**Critical and Global Perspectives of Multiculturalism: Contested Identities of
Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the concept of multiculturalism and ethnic identity construction as it unfolds in the dialogue of two radio talk shows in the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community. It posits that current formations of Canadian Multiculturalism policy and the heterogeneous global processes of ethnic identity constructions are not entirely in conjunction with each other. Therefore, this study critically analyzes the notion of global multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism to gauge their salience for Canada's discourses of multiculturalism. The adoption of a critical and global framework of multiculturalism focuses on the various global and local intersections of power and supports the open deliberation of contested issues by differentially situated minorities within the various layers of the public sphere. This ideological shift holds the potential to construct a nuanced and layered response to the structural inequalities present in multicultural localities.

KEYWORDS: Critical Multiculturalism, Global Multiculture, Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils, Minority Public Spheres, Critical Discourse Analysis

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Understanding Plural Identifications in Multicultural Spaces

This thesis explores the concept of multiculturalism and ethnic identity construction as it unfolds in the dialogue of radio talk shows in the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community. Specific case studies of cultural identity formation, such as this thesis, can further the development of a more nuanced understanding of the complex processes of cultural identity formation. It does so by displaying the convoluted layers of power and belonging present within the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic minority refugee/immigrant community in Canada. Furthermore, this thesis posits that current formations of Canadian Multiculturalism policy and the heterogeneous global processes of ethnic identity constructions are not entirely in conjunction with each other. Homogenous understandings of ethnic identity, along with the desire to construct singular national allegiances by Canadian Multiculturalism policies, prove to be an integral part of this disconnect. This disjuncture fails to address the rising inequalities and tensions present at the ground level of cultural entanglements, which lead to increased frustrations and discord.

I analyze the notion of critical multiculturalism (McLaren, 1994) and global multiculturalism (Nederveen Pieterse, 2007) to gauge their salience for Canada's discourses of multiculturalism. Both these scholars endorse the need for open deliberation on issues of identity and belonging by diverse players. The adoption of a critical and global framework of multiculturalism focuses on the various local and global intersections of power and supports the open deliberation of contested issues by differentially situated

minorities within the various public spheres. This ideological shift could potentially construct a multi-layered response towards understanding and responding to the structural inequalities present in multicultural localities.

1.2 Tamil Language and the Ethnic Tamil People

Tamil ethnicity hails from South Asian Dravidian culture, originating mainly in the southern part of India (Canagarajah, 2008). There are around 60 million Tamils in the Indian state of Tamilnadu and around 3.5 million Tamils in Sri Lanka. Tamils in Sri Lanka had emigrated from India to Sri Lanka during both ancient times and the colonial period. The Sri Lankan Tamils make up the largest minority in Sri Lanka¹, while the Sinhalese comprise the majority. A rise in young militant Tamil groups is evident after the leadership of moderate Tamils failed to protect the rights of the Sri Lankan Tamil people in the early 1980s (Fuglerud, 1999; Hyndman, 2003). One group that exists as the dominant opposition to the Sinhalese majority in Sri Lanka today is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004b), who have waged a violent struggle for an independent Tamil nation for over two decades with the Sinhalese majority government.² This ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka since the early 1980s has led to the exodus of Tamils to various parts of the world.

Within Canada, 93% of Tamils are from Sri Lanka and only 6% are from India's state Tamilnadu, and 1% of the Tamils are those who were scattered elsewhere during

¹ Another minority ethnicity in Sri Lanka is the Burghers who comprise of Dutch, Portuguese, or British descent.

² This group was placed on the terrorist list in April of 2006 by the Canadian Conservative government.

colonialism (Vaitheespara, 1999). My thesis focuses predominantly on the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Toronto and I do not refer to Sri Lankan Tamil communities in other cities in Canada. I also do not delve into details on the Indian Tamil community in Canada, although I do discuss their relations briefly in Chapter 2 in the discussion on ethnicity and migration. The cultural products from the Indian state of Tamilnadu have always been the primary source of media consumption prior and after the dispersal of Sri Lankan Tamils. Therefore, in the chapter focusing on the public spheres engaged in by the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community, I briefly outline the Indian Tamil popular culture and its role in constituting the ethnic identity of Sri Lankan Tamils.

The Sri Lankan Tamil settlements in Canada are concentrated mainly in Toronto and also has large populations in Ottawa and Montreal. The production of the radio shows analyzed in this thesis took place in Scarborough and majority of the interview participants are from Scarborough or the neighbouring GTA cities. The major element surrounding the Tamil community in Canada remains the ongoing ethnic conflict in their homeland. The migratory history of Sri Lankan Tamils and the details pertaining to the rise of the conflict are briefly outlined in Chapter 2, as it is crucial to understanding the discursive practices and events that take place within the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils.

1.3 Aims and Significance

This research contributes to the academic debate in a variety of ways. Firstly, scholars within the communication field have not yet performed an empirical investigation on the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Toronto. Its growing population and thorny political climate that continues to dominate the homeland creates contentious identifications.

These elements make this community a fertile area of research on the construction of ethnic identities and Canada's ability to deal with such convoluted practices of belonging. Secondly, the thesis supports and furthers the thriving discussion of multiculturalism from a critical and global perspective (Karim, 2006; McLaren, 1994; Modood, 1997; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Shohat & Stam, 1997; Werbner, 2002). The debate regarding multiculturalism policy in Canada has for the most part revolved around questions of assimilation or integration within a national framework (Harles, 1997; Kymlicka, 1996). The contribution of these previous studies asks that multiculturalism policy step beyond its nationally focused and often dichotomous conversation of integration or assimilation to view multiculturalism as part of a global discourse. Furthermore, they have asked for responses that address the unequal structural positioning of minorities within multicultural societies. The concept of critical multiculturalism and global multiculture informs my discussion in asking for flexible and porous understandings of difference and belonging, in light of the complex global circuits of identifications.

Thirdly, the majority of the works that insist on broadening multiculturalism discourses and situating it within a global context primarily focus their empirical analysis on the European and American experience (Benhabib, 2002; Modood, 1997; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Werbner, 2002). A number of these scholars refer to the Canadian case in passing but do not engage in concrete case studies that explore Canadian Multiculturalism and its operation in Canada. Some view Canadian multiculturalism in a highly negative light and do not conceive it to be of any positive value (Bannerji, 2000a; Bissoondath, 2006). It is only of late that we have noticed a diversification of this debate

within Canada, propelling discourses of Canadian Multiculturalism within a global framework (Karim, 2006; Wayland, 2006). Therefore, my research contributes to this growing academic debate of Canadian Multiculturalism discourses from a broader global perspective.

1.4 Defining Major Terms

The critical exploration of certain concepts and their relationship to one another is an integral component of this thesis. In order to understand the often-elusive intricacies surrounding ethnic identities, the terms identity and ethnicity are qualified to engage with the discussions surrounding the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils' cultural identity. The different usages and often-imprecise significations of the term multiculturalism also require some elucidation. I will briefly also define the terms critical multiculturalism, and global multiculture; the chapter focusing on the theoretical discussions surrounding the concept of multiculturalism will unpack these two terms in greater depth. Lastly, the multilayered and evolving notion of the public sphere needs defining to firmly situate the exploration of the Tamil minority public sphere in the empirical analysis of this thesis.

Ethnic Identity

This study perceives identity in accordance to Stuart Hall's conception (1994); he defines identity as a process that is always undergoing transformation. Hall also emphasizes the process and production aspect of identity, shifting it away from static conceptions.

Although identities are always in production, forever shifting and signify having some sort of core, this core remains ever changing (Brah, 1996; Hall, 2000). Utilizing Hall's

conceptualization, this thesis understands identities as multiple, shifting, and always in production.

Common perceptions of ethnicities are of a group that is physically recognizable through overt qualities such as dress, food, language, and religion. More significantly, they share social customs and traditions, a historical past, unique structural organizations, and practices. These elements bind ethnic identity, which evidently constructs a cohesive identity that draws the boundaries of difference between groups (Barth, 1969; Hall, 2001; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007). Ethnic identities are constructed through difference and often oppose dominant and external groups, leading to the fortification of the self. This usually results in the imposition of cultural cohesion upon the diversity of practices within ethnic communities (Benhabib, 2002; Brah, 1996; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007). This thesis intends to focus on the shifting nature of ethnic identity and places emphasis on the processes of inclusion and exclusion between and within groups.

Multicultural and Multiculturalism

The term multiculturalism tends to mean different significations in various instances; I wish to clarify its usage here to ease the understanding of the discussion that follows in Chapter 3 on multiculturalism. One usage pertains to the diversity of a society, while another refers to policies aimed at addressing the diversity present in society (Tepper, 1997). In his study on the evolution of Canadian Multiculturalism, Elliot Tepper (1997) utilizes “multiculturalism” to signify the lived reality; while Stuart Hall uses the adjective “multicultural” to relate to the lived reality of a society that co-exists with a variety of different cultures (2001). Hall and Tepper utilize “multiculturalism” to indicate the policy

framework intended to address the plurality of a society. Although Tepper and others differentiate between the lived reality and the policy, I wish to incorporate a third signification as used by Richard Day (2000), that of multiculturalism prescribing a social ideal, a radical ideology. I take into consideration these three uses in my discussion of the convoluted conceptions of multiculturalism.

The adjective “multicultural” is utilized here to refer to the diversity of ethnic groups inhabiting a particular location or space. I also utilize “multicultural localities” to refer to the culturally diverse demographic locations in the western countries that are a result of recent migration patterns. The proper noun “Canadian Multiculturalism” is utilized as the signifier when referring to policies implemented by various nation states. They refer to the policies conjured by institutional bodies to manage the *mélange* of complexities and situations that arise in the intertwining of different cultural groups. This results in policies such as regulating citizenship accommodations, recognizing, and celebrating cultural diversity (Hall, 2001, p. 209; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007, p. 90). Discourses of Canadian Multiculturalism are neither homogenous nor singular; they continue to evolve and shift their priorities over time.

The third signification of “multiculturalism” as Day (2000) utilizes it is the prescription of a social ideal; an ideology promoting and prescribing a social ideal. According to this thesis, this ideal goes beyond just recognizing identities and tackles the multiple layers of inequalities. It promotes a global sense of belonging, surpassing nationalistic narratives of unity in diversity. The various ideological aspects of multiculturalism influence the policies construed by nation states over time. The specific

theories of multiculturalism explored in this thesis are critical multiculturalism and global multiculturalism. This thesis purports that the adoption of a critical and global multicultural ideology for Canadian Multiculturalism can enable more complex and nuanced understanding of the multicultural realities on the ground and therefore allowing for accurately aimed solutions.

Critical Multiculturalism and Global Multiculture

Critical multiculturalism argues against Charles Taylor's (1994) proposition on the politics of recognition and asks that we go beyond seeking diversity and recognition (McLaren, 1994). Various other scholars support McLaren's argument and aim to sculpt multiculturalism discourse into one that endorses and facilitates the transformation of structural inequalities (Benhabib, 2002; Goldberg, 1994; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Shohat & Stam, 1997; Werbner, 2002). This thesis propels this argument forward and illustrates the vital need for such transformations by displaying the obstacles and tensions experienced by Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils. It also places emphasis on the manner individuals are situated differently in relations of power within minority groups. The analysis of the radio show, *It's That Show* in Chapter 6 highlights how youth are positioned within this minority sphere. It is necessary to examine the treatment of these differently situated members within minority groups and examine how they can acquire greater access to represent themselves.

Nederveen Pieterse (2007) criticizes the nationally contained discourse of multiculturalism and responds by proposing a new concept, global multiculturalism. He articulates global multiculturalism as the offspring of globalization and migration, which

results in the globally interconnected diversity (2007, p. 201). He argues that the prevailing national framework found in discussions of ethnicity and multiculturalism is largely inadequate in understanding the complexity of global cultures. Furthermore, the resulting policies on multiculturalism lag years behind the actual events on the ground (2007, p. 89). Within the framework of global multiculturalism, partial cultures, multiple identities, and belongings are common. Nederveen Pieterse considers these partial and multiple identities and cultures as part of the process of flexible acculturation.³ He perceives flexible acculturation as the utilization of elastic and open methods in the process of belonging at home in the world (2007, p.189). The examination of the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil public sphere provides examples of such flexible acculturation and practices of global multiculturalism.

Global multiculturalism as proposed by Nederveen Pieterse also intertwines the concerns of critical multiculturalism in arguing that global multiculturalism includes the encounter with global conflict (2007, p. 179). He emphasizes that due to the increase in global migration, we cannot contain conflict within the national boundaries. In reality, conflicts spread across the globe far more swiftly than in previous decades, affecting various communities and leading to anger and frustration. Nederveen Pieterse argues that multiculturalism policies and foreign policies can no longer be disconnected; they need to be consolidated to allow the creation of more equitable and accountable policies (2007, p. 179). The Toronto Tamils' flight from Sri Lanka due to ethnic conflict has not quarantined the community from the effects of the conflict. Migration has not removed

³ Playing on Ahiwa Ong's notion of flexible citizenship (1999)

the pain; more accurately, the inaction shown by their host country to their plight has given way to anger and frustrations.

Public Sphere

My exploration into a segment of the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil public sphere sheds light on the dynamic discourses present within this community. The public sphere is an area for social conversation and contestation, possibly leading to some understanding on the discourses and perspectives within and between various groups (Habermas, 1989). This thesis' treatment of the public sphere encompasses a model similar to Fraser's (1993), of an open, porous, and multiple space with varied belongings. The research focuses on the ethnic public sphere and the heterogeneous discourses present within. The Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil public sphere consists of numerous local organizations, associations, and media institutions. The local Tamil media provides a foundation for an active minority public sphere in this community. I wish to understand the complexities involved in the formation of cultural identity and the intersections of power within and between the mainstream public spheres. The exploration into this minority public sphere demonstrates the heterogeneity of ethnic communities and provides cues to the various manners in which Canadian multiculturalism discourse may have to adapt to suit these lived realities.

1.5 Methodology

I track the discourses of two diverse radio call-in programs over the period of four months. Radio was the chosen medium for it plays a dominant role in the Sri Lankan public sphere. To explore more thoroughly with the multiple layers of the text, a critical

discourse analysis (CDA) is performed on one particular show from *It's that Show* and one from *Iravu Chalaaram*. These programs were chosen through judgmental sampling methods. CDA dominates the empirical analysis of this project and its analytical strength lies in its integration of production, consumption and the distribution of a text (Fairclough, 1995).

In-depth semi-structured interviews conducted near the conclusion of the radio show's tracking and CDA analysis period were intended to balance any limitations present within the textual analysis. The semi-structured interviews contained focused questions designed to propel the discussion in the arena of ethnic identity formation to gain insight into the contesting dialogues within the community and its relation to the broader Canadian society. Fifteen interviews were conducted and the sample consisted of two different categories of interviewees: hosts from *It's That Show* and *Iravu Chalaaram* and Toronto Tamil community leaders. The media hosts were interviewed in a group format, while the community leaders were mainly interviewed individually.

Critics may point out that the small sample size of the programs analyzed and the number of interviewees does not provide objective or widespread results. As a qualitative researcher, using critical discourse analysis as the main methodology, I do not make broad claims on representativeness. This study intends to provide an in-depth exploration into a small portion of the discourses present within the Tamil community and infer from a variety of angles the reasons and repercussions that surround these set of discourses. Moreover, a thorough exploration of the countless shifting dialogues within the community, its players, and the intricate layers of power are beyond the scope of this

thesis. However, the study does reveal some of the contesting and heterogeneous dialogues within the community by exploring their concerns and placing these discourses within the framework of the broader society.

While I take steps to account for methodological weaknesses and to meet ethical standards, I do not consider pure objectivity an attainable goal in the study of cultures and identity construction. I believe that the role and biases of the researcher should be explicit and taken into consideration as part of the research process. My background as a Canadian of Indian Tamil origin provides me access to the Sri Lankan Tamil community. This enables me to access the language and culture of the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils despite minor cultural and differences in the spoken Tamil dialect. As a researcher, I hold the position of an insider by having access to the language and cultural markers of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils. However, I remain an outsider, in that I have not experienced the discrimination and socio-political strife that dominates the cultural history of the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community. Furthermore, the tense political history between India, Sri Lanka, and the LTTE complicates the relationship Sri Lankan Tamils may have towards Tamils of Indian origin. This insider and outsider position blurs and confuses certain boundaries between the researcher and participants during the interview processes and provides some interesting insight into the continual maintenance of boundaries present in the construction of identities.

The analysis of the two shows is divided into two chapters; Chapter 5 contains the methodological discussions surrounding the CDA and then follows with the analysis of *Iravu Chalaaram*. The focus in this analysis centers on the discourses of belonging to

Canada. In addition, the analysis of the October 6, 2007 program delves into the multiple processes of othering and its connection to their perceptions of the self. The August 8 2007 program of *It's That Show* focuses on the practices of caste discrimination in the private sphere in Canada within the Toronto Tamils. The analysis centers on the attempts by the Tamil youth to discuss this contentious issue with a mainly adult audience. The analysis highlights the complex negotiation of power that occurs in this dialogue as a minority within the minority group speaks.

The analysis of the discourses present within the Toronto Tamil minority public sphere highlights the heterogeneity and complexities of ethnic identity formation. Furthermore, it brings to the fore the need for more nuanced responses to these contested and multifarious discourses. Multiculturalism discourse cannot simply mediate the communication of diversity across borders. Rather, as Shohat and Stam (1997) argue, any substantial framework of multiculturalism has to address the genuine sense of pain, inequality, and discrimination felt by the communities. A greater understanding of the discourses present within the minority spaces and their interaction with the mainstream dominant discourse is required. Discourses of multiculturalism need to direct its attention to the multiple facets of oppression and provide a means of open discussion to arrive at possible solutions to the different forms of inequalities present in our society.

CHAPTER 2: MIGRATING CONSTRUCTIONS OF TORONTO SRI LANKAN “TAMILNESS”

2.1 Exploring the “Routes” of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils

The identity of Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto intertwines with several layers of migration and overlapping narratives of “Tamilness.” Tamil, the oldest Dravidian language and its culture predominantly hail from the South eastern region of India. Approximately 60 million Tamils live mainly in the state of Tamilnadu in India and around 3.5 million reside in Sri Lanka (Vaitheespara, 1999). The consequences of various migratory practices gave way to the formation of Sri Lankan, Malaysian, Singapore, Fiji, and South African Tamils. Tamils from South India migrated to Sri Lanka and other parts of the world from the ancient times to the colonial period. The rising ethnic violence in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s led to the scattering of Sri Lankan Tamils to many parts of the world, creating a Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. The desperate dispersal led to their movement across numerous national boundaries, disregarding international laws of human movement that intend to keep out strangers (Fuglerud, 1999). These migratory events dictated by various historical influences cause variations in language, cultural boundaries, and complicate the conception of home and allegiances (Appadurai, 1996; Morley, 2000). These multiple routes and shifting practices of migration require considerable attention in order to expand our understanding of their effects on ethnic groups and the multicultural localities.

Various scholars have recorded the political and historical strife unfolding in Sri Lanka. For example, Clarence (2007) and Naidoo and Schaus (2001) focused on the ethnic conflict within Sri Lanka. Others have conducted case studies that trace the difficult experiences of Sri Lankan Tamils living amidst the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka (Brun, 2005; Manogaran & Pfaffenberger, 1994); and other case studies have focused on the migrant Sri Lankan Tamil's experiences (Fuglerud, 1999; Preis, 1997; Wayland, 2001; Whitaker, 2004). Oivind Fuglerud's (1999) anthropological study on long distance nationalism performed an extensive exploration of Norwegian Sri Lankan Tamils. He traces the trajectories of Tamil ethnicity from South India, examines the persisting conflict in Sri Lanka, and explores the construction of Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic networks. He also illustrates the intricacies of power and inequalities present between different waves of Tamil immigrants and refugees. His research provides a strong foundation on which this study carries out its examination of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamils.

The handful of studies that focus on Sri Lankan Tamil migrant communities are primarily on the European Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora; very little attention has been given to those who arrived and settled in Canada. C.B., a young community leader interviewed proclaimed, "There are more [Sri Lankan] Tamils living in Toronto than in any city, town, or village in Sri Lanka." Toronto is the central node of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. This augments the need to understand the unique position of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils within Canada and the larger Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. A few studies have tackled the Canadian case; Vaitheespara's (1999) brief mapping of the Indian and

Sri Lankan Tamil migrants in Canada traces the early roots of this community. While studies such as Aruliah's (1995) provide an in-depth picture of one family's experience as refugees and their settlement process in Canada. The majority of academic and community based research tends to revolve around the issue of health, especially mental health as it had been an unacknowledged issue within the community (Chandrakanthan, 2007; Kendall, 1989). Cheran's (2003, 2007) work aligns itself closer to the aims of this project and delves into the intricate differences and concerns involved with this community. Cheran places emphasis on the need to understand the Tamil diasporic community in a global context, their multiple political affiliations, and their shifting identities. These elements play a constructive role in the present study and assist in developing a more complex understanding of multicultural localities.

As Clifford (1997) and Hall (1994) state, the discussion on ethnic identity formation ought to revolve around the historical developments and processes surrounding identity, emphasizing the routes and not the roots. Appadurai's (1996) influential work proposing the five "scapes"⁴ of global cultural flow provides structure in exploring the multiple and disjunctive processes of migration and identity. Although I do not structure my discussion strictly according to Appadurai's five scapes, I frame this chapter and the analysis that follows with these dimensions in mind. I intend to focus on the layered processes of Sri Lankan Tamil identity formation in Toronto and explore the narratives that construct the ever-changing core of this community. Dalia Abdelhady (2006)

⁴ Appadurai proposes a framework for understanding global disjuncture by examining the relationship between the five dimensions of global cultural flow: ethnoscape, technoscape, financescapes, mediascapes, Ideoscapes (1996, pp. 296-298)

observes that research on immigration has consisted of too narrow a focus, of integration or assimilation. She urges new avenues of research that explore the very nature of ethnicity, the framework of migrant minority ethnic communities and the new complex set of relationships that are introduced and infused into this framework. For example, Manas Ray (2003) addresses the complex multilayered aspect of identities and relationships. He traces the Fiji Indians' flight to Australia and analyzes the tensions that arise when the indentured Fiji Indians encounter the mainly upper class Indian professionals in Australia. His study illustrates how migratory Indian communities that are influenced by distinct migratory experiences, construct different notions of "Indianess." Likewise, Abdelhady's (2006) exploration of transnational and global ties that arise between the Lebanese immigrants in three specific diasporic locations, Montreal, New York City and Paris, acts as a compelling example of new trajectories of research. The movement away from discussions of assimilation and integration or home and host relationships, supplanted by a focus on multiple ties of belonging and being stimulates new and complex angles of exploration.

This chapter begins by addressing some of the theoretical discussions informing culture and ethnicity in our global age. I then provide a historical background on the multiple layers that inform ethnic Sri Lankan Tamil identities, starting with the various moments of migration. This is followed by the tensions that arose between Sinhalese nationalist agendas and ethnic Sri Lankan Tamils, which eventually led to ethnic violence and the dispersal. Following this, I chart out the conceptions of diaspora and delve into a brief outline of the broader Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. I then discuss the foundations of

the Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils, specifically Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils. The relationship between Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils in their homelands and in the diaspora is briefly discussed within the chapter. This discussion aids in understanding the participation of Sri Lankan Tamils in Indian Tamil transnational spheres, which is explored in the following chapters.⁵ Finally, I examine the complexities of plural nationalism and the experiences of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils as they grapple with this increasing phenomenon within a singular nationalist framework. This leads to the following chapter's discussion on the framework of multiculturalism, the rising trends of plural patriotisms and multiple identities in our global societies.

2.2 Being Tamil in Different Spatial and Temporal Spaces

Culture and ethnicity

Perceptions of culture have concrete effects on the lives of many around the world. Academia and related areas have come to dismiss the conception of culture as a specifically distinct entity; many have written on the multiplicity and shifting nature of culture. However, the notion of culture in other arenas of our society continues to bear this idea of wholeness. Many continue to perceive culture as having neat correlation to population groups and territory that are supposedly homogenous. These conceptions of culture, often employed by various cultural policies, are greatly inadequate in understanding the fragmented and multilayered systems of meaning and practices of various communities (Benhabib, 2002; Modood, 1997; Werbner, 1997). Furthermore, as

⁵ I do not focus on Toronto's Indian Tamils, as they are small in number; their experiences differ in many ways from that of the Sri Lankan Tamils, as they are mainly economic migrants.

Bhabha (2000a) poignantly notes, emphasis and recognition is given to those supposed whole cultures that exist for long periods and in greater numbers. This conception does not correspond to minority and marginalized groups increasing under the intensified patterns of migration in our globalized world. The Sri Lankan Tamil community in Toronto embodies one such minority group, a product of multiple migratory moments at distinctive geographical spaces that continually grapples with its decentered and fragmented cultural position.

The significations contained within the notion of ethnicity have played a crucial and terrifying role in the lives of the Sri Lankan Tamil people. Ethnicity is derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, which describes large groups of animals or warriors. The Romans later utilized it to describe provinces; an English comparison to the notion of the tribe (Tonkin, 1996). The prevalent understanding of ethnicity today retains the notion of ethnic as referring to a group. It incorporates the sharing of cultural symbols, traditions, customs, language, a historical past, and religion. More importantly, it includes the criteria for organizing practices and narratives to construct a sense of a cohesive identity. It also includes the construction of boundaries in the process of defining itself (Barth, 1969; Brass, 1996; Fleras & Elliott, 1999; Hall, 2001; Nederveen Pieterse, 2004a; Weber, 1996). As stated in the introductory chapter, ethnic groups are understood to be those sharing various cultural symbols, traditions, and historical past. However, these groups remain heterogeneous with cultural boundaries that are continually redrawn, as new ones continue to arise.

A great deal of emotional attachment may be attributed to ethnic bonds, as evident in the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils; it has the potential to produce tension and violence. These conflicts arise due to the construction of borderlines both physical and symbolic. The national borders drawn on world maps during the last few centuries do not neatly correspond with the boundaries of ethnic communities living on the ground; they often separate existing ethnic communities and construct new groups of minorities and majorities (Yuval-Davis, 2004). Migration and settlement further complicate these ethnic bonds and their allegiances, while expectations continue to exist that ethnic community members must adhere to certain moral criteria to maintain membership in the group. These boundaries attempt to distinguish those who belong, while positioning the stranger outside the margins of acceptability (Barth, 1969; Brass, 1996). However, the positioning of the othered stranger is increasingly blurry (Bauman, 1990). John Rex (1997b) argues that the emotional and non-rational characteristics of these ethnic bonds are concoctions of socio-political ventures by political leaders and intellectuals. While this may well be the case, it remains that the politics of boundaries carry a fear of tainting the purity of existing cultural symbols and practices. The conception of culture as pure, neatly bound, and static holds the potential to perilous misconceptions and bloody violence.

Initial Waves of Migration

As mentioned earlier, there are around 60 million Indian Tamils in the state of Tamilnadu and approximately 3.5 million Sri Lankan Tamils. Of this 3.5 million, an estimated one million Sri Lankan Tamils find themselves displaced around the world. This is due to the ongoing political conflict in Sri Lanka between the majority Sinhalese government and

the minority Tamil militant group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The formation of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora encompasses several stages and varying rationales of migration through history. The initial migration includes those from the tenth and eleventh century from India to Sri Lanka. Many moved for trade and business purposes; however, Cheran (2007) states that these ancient migrants from Tamilnadu were initially of the oppressed caste and religious minorities, such as Tamil Muslims. The other significant stage of Tamil migration from India to Sri Lanka occurred during the 19th century, where Tamils from South India were taken as indentured labourers to various parts of the British Empire to work on tea plantations (Cheran, 2007; Vaitheespara, 1999). These various migratory moments constructed new boundaries within the Sri Lankan Tamils themselves.

It is important to understand the movements and positionings of groups in order to situate them in their migratory condition. Fuglerud (1999) illustrates the geographical distribution of the ethnic groups over time in Sri Lanka. Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century, Sri Lanka was divided into three kingdoms. There was the Sinhalese Kingdom in Kandy, another Sinhalese kingdom was located on the west coast, and the mainly Tamil state of Jaffna peninsula was located in the north (p. 26). Fuglerud identifies two groups of Tamils in the east coast, the Muslim Tamils, known as the Moors and the “Sri Lankan Tamils” who are predominantly Hindu (p. 21). The northern province of Jaffna consists of a strong population of Hindu Tamils, who acknowledge their Indian roots but consider themselves unique and identify themselves also as “Sri Lankan Tamils.” The last category of Tamil migrants from India who arrived during the

British colonial period is referred to as “Indian Tamils” or “Tea Tamils.” However, it remains unclear if this identification is imposed on them or if it is self-ascribed. They mainly settled in the central parts of Sri Lanka. These categorizations offered here, while simplified in their framing, allude to the divisions and multiple allegiances involved in the construction of Tamil identities.⁶

Rise of Ethnic Nationalism

During the reign of various colonial powers, there was an imbalanced allocation of power between the Sinhalese and Tamil groups. The Portuguese, Dutch, and the British provided minority Tamils with more administrative power and they held a greater proportion of professional, technical, and administrative positions than the majority Sinhalese population (Vaitheespara, 1999). This appears to be a practice carried out in certain other colonial settlements in various degrees, such as Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis (Fleras & Elliott, 1999), in which the minority group (Tutsis) were placed in power over the majority group (Hutus). This often has often resulted in intense conflict once the colonial power is removed from the equation. After gaining independence from the British in 1948 the Sinhalese majority secured power but remained anxious of the privileged position of the minority Tamils. Efforts were made soon after to undermine the economic, cultural, and politically dominant position of the Tamils. Prior to the rise of Sinhalese nationalism, the two groups coexisted peacefully and the boundaries between

⁶ The Sinhalese, mainly Buddhist, population is situated on the west, central Colombo and southern regions of Sri Lanka. Large portions of Tamil populations do live in these areas as well with considerable intermingling moments and practices (Fuglerud, 1999). The Burghers mainly reside in the Colombo and its neighbouring parts.

the groups were lax, with numerous intermarriages and sharing of cultural practices. This rise of Sinhalese political nationalism in the decades following independence attests Nederveen Pieterse's (2007) claim that conceptions of nationality are often defined in relation to the dominant ethnicity.

The Sinhala only policy of 1956, establishing Sinhala as the single official language, aggravated the Tamils in Sri Lanka and gave way to some of the early riots between the two ethnic groups (Fuglerud, 1999; Hyndman, 2003; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Vaitheespara, 1999). Legitimacy over language continues to be at the core of the conflict that wages to this day in Sri Lanka (Canagarajah, 2008). The second government policy that disturbed relations between the two groups is the colonization policy. Sinhalese peasants and those living in slums were settled in the northern province of Jaffna, the area that was originally part of the Tamil Kingdom and continues to comprise majority of the Tamils in Sri Lanka (Fuglerud, 1999).⁷ The 1970s government policy that standardized the examination scores for university admission required that Tamil students obtain a higher grade than the Sinhalese students in order to gain admittance to university. R.T., a community leader in the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community proudly exclaimed that going to university is part of the Tamil tradition. Fuglerud (1999) also affirms this in his own work and adds that Tamils perceived a university education leading to a position in the civil service as part of the Tamil tradition from the time of colonial rule (p. 32). While the earlier two policies did result in riots, this particular policy infuriated the Sri Lankan Tamil community. The anger and disappointment felt by

⁷ Majority of the land that Sri Lankan Tamils and the LTTE desire to obtain as their separate homeland, Tamil Eelam is the Jaffna peninsula.

Tamil students who anticipated gaining admission to university led to the decisive fall out between Tamils and the Sinhalese government (Fuglerud, 1999).

The leadership of moderate Tamils had failed to protect the rights of the Tamil people and the militant youth movements rose with great intensity. It was during these riots in 1972 in Sri Lanka that members of the Tamil Student's Union established themselves as the Tamil New Tigers, which was later changed to the LTTE in 1976. While many other young militant groups formed at that time, the LTTE is currently the only militant organization that stands as a powerful Tamil opposition to the Sinhalese government (Fuglerud, 1999; Vaitheespara, 1999). By July 1981, widespread violent riots against the Tamils shattered the ethnically diverse city of Colombo (Fuglerud, 1999; Vaitheespara, 1999). The bloodiest of these riots were the July 3 1983 riots, known as Black July, which are annually remembered all over the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. In the years that followed violence swelled between the Sinhalese and the Tamil militaristic movements as well as between various Tamil militant movements. Sri Lankan Tamils fled in droves to other parts of the world in fear of the Sinhalese government's actions as well as being caught in between the ideological and physical conflict between various Tamil militant groups.

2.3 Multiple Migratory Trajectories: The Dispersal

Diasporic Formations

This escalating violence between the Tamil militaristic movements and the Sinhalese majority government gave way to a growing Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Since a thorough discussion of the intricate workings of diasporic formations is beyond the

scope of this thesis, I discuss a few points and indicate certain characteristics that are of importance to the discussion at hand. Many utilize the term diaspora to mean loosely those populations living away from their homeland, such as transnational communities. While I do not criticize this signification, I wish to utilize the term here in its more rigid form. James Clifford (1997) states that diaspora usually connotes a long separation, accompanied by a loss and displacement, that evokes a sense of longing and in many cases a hope for return (Kolar-Panov, 1997; Morley, 2000). Clifford does not specify the length of this separation; however, in our present condition, this separation may not be a necessary characteristic of a diaspora as many temporarily visit their homeland on a regular basis (Wong, 2002). Therefore, they may be able to visit but not necessarily return to their homeland. In addition, Clifford characterizes a diaspora as comprising multiple networks of communities that are often spread throughout the world.

These multiple networks imply various trajectories of movement that do not always abide by the rigid rules of movement within the post-Westphalian spatial boundaries. Fuglerud (1999) suggests that the pre-modern relationship with spatial boundaries, as flexible and porous, is revived in the migratory practices of asylum seekers and refugees. This often creates tension between the fluid pre-Westphalian and rigid post-Westphalian conceptions of geography (1999, p. 62). A Tamil caller on *Iravu Chalaaram*, a local Toronto Tamil radio talk show tracked in this study, passionately argues with one of the hosts. He asserts that Western nations often foster rigid rules for migration. He argues that if he and others had not found illegal methods of entering and exiting various countries then many of *his* people would not be alive today. He also

contends that what is in the best interests of the nation (Canada) may not be in the best interest for other groups of people. While this caller clearly attests to the arbitrary nature of these boundaries to groups in peril, the attachment to rigid nationally imagined territorial boundaries continues to be a pervasive sentiment in our society. Policy construction in many instances mirrors these perceptions in diverse areas, even though it is not entirely suitable to the complex migratory practices of current society.

The often messy circumstances of leaving, moving, and arriving, the process Appadurai (1996) identifies as deterritorialization, disturbs existing forms of being. The complexities that develop in light of these shifts need to be taken into consideration to understand constructions of identity. Cheran (2003) argues that understanding these circumstances is important; he adds that we must distinguish between migration that is of a forced nature and that of economic migration. Economic migrants often choose the country that they relocate to and control the circumstances of leaving and arriving. Therefore, their sense of displacement is not as harsh as it is for forced migrants. These factors play a significant role in the lives of the migrant groups, significantly affecting their growth and interaction with the host country.

Tamil Diasporic Routes

Cheran (2007) poignantly illustrates the emotions associated with displacement through a Tamil poem. The poem reveals the diasporic traveller's confusion and sense of displacement caused by his inability to recall how he arrived in his diasporic land (p. 150). Exile is understood as more than a geographical location, it is a condition, a state of being (Naficy, 2003). It involves the collapse of ties with an imagined place and

community (Fuglerud, 1999). Cheran (2007) states that according to Tamil tradition, the space of exile from one's country or village was an extreme punishment; it was a space of social death. However, in light of the fundamental shifts in Tamil society after the 1983 riots, Cheran argues that the lamenting exilic narrative has undergone considerable transformation and currently connotes a space with multiple new meanings. This is evident in the multifarious and at times even compelling role of the heterogeneous Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community within its diasporic networks, its homeland⁸, and its country of residence.

The Tamil diaspora encompasses various stages of arrival and settlement. Prior to the outbreak of violence in Sri Lanka, there were only a handful of emigrants to the countries of their colonists, Portugal, England, and Norway. Following the 1983 riots, refugees poured out through multiple and overlapping routes. They traversed through or settled in countries such as India, Singapore, Malaysia, Norway, U.K., France, Germany, Australia, and Canada (Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce, 2006; Fuglerud, 1999). The current waves of migration differ slightly from these earlier refugees' migratory practices. The migratory patterns of the Sri Lankan Tamils still involve various routes; however, it is not as chaotic as the initial flight from Sri Lanka from the late 1980s until the late 1990s. Sri Lankan Tamils currently arrive mainly as immigrants and not as refugees, such as the wave prior to them. In many cases, refugees who were granted residence in certain host countries, such as Canada, sponsor their relatives (Hyndman, 2003).

⁸ Some may imagine the homeland as Sri Lanka, while others may perceive the imaginary state of Tamil Eelam, made up of the North and eastern regions of Sri Lanka as their homeland.

These travelers are not all equal, each diasporic community differs both internally and in relation to others (Brah, 1996; Cheran, 2007; Clifford, 1997). The attitudes and policies harboured by the host country towards refugees and immigrants, such as France's assimilatory perspective versus the xenophobia exuded by Germany or the contested ideology of multiculturalism of Britain, Netherlands, and Sweden create fundamentally distinct immigrant communities (Rex, 1997b). The Tamil diaspora demonstrates this difference for there are great disparities between Sri Lankan Tamil communities in France, Switzerland and Canada (Cheran, 2003). In addition, there are the various modalities of difference within the community itself, such as class, education, caste, gender and religion that are not evenly dispersed in each diasporic network, which further differentiates each of these communities (Brah, 1996; Cheran, 2007). There was a higher acceptance rate of refugees in Canada; therefore, the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Canada boasts a population over 250 000 and claim that 200, 000 Sri Lankan Tamils have settled in Toronto, making it the center of the Tamil diaspora (Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce, 2006; Chandrakanthan, 2007; Cheran, 2007). However, Statistics Canada's ethnocultural portrait identified a total of 34,590 individuals who identified their ethnic origin as Tamil, while 103,625 identified themselves as Sri Lankan (S. Canada, 2006a).⁹

⁹ This data number includes those who identified themselves as belonging to more than one ethnic origin. The ethnocultural portrait does not seem to distinguish between Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamils. Those who identified themselves as Sri Lankan may also be Sinhalese. The data indicated 5,820 individuals who identified themselves as Sinhalese.

2.4 Foundations of the Toronto Tamil Community

Waves of Tamil Migration to Canada

Based on various migratory waves and a booming younger generation it may be deduced broadly that there are four different categories of Sri Lankan Tamils. They are the educated first wave, the refugee second wave, the present third wave of immigrants, and lastly the Canadian born or Canadian raised children of these groups. As stated above, the early Tamil migrants to Western countries such as Canada were few in number. Sri Lankan as well as Indian Tamils began to arrive in Canada between 1940s and 1960s. They consisted of educated professionals, primarily upper and middle class males, of the mainly higher caste, Brahmins or Vellalars. They obtained employment, led professional careers, and interacted well with each other and Canadian society (Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce, 2006; Cheran, 2007; Vaitheespara, 1999). The next wave of Tamils differed in many ways from this first wave of Tamil migrants, as their reason for migration was different from these economic migrants.

The onslaught of violence in Sri Lanka during the early 1980s saw a greater rise in the Tamil population in Canada as refugees came in droves. This second wave comprised of different classes, castes, and religions. It included males and females, contrary to the trends of the earlier wave of migrants. Around 55% of the current Sri Lankan population in Canada arrived during this period ranging from 1991 to 2000 (S.

Canada, 2006b).¹⁰ Those refugees who arrived during the early 1990s endured a longer and greater intensity of violence. Consequently, they harbour an immense pain that they could not expunge upon arrival into their safe haven. This is a point that Clifford emphasizes in stating that the identities marred by “displacement and violent loss cannot be ‘cured’ by merging into a new national community” (1997, p. 286). This is a significant point that is often overlooked when making demands for immigrants to integrate into their new home.

The sense of trauma and displacement felt by these refugees is at times overlooked. V.L., a host on *Iravu Chalaaram*, illustrates that he was originally from the mixed area of Colombo and had left Sri Lanka in 1984 to pursue his education abroad. He later joined his family in Canada in 1988; consequently, he had not experienced the intense violence that the refugees of the early 1990s underwent. He recollected the conversations he had had with the newly arrived refugees in the 90s, “I would ask, ‘why the hell we fight? Why can’t we live happily?’ Then the story they give and the emotion, I got scared sometime. The way they talk, the things they went through and gradually I started to read and investigating” The intensity of violence and struggle for survival that the second wave of migrants to Canada experienced instilled within them a deep sense of Tamil nationalism. They distinguished themselves from the Indian Tamils and set up organizations that identified with this renewed Tamil nationalism. They also carried an immense sense of pride in their cultural and linguistic heritage, making them

¹⁰ Data stated is for Sri Lankan population and does not specify the number of Tamils and Sinhalese.

quite different from the earlier wave of migrants who had embraced western culture far more readily (Vaitheespara, 1999).

The second wave of Tamil migrants was not as proficient in English as the individuals of the earlier wave. This contributed to a high unemployment rate within the community and an increase in weaker economic conditions. They had to accommodate to variations in not only their language and economic circumstances but also had to endure shifts in climate, food, social customs, religious practices, and moral and ethical codes of behaviour (Chandrakanthan, 2007; Vaitheespara, 1999). L.L., one of the hosts of *Iravu Chalararam* asserts that the adults from this wave of Tamil migration generally continue to consider themselves strictly as Tamil and do not hold the same degree of allegiance to Canada as the first wave of Tamils. The earlier wave tends to hyphenate their identity as Tamil-Canadian or Canadian-Tamil based on the situation and the national narratives they identify with most.

The third wave of Sri Lankan Tamils includes the new immigrants who continue to arrive from Sri Lanka. The immigrants from Sri Lanka from 2001 to 2006 currently make up 22% of the total population. While this is still a steady influx, this wave arrives generally as immigrants as they are sponsored by the second wave of Tamil migrants. They arrive and settle in Toronto or Montreal and are assisted by the well-established Tamil infrastructures that are already in place in these metropolitan cities. These third wave migrants tend to remain very closely knit to the Tamil community. According to community leaders, this group has a slower rate of integration into the mainstream Canadian framework because they settle into the densely populated Tamil

neighbourhoods such as Scarborough. This group continues to experience similar language and cultural barrier issues as the second wave of refugees and do undergo economic hardships. They also foster a greater sense of anguish in their deterritorialized position as they endured the sufferings of war for over two decades.

The last category of Tamils consists of the children of the first, second and third wave of immigrants and refugees.¹¹ They comprise of Canadian born youth, those who arrived at a young age to Canada, or those who recently arrived in Canada. The younger generation of Tamils experience great difficulty in understanding their place within the existing discourses of identity and belonging. Due to the numerous confluences of identity there does exist a degree of tension between young people who were born or raised in Canada and the third wave Tamil youth. The differences in identification have resulted in the extreme case to violence among teenagers (San, 2007). The hosts interviewed from *It's That Show* arrived in Canada at a young age during the second wave of Tamils. Through their interviews and the topics they tackled on their shows, it is evident that their focus lies predominantly with local Tamil and Canadian issues rather than the issues pertaining to the strife in the homeland. They did acknowledge that there are those raised or born in Canada who can at times be very dedicated to Tamil culture and its nationalistic narratives. However, they described their own position as “sitting on a fence”: they are in between the two national and cultural narratives. While they do describe this hybrid space as an uncomfortable position that causes tension, they take pride in identifying with this in-between space. This complex and diverse make up of this

¹¹ This group is quite heterogeneous and is only grouped together here as their experiences and processes of identification are different from that of the adults.

category of young Tamils comprises of multiple loyalties, tensions and struggles as they attempt to carve out a space for themselves.

The older community leaders and hosts who were interviewed perceive this group as mainly identifying with the issues and cultural symbols of Canada more so than that of the Tamil narratives. However, they point to a rising phenomenon that when these young people turn eighteen or nineteen they begin to reflect about their Tamil identity and develop a passion for the Tamil language and its culture. They attribute this to various factors but it is mainly linked to developments in communication technology. The trend in reverse acculturation may be attributed to the increase in contact with the homeland, due to the changes in technology (Vertovec, 2001). These changes allow for faster transmission of news from Sri Lanka, through the 24hr radio channels and the recent Tamil TV channels. In addition, cheaper telephone rates, air travel, and increased communication via the internet strengthen the ties with relatives in Sri Lanka.

The simultaneous visual relaying of the developments in Sri Lanka, the damages and the deaths bring the stories to life for young people more so than the oral retelling of these tragedies by their parents and grandparents. Furthermore, the interviewees observe that the immense attention that the mainstream media paid to Sri Lanka during the tragedy of the 2004 tsunami played a significant role in the lives of these young people. It was only then that these young Tamils witnessed the harsh lived realities of the Tamil people in the north and eastern regions of Sri Lanka. This also contributed to a revived interest in learning the history of Sri Lanka and its continuing conflict. Tamil university

students also began visiting Sri Lanka to assist in the tsunami restoration and development programs and for many of them this was their first trip “home.”

This sudden resurgence of Tamil culture in this particular segment of third wave Tamils complicates the belief that integration into the host country occurs the longer one resides there; which then allegedly results in a move away from ones ethnic or nationalistic ideologies. However as Kolar-Panov (1997) indicates, during times of war the nationalistic narratives of the homeland are at the foreground rather than the relationship between the immigrant and the host country. The complexities of migration, technology, combined with situations of conflict in the homeland disturbs those traditionally perceived acculturation patterns and compels us to consider Nederveen Pieterse’s (2007) conception of flexible acculturation. However, our society has yet to accept this form of belonging as the norm, for in many instances multiple national loyalties and allegiances remain highly suspect in our post 911 world.

The Growing Toronto Tamil Community

Patricia Ehrkamp’s (2005) study on Turkish immigrants in Germany illustrates that identities and belongings are multiple and traverse national borders. She states that the Turkish community’s spatial identifications and transformations are examples of engagement with the receiving society. She also argues that transnational ties are in fact complementary instead of being contradictory to the engagements with the receiving society (p. 361). Likewise, Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto engage with Canada in their own manner and pace. Their engagement may be categorized in an assortment of ways but I wish to highlight certain key aspects: economy, education, and politics.

The economic positioning of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil comprises of a wide spectrum. Around one third of Tamils acquire employment within the manufacturing sector (Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce, 2006). Currently, with the increase in accreditation services many are able to practice in fields in which they have trained such as doctors, engineers, and lawyers. Furthermore, young Canadian educated Tamils are entering the work force as professionals. The above professions are considered the most prestigious and educated Tamils pursue these traditional career paths. However, recently they are also expanding into the real estate and financial planning arenas as these are perceived to be profitable areas of growth (Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce, 2006).

Toronto's Tamil business community is a thriving, well-organized, and supportive system that is a strong pillar of Toronto's Tamil community. A report published by the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce categorizes its businesses into those that serve the Tamil community alone and multi-ethnic businesses that serve other communities and franchises, specifically the restaurant line. One interviewee asserted that one could gauge the success of Tamil businesses within such a short time in Canada by simply glancing at the thickness of the numerous Tamil business telephone directories. There are numerous phonebooks due to various divisions within the community based on political, ideological, and personal beliefs.

Sri Lankan Tamils harbour an emotional relationship towards the right to education. The root of this extends back to the discrimination faced at the hands of the Sinhalese majority government. As mentioned above, the implementation of government

policy during the early 1970s required Tamils to score higher on university admission than the Sinhalese students, which resulted in the subsequent protests that triggered much of the violence that continues to this day. Subsequently, Toronto Tamils bask in the freedom that Canada provides them in pursuing and obtaining an education. According to CTCC's report, more than 12% of the Tamils in Toronto have obtained a university degree and 15% have a college diploma. R.T. states that these numbers will significantly increase over the next decade since the children of the second wave Tamils will be graduating during this period and many have opted to pursue a university degree.¹² The interviewees also expressed pride in the freedom that Canada allots to its immigrants, enabling them to pursue whatever they wish to accomplish. Although this echoes the all too familiar narrative of the American dream, the Tamil community holds this opinion towards Canada due to the memories of discrimination based on ethnicity, class, religion and caste experienced in their homeland.

Political Growth of Toronto Tamils

While Tamils in Toronto express a great deal of optimism and pride in Canada's education system and the rights allotted to its immigrants, the same does not apply to the views held towards politics in Canada. Many of those interviewed conveyed dismay and frustration regarding the perceived exclusionary practices of the political system. Despite the Tamils' active participation in the political parties, especially the Liberal party in both the federal and the provincial levels, they feel that parties tend to sideline Tamil members

¹² However, community leaders who work at the grassroots level with young people declared that this might not be the case as many young Tamils are stricken with personal dilemmas, which hinder their educational success.

when opportunities emerge for them to represent the party in a constituency. This has resulted in Tamils diversifying their loyalties to include other parties as well. Neethan Shan, who was once a liberal, contested as an NDP candidate in the 2007 provincial election in the Scarborough Rouge River riding but was defeated by the Liberal candidate; nonetheless, this did provide some degree of optimism to members of the Tamil community. However, other members of the community feel that the desire to participate in Canadian politics is narrow and shortsighted. M.R., a community leader, argued that Tamil community leaders are influenced by their desire to reach a peaceful political solution in the homeland and they believe that having political sway in Canada might assist them in this regard. M.R. felt that this was not going to produce the broad results desired; he believed that Tamils must diversify their purpose of participating in Canadian politics. These and other contentious opinions inform the political participation of Tamils within the Canadian system.

In addition, various organizations within the community undertake the task of educating their members about Canada's political system. Media organizations such as CTR, CTBC, Tamil Vision International (TVI), and Canadian Multicultural Radio *Thamil FM*, along with Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) actively engaged with the recent mixed member proportional (MMP) voting referendum in Ontario. It educated community members on the strengths and weaknesses of this system. Furthermore, it highlighted the benefits it could have for Tamils to gain representation in the legislature to ensure greater allocation of resources towards the community's interests. Although MMP did not win, community leaders and the radio show hosts maintain that Canadian

Tamils will continue to try to gain representation in the legislature and parliament to address the needs of the community.

2.5 Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils Relations

Migratory practices shift the relations of power and identifications between and within ethnicities, such as that of the Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils. Indian Tamils consider the Indian state of Tamilnadu to be their historical homeland. The space fosters immense pride, legitimacy, and a sense of belonging. They take great pride in their lengthy Dravidian Tamil cultural history and heritage and celebrate it in various forms. Sri Lankan Tamils share the same Dravidian Tamil cultural history; however, their migration to Sri Lanka endowed them with other distinct cultural discourses and practices with which they identify. The ongoing struggle for a legitimate space instills pride in their imagined nation of Tamil Eelam.

As the conflict in Sri Lanka escalated in the early 90s, Sri Lankan Tamil refugees poured onto the shores of India and were placed in refugee camps. The state of Tamilnadu, being in close proximity to Sri Lanka, became a safe haven and transition destination for fleeing Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. The flooding of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees and immigrants into the shores of Tamilnadu from the onset of the conflict caused some discomfort among Indian Tamils; however, many Indian Tamils did aid and assist Sri Lankan Tamils in settling into India or in reaching other destinations. Although

Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils share similar cultural narratives and traditions, the differences in dialect, geographies, and politics construct boundaries between the groups. Therefore, Sri Lankan Tamils were generally perceived as unauthentic and foreign¹³ by the Indian Tamils, which promulgated a “self” and “other” relationship. Consequently, the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees were generally placed on the lower rung of the social ladder due to the differences that existed among them.

Furthermore, India’s controversial role in the conflict between Tamil militant groups and the Sri Lankan government intensified the boundaries between Indian Tamils and Sri Lanka Tamils.¹⁴ This discomfort heightened exponentially after the 1990 assassination of Rajiv Gandhi¹⁵ by a female LTTE suicide bomber. Rajiv Gandhi was a popular candidate seeking re-election for the Prime Minister post. His assassination devastated the nation and as the incident occurred in Tamilnadu, it greatly marred the opinions held of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. This led to the tightening of Tamilnadu’s boundaries and Sri Lankan Tamils were perceived with anger and suspicion by local authorities and the Indian Tamil population as a whole. However, the passing of time and the economic sway of Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic population in Tamilnadu has abated some of the harsh divisions.

These contentious events of the homeland have a significant influence on the interaction and relationships between Toronto’s Indian Tamil population and Toronto’s

¹³ Boundaries of differences were often constructed between other Tamil diasporas as well, such as the Malaysian or Singapore Tamils.

¹⁴ See Fuglerud (1999) for a more detailed discussion on the political conflict between these groups

¹⁵ He was the son of Indira Gandhi, the first female Prime Minister of India and grandson of the first Prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Sri Lankan Tamil population. In Canada, Indian Tamils struggle to maintain a distinct identity from the Sri Lankan Tamils because of the dominant presence of Sri Lankan Tamils.¹⁶ As Vaitheespara (1999) indicates, the earlier waves of Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils were both few in number and therefore interacted closely forming overlapping communicative spaces in the form of cultural associations such as the Bharathi Kala Mandram (Bharathi Cultural Association).¹⁷ The separation of common spaces of interaction was influenced by the influx of refugees and asylum seekers to Canada during the early 90s, as well the events occurring in India (Vaitheespara, 1999).

The small population of Toronto Indian Tamils¹⁸, primarily educated professionals from upper and middle class families is not as close knit as Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils. Religious and caste divisions continue to play prominent roles in the social structure of Toronto Indian Tamils. Moreover, there is no single uniting cause binding the community together as in the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils. The Indian Tamil immigrants who arrived after 1990 were keenly aware of the growing strength of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil population. There was considerable discomfort with being in such close proximity to a group they perceived as socially other. The mainstream public sphere's lack of knowledge of the differentiations within ethnic groups further contributed to the anxieties nurtured by the Indian Tamils. In Canada's mainstream discursive formation, the signifier "Tamil" mainly refers to the Sri Lankan Tamils, while

¹⁶ There has not been any detailed research conducted on Toronto's Indian Tamil community, possibly due to their small numbers. The discussion here is based on my observations as a Canadian Indian Tamil.

¹⁷ It is presently a cultural association organized and participated in mainly by Toronto's Indian Tamils.

¹⁸ It is not feasible to obtain a precise number on the number of Indian Tamils since the census ethnicity categories contain Tamils as a broad category and does not differentiate between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils

the existence of Indian Tamil immigrants is almost non-existent. Through the imbalanced movement of people and the mainstream public sphere's inability to comprehend the nuances of groups, the once minority Sri Lankan Tamils now possess the ethnic label "Tamil" in the diasporic space. The dominant majority of Indian Tamils feel that they have lost their identity in the process of migrating to Canada. The imbalanced movement of groups to various migrant destinations transforms the relations of power and identifications between groups, requiring the reconstruction of existing boundaries and discourses.

2.6 Living Between Two Narratives Of Nationalism

As mentioned earlier, a significant issue that dominates Sri Lankan Tamil Canadians is the continuing conflict in the homeland. As the largest community of diasporic Sri Lankan Tamils, they continually advocate to various levels of the Canadian government to devote attention to the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka. They request the government to assist their loved ones in Sri Lanka by reaching a peaceful resolution to the ongoing violence. Their resounding plea has not produced significant action but R.T., a member of CTC, remains optimistic and stated that their campaigning to various levels of government has resulted in minor acknowledgements and shifts in policy. He pointed to a new policy that was announced in December 2007 taken by the Harper government. The policy states that a tougher stance would be taken on those immigrating to Canada who had belonged to the Sri Lankan state security forces and police officers. Many in these

positions of authority are deemed responsible for human rights abuses and torture of Tamil prisoners and civilians in Sri Lanka (Bell, 2007b). The Canada Border Services Agency intends to deport those who belonged to the Sri Lankan state security forces as it has with those alleged to have assisted the LTTE in their militant undertakings. R.T. considered this a great achievement as the Canada government was finally implementing the same set of rules for those involved in both sides of the conflict.

The possibilities of a revival of Tamil cultural pride and continual allegiance to Tamil separatist movements in the third wave of Tamil migrants may perturb many in the mainstream public sphere. These allegiances generate such negative reactions for Tamil separatist nationalism as it is often linked with the LTTE's violent actions in Sri Lanka. This perception especially looms large in light of the Conservative government's banning of the LTTE by placing them on the Canadian terrorist list in 2006 (Public Safety Canada, 2006). This resulted in the suppression of many habitual symbolic visual displays of Tamil nationalism. These often comprise of the Tiger flag, the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran's photo, and other paraphernalia that symbolize the struggle for an independent Tamil state (Cheran, 2007). John Rex states that, "movements which promote political disloyalty and terrorist politics will be suppressed in a nation state" (1997b, p. 282). Nation states often tend to suppress those movements they deem threatening to their own dominance. However, it is necessary to scrutinize the obfuscated negative labeling of groups and communities and focus on the nuances present within these narratives and symbols to ensure that groups are not wrongfully characterized.

I would like to separate the discourse for a separate Tamil state and a resolution in Sri Lanka from the actions and narratives of the LTTE. Although these two narratives are often conflated as one, I deem this distinction a necessary one for it enables greater understanding of this complex set of discourses. The blanketing of Tamil separatist nationalist allegiances as “terrorist” politics is a narrow conception that does not reflect the multiple public spheres to which diasporic Sri Lankan Tamil populations ascribe. The cultural politics of deterritorialization produces plural patriotism as national allegiances dispersed across the globe re-combine with other narratives and pose a problem to the singular Western conceptions of nationhood (Appadurai, 1996). The identification of Tamil Canadians or Canadian Tamils does not completely capture the complex and continually shifting core of these identities. I utilize it here to express what community leaders use to describe themselves. The Canadian Tamils are wedged between these conflictual narratives of nationhood and attempt to speak for themselves from this contentious space. This is not Bhabha’s (2000b) space of emancipation; he considers the in between space where various discourses come together and combine to create a third space, that creates novel relations of power, holding the possibility for resistance and change. However, this has been a contested notion, and as Appadurai (1996) argues, the coming together of various discourses does not necessarily have to consist of an emancipatory characteristic, rather it is a space of conflict and reconfiguration.

Fuglerud (1999) suggests that there are certain stages of exile nationalisms starting with a refugee identity being forced upon a group by the authorities or the government. Eventually, the group members attempt to avoid such marginalization by

representing themselves from their own perspective. Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada were subject to negative framing, like many other minority groups, over the decades by dominant forces of representation such as government as well as media institutions. While in the past they did not have the institutional and structural systems in place to counter these framings, of late they have begun resisting these hegemonic framings. They fiercely speak out against the mainstream's allegations of Toronto Tamils funding the LTTE or of the Toronto Tamils *being* LTTE members.

One organization that came to the foreground in 2005 is the Canadian Tamil Congress. It strongly identifies itself as Canadian Tamil and claims to speak as the unified voice of Canadian Tamils. David Poopalapillai, the national spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress, retorts in an article in *The National Post* to allegations of Tamil Tigers lobbying politicians in Canada. He asserts, "We [Canadian Tamils] do go after politicians, but LTTE, I have no evidence... I'm not directed by LTTE or anybody else. I have my own conviction. I strongly feel the Tamils in Sri Lanka have been oppressed for a long time" (Bell, 2007a). Those interviewed strongly stress that local Tamil voices asking for peace and international interventions in the conflict in Sri Lanka, are the voices of Canadian Tamils who are actively engaging with Canada's democratic system. One of the hosts of *Iravu Chalaralam*, L.L. heatedly exclaimed that the mainstream media, authorities, and the government ignorantly assume that Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto speak as the mouthpiece of LTTE. He added that Tamils fled a war torn land and many have come to consider Canada as their home for over 20 years. Their sense of gratitude towards Canada comes out in the radio episode analyzed in Chapter 5.

Sri Lankan Tamils, like many migrant communities, have loyalties for both their motherland and Canada. These pluralistic national allegiances unearth a variety of problems for the host country, requiring serious deliberations and policy developments devoid of suspicion, to understand and handle this complex phenomenon.

L.L. also pointed to the conflated conceptions that mainstream media and at times government authorities engage in by failing to observe the distinction between “*being a supporter* of the LTTE and *being an LTTE*.” The Toronto Tamils’ relationship with the LTTE is a highly convoluted one and does not correspond to a dichotomous, for and against relationship. Many Tamils fled to Canada due to the violence between the Sinhalese government and the various Tamil militant groups. In addition, they also fled in fear of the violence that took place between the various Tamil militant factions, among which the LTTE eventually developed as the prevailing force. According to L.L., some of the early Tamil immigrants and refugees supported some of the opposition groups and fled to Canada in fear of the LTTE’s forceful suppression of these groups. While many of these individuals continue to dislike the LTTE, they also conflictly believe that the LTTE remains the only opposition to the alleged Sinhalese oppression of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Fuglerud (1999) also describes the Norwegian Tamils and their relationship to the LTTE as a profound contradiction. Similar to several Tamils in Canada, certain number of Norwegian Tamils also fled from the LTTE; however, they have come to perceive them as their only source of resistance, in light of the continued violence between the Sinhalese government and the LTTE.

The predominant inclination is that many Sri Lankan Tamils do support the LTTE; however, they may not condone the use of violence and therefore remain at odds with the LTTE in that aspect. L.L. states that it is difficult for Tamils to be entirely opposed to the LTTE or support them wholeheartedly and find themselves constantly negotiating their positioning. Diasporic nationalism primarily attracts negative attention when associated with oppositional movements and its operations and motives are perceived to be contrary to the norm. Community leaders and radio show hosts believe that the mainstream media are quick to judge the Toronto Tamil community and fail to understand the complexities that befall their community, especially in relation to homeland and identity issues.

Questions of belonging and loyalties gained new focus since the Conservative government banned the LTTE as a terrorist organization in April 2006. This further complicates the Canadian Tamils' multiple sense of belonging. The shift in policy jostled the habits that Canadian Tamils were engaged in thus far to symbolize the ongoing conflict. The adoption of LTTE paraphernalia to symbolize the struggle is a practice that more or less went unquestioned for the past two decades. However, these symbols, as characteristic of symbols, have a variety of different significations to their users. Symbols such as the tiger have been adopted by Sri Lankan Tamils as a reminder of their exodus, the discrimination they underwent, or acts as a reminder of their loved ones still in peril in the homeland. For others, these symbols evoke hope in the LTTE's efforts to gain a separate homeland and peace for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. However, certain parts of the mainstream public sphere perceive the use of the Tamil Eelam (country) flag or the

symbol of the tiger as evidence of being part of the LTTE and this elicits a great deal of suspicion and marginalization.

The prevailing conception often offered by the mainstream public sphere is a simplified version of the complexities of migration; however, it is necessary to acknowledge these intricacies present within migratory identities and consider them in their plural and partial forms. Moreover, these identities are a messy interaction of various migratory periods and routes. Therefore, constructing new roots does not involve a cultural transplantation; rather, it is a continual reworking and renewal of previous and present forms of being. Werbner argues that social spaces, symbolic discourses, and organizations are started from scratch facilitating cultural and material creativity (2002, p. 218). However, this does not imply that ties to the homeland are severed, instead migrants continue to be influenced by how the homeland perceives those in the diaspora (Fuglerud, 1999, p. 139) and how they perceive themselves and others. Consequently, responses to these multiple identities and allegiances require more nuanced and flexible conceptions. Understanding the intense pain and complex emotional ties, which extend beyond the national boundaries, involve open dialogue and deep-rooted responses. The lack of such dialogue and deliberation poses the risk of ostracizing communities, causing discontentment. Multicultural frameworks implemented in various multicultural localities intend to manage these multiple and partial identities. However, they continue to function within the singular national framework, making only slight grudging steps towards accepting plural patriotism and belongings in the world. The next chapter briefly examines the Canadian multicultural framework as well as its ideological influences and

supports two concepts that allow and account for the complex identifications of our multicultural localities.

CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING MULTICULTURAL REALITIES: TOWARDS A CRITICAL AND GLOBAL MULTICULTURALISM

3.1. Ongoing Questionings of Multicultural Realities

The proliferation of globalization and global conflict resulted in the increased movement of people and capital. As illustrated in the earlier chapter, it shifted the positioning of ethnic groups, as well as changed the role of major players in society. The dominant role of the nation state has been a highly contested issue in light of these changes. Despite its weakened position, the nation state continues to have a primary role in structuring the lives of those who live within its borders (Cameron & Stein, 2002; Wong, 2002). For example, the framework of multiculturalism was implemented by certain nations to deal with the increasing phenomenon of multicultural localities, in which starkly diverse cultural and ethnic groups reside. The ideological conceptions and policies of multiculturalism attempt to manage these differentially situated groups within the national frameworks.

Discourses and practices of multiculturalism are an important arena of examination especially in light of major political shifts in the world (Hall, 2001).

Historical transformations, such as the end of the cold war, global movement of capital and people, and the postcolonial shift contribute to the divergence of opinions. They bring differences in closer contact, necessitating the questionings of how to handle them. The concept of multiculturalism continues to be deeply conflated and contested. It was derived from pluralist ideology and arrives at the acceptable practices in dealing with

differences of ethnic identity and allegiances within a nation. As stated in the introduction chapter, I utilize the term “multicultural” to signify the diversity of societies. The term “multiculturalism” refers to the ideological concept; however, when referring to the specific policy framework formulated by countries, I refer to it as a proper noun such as, “Canadian Multiculturalism.” I differentiate the policy framework from the ideological formation for I intend to underscore the multifaceted aspect of multiculturalism discourses and the policy constructions, at different times and across different spaces.

In this discussion, I focus mainly on the management of differences pertaining to recent ethnic minority groups. However, I do grant that a practice of dealing with difference continues to play a significant role with ethnic groups from earlier waves of migration to Canada, such as the French Canadians. The movement of capital and people is an ongoing process throughout history but the recent swell in migration to western countries has produced geographical spaces with diverse groups in closer proximity than in any prior period (Cameron & Stein, 2002; Goldberg, 1994). The recent migrant minorities, unlike the earlier groups, continue to maintain close ties to their homeland, pluralizing the notion of home and proliferating multiple loyalties in their multicultural localities (Brown & Cardinal, 2007). The experiences of these economic or forced migrant groups in their new localities vary based on the ideological perceptions that specific countries have towards minorities and citizenship.

Varying countries consider migrants as outsiders, as temporary guests, or as part of the society. These conceptions then result in policies that set out to manage these demographic diversities and may promote a range of responses, such as assimilation,

naturalization, tolerance, or integration (May, Modood, & Squires, 2004). Canadian Multiculturalism is one response to the increasingly heterogeneous characteristic of this nation. These multicultural realities augmented by the processes of globalization tend to be fluid and require the constant negotiation of conflict and difference at various levels of society (Modood, 1997; Werbner, 1997). Scholars criticize the various multiculturalism discourses for not being able to address sufficiently inequality and differences. Likewise, they also criticize that the policy constructions are lagging behind these conflictual and continually shifting realities (Nederveen Pieterse, 2007). These policies have come under heavy criticism and many scholars dismiss it for encouraging diversity mainly in the private sphere while concentrating on unity within the national framework in the public sphere. Policy framework discourses differ between each country; they are not singular in nature and shift over time in response to the political and societal conditions (Li, 1999).

This chapter highlights some of the discourses and critiques of multiculturalism as an ideology and its influence on the policy framework of Canadian Multiculturalism. The attention given to arguments of integration or assimilation has stifled other dynamic discussions of understanding differences. As the preceding chapter illustrated with the case of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils, there are multiple differences and we need to develop a nuanced understanding of differences in order to devise means to handle the inequities that arise. I turn to the concept of critical multiculturalism to explore new avenues of understanding the multicultural realities of our society for I consider it as an adequate tool to tackle inequalities structured across various intersectionalities of difference. Following this, I examine the concept of global multiculturalism and draw attention to the

importance of understanding the construction of localities from a global perspective. I emphasize Nederveen Pieterse's (2007) and others' argument that conflict has gone global and cannot be reined within the borders of the nation (Hyndman, 2003). We need to understand differences as situated within various layers of power and as being interlaced with the consequences of global conflict, in order to comprehend the multicultural realities of our world.

3.2 The Multipronged Discourses of Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism as Ideology

Many scholars have analyzed the discourses of multiculturalism (Bannerji, 2000a; Benhabib, 2002; Bissoondath, 2006; Day, 2000; Goldberg, 1994; Hall, 2001; Li, 1999; Tepper, 1997). I briefly outline here four forms of multiculturalism discourses: conservative, commercial, liberal, and critical/radical multiculturalism. Subsequent to this, I discuss some of the broader arguments deliberated within multiculturalism. I chart the arguments pertaining to the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution. I argue for the need to move past this dichotomous conversation and exercise both a politics of recognition and a policy of redistribution in order to arrive at new avenues of understanding the multicultural realities of our society.

Conservative multiculturalism comprises of colonial roots, focuses on assimilation, and seeks to construct a singular and unified culture. Corporate/commercial multiculturalism shares many similarities with conservative multiculturalism. However, its underlying notion advocates that concerns of differences and inequalities may be

resolved upon its recognition within the marketplace (Hall, 2001; McLaren, 1994). Scholars such as McLaren (1994) have rejected conservative and corporate multiculturalism for not questioning the dominant regime and promoting an add-on mentality of minorities. Liberal multiculturalism, informed by pluralist ideology perceives cultural differences to be of equal stature, allocates rights to protect and engage in various cultural practices, and leans towards integration of minorities within the broader society (Day, 2000; Hall, 2001). While all these forms of multiculturalism discourses manifest themselves in some form or another in current society, liberal multiculturalism tends to inform mainly what we understand as multiculturalism.

In its aim to recognize group differences, liberal multiculturalism has been criticized for freezing the boundaries of groups (Caws, 1994; Nederveen Pieterse, 2004a). Furthermore, accusations exist of liberal multiculturalism not adequately problematizing the inequalities within the current system. It acknowledges that there are certain disparities but believes that these can be reformed within the existing framework (Benhabib, 2002; McLaren, 1994). In contrast, critical multiculturalism highlights oppression and structural inequalities that inhibit the equal participation of minorities in society and focuses on addressing the heterogeneity of power and differences (Chicago Cultural Studies group, 1994; Goldberg, 1994; Hall, 2001; McLaren, 1994). I will discuss the possibilities that critical multiculturalism possesses in informing a nuanced and fluid understanding of differences and groups in the latter part of this chapter.

To Recognize or Redistribute?

At present, I wish to return to liberal multiculturalism and chart two paradigms that have unfortunately stood in opposition to each other: the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution. The politics of recognition, a phrase initially introduced by Charles Taylor (1994), promotes cultural differences. It emphasizes that these differences be acknowledged and valued, for a negative perception of differences may prove damaging to collective identifications. Politics of recognition primarily focuses on the injustices encountered in cultural representation. Although many agree with Taylor's claim that distorted representations of groups proliferate damaging consequences, concerns and criticisms have risen over the years towards the politics of recognition. Scholars such as Richard Day (2000) argue that the underlying framework of a politics of recognition suggests that there is a singular nation, an "us" that has to recognize "them." Will Kymlicka's (1996) suggestion of allocating rights based on national minorities such as the charter groups and ethnic groups rings true of this claim. His position reaffirms the earlier criticism of liberal multiculturalism freezing group boundaries. Seyla Benhabib (2002) asserts that Kymlicka's stance does not take into consideration the fluid shifts that occur in the status of groups. This fluidity of statuses is evident in the differential treatment of Sri Lankan Tamils in their homeland and migration destinations. Benhabib also strongly argues against the privileging of these "national cultures over immigrant ones" since liberalism arguably considers all cultures as valuable (2002, p. 66). Although the politics of recognition aims to address the unjust cultural representations and its repercussions, its ideological framework remains highly contested.

The redistribution paradigm on the other hand seeks to address the socioeconomic injustices that arise from the practices of marginalization that bar minorities from equal participation in society (Benhabib, 2002). However, it too has faced criticism for being too narrow in its understanding and treatment of social injustices. The lengthy debate between these two paradigms has recently shifted to bring about a more comprehensive discussion of recognition. Parekh's (2004) essay on "Redistribution or recognition? A misguided debate" skillfully unravels the unproductive nature of this debate and asks that we require both a politics of recognition and redistribution in order to address thoroughly the social inequalities that exist. Parekh (2004) argues that both recognition and redistribution address two significant arenas and sites of justice and, while related, they are not equivalent to each other. He aptly states that inequalities perpetuated due to misrecognition and economic marginalization hail from different mechanisms and therefore require different treatment. Similarly, Benhabib (2002) unpacks this ongoing debate by drawing on Nancy Fraser's (1996) position on utilizing both the paradigms to challenge the multiple faces of injustice. These scholars arrive at this nuanced position by acknowledging the multifaceted nature of power and recognizing that no one tool or stance can adequately address the extent to which power and injustices operate. This reconfigured ideological positioning needs to inform the construction of diversely layered mechanisms, utilizing both the paradigm of recognition and redistribution, where deemed fit, to address injustices faced.

3.3 Canada's Practices of Dealing with Differences

Canadian Multiculturalism policy is influenced by liberal pluralism ideology; nonetheless, the policy undergoes continuous shifts, is multiple, and remains highly contested (Karim, 2007). In order to understand the development of the various discourses of multiculturalism it is important to comprehend the historical makeup of Canadian society, the shifts in immigration policy, and the changes this brought to the Canadian ethnoscape. I do not aim to engage in a thorough discussion of these aspects, for that task extends beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, I briefly chart the significant elements that contributed to the development and transformations of Canadian Multiculturalism policy, followed by criticisms and concerns regarding the policy. This leads us to the discussion regarding critical multiculturalism and global multiculturalism as having the potential to address the concerns raised about liberal multiculturalism and the policy manifestations that it informs.

Canada and Shifting Immigration Policy

Canada is widely hailed a land of immigrants beginning with the East Asian population that crossed the Bering Strait who make up our indigenous population. This was followed by the arrival of the French and the English colonists, other European immigrants, and the more recent waves of non-European immigrants (Fleras & Elliott, 1999). The usurping of power and land from the aboriginals, fashioned Canadian national narratives as white, made up primarily of the British, French, and other Europeans. These singular perceptions informed the racially fashioned Immigration Act well into 1962 (Wong, 2002). These policies eventually had to shift, to address the need for skilled labour in Canada, and to offset the decline of European immigration (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002;

Arat-Koc, 1992; Fleras & Elliott, 1999; Wong, 2002). These economic needs resulted in significant changes to the Canadian demographic and cultural framework.

Immigration policy underwent major shift in 1967 not only due to these economic reasons but also due to continued pressure from ethnic minorities and human rights activists to remove the overt racial barriers. The introduction of the supposed “colour blind” point system in 1978 ushered in much of Canada’s non-European population (Fleras & Elliott, 1999; Henry & Tator, 2006). The point system was divided into three categories: family reunification, independent, and refugee class. It established nine criteria to evaluate one’s competence in gaining acceptance into Canada. Although the point system is not overtly racist, it is not void of bias and continues to favour only certain groups of people as acceptable human capital (Henry & Tator, 2006).

The 1990s saw the increase in the number of refugee claimants, such as the Tamils and Sikhs, who outnumbered the sponsored refugees through established organizations (Johnson, 2006). Gillian Creese argues that although the circumstances of refugees differed from those of immigrants they were in most cases treated similarly and were chosen based on their marketable skills (1992, p. 127). She, as well as Fleras and Elliot (1999) argue that there was a predominant trend to ignore the rise of a global refugee crisis. The narrative rather focused on the social problem of refugees, perceiving them as a threat to the nation and as abusers of the immigration system. Benhabib (2002) asserts that while countries could no longer openly close their borders to refugees and asylum seekers, nation-states found other means to control the movement and entry of people within their borders. This ensued primarily through the characterization of

immigration and incorporation policies. This is evident in the Canadian case in the rigid criteria established to qualify within the point system and the tightening of refugee claimant methods over the years (Johnson, 2006).

Discourses of Canadian Multiculturalism

The conquest of the aboriginals by European powers, followed by the French and British power struggle, with the British triumphing as the dominant force, established some tensions at the institutional and interpersonal level. The strong voices of French Canadians and aboriginals continually demanded greater recognition from the British Canadians. These narratives constantly impaired the construction of a singular English Canadian national discourse. The Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B) during the 1960s sought to address these issues. However, the work of the B&B Commission focused primarily on the English and French Canadian language and cultural relations, which brought about strong contestation from the “third force” of recent ethnic minorities (Miki, 2005). Julia Lalonde’s (2006) study highlights the Ukrainian-Canadian community’s significant contributions to the “third force” in demanding increased recognition during the discussions of the B&B Commission. The pressures from such communities significantly influenced the recognition of the “other” ethnic groups in the B&B Commission’s Report, Vol. 4, forever shifting the discourse from bilingualism and biculturalism to bilingualism and multiculturalism (Abu-Laban & Nieguth, 2000; Canada, 1970; Day, 2000).

The government in 1971, under Trudeau's leadership, declared Canadian Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework as official policy. This policy sought to recognize the language and heritage of all the ethnic groups within Canada and aimed to remove existing social obstacles that promoted unequal relations and deterred equality (Fleras & Elliott, 1999; Karim, 1993; Li, 1999; Mackey, 2002). The early years of Canadian Multiculturalism focused on recognizing difference and emphasized cultural retention in its programs. During the early 1980s, the policy evolved to encompass equity related issues, such as race relations, employment equity and education programs (Fleras & Elliott, 1999; Li, 1999). Multiculturalism also began to direct its attention to the new racially and ethnically diverse immigrants because of the shifts in immigration policy (Li, 1999). The 1985 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom embedded multiculturalism as part of the Canadian way of life, establishing the foundation for the Multiculturalism Act that soon followed.

The 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act further enshrined the discourse of multiculturalism into the fabric of Canadian identity emphasizing social justice, civic participation and identity matters, while still concentrating on Canadian unity (Nakhaie, 2006). It also expanded on the earlier objectives, acknowledging that Canadians have the freedom to choose and participate in their cultures and that the Act recognizes and promotes this multicultural characteristic of Canada (Fleras & Elliott, 1999). Furthermore, it ensures assistance to social institutions to promote and maintain the multicultural characteristics and further social cohesion by developing greater understanding between groups and encourage appreciation for other cultures (Li, 1999).

The other major objectives concentrate on the preservation of non-official languages while simultaneously strengthening the official languages of English and French (Fleras & Elliott, 1999; Li, 1999). While the discourses of Canadian Multiculturalism are deeply interwoven into the narratives of Canadian society, many question the value of Canadian Multiculturalism.

3.4 Criticisms and Concerns of Multiculturalism

Critics of liberal multiculturalism contend that group identities are forever in flux and that the liberal ideology and the policy frameworks of multiculturalism do not adequately address the realities on the ground. Moreover, critics claim that multiculturalism reifies and reduces groups to superficial and symbolic characteristics while focusing more on discourses of nation building (Li, 1999; Parekh, 2004; Thobani, 2007). While many criticize the discourses of multiculturalism, it is unclear whether they dismiss liberal multiculturalism, all forms of multiculturalism, or oppose the various policy manifestations. In addition, it often remains unclear at what point in history and which country their criticism is aimed at. There is a conflation between the various aspects of multiculturalism discourse and this leads to the dissonance in its discussion (Karim, 2007). As stated earlier, there are numerous aspects of multiculturalism, as an ideology and policy, and it would be beneficial to the dialogue on multiculturalism to address its differential aspects.

Advocates and detractors of Canadian Multiculturalism agree that it arose from the pressures of a shifting world scene that ushered in the postcolonial era and a global

economy; in order for Canada to remain competitive it had to project itself as a progressive, tolerant and cosmopolitan nation (Fleras & Elliott, 1999; Thobani, 2007). As indicated earlier, the dilemmas encountered in managing French Canadians' demands for greater recognition and the rising aboriginal voice led to the establishment of the B&B Commission during the 1960s. Over the decades, the growth of new immigrants in the urban centers required the state to further recognize and address this demographic to capture the "ethnic vote" (Fleras & Elliott, 1999). Scholars such as Thobani (2007), Henry and Tator (2006), and Fleras and Elliot (1999), who are critical of Canadian Multiculturalism, often highlight these political and economical motivations behind the foundations of Canadian Multiculturalism. The major concerns that arise apart from these are that Canadian Multiculturalism reifies identities, does not address systemic inequalities, and remains narrowly focused on national unity. I attempt to unpack these criticisms below leading to the discussion on critical multiculturalism and global multiculturalism as perhaps holding the potential to surpass some of the concerns raised.

Reification of Group Identities

Liberal pluralist multiculturalism, although it manifests in different forms across the globe, has a tendency to reify identities in its efforts to recognize cultural difference (Day, 2000; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Samad, 1997; Thobani, 2007). The state's allocation of rights and recognizing groups as belonging to the national fabric requires the identification and classification of distinct groups. As discussed in the earlier chapter on ethnicity, this is a false and narrow conception of groups, for group boundaries shift;

they are hybrid and multiple in their affiliations (Benhabib, 2002; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007). The mosaic metaphor that symbolizes ethnic groups as parts of a whole, as signified in Canadian Multiculturalism, misunderstands and misrepresents the nature of group identities by freezing them as delineable wholes (Benhabib, 2002; Thobani, 2007). In the case of recent immigrant groups the predominant understanding in many receiving countries, such as Canada and Australia, is of ethnic identity being transported from the homeland (Cunningham & Nguyen, 2000a; Werbner, 2002). This cultural transplantation notion is simplistic and reductionist in its thinking. Although recent ethnic groups maintain closer ties to their homeland than earlier groups, they continue to evolve and undergo considerable changes in their new home (Werbner, 2002; Wong, 2002). The reification of group boundaries and the simplification of identity formation results in the mainly superficial celebrations of difference within the public sphere.

Inadequacy in Contesting against Systemic Inequalities

The second major critique against the dominant framework of liberal multiculturalism and its corresponding policy pertains to its inadequate contestation of systemic inequalities experienced by the minority others. The liberal ideology presupposes that the achievement of social equality is not a laborious task and does not require significant changes to the existing framework. A predominant criticism of the liberal Canadian Multiculturalism policy discourses is its treatment of racism as individual and isolated incidents, solved through the mantra of tolerance, rather than as belonging to an endemic systemic structure (Arat-Koc, 2005; Karim, 1997). Henry and Tator (1999), and Abu-Laban and Nieguth (2000) note in their examinations of state discourses, such as

Canadian multiculturalism, that the language used tends to be passive and non-coercive, connoting the tone of tolerance rather than change. They, like others (Fleras & Elliott, 1999; Mackey, 2002; Marger, 2006), argue that such discourses of the state are mainly symbolic. Fleras and Elliot (1999) assert that the celebration of symbolic identity is a safe manner to manage ethnicity without shifting the framework of the society in any significant manner. Bannerji's (2000b) analysis elaborates on Fleras and Elliot's by stating that the discourse of diversity allows the state to continue its practices while also appeasing the multicultural realities on the ground. Moreover, since the state has taken it upon itself to manage the multicultural groups, it does an unbiased and neutral role in this management of difference; and remains for the most part unquestioned (Thobani, 2007).

Nationally Focused Agenda

This leads us to the criticisms of liberal multiculturalism discourse and policy as remaining narrowly focused on nationalistic agendas and retaining an assimilationist characteristic. Goldberg (1994) argues that managed multiculturalism, although intentioned to improve the circumstances of minorities, remains entrenched in a monocultural model of the nation state. Goldberg substantiates Appadurai's (1996) argument that the nation state must continue to make members, living within its boundaries, into local subjects. This managed multiculturalism allows and accounts for differential expression of cultural identity within the limits of the private sphere (Henry & Tator, 1999; Li, 1999). The parading of these differences manifests within the public sphere in the form of parades and festivals, such as Caribana, Danforth Street Festival,

and Tamil Day at Canada's Wonderland. These sanitized public displays of a group's identity¹⁹ are devoid of complexities or the power relations that make up these identities.

Meanwhile, the two charter groups²⁰ continue to retain greater claim to power and legitimization with their identities standing above that of the recent ethnic minorities (Thobani, 2007). One rationale as to why the culture of the West situates itself in the centre, to which all others remain at the margins as abject identities, is its supposed universality (Benhabib, 2002). Benhabib argues that the western concept of universality actually homogenizes the development of western identities and creates the view of the West as a view from nowhere (Chicago Cultural Studies group, 1994; Day, 2000). Richard Day argues that the nation state (Canada) needs to overcome its presumption of already existing in a state of homogeneous wholeness. He stretches this further, stating that this is actually an impractical and impossible aspiration (2000, p. 12). However, many Western countries like Canada, despite their overall efforts to recognize its minorities, mainly perceive the nation state as a preexisting exclusive entity with which all minorities must identify or remain outside the boundaries.

As discussed earlier, scholars such as Kymlicka (1996) justify the practice of allocating group rights based on the privileged status of national minorities²¹ and the recent not so privileged ethnic groups. He suggests that the recent ethnic groups arrive here with the knowledge that they must assimilate into the existing national fabric;

¹⁹ I utilize the singular of identity rather than the plural in this case because these displays reduce groups to a monolithic whole.

²⁰ Although the aboriginal groups presently belong to the category of the founding nations or charter groups, I refer here to the British and French due to the unequal distribution of power that persists to this day in relation to the aboriginals.

²¹ Kymlicka's national minorities are those groups involved in the conquest or federation, British, French and the aboriginals.

therefore, the state need not accommodate in a significant manner. Benhabib (2002) argues that from the perspective of political liberalism that Kymlicka argues from, there is no substantial reason to privilege one culture over another, since all cultures are equally valuable. Kymlicka's narrow perception of history also tends to lead to the homogenous understanding of what constitutes a nation. As indicated earlier, Goldberg (1994) and Nederveen Pieterse (2007) argue that the present configuration of nation states is but a small episode within the broader historical trends of flexible flows between boundaries. Kymlicka's standpoint considers immigrants to be add-ons to an already existing static national framework instead of being part of the ongoing construction of this national identity.

The adoption of broader perspective of cultures, histories, and identities would allow nation states, such as Canada, to engage in meaningful dialogue with its heterogeneous minority groups regardless of their moment of arrival (Davidson, 2007). In addition, as Reza Nakhaie (2006) states, it would require not just recent ethnic groups to integrate but also the dominant ethnic groups to consider seriously how to integrate economically and socially with each other. Moreover, it holds the possibility of perceiving recent ethnic minorities as belonging to the process of constructing a nation as opposed to the perception of ethnic communities contributing to the collapse of an unchanging national identity. The ensuing section on critical multiculturalism, followed by global multiculturalism takes into account the fluidity of cultures, histories, and identities, which facilitates an inclusive politics of difference.

3.5 Critical Multiculturalism: Revisiting Differences

Difference cannot be relegated to the cultural arena alone, it must be understood in a multivariate manner that includes the social and political economy of difference (Kanishka & Kipfer, 2005, p. 674). Critical multiculturalism, as developed by McLaren, problematizes the relationship that binds signifiers and signifieds together. By this, he suggests that we analyze differences in a multidimensional perspective, examining the various intersectionalities of power within which individuals and groups find themselves situated (1994, p. 55). Scholars such as Nederveen Pieterse (2007), Goldberg (1994), Werbner (2002), Fleras (1999), and Henry and Tator (1999) consider critical multiculturalism to open up new trajectories for the discourses of understanding and dealing with differences and inequalities.²² They perceive it in this manner for critical multiculturalism shifts from the monocultural celebratory treatment of differences and looks at the power relationships between and within differences. Furthermore, critical multiculturalism understands cultures as fluid, multiple, and has a deeper conception of history. I structure the discussion on critical multiculturalism into its perceptions of differences, resistance, and history. Critical multiculturalism's handling of these aspects holds the potential for open dialogue and meaningful action.

Differential Differences

As stated above, critical multiculturalism's treatment of difference is plural, scrutinizing the various systems of differentiation such as race, class, caste, gender, age, religion, and

²² Some refer to critical multiculturalism as radical (Henry & Tator, 1999) or polycentric multiculturalism (Shohat & Stam, 1997); however, the basis of the concept remains similar.

ethnic identity. McLaren asserts that critical multiculturalism focuses on the situatedness of individuals and groups within and across these systems, while asking to challenge inequalities by analyzing the micro differences within difference (1994, p. 59).

Examinations by both Thobani (2007) and Benhabib (2002) are characteristic of such a line of questioning; they unpack the double jeopardy positioning of females within Native American communities. They point out that the allocation of rights to marry outside the community stipulates that native women will lose their status whereas native men do not undergo the same consequence. The state dominated the right of naming and privileged the native males over the females. McLaren (1994), Benhabib (2002), Fleras and Elliot (1999) and feminist scholars such as Nancy Fraser (1996) stress the need to address the overlapping inequalities and subordination experienced by minorities within minority groups such as women and children.

The diversity present within and across groups requires further attention. The distribution of power and resources highlighting the multilayered and multidimensional nature of oppression are especially important aspects for further study. Viruell-Fuentes (2006) explores through in-depth interviews the experiences of transnational first-generation Mexican immigrant and second-generation Mexican American women, indicating the gendering of these transnational spaces. She suggests that females of both first and second-generation Mexican females construct their identity through narrowly limited cultural cues and resources made available to them. Viruell-Fuentes also points out that there are more resources for men to engage in transnational movements, while the free flow movement of females, wives and mothers, are greatly inhibited. The

positioning of gendered and other minority identities in the mainstream and within minority groups requires further questioning.

Another study that examined the diversification of groups is Martin Marger's (2006) study on Canadian business immigrants who arrived on the Business Immigration Program during the mid 80s to mid 90s. Although I find Marger's focus on assimilation or transnationalism to be somewhat limited²³, his effort to treat ethnicity in a heterogeneous manner comes across throughout the piece. The study explores various intersectionalities of identity and does not limit itself only to cultural identity. He argues that these immigrants, primarily of East Asian background, tend to foster weaker ties to their ethnic groups, preferring to maintain closer ties to the mainstream and mainly distinguish themselves by their class identity (p. 890). His conclusion discusses the nuances of ethnic groups and argues that traditional understandings of immigrant experiences overlook the specificities of ethnic groups. Marger asserts that there are a multitude of immigrant needs and experiences, which require a wide array of varied responses.

My foray into Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil community sheds some light on the specificities of groups and the structuring of issues and their responses. Some of the interviewees expressed that there are hierarchies of issues that the community addresses and mobilizes itself around. By this, they point to the manner and reasons certain discourses gain attention as problems in the community and others do not. The hierarchy of discourses focuses primarily on the homeland takes precedence. Male centered issues

²³ As stated earlier I consider Abdelhady's (2006) challenge that research on immigration and ethnic identities should expand beyond the dichotomous questioning of assimilation or interrelation.

such as gang violence or gambling follow; women's issues, such as post partum depression, trail behind in this hierarchy. More recently, discourses of mental health and depression have obtained some legitimacy within the community. However, matters pertaining to hybrid youth identifications are somewhere below female issues. Lastly, discourses relating to sex, homosexuality, and transgender identities remain veiled on the bottom rung of this hierarchy. Nonetheless, all these categories fall under the umbrella of the dominating issue of the conflict in Sri Lanka and the need for a peaceful resolution.

The following brief example, highlighted by some of the interviewees, displays the complexities and the multifaceted techniques utilized in constructing and negotiating between various relations of inequality. During the 1990s, the mainstream media accentuated acts of violence by Tamil youth and promulgated the image of Tamil youth as violent gangsters.²⁴ This cast an overall negative impression on the community's identity within the mainstream public. This pervasive labeling caused great concern to community members. However, the community did not see the urgency or have the means and resources to tackle this issue. By the late 1990s, the community established itself to some extent and eventually formed a somewhat united and active attempt to stamp out the violence among Tamil youth and advocate for more accurate representations within the mainstream.

Some of those interviewed pointed out that these violent incidents had negative ramifications for the reputation of the community. Moreover, it had the potential to disturb efforts to bring a resolution to the issues in Sri Lanka. Some argue that the on-

²⁴ Much of the gangs such as AK Kannan and Velvitathurai (VVT) sprang up initially from the divisions between various Tamil political factions in the struggle for a separate homeland.

going gang violence in Canada may have marred the lobbying efforts made by community leaders to the Canadian government in reaching a peaceful political solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Various groups within the community came together and poured significant effort in dealing with youth gang violence. Tamil youth associations such as the Canadian Tamil Youth Development (CanTYD) Centre were formed and provided counseling services to these young men and engaged in preventive measures. They utilized Tamil youth workers who took an active role in assisting and educating young men to turn away from violence and utilized prevention tactics to keep others from entering the gangs. This concentrated effort assisted many young males from falling into a web of violence. Actions such as this and other mobilization efforts resulted in the reduction of Tamil youth violence and the mainstream reporting and labeling of Tamils as gangsters (Keung, 2000).²⁵

While the interviewees were proud of the efforts that transpired regarding Tamil youth gang violence, some expressed regret that the larger community mainly mobilized itself as a response to negative mainstream representations, specifically since it could affect efforts to reach a political and peaceful resolution in Sri Lanka. The role of the conflict in the homeland, as stated in the earlier chapter on cultural identity, is a dominant one and has concrete positive and negative effects on the lives of Sri Lankan Tamils living in Toronto. The point that some of the interviewees highlighted, mainly those working at the grassroots level, is that those issues that never boil over and gain the

²⁵ Although in light of the 2006 banning of the LTTE and placing them on the terrorist list, members of the Tamil community have now to contend with an even more difficult label, that of a terrorist.

attention of the mainstream often remain insignificant, or due to the limited resources available to the community, certain issues never receive adequate focus and assistance.

On *It's that Show*, a youth talk show analyzed in this study, discussions of caste, dowry, and teenage pregnancies have surfaced as topics. The intention was to create a dialogue with the older adults and young people to bridge the gaps and tensions between them. However, the lack of power and legitimacy ascribed to the youth within the hierarchical structure hindered some of the discussion and gave way to self-censorship for fear of retaliation from friends, family, and the general community. *Iravu Chalaaram*, a talk show hosted by middle-aged educated elites, also laments the need to exercise self-censorship with topics relating to sex and sexuality due to the backlash they might receive from the open discussion of such taboo issues.²⁶ It appears that certain discourses remain outside the boundaries of open dialogue regardless of the speakers; however, the aura of legitimacy does allow selected speakers to address some controversial issues more so than others.

Critical multiculturalism highlights the need to problematize such differential treatment of discourses by looking at what is spoken as well as what is not. In addition, it encourages understanding the multiple interactions of power and dominance. Critical multiculturalism differs from liberal multiculturalism because of its ability to view difference in this multidimensional and multilayered manner; moreover, it rejects the unified notion of identity and rather sees them as multiple and shifting (Shohat & Stam,

²⁶ See Chapter 5 for detailed discussions of these radio programs

1997). Critical multiculturalism highlights the complex perception of identities leading to more nuanced understanding of the continual formation of identities.

Resisting Dominances

Henry and Tator assert that critical multiculturalism moves away from pluralism and addresses the inequality that exists in these various layers by focusing on the means to dismantle these “dominant cultural hierarchical structures” (1999, p. 98). While some may disagree with my postulation, I do not believe that the call for resistance and transformation must manifest in the sudden dismantling of existing systems. Rather, I would like to argue that the process of negotiation and open dialogue must play a vital role in the restructuring of these cultural hierarchies. In my analysis of the Toronto Tamils, unequal power relations between groups are not necessarily intentional; rather, they are often the result of unintentional actions that led to the imbalanced distribution of power (McLaren, 1994). The need for dialogue and deliberative negotiation between groups regarding the hierarchical systems of power is the first and vital step in paving the way to change.

McLaren and others who support critical multiculturalism as a form of addressing the complexities of multicultural societies also strongly advocate for the development of critical counter hegemonic public spheres (1994, p. 63). Unlike critical multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism does not allow for similarly deep and open engagement with systemic inequalities. Henry and Tator (1999) argue that we must bring out and openly discuss the workings of systemic inequalities such as racism to reduce its grasp on the experiences of groups and individuals. Many countries, such as Canada and England are

currently experiencing difficulties negotiating the boundaries of tolerance in dealing with controversial cultural practices of minorities (Benhabib, 2002; Parekh, 1994).²⁷ These issues need to be discussed openly and deliberated upon to renegotiate a consensus of acceptable boundaries. It is also important that minority groups themselves are able to engage freely in dialogue within themselves and with others regarding the disparately imbalanced relations.²⁸ The presence of an active and thriving public sphere and public sphericule is crucial to the ongoing discussion and negotiation of differences.

A "Thick Description" of History

Geertz's (1973) suggestion for a thick description of culture²⁹ and a deeper, more complex understanding of history informs critical multiculturalism's notion of history. Critical multiculturalism conceives history in an elongated manner, including multiple sites of oppression (Shohat & Stam, 1997, p. 301). On the other hand, liberal multiculturalism tends to focus itself on recent historical periods placing greater emphasis on the nation state and its unification. Contrastingly, critical multiculturalism's broadening of history allows us to locate the shifts in power and changes in narratives of various relationships at different intersections in time. This allows us to gain a nuanced understanding especially of the movement of people and the place of migrant minorities at present.

²⁷ Benhabib discusses the dilemmas surrounding the honour killing of women by some cultures, or the scarf affair in France. Parekh engages in a detailed discussion of various cases such as female circumcision, Sikhs wearing turbans in riding dangerous motor vehicles or working in hazardous job arenas.

²⁸ Chapter 4 engages in an in depth analysis of the Tamil public sphere and its role in resisting dominances

²⁹ Clifford Geertz suggested we aim for a thick description of culture in ethnographical study that was more interpretive, deeper in its understanding of history and unraveled the various layers of meaning.

As stated earlier, views such as Kymlicka's (1996) result from fostering narrower conceptions of histories. Scholars suggest that we need to perceive migrant minorities not as visitors, add-ons, existing outside of the dominant culture but rather view the movement of people as part of an ongoing historical phenomenon (Davidson, 2007; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Shohat & Stam, 1997). Consequently, we may come to perceive minority communities within nation states as individuals working with the state to construct the ongoing history of a nation. The Canadian state continues to harbor narrow understandings of history, which gives way to friction and unease especially when minorities exceed their allotted rights and expect the nation to engage in issues that concern them. In their study of multicultural realities in Birmingham and Bradford, Rex and Samad (1996) state that it is the singular loyalties of nation state and the plural allegiances of its minorities, such as issues pertaining to the homeland, that prove to be quite challenging for the state. This is evident in the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils lobbying of the Canadian government for a more active role in the crisis in Sri Lanka. It is also evident in other minority groups, such as the Canadian Tibetan community's recent (Spring 2008) protests in downtown Toronto in relation to China's oppression of Tibet's desire for autonomy. The following section on global multiculturalism deals more in depth with these global and multiple relationships of loyalties and conflict.

3.6 The Need for a Global Multicultural Vision

The dialogues surrounding liberal multiculturalism and Canadian Multiculturalism remain narrowly focused on the nation state and fail to expand their discussion to the

global level (Karim, 1993). While this continues to be the dominant trend, a handful of recent studies begin to analyze multicultural realities from a global perspective (Brown & Cardinal, 2007; Davidson, 2007; Karim, 2006; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007). In his most recent work, Nederveen Pieterse (2007) introduces the concept of global multiculturalism as signifying a complex understanding of differences that considers multiple identifications beyond the nation state and global conflict. Global multiculturalism further takes into account multiple and flexible identifications, by considering our multicultural realities from a global perspective rather than within the confines of the nation state. He argues that the conflicts that proliferate in certain parts of the world are no longer enclosed within the boundaries of a nation state; they spill over, travel across time and space, manifesting in various locals. Consequently, Nederveen Pieterse places substantial emphasis on the acknowledgement and engagement with global conflict. Global multiculturalism expands the discussion and dealing of difference beyond the nation state, accounting for the realities of shifts occurring in our globalized society.

The increasing movement of capital and people, along with the advances in communication technology contribute to the creation of linkages that extend beyond national boundaries (Goldberg, 1994; Karim, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 2004). The perception exists that the cosmopolitan³⁰ nature of these relationships stands in opposition to the nation state. However, Pheng Cheah (2006) argues that early nationalism³¹ was not in opposition to the interests of the nation and was similar to the current notion of the

³⁰ Cosmopolitan derives from the Greek, *cosmos* to mean world, and *polis* to signify city. The roots of modern cosmopolitanism have its roots from Kant. For a more detailed explanation see Pheng (2006)

³¹ Official nationalism of the post Westphalian period is considered more rigid in orientation, linked to self-preservation than the early flexible forms of nationalism (Anderson, 1991).

cosmopolitan that fosters a broader sense of belonging to the world. Policy makers in places like Canada realize that this new cosmopolitan consciousness requires further understanding and acknowledgement (Karim, 1993). Pieterse's global multiculturalism does not necessarily argue for overarching global institutions that manage multiculturalism; rather, he uses global multiculturalism as a way of belonging in the world and coins the term flexible acculturation to signify this shifting and multiple manner of belonging. The following discussion expands on such flexible acculturations and Appadurai's (1996) suggestion to reexamine the local in a global context. It then explores the role of global conflict within multicultural societies briefly referring to the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils.

Understanding the Local Globally

As Goldberg (1994) and others explicate, the movement of people across boundaries is an ongoing process and not a recent phenomenon resulting from the accelerated movement of capital and goods. However, countries are increasingly multicultural, especially the metropolitan centers, and construct novel methods of identifications that transform the local. Unfortunately, policies dealing with such complexities do not fully comprehend its multidimensional aspects. Appadurai (1996) indicates that an examination and re-conceptualization of the local is necessary for it creates novel relationships and recreates existing ones (p. 178). He argues for a framework that relates to the global, national, and local and mentions that such a framework is yet to emerge. Pieterse's concept of global multiculturalism brings us closer to treating identifications and relationships at multilayered and multidimensional levels.

An informative study performed by Cheng (2005) takes up Appadurai's challenge and traces the multiple construction of locality in our globalized world. His print analysis of a local Chinese newspaper, *Ming Pao*, in Vancouver looks at how the paper constructs locality in a transnational context. His findings suggest that the newspaper narrates two locals. One local links to place, featuring the concrete localities of Vancouver; whereas, the other local relates to the people of celebrities and leaders in Hong Kong. Through his study, he attempts to dispel myths of the immigrant as an outsider, and in the age of terrorism, the immigrant as a threat. Cheng argues, as does Abdelhady (2006) in her work on the Lebanese diaspora discussed earlier, that immigrants are invested in both their homeland and their current home.³² This multi-local sense of belonging disrupts singular notions of emotional attachments to individuals and localities. Research such as this is invaluable to changing the perceptions of belongings and loyalties in a complexly interconnected world. This study adds to this type of research, attempting to expand notions of localities and dispel myths of loyalties.

The Borderless Nature of Global Conflict

As stated earlier, criticisms of liberal multiculturalism point to its inadequate treatment of inequality and conflict is an inseparable part of inequality; therefore, any theory of multiculturalism must address conflict in order to be relevant. Nederveen Pieterse stresses the importance of addressing global conflict, for tensions that arise halfway across the globe influence practices and narratives in the localities of settlement. This is evident in

³² I wish to not use the term host country here, for the term "host" positions the immigrant/refugee as a guest and suggests the immigrant's role in the country as impermanent and as an outsider (Davidson, 2007).

the case study of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamils and their negotiations of identities, political engagements, and dominating discourses. As discussed in the prior chapter on ethnicities, plural nationalism is an increasing phenomenon and a growing concern for many states. Appadurai (1996) asserts that deterritorialization produces splintered loyalties that reconfigure as plural and in constant motion, creating tension between the nation state and these complex allegiances. Nederveen Pieterse's (2007) concept of global multiculturalism converges around the concept of conflict and inequalities since many of the world's recent migrant groups are labour migrants from troubled parts of the world with increasing tension and violence. It is important to understand the multiple positioning of these groups and trace how these conflicts play out in the multicultural localities.

It is especially significant to understand such attachments for these multiple belongings are viewed with great suspicion in our current society. Scholars such as Thobani (2007) and Helly (2004) argue that xenophobia continues to persist especially in relation to Muslim immigrants and refugees. They are viewed as being a threat to the western way of life. Creese (1992) argues that the increasing conflicts around the world led to an intensification of the refugee crisis. He asserts that while countries such as Canada boast of their refugee policies, they do not go far enough in understanding the refugees' pain or their complex multiple positioning (Creese, 1992, p. 129). His work points to the labeling of refugees as abusers of the Canadian immigration system. He highlights the negative representations experienced by the Sri Lankan Tamils and Sikhs in the early 1990s in the media. Creese suggests that media corporations such as *The*

Globe and Mail constructed a narrative of refugees taking advantage of the benevolence of Canada, a narrative that lingers on to present.

Unfortunately, we continue to witness such widespread negative labeling of groups from conflict-ridden pasts. Many of the Sri Lankan Tamils interviewed expressed frustration at the mainstream's practice of correlating a crime committed by a local Sri Lankan Tamil to the LTTE and the conflict in the homeland, thereby associating the illegitimacy of a crime to the struggle for a separate homeland. The result of such labeling hinders the development of social integration and belonging. Furthermore, Nederveen Pieterse states that the social exclusion experienced may lead to alternative, and at times negative, circuits of identification (p. 189). Global multicultural highlights such misconceptions and frustrations by looking past its national focus and attempts to understand global configurations of power and identifications.

3.7 A Critical and Global Multicultural Framework

This chapter illustrated that many of the criticisms of multiculturalism as ideology and policy arise from its narrow understanding of culture, identities, history, and its inadequate focus on inequalities. Critical and global multiculturalism moves us towards more fluid and multiply conceived identities and differences, as well as an inclusive sense of belonging in the world. It informs our conception of ethnic group identifications as being multiple, expanding over the national boundaries and therefore enables us to grasp the complex conversations that transpire and influence multicultural localities. Many scholars envision such an open understanding of our multicultural societies and believe

that multiculturalism, as a concept, should emulate this approach. In addition, they also consider that an integral element of multicultural societies is a thriving public sphere (Benhabib, 2002; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Samad, 1997; Werbner, 1997).

Understanding the public sphere as multiple and porous, as Nancy Fraser (1993) argued in her critique of the Habermasian public sphere, is crucial to engaging in a complex debate over various concerns. Benhabib argues that the struggle for recognition and the mobilization against inequalities occur within the public sphere and civil society (2002, p. 8). It is also crucial to pay heed not only to how the state understands its minority groups but also how minorities perceive themselves (Rex, 1997a). To understand how minorities negotiate and articulate their positionings within themselves and the mainstream, the subsequent chapter charts the Sri Lankan Tamil public sphericule and its various negotiations of identities

CHAPTER 4: NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN MULTICULTURAL PUBLIC SPHERES

4.1 Introduction: The Need for Open Dialogue in Multicultural Societies

The concepts of critical multiculturalism and global multiculturalism, as discussed in the previous chapter, assist in the understanding and handling of complex multicultural realities. Both these concepts recognize and stress the importance of open dialogue, necessitating thriving public spheres. The concept of public sphere, introduced by Habermas (1991), is understood as an arena for citizens of a nation to gather and discuss rationally the issues deemed important. His conception engendered a great deal of discussion as well as criticism, especially from feminist scholars such as Nancy Fraser (1993), who found its singular, exclusive, and nationalistic tone problematic. The concept continues to be the focus of much contemplation and undergoes theoretical revisions in accordance with the shifts encountered in our global society. A number of scholars assert that the concept of public sphere is particularly useful in dealing with the complexities that arise in a multicultural society, making it an important area of examination (Benhabib, 2002; McLaren, 1994; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Samad, 1997).

As stated in the introductory chapter, I envision the concept of public sphere as multiple, interlocking, and continually contested. It consists of players who are in diversely situated power relationships and whose concerns and dialogues expand beyond the boundaries of the nation (Benhabib, 2002; Fraser, 1995; Howley, 2005; Husband, 1996; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007). Open and prosperous public spheres are essential for

all, especially for those minority players present in a society. This discussion at present focuses on the ongoing dialogue within and between interlocking minority and dominant public spheres. In ethnically diverse societies, such as Canada, values and practices are continually contested; these contested discourses must be negotiated in an open and free space to develop greater understanding between groups (Benhabib, 2002). Furthermore, McLaren (1994) argues that the ability of the subaltern to voice itself in such open democratic spaces can be potentially counter-hegemonic. Contrary to Gayatri Spivak (1994)³³, I believe that the subaltern *do* speak; however, it is often the case that the dialogue and voices of the minority public spheres go unheard and unrecorded (Bailey & Harindranath, 2006; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007). Nonetheless, not all subaltern voices are forms of resistance and emancipation; they can be progressive, repressive and fundamentalist in nature (Hall, 2001, p. 216). Greater focus and analysis is required of these voices even if the subaltern narratives are not counter-hegemonic, for they are the spaces in which minority discourses are silenced, contested, rewritten, and proliferated.

Moreover, the interconnected nature of public spheres eventually results in these narratives and practices having concrete effects within the broader public. The focus in this chapter lies on the dialogues of ethnically diverse societies, especially those with groups from recent migratory waves, such as Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils. This chapter briefly examines the theoretical developments that surround the concept of public sphere. It then focuses on multi-ethnic public spheres and examines their presence, their role in

³³ Gayatri Spivak's significant question on whether the subaltern is able to speak for itself, which she answers negatively, has been the focus of a great deal of questioning on subaltern representation and authentic speech.

identity construction, and the possibilities it may hold for open dialogue and increased understanding. I also outline some of the public spheres in which Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils possibly engage with and point to its multiple, overlapping, and contested characteristics. The framing of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils' communicative spaces establishes the backdrop for the critical discourse analysis performed on the radio talk shows in the following chapter.

Examinations of public spheres generally revolve around the dialogues present in the media. I categorize these media spheres roughly utilizing Naficy's (2003) differentiation of decentralized global narrowcasting, focusing on transnational and diasporic public spheres³⁴, and Srebreny's (2002) conceptualization of the three gazes through which migrants understand the world: transnational, exile and community. I consider three categories of public spheres apart from the mainstream in which Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils participate: transnational, diasporic and community spheres. There is considerable overlap between these categories but they are distinct enough to be discussed separately. Due to the limited scope of this study, I cannot adequately examine all three of these spaces; therefore, I mainly investigate the transnational and community spheres.

I refrain from examining Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic public spheres primarily due to their vastness. The Tamil diasporic public spheres encompass the dialogues of

³⁴ Naficy categorizes networks such as CNN, BBC to be centralized global broadcasting while decentralized global narrowcasting relates to minority media, using ethnic languages targeted on a specific audience. He distinguishes decentralized global narrowcasting into three categories, as ethnic television produced in the country of residence by usually long established indigenous communities, imported transnational television, and the small budget diasporic television that is produced by diasporic and exilic communities in their space of in-betweenness.

variously interconnected diasporic communities that foreground the concerns of the homeland and the diaspora. These spaces mediate between different times and spaces, reconstructing the concept of home in its various locales (Silverstone, 2002). Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic discourses are intricately connected to the ongoing struggle for a separate Tamil homeland. The diasporic networks that span across national boundaries comprise of countless networks and dialogues. I briefly touch upon this sphere in my discussion but the broader discussion involves the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil transnational and community sphere.

4.2 Reconsidering the Habermasian Public Sphere

The concept of the public sphere, as proposed by Habermas, promoted a public arena in society where affected citizens can gather freely to deliberate on issues concerning them. The expectation is that by actively engaging with the issues a consensus may be reached. His idealized model of the bourgeois public sphere attracted a great deal of criticism for its Eurocentricism, naïve notions of accessibility, and openness. According to Nancy Fraser (1993) this liberal public sphere has primarily been grounded in three principles, which she finds problematic. She argues that firstly, it assumes that equality is preexisting within this space; secondly, it desires a singular public sphere situated within the national boundaries. Lastly, the existing notion of the public sphere purports that only things deemed public may be deliberated and private issues are not entertained within this space. Nancy Fraser's well-founded critiques of these overriding conceptions of the

public sphere have propelled others to alter and formulate frameworks that are more complex.

Fraser contests that a postmodern conception of the public sphere disproves of this bracketing and requires that unequal relations between participants are acknowledged and handled. Secondly, her conception supports multiple contesting public spheres; thirdly, she argues that inequalities in the private sphere also require deliberation in the public. The subsequent section discusses the configurations of power and its effect on the players in the public sphere, followed by the understandings of singular or multiple publics. I then expand upon the criticisms surrounding deliberations occurring within the national boundaries regarding national politics and argue that the large-scale migration over the years currently makes this a nostalgic perception.

Attending to the Non-Bourgeois Minority Voices

Some argue that Habermas' perception of bourgeois society's social stratum led to the mistaken conceptualizing of a supposed ideal public sphere, failing to see its exclusive nature. Browne (2005) argues that Habermas' Germany, at the time he envisioned his public sphere, was one in which minority workers were perceived as guests and existed outside the national framework. Browne suggests that perhaps Habermas did not consider minority voices as belonging to the discussions between citizens; therefore, failing to consider them in his public sphere. The criticisms from feminist circles shed light on the exclusion of women, peasants, and working class from these bourgeois public spaces. Fraser and others mainly take issue with Habermas' public sphere for his failure to examine and account for the voices of non-bourgeois and competing voices.

This present examination accounts for those heterogeneous voices of the non-bourgeois recent migrant groups in their state of in-betweenness. Numerous discussions continue to transpire on the ability of these subaltern groups to speak and represent themselves. Gayatri Spivak's (1994) influential essay, "Can the subaltern speak?" suggests the impossibility of subaltern voices to authentically speak, even if they were to obtain the opportunity to speak. She also deliberates on and eventually dismisses the role of the intellectual in this speech process, for the sake of upholding the authenticity of the subaltern voices. Spivak's arguments are provocative and compel an increased self-reflexivity by intellectuals when representing the voice of the subaltern. Nonetheless, I would like to veer away from the discussion of authentic speech at present to delve into examining the voices of the subaltern and their attempts to engage in issues of importance to them.

Building upon a Gramscian understanding of subordination and hegemony, I consider that marginally positioned groups are not devoid of agency or speech. They were denied the opportunity to be heard; therefore, it is vital to examine the conditions under which these voices may be heard. Moreover, when they do speak it is crucial to examine what they are saying (Benhabib, 2002; Harindranath, 2006). Harindranath (2006) argues that the attempts by refugee communities to articulate their experience is an example of the subaltern representing their positioning; he adds that it often stands in opposition to dominant discourses. It is arguable that these voices are not substantial forces to have concrete significance on the positioning of the subaltern; however, the speech of those hitherto denied a voice cannot be dismissed as irrelevant (Morley, 2000).

These voices were excluded from speaking in public by various configurations of power; therefore, they require time to develop their space of representation and increase their capacity to be heard. These rising minority voices make it possible that public awareness about their experiences and struggles may increase over time leading to shared understanding and change (Benhabib, 2002).

Acknowledging Differential and Plural Publics

Morley (2000) argues that a democratic multicultural society rests on the proliferation of plural public arenas that enable the participation of differentially situated people.

However, Habermas' conception of the bourgeois public sphere assumed an idealized singular space that bracketed the power differences between its players. Scholars such as Benhabib (2002), Couldry and Dreher (2007), Fraser (1993), Morley (2000), and Werbner (2002) have argued against this notion and have opted for the conceptualization of plural publics. Due to the historical distribution of power and resources, we must acknowledge that the dialogues and representations of minority voices cannot always occur within the same space. Minority voices construct alternative spaces using the means available to them and articulate their positions while simultaneously attempting to partake in the dominant public spheres. These public spheres are not closed, free-floating, and monolithic spaces; rather, these interconnected and porous spheres are situated within intricate power relationships.

Looking Beyond the National Public Spheres

Habermas' initial conceptualizing posits a public sphere bound by the interests of the nation. The proliferation of the forces of globalization increases the interconnected and plural nature of these public spheres and encompasses dialogues that stretch across national boundaries. Scholars stress the importance of including global concerns within the dialogues of the public spheres in light of the intensification of global conflict, the extensive movement of people, and the increase in diasporic and transnational public spheres (Browne, 2005; Couldry & Dreher, 2007; Morley, 2000; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Ortiz, 2002). In addition, the developments in communication technologies help strengthen these diasporic and long-distance dialogues obfuscating the lines between local, national, and global interests (Karim, 2006). As stated in the previous chapter on multiculturalism, endowing minorities with the legal status as citizens remains insufficient. This needs to be accompanied by the genuine recognition and understanding of their heterogeneous identities, as well as accepting and understanding their participation in various public spheres (Cheran, 2003).

Understanding Multiple and Overlapping Public Spheres

Charles Husband (1996) compellingly argues that open and interactive relationships between various public spheres are beneficial to multicultural societies. He offers his "right to be understood" framework to emphasize the need for such interaction and supports cross border dialogue. While minority public spheres tend to loosen certain boundaries to dominant and other public spheres, they simultaneously tighten other boundaries to sustain their ethnic identities (Panagakos, 2003; Srebreny, 2000; Werbner,

2002). According to Couldry and Dreher (2007), studies often explore the dialogues that occur within a minority or possible counter public sphere but not its links to the broader publics. Their multi-faceted study of Sydney reveals such plural minority publics and the complexities and overlaps present. Werbner's (2002) work performs such an examination as she identifies various public spheres, local, transnational, and diasporic public spheres that Manchester's Pakistani Muslims engage in. She also highlights the competition and contentious moments that arise in the interplay between these spheres. Couldry and Dreher's (2007) work, as well as others, point the way to future studies that not only identify minority counter-publics but also examine the narratives constructed in their interconnected dialogues. The discussion in this chapter as well as the ones that follow hope to engage in such an examination.

4.3 Multi-Ethnic Public Spheres and Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils

The discussion so far focused on the theoretical issues surrounding the plural and interlocking conceptions of public spheres. Here onwards the concentration shifts towards the public spheres that Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils engage in and the composition of these spaces. Husband (2000) states that multi-ethnic public spheres need to enable a diversity of media organizations to reflect the heterogeneity of their societal formation. The activities and reasons that inform their uses are multiple and heterogeneous, including negotiation of identities within themselves, other minorities, and the majority (Bailey & Harindranath, 2006; Silverstone, 2002). However, Silverstone (2002) states that minority group's use of media for their own purposes is often small

with a weak infrastructure and remain in a continuous struggle to exist. Nonetheless, the porous nature of public spheres allows some room for these minority dialogues to have some influence on dominant public spheres.

The Sri Lankan Tamils' displaced position dislocated their cultural narratives from place and culture. As Chalaby (2005) states, displaced groups tend to utilize several media products from different locales to reconstruct their culture. I begin with the transnational media space, defined by Naficy (2003) as belonging to the decentralized global narrowcasting arena which includes imported content. I discuss the example of transnational South Asian Tamil popular cultural sphere and the complex engagements that occur between the Sri Lankan Tamils and this particular media sphere. I briefly touch upon the diasporic public spheres, which are the dialogues and content produced by those in various locations across the globe. A sketching of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil community spheres follows this. The purpose of outlining the multiple public spheres members of this ethnic group possibly participate in is to highlight the heterogeneity present within ethnic groups. It provides compelling evidence to understand ethnic groups as multifaceted, evolving, and contentious, requiring complex frameworks to address their needs. The need to do so intensifies as newly migrant ethnic minorities and partial cultural identifications increase in western democracies.

4.4 Transnational South Indian Tamil Public Sphere

Transnational audiences are distributed across wide geographical spaces and are constantly increasing due to the increasing flows of migration and the decrease in prices

of communication technology such as Satellite TV (Chalaby, 2005). Transnational TV provides content to specific groups with linguistic and cultural ties, allowing the creation of supranational public spheres (Thussu, 2005). Naficy mentions Chinese, Korean, and Japanese media content as being transnational and asserts that these media spheres do not necessarily concern themselves with the issues of the migrant viewer. The anxieties and tensions related to settlement and acculturation is not a prominent priority of these transnational media products. The cross-border media content tends to focus primarily on the homeland's audience, producing mainly news and events concerning the homeland or entertainment based material. However, terrestrial communities and their diaspora, such as the Sri Lankan Tamils, also view transnational media. Werbner (2002) highlights the role of South Asian media sphere, including mainly Bollywood content, and the interaction of Pakistani Muslims in Manchester. She argues that regardless of the entertainment and aesthetic nature of certain public spheres, the South Asian mediasphere remains significant to the construction of identity as artistic representations and identity are intricately linked. The Sri Lankan Tamils engage actively with the transnational Indian Tamil media content, utilizing it to piece together their own cultural narratives in the diaspora.

Prior to delving into the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil's engagement with this public sphere, it is necessary to have some understanding of the Indian Tamil media industry. There has been scarce research on the political economy of South Indian transnational content. This is mainly because research on transnational South Asian media often focuses on North Indian Hindi media content, such as Bollywood's movie industry. The

South Indian media spheres, such as Kollywood, Mollywood, and Tollywood, the Tamil, Malayalam, and Telugu movie industries, are not examined in depth. Existing research on the transnational South Asian media sphere have examined the effects of deregulation in India, the influences of the hegemonic western cultural industry on local media products (Mishra, 2002; Page & Crawley, 2005; Thussu, 2005; Tyrell, 2000). Scholars have also analyzed Indian cultural content from the perspective of gender and postcolonial theory (Chowdury, 2003; Sharpe, 2005). Others have examined its effects from a cultural perspective on India and neighbouring countries, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and diasporic communities (Pendakur, 2003; Ray, 2003; Srinivas, 2005; Thussu, 2005). Some of the research listed above does mention the transnational television networks of South India, such as Sun TV, Vijay TV, Jaya TV, Sooriya TV, and Suriya TV, but it is not the focus of their investigation. There is a great deal of overlap between the Indian popular cultural industries as they share artists, scripts, directors, playback singers, and music composers; in spite of that, they remain distinct in the linguistic and cultural audiences they serve. These hybrid, overlapping, and minority Indian cultural spaces require greater attention in order to examine their role in various diasporic communities and localities.

Transnational Trends of Indian Tamil Cultural Industries

Kollywood, the Indian Tamil language movie industry³⁵, is one of the largest producers of movies in India, next to the Bollywood Hindi movie industry. Indian Tamil movies are not as glamour oriented as their Bollywood counterpart and are smaller in budget. The

³⁵ The major studios are located in the city of Kodambakam in the state of Tamilnadu; hence, the moniker, Kollywood, which is a spin off from Hollywood, as is Bollywood's name.

Indian Tamil movies in the 80s and early 90s were set in rural farming villages capturing the conflicts arising from the shift to urbanization. They also attempted to deal with, often in formulaic ways, issues relating to caste, class, interreligious conflict, love marriages, power, and corruption. The need to compete with Western content increased after the open door policy of 1992 and there has been a gradual shift to glamour and hyper-materialism (Tyrell, 2000). Economic and technological shifts expanded the production values and cultural narratives of this industry. The Tamil movie industry thrives with its homeland audience in Tamilnadu and with the global, predominantly Sri Lankan Tamil, transnational audience.

The Indian Tamil private regional TV industry also slowly developed its networks into transnational players like its western and north Indian counterparts, broadening its appeal to global audiences (Thussu, 2005). Some of its prominent players are Sun TV, Jaya TV, and Vijay TV. Sun TV is the first private Tamil TV channel launched in 1993; it has close political affiliations to the current chief Minister³⁶ Karunanithi's Dravida Munetra Kazhagam³⁷ (DMK) party (Page & Crawley, 2005; Thussu, 2005). In comparison to other TV channels, its political affiliations do not play as significant a role in its news and entertainment ventures, with the exception of election season. This distancing contributes to its increased success as audiences prefer its less overt bias (Page & Crawley, 2005).

The competing Jaya TV is owned and heavily controlled by Jayalalitha who is the former chief minister of Tamilnadu and leader of the opposition party, the All India

³⁶ The chief minister is equivalent to a Canadian provincial Premier

³⁷ Dravidian Progressive Party

Ana³⁸ Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (ADMK). Both Jayalalitha and Karunanithi hail from the South Indian Tamil movie industry.³⁹ Karunanithi is a poet, and was a scriptwriter and lyricist for the Tamil movie industry. Jayalalitha was an actor and the mistress of the former leader of the ADMK party, the late M.G. Ramachandran. He is one of the most revered heroes of the Tamil movie industry and was a long time chief minister of Tamilnadu. He initially belonged to the DMK party but due to ideological differences with Karunanithi, founded his own party, the ADMK. Jayalalitha took over as ADMK's party leader and became chief minister after his death. The popularity of the actors, especially that of the male heroes, in the Tamil movie industry often translates into leadership opportunities in political parties. This leads to the conflation between celebrities and politicians. The control of the media sphere by political players limits the range of issues that can be freely discussed in the public sphere. Yet, the prominence of the culture industry continues to play a vital role in the construction of Tamil identities, both Indian and Sri Lankan, across the globe.

Indian Tamil cultural products are viewed by Tamil diasporas all over the world. This includes the older Indian Tamil diasporas formed during colonialism, such as Singapore Tamils, Malaysian Tamils, and Fiji Tamils.⁴⁰ It also includes the more recent Indian Tamil diasporas made up of educated professionals in Western countries such as the United States, England, and Canada. Sri Lankan Tamils who are dispersed around the

³⁸ Initial founder of the DMK party

³⁹ The position of Chief Minister of Tamilnadu has shifted back and forth between these two party leaders for over twenty years.

⁴⁰ I refrain from including the Sri Lankan Tamils to this category of older Tamil diasporas for majority of the Sri Lankan Tamils do not consider their homeland to be India's state of Tamilnadu. They instead consider Tamil Eelam, located in the northeastern regions of what presently is Sri Lanka, as their homeland and therefore, I consider their experiences to differ from the Indian Tamil diasporas.

world also actively engage with transnational South Asian Tamil popular cultural products. The participation with the South Indian Tamil media sphere is a practice that existed even in Sri Lanka, prior to the dispersion in the late 80s. Sri Lankan Tamil cultural products comprised of folklores, local dramas, Sri Lankan Tamil and Sinhalese Baila music and smaller TV productions. While these did indeed play a role in the lives of Tamils living in Sri Lanka, the larger, well-established Indian Tamil movie industry ⁴¹ dominated their cultural spheres. However, the division between the two spheres was more evident due to the physical geographies of their separate homelands. Currently with the proliferation of communication technology and the growth of transnational media there is greater use of Indian Tamil cultural products in piecing together Sri Lankan Tamil cultural narratives in the diaspora.

Transnational Indian Tamil content is widely available through a variety of channels in Canada. As of 2002, Sun TV is available on Satellite through Dish Network in many parts of the world and boasts a viewership of over 40 million (Page & Crawley, 2005) and as of July 2008 this highly popular channel is also available on Rogers specialty TV. Jaya TV is also available in Canada through Rogers' ATN (Asian Television Network) specialty channels. Vijay TV, an increasingly popular channel is produced and distributed by STAR TV (Satellite Television Asian Region). In addition,

⁴¹ The media content distributed from India until the nineties was in the form of movies and music soundtracks since private Indian television did not begin until after deregulation in 1992. Currently Sri Lanka is also a recipient of the satellite television networks and has access to the Indian Tamil as well as north Indian channels.

Indian Tamil movies, the accompanying music soundtracks⁴², and various TV content have been available from the early settlement years through pirated DVDs and VHS copies in local Sri Lankan Tamil video and grocery stores. The distribution of these products follow patterns similar to those described by Cunningham and Nguyen (2000b) in their study of popular media in the Vietnamese diaspora.⁴³ Presently, with the reduction in price of satellite technology, many Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil homes in Canada have opted to install satellite dishes instead of making the weekly trips to these local video stores. In addition to these cultural products, large and small-scale stage shows with the celebrities from the Tamil media sphere play a prevalent role in this transnational media sphere. Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil community mainly hosts the Indian Tamil celebrities in Canada. The larger shows, such as the A.R. Rahman concert in 2007 at the Air Canada Centre, was hosted in conjunction with the North Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil community associations and businesses.⁴⁴ These large entertainment programs bring together various forms of transnational South Asian audiences.

Transnational Audiences and Indian Tamil Cultural Products

The sheer numbers of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and the passage of time have compelled the Indian Tamil cultural industries to acknowledge this market. The political tensions between the Sri Lankan Tamils and India caused by the controversial events of the Indian peace keeping force in Sri Lanka and the Rajiv Gandhi assassination by LTTE

⁴² A typical Indian movie consists of four to five songs, sung by playback singers and lip-synched by the actors on screen during elaborate song and dance sequences. India's popular music industry is primarily housed within the movie industry.

⁴³ For example, they tape or burn three episodes of a particular Tamil soap opera into one VHS tape or CD.

⁴⁴ Seating capacity of approximately 18,000 to 20,000

members in 1993 has simmered down over the decades. Large numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils have settled within India over the decades, specifically in Tamilnadu. Furthermore, the establishment of Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic businesses catering to Tamil communities in the diaspora requires that products be imported from Tamilnadu; this creates new trade and economic ties with Tamilnadu. These shifts have slowly contributed to Indian Tamil film and TV industry to address the differences of Sri Lankan Tamils as part of the heterogeneity of ethnic Tamils instead of viewing them as inauthentic outsiders.⁴⁵

This has led to the opening of dialogue regarding the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils from the perspective of fellow ethnic Tamils. One of the pivotal representations of Sri Lankan Tamils came in the form of an Indian Tamil movie called *Kanathil Muthamital* (2002). It was dubbed into English and premiered at the 2002 Toronto International Film Festival as *A Peck on the Cheek*. *Kanathil Muthamital* was the first Indian Tamil movie that attempted to engage seriously with the Sri Lankan conflict.⁴⁶ It is a big-budget movie with a star cast, music soundtrack by the legendary composer A.R. Rahman⁴⁷, and was directed by a well-renowned director, Mani Ratnam. The esteemed status accorded within South Asia and overseas to Mani Ratnam and the other contributors gave this issue considerable legitimacy within the Indian Tamil public sphere. The movie was

⁴⁵ Whether this is mirrored in practices on the ground cannot be determined within the confines of this study.

⁴⁶ *Anaveer* (2006) (Roots) is an Indian Tamil TV film, with popular Indian Tamil soap stars, which also dealt with the conflict. It was screened in local Tamil theaters across the GTA and is distributed for free in certain local Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil stores.

⁴⁷ Collaborates with Andrew Lloyd Weber, Composer of *Lord of The Rings II* and *Bombay Dreams*.

emotionally received by Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils and elicited great pride in having such prominent players contribute to their subaltern positioning.

Ratnam explores the effects of the conflict from the perspective of a vibrant and tenacious ten-year-old girl, Amudha.⁴⁸ On her tenth birthday, the young girl learns from her parents that she was adopted as a baby from a Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camp in Tamilnadu. The plot spirals around the child's search to find her birth mother so she may ask why her mother had abandoned her. The quest leads her and her adopted parents to Sri Lanka and accompanied by a Sinhalese Tamil speaking guide they venture into the heart of the conflict zone. The climactic reunion reveals her birth mother to be a member of the LTTE. Her mother, played by Nandita Das⁴⁹, explains that she had left the Indian refugee camp and returned to Sri Lanka in search of her husband. Upon discovering that her husband died, fighting with the LTTE against the Sri Lankan government, she joins the fight for a separate Tamil homeland. Despite Amudha's pleas for her birth mother to leave the war, her birth mother painfully rejects the child's entreaties and stays in Sri Lanka to continue fighting.

The film does not endorse the birth mother's decision nor does it make moral judgments on the conflict. Instead, its focus is on the plight of those caught in the middle of the war. It portrays scenes of masses fleeing on foot, leaving all their life's possessions behind. It shows parents frantically searching for their children who are lost amidst the

⁴⁸ Many of Mani Ratnam's controversial and critically acclaimed films tend to converge around strong female characters. Mani Ratnam has previously dealt with the Jammu Kashmir conflict in the movie *Roja* (1992) from the perspective of a newly wedded bride and her hostage husband. While *Dil Se*, in Hindi, dubbed in Tamil as *Uyirey* (1998) followed a love story between a male journalist and a female suicide bomber belonging to an Indian separatist group.

⁴⁹ Also seen in Deepa Mehta's highly controversial movie *Fire* (1996).

clamour and captures the elderly and disabled suffering through the long treks. It also illustrates the heart wrenching decisions made by those who choose not to flee and decide to stay in their land of birth. In addition, Ratnam illustrates the dismal conditions under which the refugees reach the shores of India and the conditions in the refugee camps. This movie was screened in Toronto's International Film Festival in 2002, gaining entry into the mainstream public sphere. It contributed an alternative perspective to the often-negative stereotypes circulated in India and transnational Indian communities of Sri Lankan Tamils living in India. It was one of the few cultural representations of the Sri Lankan Tamil subaltern's story to reach a broader non-South Asian audience. Such cultural products, although not spoken by the subaltern, allow for the engagement and discussion of hitherto unspoken, misunderstood, or suppressed discourses.

Contested Engagements with Transnational Public Spheres

The participation in South Indian Tamil media spheres elicits differing opinions among Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils. Some fear that the dominance of Indian Tamil popular culture will erode the unique identities of Sri Lankan Tamils. Media engagement and its effects arose as a topic in both the talk shows tracked. On an episode of *Iravu Chalaraam*, the audience was asked to share the media shows they preferred. Many, listed *The Discovery Channel*, OLN's travel show *Without Passport*⁵⁰, and an older British comedy viewed in Sri Lanka, *Mind Your Language*, as favourites. They also listed the local Sri Lankan Tamil TV channel Tamil Vision International (TVI) and radio channels as a household favourite. The callers were made up mainly of middle-aged

⁵⁰ A travel show

Tamil men who preferred the educational material and shows that allowed for public participation. A number of them enjoyed the recent profusion of reality game, comedy, and talent shows on Indian Tamil TV stations such as Sun TV's *Asatha Povathu Yaru* and Vijay TV's *Kalaka Povathu Yaru*.⁵¹ The list also included the highly popular "Super Singer Junior," and the dance competitions *Mastana Mastana* and *Jodi No. 1*.⁵² Most of these shows are viewed on satellite, are rented from the local video stores, and now can be viewed on Rogers Sun TV.

At the conclusion of the program, a caller observed that a great deal of people tend to watch Indian Tamil soaps but those who participated today did not mention that as part of their list. This unrepresentative outcome of opinions may have been accidentally framed by the opinions provided by one of the hosts at the beginning of the show. He mentioned that he prefers non-fictional material such as news and informative pieces on *The Discovery Channel*, and science fiction content. This utterance elevated certain content over others and acted as a precedent for the slew of callers who liked similar shows.

A caller also professed his dismay regarding community members installing satellite television in their homes to watch Sun TV and all its programming from India. He indicates that Sun TV is against the Tamils' fight in Sri Lanka and never shows any of the successes made by those fighting in Sri Lanka, displaying only the defeats. To this, one of the hosts added that people do not understand that in watching Sun TV on Satellite

⁵¹ The title of both these shows roughly translates as "Who is going to amaze us?" These reality shows resemble competition based standup comedy shows.

⁵² Such shows are popular as they are seen to have weakened the rigidly closed structure of the TV industry and have allowed the broader public to participate on screen.

they fail to support the local Tamil radio and TV stations. He stated that although the fee for the subscription is small, their lack of support for these local ventures disallow its growth. The host pointed to the legitimate concerns held regarding the dominance of the Indian Tamil cultural products on the development of local expressions.⁵³ However, such statements also deterred the audiences' admission on air of their enjoyment of Indian Tamil soaps.

The same caller remarked that these Tamil soap operas' plots are filled with conflicts and villainous individuals who break up families.⁵⁴ A number of callers also brought up this issue and stated that viewing Indian Tamil soaps is not wrong but people are often addicted to it. They argued that it is an unnecessary usage of time and it could have been used to view more educational and informative content. The Indian Tamil soaps discussed here primarily target female audiences. These programs usually have strong female protagonists and antagonists around whom the plot revolves. The plot of these shows are considered formulaic but tend to resonate greatly with the females in Tamilnadu as well as Tamil female viewers living in other parts of the world. The soaps' titles are often names of female protagonist, such as *Anjali*, *Meghala*, *Lakshmi*, *Selvi*, *Sahana*, *Ganga/Gowri*, and *Kasturi*. At times, the soaps' titles refer to the traditional roles of females, *Manaivi* (wife), *Sithi* (younger aunt), *Marumagal* (daughter-in-law), and

⁵³ This concern is further heightened since Rogers Cable now offers a direct relay of Sun TV. This option is a great detriment to the growth of the smaller minority Toronto Tamil channels also available on Rogers, such as TVI and Tamil One.

⁵⁴ Most Indian Tamil soap operas begin with a large happy family, where extended family members live under one roof. The evil villain or villainess creates turmoil within the family resulting in tension, exploitation, and even murder. The plot usually resolves itself with both the antagonist repenting, or dying and the family once again reuniting. The episodes are usually two-hour long tapes of four to five half hour weekly or daily shows taped off the satellite.

Annie (Sister-in Law). These strong female characters undergo enormous strife and

attempt to overcome it for over two to four hundred, half or one-hour episodes.

Overcoming these tensions usually requires the crossing of traditional boundaries, while paradoxically remaining within the confines of acceptability.

The callers' lament over the waste of time on certain pleasurable content mainly

targets the Indian Tamil movies and soap operas, which are primarily consumed by

females and young people. The perception is that such content is passively consumed,

provides no benefits to the viewer, and its stereotypical messages corrode the mind.

However, as Janice Radway (1984) pointed out in her seminal study on female readership

of romance novels, the act of reading itself is pleasurable and important. Likewise, the act

of viewing these soaps is also a significant active process of viewing. Werbner asserts

that aesthetic pleasures that are bound up in entertainment forms are also pertinent to

identity formation and hold the potential to be counter-hegemonic (2002, p. 270).

Therefore, the privileging of certain genres over others discredits female members' active process of openly engaging with their own public spheres.

It's That Show had an episode on the topic of media effects on Tamil youth; its

discussion revolved around various media spheres and the dialogues present within them.

Two females host this episode and one argues that media has negative effects while the

other points to its positive effects. They discuss the issue of eating disorders as a trend

perpetuated by Hollywood's perception of the ideal body image. This is followed by a

discussion about which media sphere really has more sway among Tamil youth in

relation to this issue.

A: But I mean, that is when you are looking at Hollywood, and I mean, you can say that that is the western culture. Do you really feel that body image, seeing western stars, really plays a huge role on us? Because you can only take in an influence with people that you can relate to so I think that for us, a lot more influence comes from [Indian] Tamil media.

S: Uh... I have to disagree with that, (both laugh) especially the youth of today... more than they watch Tamil movies, I think they do watch western English Hollywood movies mostly and of course, that influences them...

A: But let's look at Tamil movie stars, I mean there is Jyothika, who is ever so popular and you know we can't say she looks like she is even close to an eating disorder

S: (giggles)

A: If anything, everyone adores her because she is cute and adorable and has cheeks to pinch.

S: But I mean the most, Jyothika, yes. She is kind of the heroine of yesterday almost. Nowadays, the more recent ones like Shreya, she is coming in *Sivaji*, that girl is fit!

A: That, That's true. (laughs)

The hosts deliberated over the shifts in female body image within the Indian Tamil sphere and agreed that it is increasingly leaning towards thinner female bodies. These dialogues show the simultaneous participation in various spheres by diverse individuals.

Furthermore, it illustrates that participants are not entrenched within any one specific sphere; they are critical of the discourses in various spheres, and are actively rearticulating its meaning. As illustrated in Srebreny's (2002) case study of Iranians living in London (ILIL), there are three different gazes: transnational network, exile, and the community gaze. The ILIL "dip in and out" of these public spheres and gaze from all these angles. Similarly, the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils engage in these three types of spheres, defined here as transnational, diasporic, and community spheres.

4.5 Sri Lankan Tamil Diasporic Public Spheres

The above section discussed the Transnational Indian Tamil public sphere and illustrated certain discourses that surround its engagement. As indicated earlier, apart from the mainstream public sphere, Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils engage in three different yet overlapping public spheres. They are the transnational Indian public sphere, the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic public sphere, and Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community public sphere. Prior to delving into the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community spheres, I want to briefly remark on the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic public spheres. As mentioned earlier, an exploration of the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic public spheres extends beyond the scope of this study due to the vastness of its geography and the intricacy of its networks. However, when investigating Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community spheres certain elements of the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic public sphere are present within the discussion.

Whitaker (2004) performs an in-depth and multidimensional analysis of Tamilnet.com, capturing the complexities involved in its construction. Sri Lankan Tamils in the homeland and in the diaspora produce Tamilnet.com, an internet news site. It serves the broader Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas providing up to date news of the homeland. A complicated set of networks produce this news site and acts as an example of Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic public spheres. Tamilworld.com and Tamilnation.com also belong within the category of diasporic public spheres. They produce information in English and Tamil and have separate sections with detailed information on Canadian Sri Lankan Tamil information. Members of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil community mainly

utilize these sites to obtain information on the ongoing strife in the homeland⁵⁵ since the information is updated quite frequently. The web forums are not as active because the internet is still not as widely used a medium by the middle age and older groups of community members. Many are comfortable browsing and obtaining information but are not yet ready to embark in dialogue on the web mainly due to language barriers that exist. These websites play a prominent role in the dissemination of information and elicit discussion in various methods in their different diasporic localities.

Another manifestation of the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic public sphere is the networks created to assist in homeland politics and reconstruction. Cheran's (2003) and Hyndman (2003) work illustrates these integrated and interconnected networks across the globe. Cheran considers the complex financial engagement of Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada, France, and Sri Lanka in the reconstruction of areas affected by the war in Sri Lanka. Some of these diasporic networks include many politically motivated organizations such as Ulagat Thamilar Ilyakkam (World Tamil Movement) that strongly support the cause. Since the banning of the LTTE by the conservative government in 2006, organizations such as this have come under heavy suspicion regarding alleged involvement with fundraising for the LTTE.⁵⁶ The complexities of these diasporic networks are influenced by the political struggle in the homeland as well the policies implemented under specific countries.

⁵⁵ They still continue to rely on the locally produced radio and more recently the local TV news programs.

⁵⁶Ulagiat Thamilar has been banned by the Canadian government for financially assisting the LTTE as of June 2008.

4.6 Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil Community Public Spheres

Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community public spheres comprise a variety of different spaces, discourses, and participants. These various spaces serve unique needs and have distinct roles. They construct discourses pertaining to the ongoing conflict in the homeland, local politics, economic concerns, cultural boundaries, gender roles, and the maintenance of cultural heritage and language. These spaces mainly manifest in the form of community media and associations. This section firstly examines these community media spaces by examining each medium separately and then expands on the cultural and social associations and their functioning. Although these distinct spaces focus on a variety of different issues, the overarching issue that permeates into Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil public spaces is the ongoing conflict in the homeland. Discourses of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils intertwine with various spheres such as the diasporic and mainstream publics, engaging in global dialogues.

While organizations such as community media are modest ventures, they remain significant in their proliferation of democratic discursive spaces engaging in local and global discourses (Browne, 2005; Howley, 2005). Browne (2005) asserts that the growing population of ethnic minorities in western countries are increasingly from areas of the world with internal turmoil; this makes it vital that we understand the discourses engaged in by these communities. Rex (1997b) stresses that in order to understand seriously the complexities of multicultural societies, we must conduct both empirical and theoretical studies of ethnic minority groups. In addition, these studies must focus on how these groups perceive themselves. Examining the discourses of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil's

public spheres allows us to begin comprehending how these groups perceive themselves amidst their state of displacement and inbetweeness. Furthermore, the ability of ethnic minorities to communicate their experiences and represent themselves is an integral part of an inclusive multicultural society (Bailey & Harindranath, 2006; Deuze, 2006).

Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil Community Media

Community media are often small, local, and grassroots organizations that are mostly underfinanced, unstable, and attract small audiences (Browne, 2005; Howley, 2005; Riggins, 1992). Riggins (1992) argues that minority ethnic media perform a dual role of ensuring the survival of cultural traditions while simultaneously promoting integration into the larger western society. Furthermore, he lauds the ability of community media to bring to the fore issues that were excluded, suppressed, or ignored in mainstream and its own minority spheres. Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community media accurately fits these identifications and engages in convoluted and contradictory practices of identity formation.

Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils' community media balance the role of providing entertainment and information and construct its narratives by utilizing discourses from a variety of spheres. As Srebreny's (2000) ILIL who "dip in and out" of different publics spheres, the local Sri Lankan Tamil media and its members also slip in and out of various public spheres. They concern themselves with homeland politics and local community issues, as well as the broader mainstream publics, although, not all of them do so with the same degree or angle. However, it is rare to find a Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil media

organization that focuses only on local discourses. The multiplicity and hybridity that occurs within minority ethnic spheres must be highlighted for greater understanding of these heterogeneous spaces and their relation to others.

The role of individuals working in these ethnic community media ventures is complicated by their in-between status as speakers caught between the mainstream and the interests of their ethnic group. Riggins (1992) asserts that ethnic journalists tend to be biased towards their ethnic group and also engage in practices of self-censorship. I would argue that this does not imply that they do not engage in any form of self-criticism. However, the close-knit nature of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil community makes it difficult to be overtly critical of the community without experiencing some backlash from its members. The hosts of the talk shows, both the youth and the middle-aged men mentioned the criticisms directed at them from the community when they discussed taboo subjects such as teenage pregnancies or contentious practices such as caste or dowry. S.T., one of the female hosts on *It's That Show*, mentioned that her mother expressed concern after a fiery discussion with a male caller regarding the practices of dowry giving. Her mother worried about her reputation and wished that she were more guarded about her opinions on the show since she utilized her real name on the air. S.T. admitted she had avoided hosting the show on weeks that it tackled subjects that were controversial.

Browne (2005) points out that there does exist a certain amount of risk for both the producers of the minority media and those who enter into the dialogue. He provides examples of aboriginal teenagers in Western Australia who conducted radio plays about

the problems teenagers experience such as teenage sex and abusive parents. Their portrayal did produce a number of criticism but the praises received surpassed them. Similarly, whenever contentious issues were dealt with on the two radio shows, callers often doled out praises for even attempting to discuss openly such issues. The ability of minority media to bring out excluded and ignored issues onto the public space significantly contributes to the creation of egalitarian democratic publics.

Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil Community Print Media

There are numerous print publications within Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil media sphere. The language of dissemination is primarily Tamil with a page or two dedicated to English in certain publications. The readership of these papers is difficult to deduce, as there are no means of knowing specifically who consumes these papers. Srebreney's (2002) analysis of Persian print media suggests that middle-aged men who have a flair for homeland politics mainly consumed the material. This may very well be the case for the Sri Lankan Tamil print media, as a large portion of the content focuses upon homeland politics. In addition, since most Sri Lankan Tamil print media is produced in Tamil it is mainly accessible to the middle aged and older audiences, as many young Tamils do not know how to read Tamil.

There are numerous small budget publications that are distributed free of cost or for a small fee and can be found at the local Toronto Tamil grocery, take out, and video stores. Many of these publications have very short life expectancies as one or small groups of individuals establish them. The motivation behind the plurality of print media is possibly due to the ideological differences related to homeland politics. Due to political

differences, a few rare newspapers do not wish to focus on the strife at home and instead focus more on events in the local community and mainstream publics. These papers are not as popular and eventually run out of finances and terminate their production. Many of the Tamil newspapers tend to be littered with excessive community advertisements, such as *Udhayan*, these advertisements act as the lifeline of the establishment. The relatively cheap production costs and the abundance of publications make print a popular medium of engaging the community.

The diversity of publications and their content cannot be covered in its entirety here, nor is it the aim of this section; however, I briefly highlight two of the thriving papers here. As mentioned earlier, *Ulagat Thamilar* (Tamils of the World), was established in 1987 and it is produced by the World Tamil Movement (WTM).⁵⁷ The paper has a large readership in Toronto; it is distributed to many cities around Canada and various other local versions of this paper maybe found in parts of Europe. The functioning of *Ulagat Thamilar* resembles that of Cheng's (2005) analysis of *Ming Pao* (*West Canadian Edition*) which displayed the construction of two different locals. The dialogue found in many of these publications were situated within both the homeland and their current locality, blurring and complicating boundaries.

Another prominent publication is *Thamilar Thakaval*, a free monthly magazine focusing on the local community's issues as well as the strife in the homeland. It has been in circulation since 1991 and currently produces 6000 copies that are distributed to a variety of different outlets such as medical and professional offices. They also distribute a

⁵⁷ Although the organization is currently banned in Canada, the newspaper continues to function and is not under any restrictions.

number of copies to community organizations such as senior homes and community centres who take turns reading them and then circulate the copies amongst themselves. The magazine obtains support mainly from donations from the community and it is sparsely funded by advertisements. It invites members of the community, both young and old, to contribute to the magazine and encourages articles in Tamil and English; however, the majority of the articles are in Tamil. *Thamilar Thakaval* contributes to the proliferation of discourses within the community about pressing issues within the community. It engages with numerous interconnected spaces on its own terms and constructs its opinions about them.

Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil Community Radio

The medium that allows for greater participation and dialogue within the Sri Lankan Tamil public sphere is the radio. Scholars of community media such as Rennie (2006) and Browne (2005) indicate that throughout the world radio continues to be the most prominent medium utilized for community representation and expression. McLuhan argues that the radio affects people in an intimate manner; it is a decentralizing effect, which also has the potential to revive ancient memories and languages (2002, p. 306). Rennie (2006) suggests that this is possibly because it is relatively cheap to produce, appeals to oral cultures, and enables greater interaction than print. Even in Srebreñy's (2000) study of the Iranians living in London (ILIL), the radio was the medium that played a significant role in community building. In the Sri Lankan Tamil public sphere, radio does play a vital role in community building. There are three major radio organizations within the community; the first two are Canadian Tamil Broadcasting

Corporation (CTBC) and Canadian Tamil Radio (CTR), which relay on single channel Subsidiary Communications Multiplex Operations (SCMO) radios. The third station is Canadian Multicultural Radio (CMR), which is a rainbow station⁵⁸ owned by the Tamil community and allocates certain times of the day for Tamil FM. These three radio channels perform a significant role in the community by entertaining, informing, and eliciting discussion on a variety of issues.

CTBC and CTR are 24hr SCMO radio stations that have been narrowcasting since the late 1990s. These stations are an indispensable part of most Sri Lankan Tamil households in the GTA region. They sell their single station SCMO radios; this form of relaying divides the audience as many own either CTR or CTBC's radio. However, a number of households do own both stations' radios and juggle between both sets of programming. CTBC was the first to be established and despite its small budget and weak production values, it was quite popular with the community. In the late 1990s, differences of opinions, both political and personal, within CTBC's higher ranks led to the defection of some members from the establishment. In 1999, the individuals who had left established CTR, which has since then risen to be a prominent voice in the community. In recent years, both radio stations are available online and are able to reach a much wider audience. *It's That Show* was a program that aired on CTBC for almost a year and *Iravu Chalararam* continues to air on CTR. CTR also organizes a yearly festival called Natchithira Vizha (Star Festival)⁵⁹ and engages with the community beyond just

⁵⁸ A rainbow station consists of more than one culture's programming. An example is OMNI 2, which provides programming by a variety of cultures.

⁵⁹ Held at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) grounds July 12-13th 2008

radio programs. It has recently come to the fore that due to political divisions relating to issues of the homeland within the CTR administration, this long-standing radio station has divided into two stations. It comprises of the original CTR that is housed at the TVI/CMR location and a new station called GTR that continues to function at the original location of CTR. These latest developments act as strong examples of the contentious and shifting nature of the minority public spheres.

Canadian Multicultural Radio (CMR FM 101.3) is Toronto's rainbow station that is owned by prominent Sri Lankan Tamil community media members. CMR FM is part of a joint venture that includes Tamil Vision International (TVI), which is a local Sri Lankan Tamil specialty channel on Rogers Cable TV. There is considerable overlap between the board members of CTR and TVI/CMR, leading to a certain degree of concentration of ownership. CMR provides airtime to be bought by various ethnic groups, allowing them to communicate and represent themselves in their own languages. Some of the groups who utilize this station belong to various ethnic groups from South Asia; they provide programming in their ethnic language, such as Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Bengali, Sinhalese, Pashto, and Urdu. It includes Arabic, Tibetan, Filipino, Ghanaian, Caribbean, and Spanish programming. It also contains English programming that targets a variety of ethnic community groups such as *Ear to the Streets*⁶⁰ and fusion music programs that include Tamil, Hindi, and various genres of English music. The early morning, late night, and substantial portions of the weekend slots are allocated to Tamil FM, which airs talk shows, music requests, dramas, and news.

⁶⁰ A youth program hosted by Sri Lankan Tamil youth which was on air since 2001 but recently came to a close due to scheduling issues with the hosts.

The unique characteristic of CMR requires further attention to its structural organization and content. CMR holds out the potential for creating a space of cross cultural dialogue and interaction. At present, these programs continue to air as separate units focusing mainly on cultural maintenance. However, sharing a single space promotes the opportunity for future conjoined dialogue and efforts that address broader issues of minority representation and inclusivity within a multicultural framework.

Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil Television Media

Only recently has Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil community utilized television as a space of communication and representation. Television is a desirable medium for minority groups for it holds a great deal of prestige; however, it is expensive and is a more complex medium to manage (Cunningham & Nguyen, 2000b). The Sri Lankan Tamil community has two television organizations; they are the specialty channels TVI and Tamil One available on Rogers and Bell Express View.⁶¹ These channels were established at the beginning of the millennium; they have grown significantly over the last few years, becoming an integral part of the community's framework. Jean Chalaby (2005) states that the business model of most ethnic channels usually comprises the recycling of existing programs from the homeland and often have little original content. TVI and Tamil One often recycle Indian Tamil film and television programs; however,

⁶¹ ATN's Jaya TV is part of the Tamil package available on Rogers specialty channels; however, it operates more as a transnational network than a local television network. It has two or three programs that include local community content but even these heavily utilize Indian Tamil content. As of July 2008 Sun TV is directly relayed from India on the Rogers specialty channels.

they have slowly increased their production of local programming over the years and these programs are popular within the community.

TVI is the channel that generates the most engaging local productions and is arguably the more popular of the two television stations in the community. TVI produces a variety of talk shows aimed at specifically drawing audience participation by way of calling in to the shows. They also cover a great deal of local community events. The issues addressed on the talk shows pertain to cultural adjustments of life in Canada, such as parenting and informative issues relating to post secondary education, career options, and consumer choices. Some of these call-in talk shows are, *Thisai* (Directions), *Kelungal Tharapadum* (Ask and Receive), and a recent English programming show called *Crossroads*, targeted at parents and teenagers. TVI's programming also includes programs that target homeland reconstruction and politics. Despite the trend of installing satellite television to view Indian Tamil transnational programming, the growing strength of TVI illustrates that there is a desire for local Sri Lankan programming and self-representation.

Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil Associations

Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils engage in the various activities of numerous cultural and social organizations. The organizations take the form of cultural associations, which focus on the arts and heritage maintenance. There are approximately thirty-five "old students" associations in the Greater Toronto area (Cheran, 2003). These "old students" (alumni) organizations host cultural events such as dances and fundraisers to assist their specific schools and their locales in Sri Lanka. Some of the larger "old students"

associations have chapters in other Sri Lankan Tamil communities across the world. There are also a number of “Oor Sangams” (village associations), who also perform similar roles as the “Old students” associations. The mandates of these organizations are nostalgic as they reenact customs and practices that informed their lifestyle in their specific villages. Cultural maintenance is the primary focus of these organizations and it makes little room for public deliberation of issues that concern the local community in Toronto.

There are also business-oriented organizations and events that provide spaces of interaction. The Tamil Chamber of Commerce plays a prominent role in the economic advancement of the community. It hosts a variety of meetings and informative sessions for local entrepreneurs to establish themselves in their new home. There are annual festivals revolving around commerce and culture that draw around 30 000 to 40 000. It is an opportunity to display the various Sri Lankan Tamil and other South Asian businesses within the GTA. Kondaattam (Celebration) is hosted by CMR/TVI and as mentioned earlier Natchathira Vizha (Star Festival) is hosted by CTR. Cheran (2007) briefly discusses the positionings of these festivals within the community and their role in constructing Tamil identities. These festivals celebrate the strength and economic success of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Toronto, contributing to the identity construction of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils.

Certain social organizations engage in dialogue with the multiple public spheres and seek to address some of the growing concerns of the community such as Tamil Eelam Society of Canada (TESOC), Canadian Tamil Youth Development (CanTYD),

and Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC). They target the unequal representations of Sri Lankan Tamils within the mainstream public spheres, the lack of resources, as well as address the suppressed social issues within the community such as mental illness or spousal abuse. Tamil Eelam Society of Canada was founded in 1978 by the first wave of economic immigrants. It was primarily a cultural organization but its purposes and aims shifted with the rise in violence in Sri Lanka and the pouring in of refugees into Canada (Vaitheespara, 1999). It currently acts as a settlement agency for newcomers and performs other social assistances for various community members. It also mediates between mainstream publics and contentious community issues that arose over the years such as the Sri Lankan Tamil youth violence.

Under the guidance of TESOC's senior members, the Canadian Tamil Youth Development (CanTYD) Centre arose in the late 1990s in the heat of the Sri Lankan Tamil youth violence. The individuals who took on the task of addressing this issue were Canadian university graduates. These young men and women, who grew up under the cloud of this violence and its subsequent stereotypes, wished to change these negative narratives. Older community leaders have questioned the leadership of these young people; nonetheless, they have gradually established themselves as legitimate voices within the community. As discussed in the previous chapter, CanTYD sought to develop positive roles for young Tamils, especially males. CanTYD, along with efforts of TESOC and others attempted to educate the police and the media regarding the inner nuances of the Tamil youth violence and attempted to eradicate its intensification. Its current aims are to generate open discussion among its young Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils whose

needs and concerns are often overshadowed by the concerns of events in the homeland.

CanTYD acknowledges the plurality of identities and voices that exist within the community and focuses on providing a space for young people who are caught in between contradictory cultural narratives.

CTC is a young organization that was founded in 2000; it functions as a voice for Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils within the mainstream public sphere. Its motivations arise from the negative representations produced over the last two decades about Canada's Sri Lankan Tamils. Fuglerud (1999) asserts that refugee groups who undergo negative representations at the hands of authority figures eventually organize themselves to speak and name themselves in the attempt to dismantle these stereotypes. CTC is actively involved in this renaming process; it functions as an umbrella organization that interjects its voice in the conversation of mainstream media players and authority figures. In the last three years, it has been acknowledged by the mainstream as a legitimate group that speaks for the Tamil community within the mainstream public sphere. This organization's goals resembles that of the Forum for Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR), an organization that Nick Couldry and Tanja Dreher (2007) discuss in their exploration of the minority public sphere in Sydney, Australia. FAIR is said to challenge the conditions of negative representations that arose of Islam and Muslims after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Similar to FAIR, CTC utilizes small-scale tactics by opening up discussions with media players. According to L.L., a host of *Iravu Chalaaram*, *National Post*'s Stewart Bell is said to have vehemently opposed the Tamils' fight for a separate homeland and had labeled any efforts for the cause as linked to the

LTTE and terrorist acts. However, CTC intervened and engaged in intense dialogue with Bell regarding the nuances of the strife and the complexities involved within the community. Subsequently, L.L. asserts that Bell's recent articles on Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils are less biased and are of a less negative tone. CTC established itself as a legitimate voice of Canada's Sri Lankan Tamils and demands that its voice be considered in mainstream representations of Sri Lankan Tamils.

However, CTC has had to gain the trust of its community members to speak on their behalf. At times members of the community disagree with the narratives that CTC utilizes in dealing with particular situations that have arisen. This has at times caused some backlash from the community, forcing the organization to juggle constantly its narratives and negotiate between the various public spheres in which it participates. The narratives and representations constructed by the CTC may not always be representative of whom it speaks. However, its attempt to oppose the framing of mainstream public spheres and force them to engage in a dialogue with the minority group is a considerable accomplishment. The repercussions of its narrative constructions and representations within both spheres are an important arena to examine especially in relation to how it frames Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil identities.

4.7 Listening to the Silences

The creation and maintenance of open and porous public spaces is crucial within a multicultural society that experiences differences in shared values and practices (Bailey & Harindranath, 2006). There is especially a need for such spaces in order to provide a voice for the voiceless subalterns. This includes those subjected to domination within the

subordinated groups such as women and children, as these spaces continue to be male dominated despite the intention to expand and create spaces that are more inclusive. The question of what gets included and what remains at the outskirts of these spaces remain important angles of exploration. Community media and minority public spheres allow for open discussion over contested practices and representations. This is not to suggest that ethnic minority public spheres are all counter-hegemonic equitable spaces; on the contrary, these spaces continue to have their own power struggles and domination. However, it is only through the existence of such spaces can such tensions be openly discussed to arrive at possible solutions. The following chapter critically analyzes the narratives within two media programs that elicit dialogue on the complex processes of constructing and maintaining cultural identities in a multicultural society.

CHAPTER 5: EXAMINING THE INTERPLAY OF DISCOURSES IN RADIO TALK SHOWS

5.1 The Interconnected Discourses within the Tamil minority sphere

I have discussed the need for multiculturalism, as ideology and policy, to conceive ethnicity as open and fluctuating to understand fully the diverse needs of ethnic groups in multicultural localities. The discourses of critical multiculturalism and global multiculturalism emphasize the need for such open understandings. They advocate for the proliferation of open public spaces, in which minority voices are free to speak, and conceive these public spaces to be an integral part of an inclusive democratic multicultural society. The case of the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils intends to provide concrete evidence of the fluctuations and reconfigurations that occur in the identities of migrant groups, especially those who had to flee from their homeland. The previous chapter examined the concept of the public sphere, focusing on the minority ethnic public spaces and briefly charted the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil public sphere. The analysis that follows intends to provide a detailed insight into the discursive practices present within this minority space. It illustrates the practices of multiple belongings and the complex discourses at play in the process of constructing Canadian Sri Lankan Tamil identifications.

I begin by elucidating the methodological implications of critical discourse analysis (CDA). A CDA of one program of the talk show *Iravu Chalaaram* ensues. The CDA analyzes the interplay of the discourse of belonging in Canada. It focuses on the shifting role of the other and its influences in constructing identity. The subsequent chapter encompasses the analysis of *It's That Show*, which centers on the voices and

positioning of younger subjects within the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil minority public sphere. I intertwine my CDA with the insight gained from the interviews with the hosts and community leaders. The critical discourse analysis displays the heterogeneity of voices within the minority sphere and highlights the plethora of narratives that coexist and collide within this space.

5.2 Methodological Considerations of Critical Discourse Analysis

The concept of discourse relates to language and is understood in diverse ways by various disciplines. I employ Norman Fairclough's (1995) conception of discourse as forms of text that utilize language, be it in its spoken or written form and includes the socio-cultural relations involved. In this analysis we examine discourse as talk, which Van Dijk (1997) considers as a primordial form of discourse. The discursive constructions that are imbricated in various relations of power have ideological effects on social subjects. Thus holding the potential for unequal distribution and practices of power between various social subjects (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). The central elements in understanding the workings of discourse are social context, the players involved, and power.

Power, according to scholars such as Foucault and Gramsci, does not function in a top down fashion rather it is present in the micro narratives, which require continual reinforcement. I mainly utilize the Gramscian sense of power and hegemony, wherein there is continuous struggle to maintain power, and it holds the potential for agency and change. Critical discourse analysis often unpacks the top down relations of power, such

as Van Dijk's (1994) work on parliamentary debates on ethnic minorities. In this analysis, I consider the multifaceted workings of power and the intricate layers and overlaps that construct these discourses. I examine the utterances of resistance and possible counter hegemonic moments within the talk shows. I conceive power to be held by differently situated social subjects within the discursive formation, acting in various situations according to the resources made available to them. This analysis explores the intricate manner in which various social subjects are hailed by these discourses. The utterances of these minority voices do not necessarily play a counter hegemonic role; rather, they function as examples of the tug-of-war process, which exists in the maintenance of power.

Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA differs from discourse, linguistic, rhetorical, and conversation analysis in that it goes beyond the focus on language and places greater emphasis on the social and cultural context.⁶² It unveils the subtle and hidden workings of language within local and global frameworks and between various participants (Billig, 2003; Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999; Van Dijk, 1997). The ideologies that situate individuals in societies are often naturalized and need to be unearthed to expose the workings of power and their socially constructed nature (Foucault, 1980). Foucault's work informs this analysis in reference to identities being constructed through discourse. However, his work does not allow much room for agency and is often criticized for his closed perception of discourse

⁶² However, scholars such as Ian Hutchy (1996) assert that methods such as conversation analysis do go beyond the textual focus and examine the social context as well.

(Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Fairclough, 1992). Therefore, I borrow more from the Gramscian perspective, which does not consider discourse to be all encompassing and provides room for agency, struggle, and change.

CDA holds the potential to analyze the intricacies of contemporary societal concerns. Its multilayered analysis aims to examine the text, the processes involved in its production and consumption, as well the broader social context. It brings to the surface the often hidden and naturalized discourses, contributing to the importance of CDA as a method of examining discourse. Fairclough et al. (Fairclough, Graham, Lemke, & Wodak, 2004) offer a list of growing societal issues that require increasing attention. These include the unequal relations and representations that arise between various minority cultural groups and those in power. Furthermore, they point to the significant changes and biases that arise from the transformations to plural national identifications in our globalized society (Fairclough et al., 2004, p. 2). CDA examines the functionings of language within various societal structures, offers a critique of the processes through which norms and attitudes are formulated, and challenges the unequal workings of power. Scholars of critical discourse analysis assert that they side with the oppressed and perform their analysis with emancipatory motivations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Noppen, 2004). Therefore, their aim is to bring about change through critical understanding of the functioning of power in discourse (Fairclough et al., 2004). CDA scholars consider their analysis to unveil the unequal distributions of power, which would result in greater awareness and eventually lead to change (Rojas, 2001; Van Noppen, 2004). My analysis highlights these unequal distributions of power within the Toronto Sri

Lankan Tamil community. Understanding the intricate nature of these power distributions is the initial measure to producing change.

The acceptable degree of detail and the amount of text and talk analyzed is a highly contested issue by practitioners of CDA (Fairclough et al., 2004). It is generally agreed that CDA should include actual analysis of text; however, the methods utilized in analyzing them continue to vary. Fairclough argues that Foucault's critique of power is often easily criticized due to his lack of actual textual analysis (Fairclough, 1995). He suggests that in depth analysis of text augments the strength of the analysis performed. Based on the text and aims of the analysis performed, a variety of tools such as rhetorical, conversational, lexical, semantic, and narrative analysis are utilized in CDA. This study borrows from a number of these tools and does not follow any one particular technique. This may be considered as inconsistent use of technique; however, its interdisciplinary quality is considered a benefit for it allows the researcher to borrow from a variety of conceptual tools that strengthen the analysis (Fairclough et al., 2004; Van Dijk, 1994; Weiss & Wodak, 2003). CDA's ability to delve deeper into a text is a significant advantage that is not often available in methods such as content analysis, which is considered to analyze data at a surface level.

Ethnographic methodologies are increasingly used in conjunction with CDA to underline the complex power struggles that occur in the production, dissemination, and consumption of discourses (Fairclough, 1995; Martin Roja, 2001). This analysis provides such a multi-perspective examination through the fieldwork conducted. In-depth interviews were conducted with the hosts and community leaders; the excerpts from the

interviews have been laced with the discussion thus far. The hosts from *It's That Show* and *Iravu Chalaaram* were questioned regarding the production and consumption of their program. In addition, the five hosts and ten community leaders, chosen through snowball sampling, shared their insight regarding the broader national and transnational issues that influence the identities of their community. Their perspective on multiculturalism in Canada was also part of the discussion. These semi-structured interviews provided a great deal of insight into the practices and perceptions within the community and enhanced the quality of the CDA.

Critical discourse analysts do not claim to be objective, existing in a removed state from society. Rather, they openly proclaim their subjective positioning and actively engage with the issue that they tackle in their analysis (Fairclough et al., 2004; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1997). Scholars of CDA acknowledge their own positioning within the discourses and are self-reflective of their actions. Scholars who favour qualitative analysis continue to adhere to the systematic methods of collecting and analyzing data but acknowledge that their work may not fully understand the subject group examined (Morley & Silverstone, 1991).

As mentioned earlier in the introductory chapter, my own positioning in this examination of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils' dialogues is one of an insider and outsider. As an individual of Indian Tamil origin, I do have access to the language and cultural practices despite differences in dialect and the historical and political circumstances. However, my socio-cultural identifications are not filled with the trauma and tensions that inform the past and present of most Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils, for Indian Tamil

identity is an accepted component of the multicultural framework of India. Consequently, I cannot fully understand the emotional attachments or political leanings related to Sri Lanka or the imaginary homeland of Tamil Eelam. However, I attempt to gain a greater understanding through the ethnographic exploration of the community and by examining various forms of data to provide a more comprehensive picture.

5.3 Setting up the Study

I tracked the discourses of two diverse radio call-in programs over the period of four months to gain insight into the relationships between ethnic identity formation and discourses of belonging in a deterritorialized society. Radio continues to function as a dominant form of media within the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Toronto. CTBC's *It's That Show* and CTR's *Iravu Chalaaram* are available on the heavily utilized SCMO radios and are recently available online.⁶³ Structured as call-in programs, both shows encourage audience participation and tackle a wide array of issues that pertain to the local Sri Lankan Tamil community on a weekly basis. I determined that these two programs dealt with issues regarding the ongoing formation of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil cultural identities. For each month, for the period of four months, one program was chosen from each show. Random sampling was utilized in order to be systematic and to avoid the repetition of topical subjects that may span over a few weeks. The dialogue surveyed within these eight shows provided insight into the diverse discourses at play within Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils.

⁶³ Chapter 4 discussed the institutional framework of these two radio stations.

To explore more thoroughly with the multiple layers of the text, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) is performed on one specific program from *Iravu Chalaaram* and one from *It's That Show*. Iravu Chalaaram's sample ranges from the months of September-December 2007. Due to certain internal administrative differences, *It's That Show* went off air in August of 2007; therefore, earlier recorded shows from May-August 2007 were sampled. My CDA of the talk shows veers away from the linguistic and conversational analysis method and closely resembles the context-based analysis proposed by Fairclough et. al (2004) and Van Dijk (1994). I examine semantic tools such as stereotypes, pronouns, and metaphors to examine the dialogue within the talk shows.

The analysis is conducted in its original language, being Tamil for *Iravu Chalaaram* and English and Tamil for *It's That Show*. Fairclough (1995, p. 191) argues that texts should be examined in their original language, for analyzing a translation results in loss of detail and changes the discursive event. Van Dijk (2003, p. 104) asserts that in order to allow minority voices to be directly heard, research should reproduce textual samples in the original language. Fairclough (1995) suggests that one should reproduce the original language at least in lexical form and then provide the English translation. While I attempted to reproduce the textual samples in Tamil for the presentation of this research, it proves to be a task that surpasses the limited time and resources available for this thesis. Therefore, I provide translated English transcripts to allow greater accessibility to the reader in following the discussion. However, the CDA

was conducted in the original language utilized, be it Tamil or English.⁶⁴ I strive to allow the voice of the hosts, audience, and interviewees speak for themselves, although I paraphrase some of the responses and dialogue offered due to limitations of space.

Semi-Structured Interviews

As mentioned earlier, the CDA is triangulated with in-depth semi-structured interviews that were conducted near the conclusion of the radio show's tracking period, December 2007. The semi-structured interviews contained questions that were designed to propel the discussion in the arena of ethnic identity formation. It was also structured to gain insight into the contesting discourses within the community and its relation to the broader Canadian society. All interviews were conducted in English and lasted an hour and a half to two hours; some interviews, such as the group interviews with the hosts, were longer. As is characteristic of in-depth interviews, there was room for tangents and open discussion. The interview sample consists of two different categories of participants, hosts from two talk shows and community leaders.

The line between community leaders and Tamil media blurs in certain instances for many of the community leaders are also actively involved in the dissemination of media messages. The community leaders chosen through the snowball sample attempted to include those from the earlier wave of settlers and the more recent ones. The interviewees hail from a variety of different areas within the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community, such as those dealing with the broader political issues in the homeland,

⁶⁴ The researcher conducted translations of the Tamil segments of the shows but obtained assistance from members of the Sri Lankan Tamil community to situate some utterances that were particular only to Sri Lankan Tamils.

ethnic minority media, community development, and grassroots organizations that assist in settlement and other social issues. Effort was made to include both genders and take into account a wide range of age groups. Their insight into the various settlement periods, its shifts, and changes are much needed to reach a holistic understanding of the overlapping dialogues within community.

5.4 Introducing *Iravu Chalaaram*

Iravu Chalaaram airs on Saturday nights 9-11pm on a weekly basis and has been on air for almost ten years. It targets the Tamil speaking middle aged and older adult audience. This is mainly because *Iravu Chalaaram* is hosted in “radio” or “pure” Tamil, which is primarily accessible by the older audience. It does contain certain moments of colloquial Tamil, often when humour is at play. The hosts consider their role and aim of the show to be educative as well as entertaining.

L.L.: We want them to know more about Canada, it's where we live right? They should know about this more and whatever that happens in *this* [Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil] community,...like more than three or four times we have done fraud and credit card scams and the other things like where we have to go to get a good mechanic and good doctor and things...

The show targets issues that pertain to the Canadian and local Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community. They tackle subjects such as Canadian politics and the role of Sri Lankan Tamils in the Canadian political and social sphere, interracial marriages, superstitions, and sex education to Tamil teenagers. The show analyzed here aired on Thanksgiving weekend on October 6, 2007. The topic proposed to the audience was, “what issue or characteristics do you like about Canada.” The analysis displays the number of different

discourses that dominate and frame this community. It explores how these discourses interact, how it influences their interaction with each other and those outside of the boundaries of the group.

The hosts of *Iravu Chalaaram*, V.L., and L.L. are two educated middle-aged males, who belong to the first wave of immigrants. While V.L. works part time at the station, L.L. owns the radio station and works full time at CTR. When asked about their cultural identity, they both stated that they consider themselves as Canadian Tamils and hold a strong sense of belonging to both Canada and the imagined nation of Tamil Eelam. L.L. asserts,

L.L.: I lived more here, than in my country. I left at 19, so I live here more than that, live here more than around 21 years. I love this country too, this country gave me everything. It gave me whatever I want. That country didn't give me anything. So in other ways, I like that (Sri Lanka) only because it's my motherland...

V.L.: For us you know the struggle we went through, all the difficulties we went through, it's like heaven here you know, for us actually. Because there you know, you don't know, next day you might be killed.

L.L.: You'll be alive or not

V.L.: You know, bombing or roadside bombing

L.L.: Anything, army can shoot you

V.L.: Or arrest you.

The hosts belong to the earlier wave of Tamil immigrants who left Sri Lanka during the 80s at the onset of violence between the government and Tamil militant groups. They are not of the dominant second wave of Tamils of the 90s who were mainly refugees. Most of the community's leadership roles reside in the hands of the earlier educated wave of Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants. These well-established media and community leaders possess considerable access to the discourses at play within the minority Tamil public sphere.

L.L. and V.L. do support the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora's measures in finding a peaceful political resolution to the strife in Sri Lanka. As with the many Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils, they also believe that the LTTE's presence and actions are necessary to ward off the alleged injustices of the Sinhalese government towards the Tamil minorities. They also believe that the LTTE remains a crucial part in obtaining a separate homeland for Sri Lankan Tamils. While they remain active in events in the homeland, the hosts continue to foster strong roots to Canada. Their sense of plural nationalism, to the motherland⁶⁵ and Canada, resounds loudly within their show's dialogue. This stresses the importance of reconsidering the singular forms of belonging, a practice that currently informs many of the policies that pertain to immigrants and minority ethnic groups.

5.5 Reconfiguring Multiple Belongings and Managing Perceptions

It was Thanksgiving weekend and the province of Ontario was set to go to the polls on October 10, 2007; the topic proposed to the audience in this particular episode was, "What issue or aspect do you like about Canada?" A steady stream of callers expressed their opinions, which provide insight into the spectrum of narratives at play in this minority sphere. The dominant discourse pertained to bolstering a sense of nationalism to Canada. In addition, the narratives illustrated that Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils perceive themselves and others through a complex process of othering that is imbued with western conceptions of progress and modernization. The role of the hosts in structuring the discourse is focused on in conjunction with the sociopolitical factors that inform the

⁶⁵ The motherland may be understood as Sri Lanka but is more often than not perceived to be the imaginary state of "Tamil Eelam."

discourse. Examining these complex and diverse set of discourses, portray the heterogeneity within ethnic minority groups, and contradicts the often-monolithic perspective that exists.

Constructing Canadian Tamil Subjects through the Process of othering

The program usually commenced with a brief introduction of the topic by the two hosts. In this episode, L.L. begins by evoking the prevalent nationalistic discourses of Canadian identity, as a land of freedom, opportunity, and equality. The introductory narrative narrowed down the range of meanings from which the players engaging with this discourse could borrow. The following excerpt illustrates this action,

L.L.: In today's Iravu Chalaaram, in this Canada, what is your favourite aspect? Canada, what has it given you? It has given us many things, for the people it gives many rights and opportunities and many chances to touch many goals. This land has given many chances and people who have used this have risen well, to great heights in this country. This can be in politics, economically or work or education, in many ways. The ability to achieve great heights, this country has helped us and in the same way as with work or your growth, it could have assisted you in other ways. It could have been helpful in other ways. It could be this country's language. That is, for newcomers a place to live, providing them opportunities; this land gives us many chances. Even though our people are living in different countries, they experience many difficulties, the language spoken in that country and how they live with the people there, and perhaps they are not sure if they have rights in that country, it remains a question. However, in Canada, no matter who comes, it has given us so many opportunities and rights. So in that way what is the most important or the aspect you like most in this land would you say.

The host utilized hypophora, a rhetorical device, wherein the speaker begins with a question or series of questions and then proceeds in answering them (Corbett, 1971). This is often utilized to guide the audience or reader to a particular area of discussion. L.L.'s use of hypophora narrowed the issue to be discussed with the topic question, "In Canada,

what is your favourite aspect?" The question did not ask, what is your opinion about Canada, what do you like or dislike about Canada, rather it directed the audience to evoke only the positive aspects they may harbor towards Canada. The second question, "Canada, what has it given you?" guided the discussion further. He proceeded to answer this question by pointing out various positive factors regarding rights, education, economic opportunities, and the ease of settling into a new country. The Tamil word, "Palla," translated as "many," appeared a number of times in conjunction with the positive elements, connoting abundance, and optimism. Within the opening sequences of the show, L.L. set a tone of gratitude to the Canadian nation state and the hosts attempted to maintain this as the show's dominant signification.

The discourse of grateful Canadian subjects is constructed through the process of Othering. L.L. contrasted the positive evocations of Canada to the plight of other diasporic Sri Lankan Tamil communities dispersed around the world. He pointed out the difficulties they experience, especially in regards to living without citizenship rights in their country of refuge. Many Sri Lankan Tamils sought refuge in European countries such as Germany. These nations, even under the European union continue to maintain numerous barriers to acquiring citizenship rights by its immigrants and refugees (Benhabib, 2002, p. 167). The host did not mention the initial experience of having their rights impeded upon by the Sri Lankan government. Nonetheless, the discourse of rights and freedom is deeply imbued with the memories of discrimination, flight, and the desperate actions to seek refuge in foreign lands. However, in steering away the painful memories of the continual strife in the homeland the discussion continued to maintain a

positive tone. Comparing Canada's treatment of immigrants to other nations containing Tamil diasporic communities plays a central role in developing a sense of gratitude and belonging.

Subsequent to this introduction, the callers reproduced the host's opinion regarding Canada's benevolence. The hosts and the callers embarked on specific comparisons of Canada's position on immigrants, refugees, and citizenship with that of the other countries. The dialogue divulged the privileged position of the self (Canada) while exercising criticism towards the other countries for their exclusionary practices. The self referred to Canadians, or specifically Canadian Tamils; however, in various parts of the program the self connoted the larger Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora or Sri Lankan Tamils as a whole. The other, like the self, also shifted within various portions of the discourse, alluding to the slippery characteristic of these categories. In the first segments of the show, the countries who deny rights to its immigrant and refugees are perceived as the other.

V.L.: You will only know the goodness (arumai) of Canada if you go to another country and if you stay there for some time, you will know how good Canada is...

Caller 1: To say it shortly, whoever comes to this country it allows them to live, this prosperous country. (Uttered in poetic Tamil proverb form)

L.L.: Have you lived or been to other countries?

Caller 1: Yes, for example, I didn't go that far, right next to our land (Sri Lanka), umbilical cord, as we say, India. So freely, a Thamilan cannot live there.

L.L.: True,

Caller 1: In a camp, as refugee, we are caged, we live like animals there.

L.L.: True, now as you say, yes those who live in the camps are like that, but my parents, even though they live outside the camps, they do not have rights or obtain citizenship. They just have to live like that as long as they stay there...

Caller 1: Don't have anything, just have to live like that

L.L.: There's nothing

Caller 1: We just send them money from here and they just spend it and live like that.

V.L.'s utterance and L.L.'s further questioning set up the foundation for narratives of comparison. Callers poured in with various persuasive negative evaluations of other countries. These statements are intended to affirm further Canada's inclusive nature.

The comparison to India brought to the surface the intricate configurations of power and history between the two nations. The umbilical cord (*thopilkudi*) is a symbol of the physical attachment that a mother and child share. The use of the umbilical cord to signify India implied not only the geographical proximity but also the ties that existed prior to migration. These ties continue to exist between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils, in regards to their language, history, religion, and cultural traditions. In addition, it is in the southern state of Tamilnadu, home of the ethnic Indian Tamils, where most of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camps are lodged. Caller 1's proclamation, "I didn't go that far" suggests that even a country with close ties to Sri Lankan Tamils does not treat them as equals and utilized the extended zoo metaphor to symbolize the restrictions and dismal conditions of the refugee camps in India.

Fuglerud asserted that certain places in the world were perceived to be more prestigious migration destinations. Canada, England, and New Zealand belonged to the top of this list primarily due to their relatively positive treatment of immigrants and refugees (1999, p. 134). L.L. pointed to the barriers that exist in India towards obtaining rights and citizenship, similar to many of the European countries where immigrants and refugees are not granted citizenship easily. L.L. and Caller 1 repeated the phrase, "they

just have to live like that” the “like that” is the inability to exercise many rights or be heard in their country of refuge. Caller 1 asserted that Sri Lankan Tamils who settled in India live economically comfortable lives through the assistance of their children sending money from the western countries; however, it is not a complete or fulfilling life. In discussing the restrictions encountered by fellow Sri Lankan Tamils in other parts of the world, the discourse emphasized the need to harbor a sense of gratitude towards Canada for extending these said esteemed rights on its immigrants and refugees.

As stated earlier, the hosts acknowledged that their aim in this show is to educate and entertain their audience. Although not explicitly stated in this episode they sought to educate their audience to be “good” Canadian Tamils and to take pride in their privileged status as citizens of Canada. Keeping in mind that the provincial elections were days away, the show reminded the audience to exercise its right to vote. They reminded the audience that this right continues to be denied to fellow Sri Lankan Tamils in other parts of their world. The hosts, as well as the community leaders interviewed, pointed out that most of the adults, forty and above, grew up under the cloud of discrimination and violence in Sri Lanka. Their dispersal resulted in harsh unstable living conditions and the ongoing strife continues to cause a great deal of emotional trauma. As mentioned before, many second wave Sri Lankan Tamils, the refugees of the 90s, were victims of the more intense violence between militant Tamil forces and the Sri Lankan government. This group continues to maintain a level of distrust and disinterest in authority figures and the government.

The hosts and community leaders claimed that many Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada do not vote because they are not familiar with the concept of having their vote count. I.N., a community leader who works at the grassroots level with a variety of newcomers, stated that citizenship rights are acquired as a form of "Keeping the paperwork in order and has no meaning to it." Q.T., a member of the Tamil minority media and an active member of the community, asserted,

I won't blame them they have so much to deal with, first of all they had to worry about getting a job in the first place, let alone your political rights or you know. They were used to living in Sri Lanka where we had no rights whatsoever to do anything, so they just presume the same here. Why do I need that, I can live without it, I've lived without it....Here, I don't hear bombs, or shells or gunshots, I'm safe. There we said we lived in a democracy in Sri Lanka, its completely different here, here you have all the rights to say, my rights are being denied, if you are not allowed to vote or something. Back home, yeah you can cry all you want, it's just inside your house. So people don't go out to vote here, and yes every time election rolls around every single media here tries to push it, and Tamil media especially, we work very hard to just tell people your vote *is* going to count, get out and vote, that is your right.

Q.T. referred to the second wave of Tamils who have made Canada their physical home for over fifteen years but remain in a deterritorialized position, living continually in the now of Sri Lanka, through various communication technologies. Morley (2000) argues that migrants may remain in limbo, for they leave behind their sense of belonging in their homeland and may live in their new country without acquiring an alternative sense of belonging. Kolar Panov, in her examination of the Croatian communities in Australia, asserts that in times of strife in the homeland the past is renewed and the present is disturbed and suspended (1997, p. 209). Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil public sphere leads the contradictory role of fixating its viewers on issues of the homeland to bolster support

to reach a peaceful solution and simultaneously tries to fill the gap or void in identity that may be felt by community members who continue to harbor a sense of displacement. In this ongoing construction of Canadian Tamil identities, the issue of rights plays an emblematic role towards building confidence and constructing a renewed sense of belonging.

Scholars such as Thobani point out that Canada's discourse of tolerance and multiculturalism often seduces its immigrant population into believing the mantra of equality and diversity (2007, pp. 148, 150). It can be argued that these hosts and their audience have fallen prey to this discourse of tolerance and fail to recognize the existing systemic flaws within Canada. However, their dialogue and interview discussions reveal that ethnic minority communities are not so naïve. Appadurai asserts that efforts are made by nation states to maintain the singular allegiances of nationhood; however, in this period of deterritorialization, we witness the struggles of transnations and plural nationalisms play themselves out (1996, p. 176). While the hosts did attempt to construct grateful Canadian subjects in this discourse, their efforts did not adhere to a singular concept of belonging to a nation state. Rather, the hosts' campaign encouraged a dual sense of belonging and national allegiance to Canada and the imagined nation of Tamil Eelam.

The narratives of Tamil nationalism are not prominently present in this discourse. This is mainly because the intense allegiances held towards the struggle for an independent Tamil Eelam are taken for granted, naturalized ideologies. They are not actively discussed in this particular event but are irrevocably attached to discourses of

belonging within the Sri Lankan Tamil community. While later callers criticized some of the practices and characteristics of Tamil culture, such as caste and gender divisions, the allegiance to Tamil nationalism remains uncontested. The hosts' endorsement of Canadian nationalism belonged to a plural sense of belonging and not the traditionally conceived singular perception of nationalism.

Contesting the Dominant Discourse and Shifting the Boundaries of Otherness

This minority space is not monolithic and involves a great deal of deliberation over the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. The audience did not passively accept the narrative constructions of the hosts and challenged the conceptions disseminated. Caller 4 challenged the nationalistic narratives glorifying Canada,

Caller 4: In Canada the *system* doesn't change, it's like before, for us, there is no *system* that is suitable for us in the computer

L.L.: hmm hmm

Caller 4: Only what the screen shows that is what they do in action, no matter how much you say or you write to the MP, the *system* is not going to change.

L.L.: hmm hmm hmm

Caller 4: If we say, we have a child, and we say someone took the child.

L.L.: hmm

Caller 4: In that case, the law is the same for all the people living in Canada, it does not consider that Tamil people's goals are different, that their religion is different, their culture is different, they bring up their children in a different way. It's the same law for a white person and it's the same law for us.

The caller utilized the English word "system" a number of times, to refer to a broad set of institutional frameworks in Canada. He utilizes the Tamil word, "satam" (law) in his narrative to state that the same laws apply to all; therefore, it may be deduced that his use of "system" refers to institutional structures, such as the judicial system. His statement,

“it’s like before” pertained to the decades prior to the influx of immigrants from non-European countries and this “system,” considers whiteness as its norm. His anecdotal scenario pointed to the form of questioning that police figures employ when hearing of a kidnapping. They often assume that parents or those closest to the child are also possible suspects. The caller is offended by such assumptions and declared that the cultural values and nuances of Sri Lankan Tamils do not inform such encounters with the law. Furthermore, this line of questioning to a newcomer immigrant parent, who barely speaks English and is unfamiliar with the legal system, may cause a great deal of trauma. These utterances were the first statements that contest the discourse set out by the hosts.

The hosts allowed the caller to finish speaking and did not interrupt the caller, other than the occasional “hmm.” Subsequently, they engaged in a discussion to disabuse the caller of his opinion regarding the need to change the existing system. The caller’s assertion for the need to account for cultural differences of groups seemed to advocate for a culturally or religiously specific judicial system, such as Sharia law. The hosts stood in opposition to this idea and attempted to stamp out this idea.

V.L.: But if we perceive it that way, then we have to have 100 and more.

Caller4: Yes, I know it would be hard.

V.L.: We can’t do anything about that because, now that we have come into this country, we say we want to live and then ask them to change the laws according to our ways is not right.

L.L.: Yes, that is not, that is not practical...

V.L. and L.L. debated with the caller regarding the logistics of having laws that suit the needs of all groups in a multicultural society and upheld singular universal laws.

The positioning of self and other shifted at this point in the narrative and signified Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils as the self and the white Canadian state as the other. This is

evident in examining the pronouns utilized in the hosts' utterances, "now that we," "ask them," and "our ways." The altered identification of "them" transformed the focus from global relations and practices, to that of the national. Morley argues that in order to understand the practices of belonging and exclusion, one must engage in an analysis of both the macro and micro structures (2000, p. 4). The discourses within this minority media sphere engage in a continual redefinition of otherness, redrawing the lines of inclusion and exclusion (Cunningham & Nguyen, 2000a).

This repositioning of the other is evident in Caller 4's assertions of self and other. He narrated a story of a white Canadian mother who drowned her three children and herself by driving her minivan into the river. He argued, "They think that another day a Sri Lankan or Pakistani is the same. That is their system. They say, '*Did you see the Sun today? You know that lady took drugs and killed her three kids, same thing happen to you. ' They shouldn't think like that.*'"⁶⁶ Caller 4 differentiated between the practices of dominant white culture and that of the South Asian cultures, specifically in the private sphere. He evoked the notion of eastern cultures as traditionally collectivist and more family oriented, while the west is considered more individualistic (Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor, 2006). The caller's statements drew on the narratives of purity and corruption, aligning the east as pure and the west as corrupt. The boundaries of the other shifted and the focus hereon was on the dominant white Canadian society, its people, institutions, and societal norms.

⁶⁶ The italicized content was spoken in English while the others were uttered in Tamil.

One can argue that the hosts supported the dominant institutional framework and did not wish for change as they probably benefit from the existing distribution of power among the elites of various public spheres (Benhabib, 2002). However, during the interviews conducted with the hosts, it became apparent that they are deeply perturbed by the existence of systemic barriers in various arenas of Canadian society. Therefore, I deduce that they are not naïve about the workings of systemic racism nor do they deny the need for change. When asked about the difficulties faced by the Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto, L.L. remarked, “They don’t want other than Canadians, white Canadians, to come, to rise to the top... the white Canadians but they forget they also came from some country.” These and similar remarks from other community members reveal that these minorities foster a certain amount of discontent towards the barriers and discrimination embedded in the existing system. They consider these barriers to be implemented and maintained by the dominant European white Canadians. These individuals are actively involved in battling the practices of racism and stereotypes interwoven into representational and institutional frameworks in Canada. Yet, there is a certain level of caution and discomfort in promulgating the discontent expressed by Caller 4, especially since it diverts from their efforts to construct a positive discourse of belonging to Canada.

The hosts, in the exchange with Caller 4, did not support transforming the system in any drastic manner; rather they supported operating within the existing system and bringing about change by exercising one’s democratic rights. This was evident in the following exchange between Caller 4 and L.L.:

Caller 4: No, No, You can argue like this, but the *system* is the *system*.

L.L.: Yes, the *system* is the *system*, but we should say that it's our *system*, since this is a country we are living in.

Caller 4: but that *system* doesn't suit everyone, that is the problem.

The assertion, "the system is the system" by Caller 4 connoted that the Canadian institutional framework is unchanging despite the shifts occurring on the ground. On the contrary, L.L.'s emphasis on "our *system*" asked Canadian Tamils to redraw their boundaries of inclusion and to take ownership of the Canadian institutional framework. Although L.L. and V.L. listened to the opinions of others, they persisted with the need to redraw the singular boundaries of belonging to the homeland and stressed the need to foster a sense of belonging to Canada.

An underlying reason for the hosts' stern counter arguments to Caller 4 is the political tension that informs their community. Since the Progressive Conservative government banned the LTTE in April of 2006, a shroud of tension and worry has enveloped the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community. The threat of being accused of terrorist or anti-national activity informs many of the now cautious practices and events of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Toronto.⁶⁷ As mentioned in Chapter 2, many Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils support the LTTE, even though they may not agree with their specific actions. They perceive them as a group fighting for the freedom and safety of the Sri Lankan Tamil minorities. The LTTE has become emblematic of the struggle for the past three decades and Sri Lankan Tamils are often unable to conceive of the struggle without the LTTE. Many of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamils have perceived the banning of the LTTE as of the Canadian government's lack of concern about the plight of the Tamils

⁶⁷ Especially after the arrest of a number of young people on the allegations of arms dealing and assisting the LTTE (Bhattacharya & Srikanthan, 2007).

in Sri Lanka. This political initiative has distanced some of its members from accepting the narrative of Canada as a tolerant and equitable country. Furthermore, it has led to a degree of disgruntlement among some members of the community. Consequently, the hosts are wary of allowing the intensification of such negative perceptions due to the complex political and social realities that surround the community.

Based on the research conducted, a part of the media hosts' role involves controlling the boundaries of this discontent, ensuring that it does not overflow into detrimental practices and results. The hosts' framing of this program's narrative of being grateful Canadian subjects, implicitly also targeted this growing frustration within the community. Morley asserts that if a group were to share characteristics with those considered as existing outside of the accepted boundaries it may become detrimental to the well being of the group. He states that the group, which associates itself with those outside of the margins, may be subjected to surveillance; questioning and limitations may be placed on their access to resources and public space (2000, p. 211). For example, D.F. a long time community leader stated that organizations such as CanTYD that are funded by the City of Toronto, were denied permits to public spaces such as Scarborough Civic Centre; these permits were habitually provided prior to the banning of the LTTE.⁶⁸ In light of the changes in the political climate, internal policing is perceived as a necessary practice to ensure that Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils are not excluded from the mainstream public sphere.

⁶⁸ After two years of ongoing negotiation with the City of Toronto's permit office CanTYD obtained the permit to the Civic Centre in July 2008.

5.6 Looking At Me, Looking At You, Looking at You Looking at Me

The active exchange between the hosts and Caller 4 regarding the need for institutional change in Canada acted as a catalyst and triggered an important shift in the narrative of the program. Up until then, in the discourse of constructing grateful Canadian subjects the focus had been on the perceptions and actions of the other. The speech utterances that followed, alluded to the various underlying histories, myths, and memories that compose Sri Lankan Tamil identities. The dialogue reconfigured these narratives in relation to the current discourse. Moghaddam, Taylor, Pelletier and Shepanek (2000), in their study on the perceptions of minority groups, state that majority Canadians perceive and accept various minority groups differently. These differentiated perceptions also have an effect on how the minority group members perceive themselves. Examining this “warped looking glass,” (Moghaddam et al., 2000) is an invaluable element in configuring a critical response to the policies of multiculturalism. The question of how Tamils perceive themselves, and how others perceive Tamils was an important element of the interview discussions. There is a crucial need to understand the manner in which ethnic minorities perceive themselves for they influence their practices of belonging within the multicultural localities.

Soon after the existing stereotypes of Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils come into play in the statements that Caller 5 offered,

Caller5: Vanakam (Tamil greeting). M speaking, how are you keeping?

L.L.: We are well. How are you?

Caller 5: I am well. Good topic you have chosen...Our Tamil people, no matter where they go, they have to talk about the negatives and point to the faults, not what satisfies them.

V.L.: For example, if you ask our people, say an older person, how are you? They would say, "Oh, my back is in pain, my bones are hurting" only the faults, even though there may be 75 good things, they say only the faults...

(L.L. and Caller 5 laugh)

L.L.: But even in that we can see a good thing, if you ask a Canadian here, "how are you?" "Oh I am great, in the very best health," that positive thinking is there.

IB Technical Producer: (Enna Solarathu) "What is there to say," [Sri Lankan Tamils] will say...

(Caller 5, L.L., V.L. Laugh)

Caller 5 commenced with a criticism of Sri Lankan Tamils' supposed pessimistic attitude. Although he did not make any direct reference to the earlier comments made by Caller 4 his comment implicitly disapproved of the previous caller's critical perspective of Canada's institutional framework. The anecdotal story offered by V.L., substantiated the statement made by Caller 5. This conversation comprised of a lighthearted tone, for the stereotype they discussed is well known within the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community. L.L. utilized this statement and correlated it to a stereotype held by the Tamils of the dominant white Canadians. The discussion realigned itself with the original topic of the show, as they once again reiterated the positive characteristics of Canada. Caller 5 stated, "They respect everyone here, it is a multicultural society, I mean there may be some issues here, but in travelling to other countries I know this country is much better..." Caller 5 admitted, using lexical devices such as "may" and "some," that the existing social structure does contain flaws. However, in comparing Canada with other countries, he brushed aside Canada's inequities as minute when compared to the flaws of other countries.

This minor stereotype about the greeting habits of the Sri Lankan Tamils led to other self-criticisms and comparisons with western culture. Caller 6, the only female caller of the show, is an entrepreneur who employs Sri Lankan Tamils. She stated that Tamil people are lazy in Canada; the hosts contested this claim and asserted, "Tamil people have gained the title for being hard working employees. So only a few are like this." In the interviews conducted, when asked how others perceive Tamils, many pointed out that Tamils are perceived to be hardworking and sincere employees. This characteristic is a source of pride and the hosts defended this perception against Caller 6's statements. They did not forcefully contradict Caller 6's statements but politely disagreed to ensure that she did not lose face as the only female caller.⁶⁹

Caller 6: We can go learn if we don't know English, we can get a bank loan, we can get an interpreter. We can be trades people here; there is no rule here that I have that trade so you can't do it. There is no rule like that. If we try hard we will survive, as long as we do that we will succeed.

L.L.: But perhaps these other people have not been guided well and need some help on how to improve themselves.

Caller 6: I'm just saying don't blame others, don't be lazy and complain after. There are a lot of opportunities here.

Caller 6 referred to the lack of rigid hierarchical structures in Canada, such as the caste system, which had previously impeded upon an individual's aim to reach their goals. She promoted the discourse of the American dream, which places the individual as the central mover of his or her success and disregards the responsibility of the social structures.

⁶⁹ Facework negotiation, the act of losing and saving face, plays an important role in the ongoing construction of dialogues especially within collectivist cultures (Smitherman, Ting-Toomey, Troutman, & Dijk, 1997). The hosts stated that they do not like to disagree too harshly with minority speakers, such as women, who rarely participate in the show as this may discourage them from participating in the future.

However, a male caller who followed criticized Canada's treatment of minority immigrant professionals.

Subsequent callers continued to compare and contrast Sri Lankan Tamil culture to white Canadian culture. They compared the treatment of various groups such as women, the disabled and even animals by Sri Lankan Tamils and Canadians. As with the previous callers, the rigid rules of the caste system in the homeland are criticized and callers praised the west's lack of such a system and its supposedly reduced set of social stigmas.

Caller 8 states,

Caller 8: The white people, and to make them look bad we say a few bad stories about them, about how in their young age itself they do everything (sex) but that is wrong, this country has developed itself so much, it has grown so big and we use their dollar, and their TV is what we use, their cycle, their cars but we say that our culture is good and better but really we are usually behind them.

L.L.: Hmm hmm.

The caller's statement alluded to the constant process of boundary making which sets the criteria for exclusion and inclusion. The ongoing process of identity construction is inexorably connected to the manner in which the other perceives a group and how the group perceives the other. He spoke of how Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils construct narratives of western Canadian culture as morally corrupt and sexually promiscuous. This is contrasted to the morally pure traditions of the eastern Tamil culture. He exposed and deconstructed these narratives as part of the boundary construction practice to create and maintain a homogenous Sri Lankan Tamil identity.

However, the dominant discourse's classification of progress and modernization continues to place western culture ahead of the rest. The caller, as well as the hosts

continued to perpetuate this linear notion of progress. The dominant knowledge is deeply influenced by orientalist knowledge, which positions the west as leading the path towards progress and modernization (Said, 1978), and the culturally backward habits of the eastern Tamil society hold them back. Thobani (2007) states that multiculturalism discourse positions non-western cultures as more patriarchal and backwards. Such positioning may be present in the framework of multiculturalism discourse; however, multiculturalism discourse is not the only discourse that perpetuates such perceptions. Its roots extend further to other structures of power and epistemes, which continue to influence the conceptual maps of groups. Multiple layers of hegemonic discursive formations influence Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils' perceptions. Ethnocentric colonial notions of progress and superiority, as well as Sinhalese narratives of Buddhist nationalism, structured the Tamils outside of the acceptable margins of society. In addition, their perceptions are also intertwined with the manner in which refugees and landless people are treated by the international community.⁷⁰ These intricate and multiple discourses of power knowledges inform their identifications of self worth and belonging.

5.7 Changing the Reflections in the Looking Glass

Understanding the self-perceptions of minority groups is an important element of developing constructive multicultural localities. It is evident in the discourse analyzed that Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils are in an animated discussion over the boundaries of belonging and their positioning within the Canadian national framework. The hosts'

⁷⁰ See Creese (1992).

proliferation of the discourses of Canada's tolerance plays a dominant role in this narrative but counterarguments do arise as callers question the validity of the hosts' message. Even though the discourse analyzed is under a controlled setting, such sites of dialogue allow a variety of voices to engage in the discussion of belonging and identities in construction (Bailey & Harindranath, 2006). Their experiences as refugees and forced immigrants contribute to certain insecurities of belonging in their country of residence. Furthermore, existing normative notions of progress and modernization position these minority communities as inferior and play a role in their identity formation. This is part of the paradoxical struggle of inclusion and exclusion, as we witness the contradictory practices of admiring and repelling the west in continual competition with each other. The ongoing negotiation of Canadian Sri Lankan Tamil identity between differentiated players is further examined in the next chapter. It specifically looks at the power struggle that exists between young Canadian Tamils and the dominant members of the community through the analysis of a program on *It's That Show*. The relationship between power, access, and the right to be heard informs the analysis.

CHAPTER 6: WANTING TO BE HEARD: DIALOGUES OF THOSE “SITTING ON THE FENCE”

6.1 Differentiated Players Attempt to be Heard

The previous chapter examined the complex processes involved in the ongoing construction of identity and belonging of Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils. The analysis highlighted some discourses at play in this minority public sphere regarding national allegiances and notions of self and the other. This chapter analyzes the rarely heard discourses of young people within the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil public sphere and the configurations of power that surround them. While teenagers undoubtedly belong to the category of young people, the youth referred to in this study are mainly those in their twenties.⁷¹ Young members of minority groups often find themselves at odds with the older members of the community due to the generational, cultural, and linguistic differences. The ethnic identities developed by these younger members bear little resemblance to that of their parents (Louie, 2007). Their placement within the minority sphere is usually at the lower rung of the hierarchical system, with limited resources available to voice their concerns. Furthermore, they are often restricted in the manner they express their opinions. Nonetheless, this phenomenon is not unique to just the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils; it is present in most mainstream and ethnic groups as the younger generation of most groups attempt to carve out their own space (Cunningham & Nguyen, 2000b; Durham, 2004; Gillespie, 1992; Werbner, 2002). The limited spaces of

⁷¹ This is mainly because those younger are rarely heard by the broader, older members of both mainstream and minority public sphere. It is usually in the twenties that young Tamil adults actively struggle and gain limited success in obtaining a distinct space.

young people within the minority sphere do bring together a *mélange* of cultural narratives to the fore and often bring into question many of the existing cultural practices in both the dominant and minority sphere (Werbner, 2004). While this may not be always an emancipatory space, it functions as an arena in which discourses are contested, redefined, and re-imagined, holding out the possibility for empowerment.

6.2 Structural Make up of *It's That Show*

Radio functions as a popular medium of representation by community groups (Rennie, 2006) and the SCMO radios are a lifeline of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil community. However, it is the older members of the community who mainly make use of the radio, while the younger subjects lean towards mainstream TV, transnational Indian Tamil popular media and the internet as their primary forms of media. The FM radio station CMR FM 101.3 *Thamil FM* is increasingly popular among young Sri Lankan Tamils due to its higher production values and entertainment focus. This was the impetus for CTBC's administration to expand its market and target its SCMO radio station to Sri Lankan Tamil youth. It was through the auspices of capitalist competition that *It's That Show* was established.

It's That Show on CTBC was hosted in English and Tamil by five friends, two males and three females in their mid twenties. Three of these five hosts were interviewed as a group. The hosts are graduates of Canadian colleges/universities and are young working professionals or are pursuing further education. At its onset, the show had aired twice a week but due to the scheduling difficulties of the hosts, it switched to

Wednesdays and aired for around a year. It was cancelled in mid August 2007 due to differences of opinion with CTBC's administration. During its time on air, they examined issues such as the continued practice of dowry giving in marriages, violence among Toronto Tamil youth, appropriate methods used by parents to punish delinquent youth, teenage pregnancies, and the appropriate age for (arranged) marriages. The program under examination in this chapter deliberated on whether the caste system should be demolished or proliferated among Canadian Tamils. This was the last program of *It's That Show* that was aired on August 6 2007; however, the hosts did not know at that time that it would be the last episode.

These hosts continue to contribute to various Tamil media and organizations within the community. They were all born in Sri Lanka and arrived in Canada as immigrants because of the conflict in the homeland. The two females, A.I. and S.T. have lived in Canada from around the age of two, while L.B., the male host interviewed has lived in Canada from the age of twelve. A.I. identified herself as Canadian, S.T. considered herself to be Canadian-Tamil, while L.B., identified himself as Tamil.⁷² Their varied sense of belonging is reflected in their on air deliberations on a variety of contentious cultural issues.

The show targeted the youth and adult audience and aimed to act as a bridge to mend the fracture in communication between the two groups. They asserted that the cultural and generational gap between young people and their parents is intensifying. This growing social phenomenon requires open dialogue, to reach a common language of

⁷² L.B.'s statement was received with some surprise by the female hosts and they engaged in questioning their friend about why he does not consider himself Canadian in some way.

understanding. In their interview, when asked about their identity, the hosts engaged in a lengthy discussion among them regarding this question.

S.T.: I'm Canadian Tamil, trying to find a safe middle.

L.B.: You are at a bridge.

S.T.: Yes, I am sitting on the fence.

L.B.: But there is no medium, it still needs to be created, we are the immigrants' kids, we have to create this middle.

The hosts continue to juggle with the narratives of Canadian and Tamil culture. They observe that they are still in the process of constructing a hybrid Canadian Tamil culture and a space does not exist yet for this identification. L.B. hints at the boundary maintenance that exists within groups that attempt to draw neat borders around ethnic identifications. This notion of not having a legitimized sense of identity is also articulated in Claire Dwyer's study of British South Asian young women (Dwyer, 2000), Werbner's (2002) young Pakistanis in Manchester, and Gillespie's (1992) Punjabi youth in South Hall London.

L.B. contends that it is their responsibility to obtain a legitimized space for their hybrid identifications. Hybridity is often defined as the manner in which existing practices are disconnected from their existing forms and realigned with other discourses and practices (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004b). It is perceived as the arena in which essentialist hegemonic conceptions of identity and ethnicity are reworked and the hierarchical relationships are contested (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004b). These spaces do not necessarily always provide an opportunity for resistance or emancipation, rather they are part of the intricate coming together of various global practices (Anthias, 2006; Kraidy, 1999). Hybrid and partial cultural identities often find themselves without much

legitimacy or power within their existing discursive formations (Beltran, 2004). These partial and hybrid identities are increasingly becoming the prevailing sense of belonging within the deterritorialized globalized ethnoscape (Appadurai, 1996); therefore, there is a need to focus on these hybrid practices in order to reflect the realities on the ground.

These young people believe that their attempts to engage with the cultural shifts of Tamil identity in Canada have not been successful thus far. Along with hosting *It's That Show*, they were writers for a weekly paper called *Vaikarai* as well as other local Tamil magazines. In *Vaikarai*, they were allocated two pages for youth content in English where similar issues related to identity were addressed. However, this endeavor ended as the paper became more interested in the political events of the homeland, which conflicted with their desire to focus mainly on Canadian Tamil issues. The hosts expressed their strong desire to veer away from homeland political issues and intended to deal with local Canadian Tamil issues instead. This standpoint is highly contested and is often criticized by those who are deeply engaged with events in the homeland. The hosts as well as many of those interviewed pointed out that the dominant discourse within the community surrounds the political strife in the homeland. This issue often consumes most of the resources and attention of the community leaders and members, leaving insufficient space for open deliberation regarding local issues of cultural identity.

As advocates of critical multiculturalism assert, it is important for researchers to examine the various ways subjects are situated in power within groups (McLaren, 1994). Therefore, the ordering of discourses and speakers plays a significant role in this analysis. The question of legitimacy also functions as an important issue in relation to the speech

acts uttered. Furthermore, the function of language, English, Tamil, and “pure” Tamil are central factors in the struggle to obtain legitimization. These structural elements construct and limit the range of experiences and practices of the young Canadian Tamils within the minority Tamil sphere.

6.3 Speaking from the Margins

Constructing a Bilingual Space of Deliberation

The role of language within the minority space is linked to participation, access, and power. The show initially began as an English language program aimed at youth.

However, as most of those who listen to the SCMO Tamil radios were older Tamil speaking members of the community, the administration at CTBC increasingly wished that Tamil be utilized within the program. The show commenced as such,

L.B.: Last week, *bonus, gift, sponsorship, dowry*, such things that Seethanam (dowry) is known as, was what we discussed.

I.H.: *Last week we talked about dowry...* (translates L.B.’s comments and adds in English) *it’s another form of money laundering in the name of marriage, in our culture, the bride’s family bribes the groom’s family to marry their daughter, that is our point of view.*

L.B.: That is, what I.H. is saying is... (Translates I.H.’s comments and adds in Tamil) but in keeping the audience’s perspective at the forefront, they see dowry as something parents wish to give to their children based on what they can afford. That is, that is dowry. Giving dowry is not wrong, but how and in what situation the family gives it, is what we should be paying attention to.

I.H.: (Translates in English)... *So what is today’s topic L.B.?*

The back and forth translation of English and Tamil illustrates the attempt to address the linguistic diversity of the players within this discursive space. The hosts strived to construct an arena in which various audience members may feel comfortable

participating. The increasing usage of the Tamil language enabled the adult population to participate with the topics that these young people addressed. However, only L.B. was able to converse fluently in Tamil, while A.I., S.T., TJ, and I.H. were not able to engage as actively as L.B. in the show. This was evident in this particular program as well; once the Tamil speaking audience began to engage in the discussion, the mainly English speaking I.H.'s role diminished. Those without access to the dominant language, Tamil, within the minority sphere often find themselves with limited access to speak openly.

The monopolization of the Tamil language within the minority sphere exists across various media and has an influence on the content of programming. *Crossroads*, a new talk show on TVI, encountered pressure from the public in its initial months to switch from an English language program to Tamil. However, the host, a well-established male at TVI in his early thirties, defended the use of English as the primary language. This was because his target audiences were the Canadian born Sri Lankan Tamil teenager or those who were raised from a very young age in Canada, who are mainly English speaking. This target audience was more likely to watch and enter in a live deliberative dialogue on an ethnic community television program if English was used. Moreover, the form of Tamil utilized on air by most radio shows and TV shows is a standardized, classical "pure" form of Tamil.⁷³ This form of spoken Tamil adheres closely to its written form; therefore, it is more accessible to those who were educated in Tamil and comes across as foreign and obscure to young people who have had little exposure to formal

⁷³ Addressing a mass audience is perceived as a formal act and therefore the standardized form is used. This is also practiced by Indian Tamil TV news and radio news shows in India. In addition, using a standardized form avoids the privileging of one locale's dialect over another, as there are various dialects of Tamil in Sri Lanka as well, such as Jaffna (north), Batticaloa (east), and Colombo (central) Tamil.

Tamil education. However, using English as a primary language excluded many parents who were not confident in conversing on live television in English. Therefore, *Crossroads* presently includes both languages and allows callers to communicate in whichever one they feel comfortable using. The lack of a fluid means of communicating between the younger generation and the older generation proves to be a continued obstacle in their communication process (Louie, 2007, p. 372).

The contention over the language utilized in a given discourse involves a complex struggle between market forces, players and the positioning of power between these factors. It is evident that Tamil is the acceptable dominant language for communication within the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil minority sphere. English is utilized mainly when speaking to those outside the minority Tamil public sphere. Consequently, the practice by Tamil youth to participate within the minority public sphere in English remains unconventional and contested. The desire by the community leaders and media players to preserve the Tamil language is understood; this is a practice that is common to many ethnic groups.⁷⁴ However, Charles Husband states, in his right to be understood principle, that all must be willing to accept the responsibility to understand each other. Furthermore, he stresses that this is key to constructing an open communicative process within intercultural communication (2000, p. 209). The heterogeneity within a cultural group may be so diverse, such as that between the older and younger Toronto Sri Lankan

⁷⁴ See Canagarajah (2008) *Language shift and the family: Questions from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora* for a detailed discussion on the maintenance of the Tamil language in the diaspora.

Tamils, that the same expectations for intercultural dialogue may be applied to intracultural dialogue.

As it is the case with other groups, the responsibility to understand everyone, does not always thrive within Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil population. One of the interviewees, W.N., stated that often in community events, where youth are present along with their parents, the habitual practice is to utilize the "pure" form of Tamil. Furthermore, W.N. stated that the older members believe that they must set examples for the youth by continually repeating these existing practices. It is strongly believed that the young people will eventually adopt these practices as their own. W.N. argued that this belief is not suitable, for the youth feel neglected and increasingly participate in the mainstream public sphere, while reducing their presence within the ethnic sphere.

Q.P., a prominent Tamil media figure, stated that the older generation often criticize that the youth is disinterested in the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka and is not active within community events. The older community especially worries about what will happen after their generation, to the lobbying and reconstruction efforts in the homeland. However, some of the younger interviewees asserted that the older community leaders are unfamiliar with their hybrid practices and often do not value the perspectives of the youth. Q.P. asserts, that the older community leaders "need to include the youth in the discussion, but the youth will not listen unless community leaders listen to their problems, give them a voice, respect them, treat them as equals." As a result, the creation of a space in which various subjects may participate and be heard equally requires a reconsideration of the dominant perceptions, practices, and players.

6.4 Questioning Existing Practices and Naturalized Ideologies

Van Dijk argues that cultural differences do exist when two groups engage in communicative acts. The interaction may be “tolerantly accepted or give rise to misunderstanding and conflict and even dominance, exclusion and oppression of the less powerful” (1997, p. 21). The two groups involved in communicative acts in this discussion are mainly the young hosts and the older adult members of the community. The youth, with lower social capital within the community, are limited to the range of topics and the extent to which they may engage with a particular topic. In the final weeks, before the show was abruptly cancelled, the topics dealt with core cultural practices that were felt to be disadvantaging various members within the community

Caste in the homeland was a rigid hierarchical social ordering that was based on one’s profession and was passed on through birth (Fuglerud, 1999). It did play a dominant role in dividing and ordering the society’s subjects and led to various discriminatory practices, setting the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In Canada, differentiation based on caste has been mainly relegated to the private sphere and it continues to dominate in relation to marriages. Arranged marriages are traditionally formed within caste lines and it is often a divisive element in love marriages.⁷⁵ In many cases, it leads to forceful break ups of the couple by the parents or results in other

⁷⁵ Love marriage is often understood as a marriage determined mainly by the couple involved, instead of the parental or family unit.

exclusionary practices. In L.B.'s introductory comments on the show about the topic of caste, he stated,

L.B.: Back in the days, perhaps caste was suitable, we don't know, my age and that doesn't have any connection, but in this day and age, when we see it at our age, caste is not a reason, that should be an obstacle for a marriage. In a family, the boy and the girl who are getting married should be good, their age or education, to see that is important, but to see their caste, is wrong, that is our opinion.

L.B. explained his position in the opening statements by utilizing a cautious tone.

Furthermore, his utterance is littered with interruptions to the normal syntax of his sentences. These interruptions included, "we don't know, my age and that don't have any connection, but in this day and age, when we see it at our age." He utilized the "we," to indicate Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil youth and surrounded his position with guarded phrases that continued to highlight his positioning as a young person. The tone of the speaker was neither didactic nor top down; rather, his tone hinted that he was continually aware of his marginal position.

L.B. was conscious of the disproportionate distribution of power; therefore, he borrowed from various narrative strategies to reduce any tension the audience may have felt in questioning this naturalized ideological belief. This was especially important when considering the larger discursive formation in which this discourse occurs. The previous week's discussion on dowry gave way to some intense arguments between the hosts and some of its callers. As mentioned earlier, S.T. who was one of the female hosts had decided not to participate in contentious topics after the previous week's show and therefore had avoided this particular episode. The cautious tone was explicit in the

utterances of these hosts and they utilized various strategies to conceal or lighten their critical remarks.

L.B. further delved into the topic as he explicated his position to his audience, whom he primarily situated as parents. He asserted,

L.B.: This week, we took the issue of caste; this caste issue is discussed in all houses. Your children, children our age and younger, your children, do you want them to grow up within these ideas of caste? Or do you want them to grow up with the sense of humanity? Think about this. What did we gain from this caste? Those who studied as doctors they are cleaners here and those who were cleaners, they are doctors here. The way times are changing, should we be developing this or demolishing this? Each topic we choose for you and through you, to explain to us things. Something that we don't understand, those of you who do understand these things and are doing it, we are asking you. This issue of caste is something we don't understand, why should we have caste? For us we don't get any benefit from this caste, nothing good comes out of it. So why should we continue it? So for something that does not have any benefit, something that brings us no good, why are we still sticking onto this? As youth, as your children, we are asking you this.

L.B. presented his argument through rhetorical questions that are asked in consecutive order. He framed the discourse within the acceptable traditional narrative of parent teaching the child values. L.B. utilized flattery that is imbued with irony, "Something that we don't understand, those of you who *do* understand these things and are doing it, we are asking you." He suggested that as adults they must have questioned and deliberated upon this social practice in order for them to have continued its perpetuation. His statements insinuated, using irony, that the practice of caste discrimination within the community is an unquestioned naturalized ideology. He utilized this framing in various segments of the discourse, therefore placing the onus on the audience to prove or disprove the importance of caste in Canadian Tamil society.

Most of the callers demonstrated a great deal of enthusiasm for the topic and congratulated the hosts for tackling the issue. They agreed with the hosts and stated that in Canada caste should not be proliferated nor play a role in deciding marriages. However, the hosts stated in their interviews that callers often offered the same opinion as the hosts or the first caller and often did not disagree, unless another caller were to shift the narrative. Therefore, I focus here on those who disagreed with the dominant narrative of the show. Caller 3, a young male, argued against the dominant opinion and engaged in a heated discussion with L.B.. He asserts, "In my opinion, a generation's history and explanation, no matter how a low caste person gets rich, their habits do not change." This contentious statement gave way to an active discussion between the hosts. L.B. first discerned that Caller 3 is a 25-year-old male who has lived in Canada for six years, he then commenced,

L.B.: So what you are saying is that those who are born in the upper caste have certain habits and ways, and those who are from the lower caste have other habits.

Caller 3: I'm not saying that we should, or that it's good to look at caste

L.B.: But you think that they have different habits. Now is that the caste's habits or the family's habits?

Caller 3: Now if someone is rich, they say he is like that, that is his caste's behavior that is why he is doing that.

L.B.: Who said it's like that?

Caller 3: Normally in everyday life, we say that.

L.B.: Oh yea, I know, in everyone's family we talk like that.

Caller 3: So why did that come, it came from their habits I think.

L.B.: You could be right but I want to think the same thing in another way, the reason, the ones that said this to us is our family, right, so couldn't this be a family's habit?

L.B. attempted to illustrate to the caller that these naturalized assumptions about group behavior are not innate; rather such perceptions arise from the socialization a child

receives from his/her parents and the ideological apparatuses that surrounds them (Smitherman et al., 1997). The caller then asserted,

Caller 3: Now if, even if the son is a doctor, and the dad is a coolie worker, the habits of the coolie job comes to the son, we normally say that...

L.B.: ...So what I am saying is a doctor's son can pick up a knife and kill, and so can a coolie worker's (worker on the fields who earns a living from hourly wages) son, right?

Caller 3: (hangs up)

L.B.: I think D left, what I want to say as a final point to D is, a doctor's son can pick up a knife and kill, and so can a coolie worker's son. We can't say that oh a doctor picks up a knife that is why the doctor's son did that, and the coolie worker's son...we can't say that right.

L.B. delved further in denaturalizing the discourses that propagate prejudice towards the lower caste members. The caller had become irritated or ashamed at that point and terminated the call. The interchange between Caller 3 and L.B. exposed a dominant perception that the habits of members from different caste are innate qualities that remain unchanged despite the temporal and spatial shifts. L.B.'s argument deconstructed this belief and illustrated that the narratives constructed around caste employ double standards, which often privilege the higher caste.

6.5 Questions of Legitimacy and the Right to Speak about Particular Discourses

Caller 7 was the other speaker that drew attention to the allocations of power between speakers and discourses. Analyzing the interplay between the hosts and Caller 7 is important not only because it subsumed much of the hour allocated for the show, but also because it brought to the forefront the issue of legitimacy in speaking about certain issues. Language played a role in signaling power for Caller 7 was the only one who

introduced himself utilizing the classical “pure” Tamil. In addition, he maintained the level of formality involved in using this form of Tamil throughout the interaction. I.H., had been occasionally offering input thus far in English to the colloquial Tamil speakers; however, in this lengthy discussion in “pure” Tamil, his voice went unheard.

Beyond his use of language, Caller 7 further signaled power and authority as he subsequently asked for the names and ages of both the hosts. The role of asking questions is usually the hosts’, which usually bestows a degree of power and control to the host. In asking the hosts’ names, and more importantly their ages, the caller reversed the traditional role of the talk show host.⁷⁶ Furthermore, L.B. stumbled when asked about his age, “I am fifteen...I am twenty-four, I wanted to say fifteen but I would be wrong.” As minor as his stumble was, it illustrated the discomfort that Caller 7 caused among the hosts; he had upset the flow of the show.

Caller 7’s arguments challenged the narrative that had been formulated thus far on the positioning of caste in Canadian Tamil society. He utilized a didactic tone when speaking to the hosts, signaling a sense of certainty, authority, and power. He then transformed the discussion from one between media host and audience, to one between a parent/elder to a child, or a teacher and student. L.B. and I.H. had utilized this narrative earlier on in the show to ease the tensions that may arise due to their critical stance on such a contentious cultural issue. Caller 7 also employed the parent/child didactic narrative to situate the speakers in differentiated power structures. He repetitively utilized variations of the phrase, “I want you to understand something” or “Think about this

⁷⁶ In the discussion with Caller 3, L.B. was the one who asked for the caller’s biographic information.

carefully,” which connoted his power and supposedly superior knowledge. The semblance of power provided to the young hosts of the show waned in light of Caller 7’s presence.

The discussion ensued with Caller 7 quoting a famous quote, which previous callers had utilized to strengthen their argument on removing differentiations based on caste. It is a well-known couplet written by the renowned classical Indian Tamil poet, Barathi, “Sathigal elai adi papa, kollum thalthi solal pavam (There is no caste child, to speak lowly because of caste is a sin).” Caller 7 then proceeded,

Caller 7: The person that said this is Barathiyar, now people should carefully pay attention to this issue, the person that said this big issue, what caste did he marry into?

L.B.: Which caste?

Caller7: He married within his own caste.

L.B.: Aha.

Caller 7: Think about this carefully, if he had gone and married a girl from another caste then it would have been a proud thing, and it would have been true.

Caller 7 utilized argumentative structures to contest the validity of the poet who was most often quoted on the show. Barathi was not only a poet but also a social and political activist in the 1930s and was involved in India’s independence movement. He had denounced the caste system and had advocated that all be treated equally. However, Caller 7 argued that the poet who wrote this couplet did not set an example by marrying outside his caste; therefore, his words were meaningless. It is important to note that Caller 7’s narrative did not engage with the topic proposed by the hosts at the onset of the show. He did not deliberate on the need to proliferate or demolish caste; instead, he only argued in relation to who can speak about this topic.

The caller then questioned not only the words of Barathiyar but also that of the audience who had participated in the show, by stating:

Caller 7: Now even in your house, your mother and father, parents have a tradition as to who their child will join with.

L.B.: That is true.

Caller 7: This is the truth. These people that have come here and said (quotes Barathi's couplet) that is all pure lies. No one that came here, one thing clearly, I belong to the Vellalar caste, I will not give away my children to marry someone below that caste.

L.B.: Why?

Caller 7: That is my tradition. That is how I was raised, that is how I grew up.

Upon challenging the validity of the speakers who opposed the proliferation of caste discrimination, the caller asserted boldly that he is of the higher Vellalar caste, the esteemed business caste.⁷⁷ Fuglerud (1999) asserts that the business oriented Vellalar caste held most of the power in Sri Lanka, even though they are below the priestly Brahmin upper caste. Upon discrediting the words of the poet, as well as that of the audience, Caller 7 attempted to utilize the opportunity to bolster his own integrity and ethical stance in stating that he is open and honest unlike the others who have spoken on the show.

L.B. spoke very little in the interaction thus far with Caller 7; he only answered in short phrases to the hypophoric questions asked. However, when Caller 7 criticized the audience who participated, labeling them as liars, L.B. attempted to regain control over the discourse through various tactics. Tactic is the tool utilized by the subordinated in the space of the dominant, by playing upon the prescribed rules and practices, usually in the

⁷⁷ Many settlers of Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils belong to the Vellalar caste possibly due to the uneven processes of migration and economical reasons.

form of isolated actions, making use of the rare chances that they are offered (De Certeau, 1984). He stated

L.B.: You make a good point; please don't be angered that I am interrupting.

Caller 7: No, nothing like that.

L.B.: You said a good point that Barathiyar married within his own caste

Caller 7: That is the truth!

L.B.: That is the truth; I am not saying it is not true.

Caller 7: To this day those who have said such things, no one has asked if they have behaved like that.

L.B.: Can I ask a question?

Caller 7: Ask.

L.B.: What age was Barathiyar married?

Caller 7: That, I don't know.

L.B.: He was married at a young age. That is, he was married before he started to question things in life.

Caller 7: hmm hmm...

L.B.: So what I am thinking is because of his family, like what you would do with your child⁷⁸, his parents may have arranged his marriage. Perhaps that is the reason why he sung⁷⁹ like that.

Caller 7: (laughs)

The reason for L.B.'s silence is revealed at this time to be a symbol of respect. As it is within many traditional South Asian cultures, children and young people are expected to listen and not interrupt an adult while speaking. In apologizing for interrupting and by requesting permission to ask a question, L.B. bestowed ample respect to the speaker and then commenced in tackling the argument made. L.B. utilized the same argumentative structure that the caller had employed earlier. He asked a hypophoric question and commenced in answering it in order to establish his point. The irony implied in his tone is a tactic, for it functions here as a tool to tackle his opponent (De Certeau, 1984, p. 37).

⁷⁸ Caller 7 had mentioned earlier that he had already arranged his children's marriages with his sister's children. Marriages between first cousins are a regular practice in the homeland and do continue in certain instances in the diaspora.

⁷⁹ Poems were often sung in Tamil, characteristic of an oral culture's traditions.

L.B. remembered this particular caller in the interview with the hosts and stated, “My mom was yelling at me, ‘why did you punk him off,’ I said, ‘who cares.’ That is the mentality right, just because they are educated they would know better than us.” He refers to the caller’s use of “pure” Tamil, which signaled the caller’s elitist knowledge. L.B. smiled and stated in the interview that the caller had assumed that he, a young person, would not know anything about the classical Tamil poet Barathi’s, life, or his works. However, L.B. has a passion to learn about Tamil culture and history; therefore, he had known that Barathi had an arranged marriage at the whim of his parents while he was still a young student. L.B. subverted the arguments utilized by Caller 7 and contested his claims to the surprise of the listeners and the caller himself. This utterance contested the hierarchical power structure between an elder and young person and was made possible primarily due to the use of tactics and in utilizing the limited power L.B. held as the host of the show.

Soon after, the narrative focused again on the right to speak, as the caller narrowed in on the legitimacy of L.B. to speak about this issue.

Caller 7: Now if someone comes on this radio show, whose child has married below or outside their caste and says these things, then it will be accepted. Instead of that, they just come on and say, it should be like this and that. Now, I don’t know how many years from now you will get married, but unless you marry outside of your caste, will what you say now have any meaning...

L.B.: Yes, but only if I like the girl, otherwise I will not marry.

Caller 7: Laughs,

L.B.: That could be from any caste, religion, why would I marry someone I don’t like?

Caller7: That is a different problem, let’s not go there. Now the girl that you see will not be lower than your caste that I know from this minute.

Caller 7 argued that only those who practiced such values should speak and limited the participation of speakers in the discussion. In pinpointing to the possible personal life decisions of the host, he discredited the host's integrity. L.B. was forced to defend his own personal life choices due to these statements. Later callers mainly defended the young host and argued against Caller 7; however, this dialogue with caller 7 highlighted the positioning of power and the ongoing struggle by certain speakers to obtain legitimacy to speak about particular narratives.

The hybrid space of the youth continually faces opposition and due to the limited resources available to the community does not receive equal importance. In addition, it is the perceptions that are held of these younger members that halts the proliferation of a bilingual, Tamil and English, minority public sphere. As the hosts stated in their interviews,

S.T.: They were scared to let us talk about a lot of things.

A.I.: So it's like we didn't have the right to because we are all young people, we didn't have someone above us that has the power to meet midway.

L.B.: We are still the next generation, we don't have the respect of the people who are one generation above us, who run our community.

The person who can meet midway whom they refer to is the host of *Crossroads*, who is in his mid thirties and has greater access to the older community members. However, the hosts all agreed, "We are lucky to be even in a country where we are able to voice our opinions because if we are in Sri Lanka we can't go and say anything like this."

Nonetheless, they allege that it was their desire to target taboo practices that exist within the private sphere that acted as the catalyst for the cancellation of their show. S.T. stated, "There were a lot of topics that we could have talked about. If we had that next show, we

could have talked about it.” They had wished to discuss topics such as premarital sex, child abuse, and child sexual abuse. The belief held among the hosts is that their voice was perceived to be far too controversial and the administration worried that their contentious debates may hinder the station’s reputation among older audience members. While some may argue that these dialogues may not have wide ranging emancipatory possibilities, the struggle over what gets included and who speaks, is central to the struggle of justice and freedom over unequal practices (Benhabib, 2002; Werbner, 2002).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Multicultural Localities, Identities, and Minority Voices

The author intended to explore the construction of ethnic identifications in multicultural localities from a global and critical perspective. It stressed the need for deliberative dialogue on the contentions over identity and belonging in the public sphere. This will allow for greater understanding of the complex interactions within and between groups, and the actions of the state. The examination of a segment of Toronto's Sri Lankan Tamil community public sphere illustrated the heterogeneity within this ethnic group and highlighted the contested nature of these discourses. The analysis in the previous chapters further substantiated the claims made by scholars, such as Nederveen Pieterse (2007) and McLaren (1994) that global conflict continues to play a significant role in the lives of migrant groups and that individuals are differentially situated in various power systems requiring different responses. These complicated understandings of ethnic groups should reflect in state policies that manage ethnic differences, such as the Canadian Multiculturalism policy.

The empirical research conducted in this study contributed to the existing gap in research on the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamil community. The research sought to highlight the long history that informs the Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto and contextualized their complex identifications and allegiances. The analysis of the *Iravu Chalaaram* brought to the fore the contested perceptions of the self and the other. Meanwhile, *It's That Show* displayed the differentially positioned status of Tamil youth within the minority sphere and the struggles they experience in gaining legitimacy to speak and be heard.

Furthermore, through the interviews and the analysis of the radio talk shows, the research allowed for the voice of this minority group to be heard. The research brought to the fore the difficulties experienced by various players within the group in articulating their opinions in the mainstream and the ethnic minority public sphere.

The analysis on *Iravu Chalaaram* illustrated the shifting practices of othering and its influences in defining group identity. The other differs according to the various situations and transforms how the self is viewed in each of these instances. The pride held in Canada's discourse of tolerance places other countries as the other. However, in looking at the barriers that face Tamils in Canada, the Canadian nation state and its institutions become the other and the Toronto Tamils the victims. However, when comparing the western other as a symbol of progress and modernization, the Tamil culture is perceived by its members as traditional and backward. The other is not always repelled, it is actually revered at times, and it continually influences perceptions of the self.

The order of discourse within this minority sphere plays a central role in the identifications of the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils. The ongoing political strife in Sri Lanka dominates the discourses of the Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils. This issue is present in diverse manners in the lives of the thousands of Tamils living in Toronto; each of them reacts and treats this discourse distinctly. However, within the minority public sphere the pressure to reach a solution to this strife is ever increasing and the negotiation over the acceptable method of doing so creates numerous divisions. The aging community elders from the first and second wave migrants are striving to find a political resolution to the

ongoing violence before the opportunity passes their generation. Many of them support the LTTE in varying degrees and tend to believe that they are the only force protecting and fighting for the interests of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. They also strongly believe that a permanent peace may be reached only through international and diplomatic intervention. However, many deem that the banning of the LTTE has overturned the lobbying efforts that Canadian Tamils have undertaken thus far. The suspicion under which the Sri Lankan Tamils live at present creates a sense of nervousness and deepens some of the insecurity that informs their past. This thesis did not embark on a detailed analysis of the suspicion under which the community currently resides. It is deduced that further examination is required on how the mainstream public sphere's practices and events frame these types of communities and the repercussions this has on their self-perceptions.

Additional research is required on this particular group's cultural and political identifications, in light of the controversial political atmosphere that surrounds them. The banning of the LTTE in Canada shifted many of the discourses that were hitherto utilized by the Toronto Tamils to identify the struggle for a homeland. It is currently being rearticulated in a sanitized manner, void of any LTTE signifiers in order to fit within the acceptable discourses of the mainstream public sphere. The relationship between the Canadian nation state and the allegiances held towards the struggle for Tamil Eelam requires greater investigation as it plays a significant role in the lives of this group.

The ongoing strife in the homeland is the dominant discourse in the minority sphere and has the tendency to procure most of the resources within the community. The talk shows examined in this study belong to a small segment of the discourses within this

minority sphere that focus on local Canadian Tamil issues. The minority members within this minority community mainly experience the repercussions of the overarching discourses occupy most of the attention. According to the interviewees, minority members, such as women, youth, those with disabilities, and those of varying sexual orientations, who wish to focus on the local Canadian Tamil issues have little room to express their ideas. Some community leaders do attempt to include diverse voices but many strongly feel that unless the issue in the homeland is resolved, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora will not be able to live peacefully. They believe that the Tamil diaspora has a responsibility to bring peace to those left behind in Sri Lanka; therefore, the struggle for the homeland should be their primary concern. Consequently, homeland politics continues to take precedence in this minority public sphere. An important area to follow for future research are the shifts that may occur in the ordering of discourse as the younger generation increases its economic capacity and gains greater access to the minority sphere.

In addition, inviting various players to engage freely within minority public spaces is an asset for the future of an ethnic community's media organization (Browne, 2005). In reference to the positioning of youth within the minority ethnic sphere, Browne points to the importance of understanding the younger audience. He argues for a shift in the balance in topics and language in order to account for this growing population (p. 208). Additionally, he suggests that heavy use of homeland language and topics may not be as pertinent to the second generation of minorities. This practice may risk alienating them if they persist on the same course. It is imperative that communities reevaluate their

distribution of power and make an effort to understand the treatment of various players, especially how players are structured differently in the homeland and in their specific diasporic locality. Understanding the heterogeneity of ethnic groups by those outside and within is central in building an inclusive multicultural space.

In light of the contestations that reside within the community, the practice of internal policing is prevalent within this minority public sphere. The internal policing occurs in two manners; firstly, minority media players tend to censor themselves in attempting to tow the line of the dominant discourse in both the minority and majority sphere. Secondly, the allocation of resources to particular discourses and not others does not leave room for the promulgation of minority discourses that differ or contradict the hegemonic apparatus. Internal policing occurs because of the need to maintain boundaries between spheres and groups and to uphold discourses a pure Tamil identity. In addition, they also occur because of the need to fit with the mainstream's discourse of the norm. The internal policing of discourses that do not fit with the mainstream occurs because of the need to belong. As Morley (2000) argues, a group risks the chance of being ostracized from the mainstream if it is viewed to foster marginal discourses. Therefore, in order to obtain the benefits of belonging to the mainstream, a certain degree of internal policing does occur within minority spheres. The tension between relating to the mainstream sphere and maintaining a sense of self within the minority sphere is a convoluted ongoing negotiation.

7.2 Perceiving Difference from Critical and Global Multiculturalism Perspectives

The two concepts supported and explored in this study were Nederveen Pieterse's (2007) global multiculturalism and McLaren's (1994) critical multiculturalism. Critical multiculturalism focuses on difference, the hierarchical structure under which individuals within groups are positioned, and places emphasis on the need for counter-hegemonic action. This study attempted to understand the identifications within the Tamil community through various intersectionalities of difference, such as caste, class, gender, age, and migratory period. In addition, it examined the positioning of media players within Toronto's Tamil minority public sphere and its audience, based on age, gender, and migratory periods. It explored how these differences influenced the construction of narratives in their discourses. It is evident from the analysis of *Iravu Chalaaram* and *It's That show* that the older males have considerably more legitimacy and authority over the minority sphere, in comparison to the younger hosts. McLaren asks that multiculturalism policies should understand these differentiated positionings and construct responses that acknowledge their differentiated needs, so they are more equitable and relevant. State strategies, such as multiculturalism, immigration, and foreign policy that manage the complexities present in our globalized society should take into account the layered processes of power and history in constructions of identity and the allocation of resources (McLaren, 1994; Modood, 1997; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007; Werbner, 1997).

As indicated in the analysis, there were very few women participants in the shows. The hosts of *Iravu Chalaaram* acknowledged this and stated that they tend to

diversify their topics, so that it is more inclusive to both genders. Nonetheless, middle-aged first wave males dominate the minority Tamil public sphere and the role of women within them is limited. Another marginalized group within this sphere is those whose sexual orientation differs from the heterosexual norm. The abject perception of these sexualities places them outside of the margins and their discourses continue to remain hidden from the minority public sphere. Critical multiculturalism asks that we not see ethnic groups as homogenous wholes, instead we must see the differences within them, and how members are differentially situated in power. These minority and marginalized voices need greater access within minority and mainstream public spaces to negotiate and re-imagine their marginal positionings.

Global multicultural (Nederveen Pieterse, 2007) underscored the need to understand the deep and ongoing effects of migration, placing greater emphasis on understanding the role of global conflict in the process of identity construction. Nederveen Pieterse (Nederveen Pieterse, 2007) and other scholars suggest that plural national allegiances be accepted as a norm and not as an abject form of identification to be viewed with suspicion. Current forms of belonging that support singular nationalistic policies tend to be limited in the manner they address complex social and political issues that arise among its recent migrants. As mentioned earlier, the multiple allegiances held by Canadian Sri Lankan Tamils has resulted in suspicion from authority figures and the mainstream public sphere and has led to broad negative stereotyping.

These stereotypes present within the discursive formation influence the perceptions held by these minorities towards the host country as well as of themselves.

This was evident in the opinions offered by *Iravu Chalaaram*'s callers on their conceptions of Sri Lankan Tamils and the west. Often times, the suspicion held towards plural allegiances has led to the reduction of engagement in plural nationalistic practices, for fear of retribution. In other instances, it has strengthened the borders between mainstream public spheres and the minority sphere, causing individuals to retreat into the safety of their own ethnic boundaries. These complex sociopolitical interactions and identifications necessitate a reevaluation of current policies and practices related to various policy frameworks in multicultural localities. Accepting these multiple and heterogeneous allegiances as part of the discursive formation alleviates the negative stigma that surrounds them. It is only then can we openly deliberate about the acceptable forms of acting and representing these plural identifications and allegiances.

APPENDIX

Research Instrument

Radio Program Hosts

1. What is the name of your show? How did you derive the idea for the show?
2. How long have you been on air?
3. What are your means of dissemination?
4. Do you know what your audience reach is? If yes, how many?
5. Who is your target audience?
6. What is the aim of your show?
7. Would you say your show looks at cultural identity issues related to the Tamil Toronto community?
8. What types of issues have you discussed? How do you come up with topics for the show?
9. What were some of the responses to these topics?
10. What have been some very popular topics of discussion?
11. What are some issues you wish you talked about? Do you plan to talk about them in the future?
12. Are there any topics that are deemed taboo? Do think they need to be addressed?
13. Is there a reason you have not talked about these issues yet?

Radio Program Hosts and Community Leaders

14. Were you born in Canada? If not, how long have you been in Canada? How old were you when you immigrated to Canada?
15. How do you identify yourself? (Do you consider yourself Sri Lankan, Tamil, Canadian, Hindu, Christian...)
16. What are your thoughts on the cultural identities of the Tamil Toronto community? How do Tamils perceive themselves, how do others perceive them? How do Tamils perceive others?
17. Are there any internal divisions or conflicts within the Tamil community related to identity issues? What are some of these divisions?
18. Why do you think these divisions and conflicts exist?
19. What, if anything can be done to reduce these divisions?
20. What role does the ethnic conflict in the homeland play in the Toronto community's formation of cultural identity?
21. How does this affect the way Sri Lankan Tamils view each other and others outside the community?
22. Do you believe that Canada is a multicultural society?
23. Do Canadian policies adequately address the needs of the Tamil community?
24. How do you think people view Tamils in the broader Canadian Society?
25. Do you think Tamils feel welcomed in this country?
26. What are some of the problems faced by members of the community in adjusting to life in Canada?

27. Are there any frustrations felt by the Tamil community in Toronto? What are they? Why have they risen? How can we alleviate some of the tension?

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