilingually literate in Bengali, Sanskrit, and English and colloquially fluent in Bengali and English. My paternal grandmother, who had a similar rural and caste background as my paternal grandfather, was an illiterate, monolingual Bengali speaker. All eleven of their children attended Bengali-medium public school in Malda Town, while most later pursued higher studies in engineering, law, or the arts in Malda or Calcutta. The sons are all bilingual speakers of Bengali and English and the daughters are mostly monolingual speakers of Bengali. All of my father's siblings, however, can read and write Bengali and English.

After high school my father was admitted to a prestigious engineering college in Calcutta, Bengal Engineering College. In 1965, my father accepted his first job at a civil engineering firm in Calgary, Canada. He received this job offer two years before the Canadian and American governments repealed their anti-Asian immigration policies and actively encouraged the immigration of Indian scientists and engineers. My father was one of the first South Asians to immigrate to Calgary. From Calgary he moved to Vancouver, then to Winnipeg, then to Philadelphia, and then finally to Montreal in 1972. After an initial rejection, my father was personally granted permanent residency in Canada by the Quebec Minister of Immigration on the basis of his scientific expertise. My father learned to speak joul from his brothers-in-laws and my mother learned to speak Indian English from my father and his Bengali friends. From a young age, my brother and I were socialized to speak in English with Bengalis and in joul with French Canadians.

After the passage of Bill 101 in 1977, a rift started to grow between my French Canadian and Bengali social circles. René Lévesque, a distant relative of mine, passed

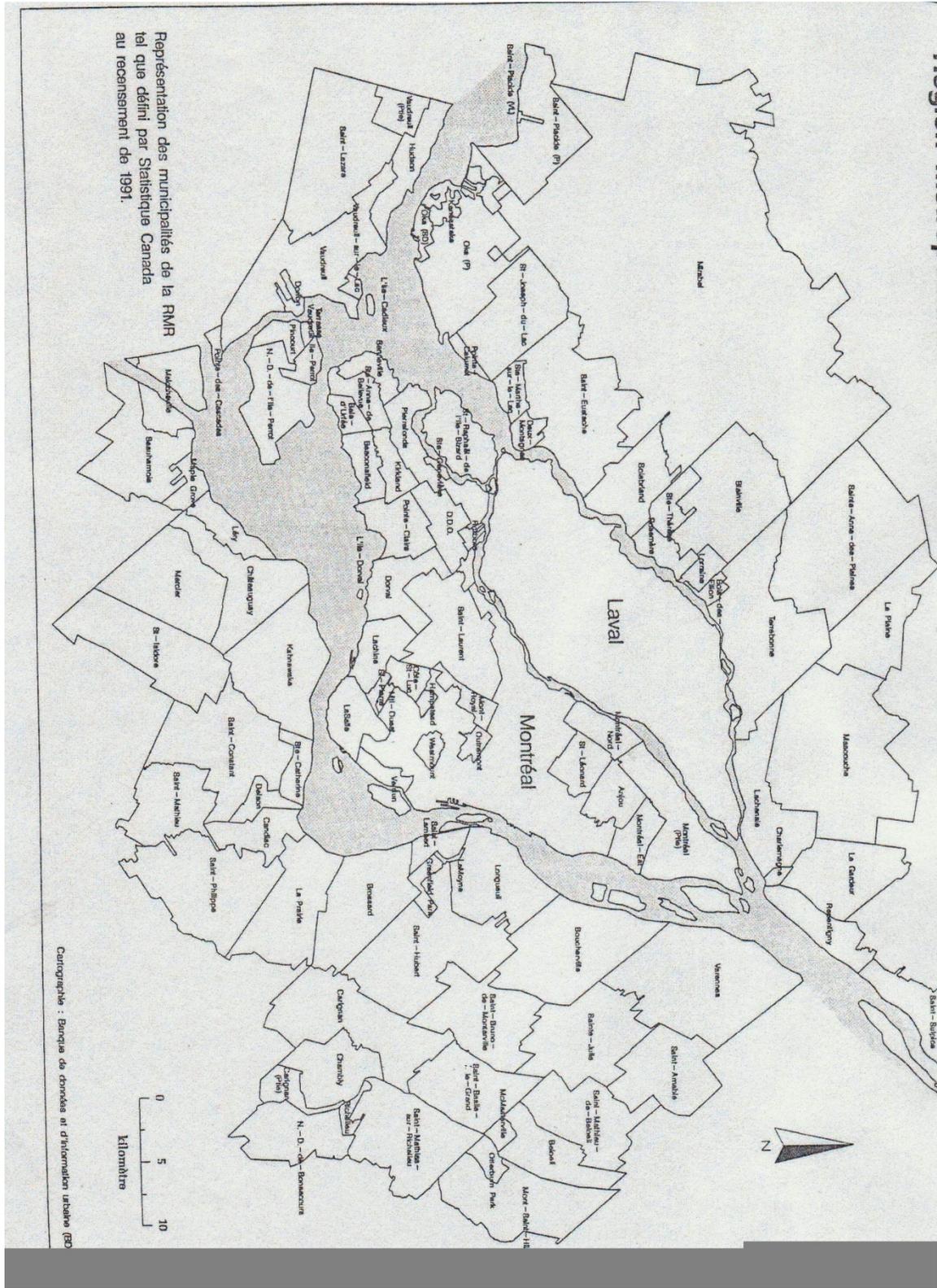
this law to mandate the public use of French in public schools and private workplaces. Most monolingual Québécois de souche, including my own Lévesque family, celebrated this law as a necessary antidote to the growing financial dominance and demographic presence of English-speakers in Montreal. This same law was criticized by monolingual English-speakers who, like most of our Bengali friends, were unable to work or study in French. In 1980, my father declared that his children would only attend English-medium schools and moved us to the Philadelphia suburbs, a region with one of the largest Bengali Hindu diasporas in North America.

Over the next few decades, we would monitor Montreal's social transformations from our vantage point as frequent visitors rather than regular inhabitants. Such transformations include shifts in the nationalist identity politics of French Canadians as Québécois (my mother still refers to herself as French Canadian) and shifts in Quebec's immigration policy (which is welcoming more Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and South American applicants.) I have witnessed, largely through my Québécois de souche family's and friends' reactions to the 1995 referendum, the expression of xenophobic sentiments and, later, the tentative appreciation of Québécois multiculturalism. I have also witnessed Montreal minorities increase their efforts to learn French, such that much of Montreal's younger generations are at least bilingual speakers of English and French. Through the year when I would speak in joul with strangers, less and less often would my interlocutor express surprise or discomfort in not being able to reconcile my phenotype with my linguistic repertoire. Usually, upon learning that my mother is a Québécois de souche, my interlocutor is reassured that I am no more categorically transgressive than a *métisse*.

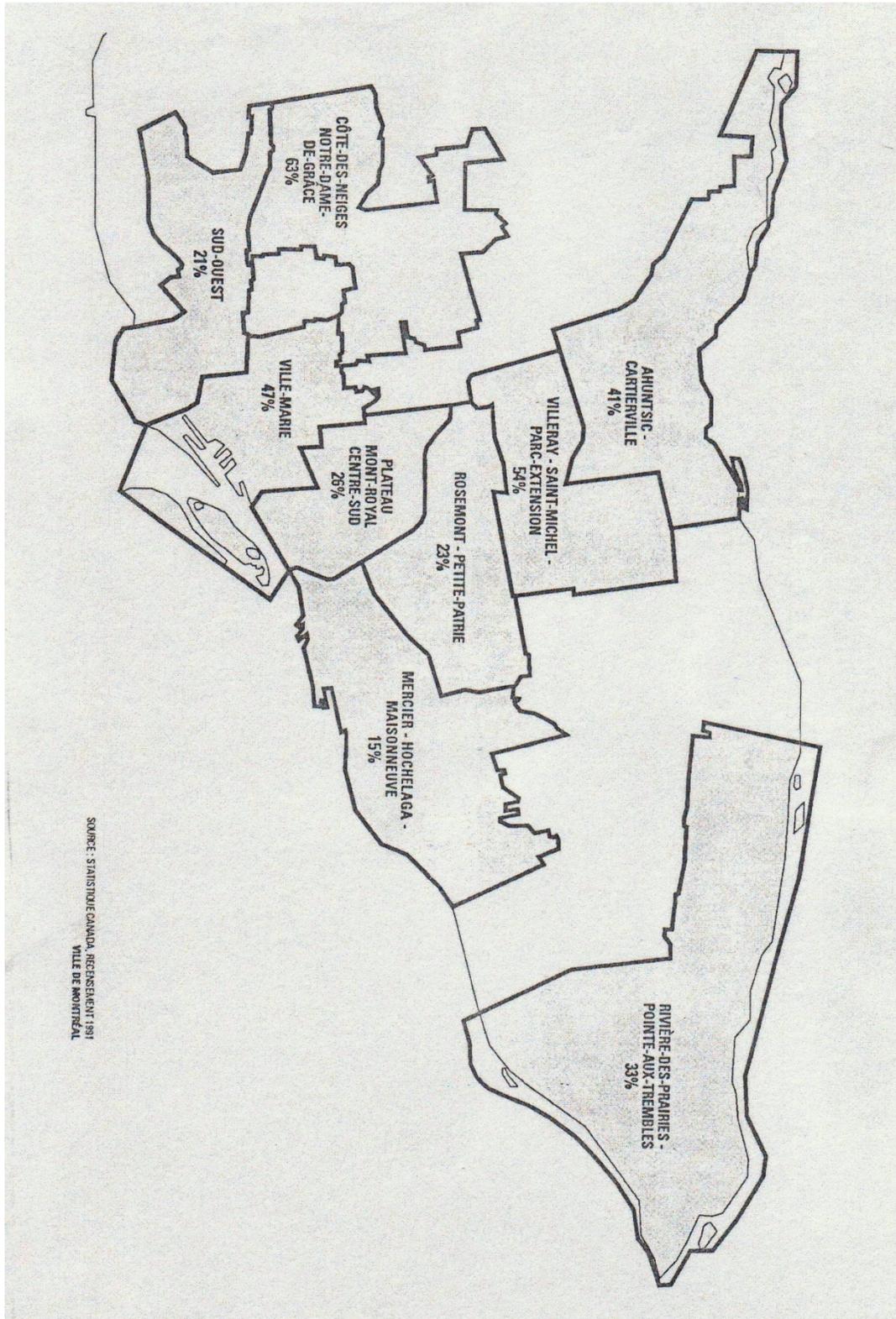
Both of my parents have experienced similar reactions when speaking English in the United States or French in Canada. For my mother it is her usage of Indian English phonology and for my father it is his usage of Québécois idiomatic expressions that elicits visceral reactions of surprise or amusement to the unexpected incongruity between phenotype and linguistic expertise. My family's variable ability to strategically influence the outcome of these communicative encounters is partly based on our differing levels of metalinguistic awareness and partly based on other social factors. In my professional roles as ethnographer and linguistic anthropologist, I have had many opportunities to develop my metalinguistic awareness of linguistic processes, practices, and forms marked as normative or transgressive to the dominant ideological regime. For people like my parents who are often told to speak "normally", their denial of linguistic normativity has much less to do with degrees of metalinguistic awareness as it does with the mediated enforcement of racial, class, and even caste social hierarchies within North American society. In the end, I have written this dissertation as a testament to those for whom the act of speaking, writing, and belonging remains vexed with uncertainty.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Metropolitan Region of Montreal (Statistique Canada 1991b)



**Appendix 2: Municipal Districts of the City of Montreal with Percentage of the Population other than French or British Origins (Statistique Canada 1991a)**



**Appendix 3: 1961 Census – “Number of mother tongues spoken in various states and union territories” (Goel and Saini 1972)**

Name of the state/ union territory	No. of Indian mother tongues spoken	No. of foreign mother tongues spoken	Total
Andhra Pradesh	186	24	210
Assam	162	30	192
Bihar	121	32	153
Gujarat	106	32	138
Jammu and Kashmir	90	13	103
Kerala	69	41	110
Madhya Pradesh	233	25	258
Maharashtra	401	53	454
Mysore	128	42	170
Nagaland	89	6	95
Orissa	50	8	58
Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh	135	26	161
Rajasthan	78	11	89
Tamil Nadu	100	59	159
Uttar Pradesh	117	25	142
West Bengal	236	37	273
Delhi	92	49	141
Himachal Pradesh	203	7	210
Goa, Daman, and Diu	15	13	28
Pondicherry	36	19	55
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	23	3	26
LM&A Islands	12	2	14
A&M Islands	65	8	73
Manipur	82	5	87
Tripura	107	5	112
NEFA	162	6	168

**Appendix 4: 1971 Publication: Official languages survey (Khubchandani 1981)**

<u>Language</u>	<u>Speakers (in millions)</u>	<u>Percentage to total population</u>
1. Hindi	162.6	29.7
2. Telugu	44.8	8.2
3. Bengali	44.8	8.2
4. Marathi	42.3	7.7
5. Tamil	37.7	6.9
6. Urdu	28.6	5.2
7. Gujarati	25.9	4.7
8. Malayalam	21.9	4.0
9. Kannada	21.7	4.0
10. Oriya	19.9	3.6
11. Punjabi	16.4	3.0
12. Assamese	9.0	1.6
13. Kashmiri	2.4	0.4
14. Sindhi	1.7	0.3
15. Sanskrit	0.0022	---

Additional administrative languages:

16. Konkani	1.5	0.3
17. Manipuri	0.78	0.2
18. English	0.19	---

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