"Ma vie est vraiment différente de ce que je pensais*":

A life-story analysis of geographies and gendered subjectivities

of Francophone mothers in Kingston

*My life is really different than I thought

By

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Abstract

This dissertation is about migrant Francophone mothers’ experiences of mothering in Kingston, Ontario. It exposes how elements of these women’s life-stories, namely mothering, migration, and minority language, intersect with experiences of places to orient their subjectivities, their material conditions and practices, and their future possibilities in various ways. These intersections of life stories and places shape particular configurations of identification, affiliations, marginalization, power, and powerlessness, and define how patriarchal and heteronormative notions of gender assert themselves in each mother’s life. Kingston is a mid-sized city with a vast Anglophone majority where Francophones comprise less than 5% of the population. Francophone presence is largely invisible and marginal except in designated French-language institutions (e.g. French-language schools). Most Francophones in Kingston are economic migrants and their family members, including military families, from Québec, elsewhere in Canada or abroad. I conducted life-story interviews with thirty-two Francophone mothers living in Kingston in 2016. I also interviewed fifteen women holding key positions in French-language services organizations from 2016-18 while sitting on two planning and advocacy committees for French-language services.

Significant planes of differences that emerge from Francophone mothers’ stories are whether they came to Kingston as primary or as secondary migrants, their degree of fluency in English, and their affiliation with the military. These differences define each mother’s social power and inclusion, and her experiences of the institution of motherhood and its gendered imperatives. These differences also shape the degree to which the dominant structures of place in Kingston constrain mothers’ everyday geographies. Mothers ‘make do’ and ‘make with’ relationships and structures non-conducive to their mothering and linguistic needs, and they experience places as passages that
facilitate or hinder the continuity of their particular projects and forms of being. Francophone institutions, although they can foster smoother passages for some mothers, also reinforce gendered roles around feminized social reproduction and cultural labour. Francophone mothers’ experiences of difference in Kingston, as migrants, mothers, and Francophones, shape the articulations of gendered norms and stories of motherhood, care and social reproduction, and cultural transmission in their lives, and how these norms and stories channel their subjectivities and possibilities.
À nos mères

Take [this] story, for instance. It’s yours. Do with it what you will. Cry over it. Get angry. Forget it. But don’t say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story.

You’ve heard it now.

(King 2003, 119)
Acknowledgements

I am writing these lines of acknowledgment at the very end, as this whole dissertation stands before me. In all honesty, I did not seriously believe I would get to this point until now. In a somewhat circular way, it is thanks to all those I acknowledge here that I did.

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Foreword

March 14th 2018

Last night I was talking to a friend, telling stories about this research.

This research is about telling stories – about mothers telling me their stories, and about me telling stories of these stories.

My friend was touched by my stories of mothers’ stories – of mothering, of migration, of linguistic minority. She had followed her partner to Calgary for a few years, far from her friends and networks, and with her shaky English as social and economic currency.

She said « c’est dur dans ce temps-là d’être soi-même ¹ ».

The preoccupation with « être soi-même ² » is a nagging theme in all my thinking and telling of stories of mothers’ stories.

I approached this project inhabited by an esthetic enchantment with Spinoza’s ideas of subjectivity, filtered through Deleuze (Deleuze 1978, 2003). I like the idea of an individuality made and remade at the interface of the myriad encounters between being and the world. The idea of being as resulting from a general orientation in these encounters, that favours the continuity of this being and not of other possibilities – so that, if I eat an apple, the result of this encounter is the continuation of my being and the end of the apple.

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¹ It’s hard to be yourself in that context.
² Being yourself
Stories are encounters in that sense – they reiterate one version of being, and abandon other possibilities. As Loraine Code (1991) and Gill Valentine (2007) remind us, we can never be all that we are at once.

« Être soi-même » is a slippery desire – or imperative. It is contingent on which stories are told about us – by ourselves, by others, by institutions, by Foucault’s disseminated apparatus of governmentality, and by the material conditions in which we pursue, pursued, and will pursue our daily lives, then, now, and later.

“The truth about stories is, that's all we are.” (King 2003)

Stories are told by mothers about themselves and other mothers (Dyck 1989, 1990, 1996; Sara Ruddick 1995). Stories ground and orient. They carry their specific possibilities, as well as the opportunity costs of other stories.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

This dissertation is about the lives, subjectivities, and daily experiences of Francophone mothers in predominantly English-speaking Kingston, Ontario. It explores how these women’s lived stories of mothering and of minority language shaped their life trajectories, coloured their current circumstances and experiences of place in Kingston, and oriented their perceptions of possibilities.

Mothering is a powerful social experience which “changes lives in all sorts of ways” (Miller 2005, 6). In many women’s lives, mothering drastically heightens the experience of reproductive labour and obligations, as well as financial needs and pressures (Aitken 1998; McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby 2002; Büskens 2004; O’Reilly 2004b; Ranson 2004; Sophia Bowlby et al. 2010). Mothering also profoundly transforms the ways in which one experiences and thinks of oneself and the world (Sara Ruddick 1995; Madge and O’Connor 2005; Miller 2005; Chandler 2007; Luzia 2010; Boyer 2018). As they become mothers, women encounter the interwoven phenomena of mothering, that is, of their personal (and potentially empowering) relationships with their child or children, and of motherhood, the institution through which mothering is socially structured (O’Reilly 2004a, 2004b, 2008, 2009). Since at least the landmark works of Adrienne Rich (1986) and of Ann Oakley (1979), feminists have described motherhood as an institution that is patriarchal, male-defined and controlled, and deeply oppressive to women. Motherhood is anchored in gender regimes that closely tie mothering to social concepts of femininity, and to the feminized nature of care and reproductive work (Bowden 1997; Dyck 2005; Bezan son and Luxton 2006; Lawson 2007; Braedley and Luxton 2010). Social discourses of motherhood idealize and romanticize mothering, namely through images of ‘good mothers’ and their multiple and contrary
imperatives (Büskens 2004; O’Reilly 2004b; Fox 2006; O’Brien 2007; Christopher 2012, 2013). Conversely, the institution of motherhood denigrates and blames mothers for individual struggles and mishaps, and relegates them to a posture of relative powerlessness in the face of patriarchal and state authority (particularly in the cases of mothers who are racialized, poor, young, single, mentally or physically unwell, etc.) (Sara Ruddick 1995; Young 1995; Roberts 1999; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010; Wells 2011).

Meanwhile, being Francophone in Kingston means to live one’s life in a state of perpetual minority, which shapes day-to-day as well as long term experience (Huot and Veronis 2017). Negotiating one’s minority language and the language of the majority clutters and impairs certain practices and events of everyday life (Huot, Dodson, and Rudman 2014; Veronis and Ray 2013; Veronis 2014, 2015). As a collective experience, speaking French in Ontario also entails participating in – or at least interacting with – a shared political project which fosters particular identifications as Francophone (Thériault 2007; Thériault and Meunier 2008; Gilbert 2010b). For many Francophone mothers, linguistic minority also translates into preoccupations and labour of cultural transmission and survival (Lee and Cardinal 1998; Iqbal 2005; Dyck and Dossa 2007; Yax-Fraser 2011).

Mothering and French-language minority interweave in Francophone mothers’ lives with other power dynamics, including heteronormativity, liberalism, and neoliberalism, to foster diverse forms of life: senses of self, lived experiences, and possibilities. How various power regimes emerge in each mother’s experiences depends on her multiple and fluid positionalities, her trajectory, and the various spatial and temporal contexts she navigates (Valentine 2007). Thus, Francophone mothers as a social category regroups various and messy subjectivities, activated and
reinforced through vagaries (*péripéties*), quasi events (after Povinelli 2011), and combined and competing obligations of daily life.

Francophone mothers, in all their multiplicity of experiences and identifications, are nonetheless subjected to the disciplining actions of space, authorizing certain presences and performances and barring others (Valentine 1989, 1999; G. Rose 1993, 1999; McDowell 1999). As Silvey warns us, “the structures of gender, race, and class play into determining whose bodies belong where, how different social groups subjectively experience various environments […], and what sorts of exclusionary and disciplinary techniques are applied to specific bodies” (Silvey 2006, 70). Despite their diversity and fluidity, Francophone mothers’ identities and experiences need to be understood in their contexts of “dominant spatial orderings” (Valentine 2007). Such orderings promote particular expressions of subjectivity, and create and reinforce marginalisation: of mothering, of French as a minority language, and of other axes of differences such as race, class and, in the case of Kingston, the military. Spatial regimes of power operating through Francophone mothers’ experiences of mothering and of French-language ‘sediment’ through ongoing and repetitive experiences to channel particular subjectivities (Thrift 1999; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000; Madge and O’Connor 2005). These regimes make “certain things, not others, available” (Ahmed 2006, 14). Building on Husserl, Ahmed argues that what is available to us shapes the spaces we inhabit, as well as our actions, which in turn create lines of direction that define our perceptions and our orientations (Ahmed 2006; see also Young 2005).

I have built this dissertation upon the premise that how experiences of French-language and mothering sediment in Kingston Francophone mothers’ lives is a matter of time and place. I postulate that life trajectories – including experiences of mothering and language – and places activate gender in different ways. In this, I echo Pratt and Hanson, when they declare that “gender
is socially constructed, [and] the category woman is created and recreated in different ways through even a single woman’s life. […] Lives are lived through time; they are also lived in place and through space” (Pratt and Hanson 1993, 30). In other words, I contend that life stories and places matter in how Francophone mothers in Kingston experience mothering and French-language, in terms of their subjectivities, their daily circumstances, and their wider trajectories.

Research question

This dissertation aims to answer the following question: what are the ways in which mothering in Kingston, mediated through various relationships to French language, shape Francophone mothers’ subjectivities, geographies, and material conditions and practices. In other words, my objective is to reveal how Francophone women, in their senses of self, their daily experiences, and their horizons of possibilities, experience and deal with mothering, French-language, and Kingston as a place, and as an amalgam of places.

To achieve this objective, I refracted my overarching question into three lines of query. The first one explores how experiences of mothering and of French-language, as well as the places of Kingston, colour Francophone mothers’ subjectivity: their individual consciousness of who they are, their ways of knowing, their interactions with their social contexts, and their agency (Sharp 2009). Mothers identify and dis-identify within particular spatial and temporal contexts, and these identifications (and performances of identification) influence their experiences of power and powerlessness. Of particular interest to me are the ways in which gender operates in conjunction with mothering, French-language, and Kingston to channel particular senses of self.
My second line of query discusses the material and discursive conditions in which these women’s lives – as mothers and as Francophone – unfold. Francophone mothers cope on a daily basis with dominant spatial orderings of Kingston, underlain by regimes of capitalism, heteronormativity, English-language hegemony, and neoliberalism, amongst others. I describe the strategies and practices through which they attempt to balance multiple and often conflicting needs of mothering, social and economic imperatives, logistical constraints, and counter-hegemonic cultural commitments, and get themselves and their children to the end of the day.

My third line of query investigates how different power regimes, including those operating in their experiences of mothering and French-language, sediment in Francophone mothers’ lives to define and orient their horizons of possibilities and impossibilities.

Setting

Kingston is located on the shore of Lake Ontario, between Toronto and Montréal, at the mouth of the Cataraqui River. According to the 2016 Canadian Census, the population of Kingston was 117,660 (Statistics Canada 2016). Donald and Hall categorize Kingston as a small-sized public-sector city, referring to the important weight of public-sector institutions, including the university, the military, industrial-carceral complexes, and health-care services, in shaping the economic and social life of the city (Donald and Hall 2016). The prominence of these institutions provides an important labour market, comprised of stable, well-paying, unionized, full-time jobs in the public sector. The largest employer in Kingston is the university, followed by the military, the hospitals, the school boards, and correctional services. The importance of Kingston’s public-sector institutions brings many professionals to the city, who typically move there for job opportunities rather than for other attractions (social, cultural, or natural) (Donald and Hall 2016).
Public-sector employers understand this phenomenon and offer relatively generous wages and compensation packages as incentives to migrate and to remain in Kingston. Donald and Hall (2016) note that institutions also use these good conditions to offset the relatively poor economic opportunities for migrant workers’ spouses. Employment outside these institutions, in the private-sector market, tends to be low skilled, low-paying, precarious, part-time, and concentrated in retail, restaurants, and other support services (Donald and Hall 2016). The co-existence of these two labour markets in Kingston creates a notable disparity in wealth, with concentration of lower income households in downtown areas. Meanwhile, poverty in downtown Kingston is amplified by an inflated rental market (Streich 2017).

French presence in Kingston dates back to the early seventeenth century (Lamontagne 1995; Gilbert 1999). French explorers encountered a Mississauga settlement named Katarokwi (transformed later into Cataraqui) at the mouth of the Cataraqui River. They established an important trading post and military settlement, culminating with the construction of Fort Frontenac in 1673. The British captured and destroyed the fort in 1758 as part of the Seven Years War, and over the next half-century Kingston became a center of Loyalists fleeing the American Revolution (Lamontagne 1995; Donald and Hall 2016). Kingston was Canada’s first capital city in 1841, which brought an important Francophone population to fill bilingual civil-service positions (Lamontagne 1995). However, the Capital soon moved to Montreal, and later to Ottawa, leading to a drastic reduction in the number of Francophones in Kingston. For a time, the city’s French population was comprised mostly of members of the Canadian Forces and their families. Following WWII however, important numbers of families from Québec moved to Kingston to work in the region’s booming industries (such as Alcan and DuPont) (Ouellet 1993; Gilbert 1999). In 1952, prominent Francophone citizens founded the Club Champlain, with an aim to gather and
build solidarity among French-speakers to create a French-language community (Lamontagne 1999). Léopold Lamontagne, president of the Club from 1957 to 1961, thus philosophized:

Le but d’un club social… consiste à recenser la population francophone d’une région; à former une collectivité de langue française; à chercher les moyens d’éveiller l’intérêt souvent endormi à l’égard du français, à informer le public de nos réalisations par la voie de la presse et de la radio locales, enfin à procurer à tous ses membres l’occasion de se rencontrer et de travailler à l’avancement de la cause française dans leur milieu.¹ (Lamontagne 1995, 155)

The success of the Club Champlain in gathering a community of Francophones required the establishment of institutions that would regroup and promote French-language organizations and projects. As geographer Anne Gilbert notes, « ce sont ses institutions qui, en proposant des modèles culturels propres à ses membres et en encadrant leur participation, donnent à la minorité les moyens de durer, de se maintenir, de s’adapter au changement² » (Gilbert 2010b, 15). The Club Champlain began by founding a French-language parish with, at its center, its very own church and parish hall. The church buildings would house French-language Catholic associations: several charities, a choir, a newsletter, a variety of parish clubs, and eventually the Centre culturel Frontenac (Lamontagne 1995). The church Saint-François d’Assise was inaugurated in 1962, at 512 Frontenac Street, and did much to vitalize and centralize the Francophone community. The Champlain Club then tackled its second grand project: the establishment of French-language schools. This would prove a much lengthier struggle, and for more than two decades, the only French-language instruction available in Kingston would be in bilingual classes and French immersion classes in English-language institutions. It was not until 1988 that elementary Catholic

¹ The purpose of a social club … is to reach the Francophone population of a region; to form a French-language community; to look for ways to awaken the often sleepy interest towards French-language; to inform the public about our achievements through the local press and radio; and finally to provide all its members with the opportunity to meet and work to advance the French cause in their milieu.

² Minority’s own institutions, by proposing cultural models specific to its members and by framing their participation, are the elements that provide the means to last, to maintain, to adapt to change.
school Rémi-Gaulin, the first French-language school in Kingston, was opened (Lamontagne 1995).

Since the renewal of Francophone presence around the mid 20th century, the centralizing pull of community hubs has defined the development of Francophone geographies in Kingston. The government of Ontario defines a community hub as

a central access point for a range of needed health and social services, along with cultural, recreational, and green spaces to nourish community life. A community hub can be a school, a neighbourhood center, an early learning center, a library, an elderly persons’ center, a community health centre, an old government building, a place of worship or another public space. (Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group 2017, 7)

Francophone minority communities in Canada were pioneers in developing community hubs. Their aim was to centralize French-language services and, in that way, create places where Francophone concentration was high enough for daily life to unfold in French, especially in areas where Francophone population was low and geographically dispersed. In that sense, community-hubs gather French-speakers who might otherwise remain scattered, and promote the necessary relationships for minority cultural and linguistic survival (Légère 1989; Pilote 1999; Allain 2006; Gilbert 2010b). The roles and benefits of community-hubs in fostering community cohesiveness and vitality, and minority linguistic continuity, is well recognized by the Federal and Provincial Governments. These two levels of government share a legal commitment to support Francophone communities in their efforts to prevent assimilation (through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom and the Ontario French Language Services Act) (Allain 2006; Pilote and Magnan 2008; Gilbert 2010b; Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group 2017).

Community hubs in Francophone minority communities have mostly emerged around schools, as these institutions represent both a converging center of Francophone families and a
means to shape the future (Légère 1989; Allain 2006; Pilote 1999; Pilote and Magnan 2008). The first French-language school-community-hub in Canada opened in Fredericton in 1978. In the following decades, the model was replicated in Francophone minority communities all across the country. By providing a place of Francophone everyday encounters and relationships to the community as a whole, school-community-hubs allow the socializing action of the school, developing and reinforcing the minority language, to extend to a wider population beyond school-aged children (Pilote 1999; Allain 2006). In Allain’s words,

nous savons qu’un ensemble constitue plus que la somme de ses parties. En intégrant en un seul endroit les infrastructures scolaires et communautaires, on rend possibles des synergies qui ne se produiraient jamais si l’on avait une école d’un côté et un centre culturel ou communautaire de l’autre. Avec la nouvelle formule, on crée un espace inédit, où la communauté peut trouver des services de base [...] et un lieu de rassemblement, de rencontre, pour répondre à plusieurs besoins fondamentaux et renforcer l’identité et l’appartenance communautaire3. (Allain 2006, 18)

Kingston’s Francophones were soon aware of the emergence and significance of school-community hubs in other Francophone minority communities in Canada. When the Club Champlain advocated for the founding of the Saint-François d’Assise parish in the 1950’s, it did not articulate it as a community hub, even though it filled a similar role for the Francophone population. However, by the late 1980s, the concept of the school-community-hub was the paradigm that oriented the emerging project of a French-language high school in Kingston. Several Francophone individuals and institutions (Centre Culturel Frontenac, Club Champlain, and Association canadienne-française de l’Ontario, among others) piloted the project, which would provide both the opportunity for Francophone children to pursue their studies in French beyond

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3 we know that a whole is more than the sum of its parts. By integrating school and community facilities in one place, synergies are made possible that would never happen if we had a school on one side and a cultural or community center on the other. With the new formula, we create a new space, where the community can find basic services [...] and a gathering place, a place of encounters, where community members can meet several basic needs and strengthen identity and community.
elementary level, and a central location to regroup various community services scattered outside of the church and parish hall (St-Cyr 1992; Lamontagne 1995). The Catholic French-language high school Marie-Rivier opened in 1992. However, the negotiations with the provincial and municipal governments over the site and funding of the new school dragged on, and for several years classes were held in temporary trailers adjacent to Regiopolis-Notre Dame Catholic high school (Lamontagne 1995; Stones n.d.). Finally, in 1996 Marie-Rivier moved into its new building on 711 Dalton avenue (Stones n.d.), for which it shared the lease with the Centre culturel Frontenac. The building could also house many Francophone organizations, and thus concretize the project of a school-community-hub. At the time of my fieldwork, 711 Dalton was home to the theater hall L’Octave, the adult education and literacy centre La Route du Savoir, the Optimist Club, offices of French-language rights advocacy organizations such as the Réseau des services de santé en français de l’Est de l’Ontario, the local Radio Canada station, and half of the activities of one of the two French-language daycares. The development of the school-community-hub marked a transition from the parish to the schools (Marie-Rivier, of course, but also the closely associated elementary school Rémi-Gaulin, and later on the Public schools as well) as the neuralgic centers of the Francophone geographies of Kingston. The decline of the Catholic Club Champlain, due in good part to the aging of its members, and the rise of other more secular organisations (e.g. Club Optimiste) located in the Dalton Avenue hub, certainly contributed to this transition. Importantly, it also implied a shift in the location of many French-language activities and services from Frontenac street, located downtown, to Dalton Avenue, in the Northern part of the city close to the 401 highway.

Francophone identifications closely tied to the Catholic Church anchored the first projects to establish French-language institutions. However, from the 1990’s, the need emerged for French-
language education in non-confessional Public institutions. This need for Public (as opposed to Catholic) education may be partially attributable to the important proportion of Québécois.es in Kingston’s Francophone population, and namely in the military French-speaking population (Duquette and Morin 2003). Since the Quiet Revolution of the 1960’s, Québec society has increasingly striven to limit the weight of confessional religions (mostly Catholic, but also Protestant) in the provision of public education, culminating with the official de-confessionalisation of public schools in 2000 (Milot 2001). Many Québécois.es parents, as well as other Francophones parents from non-Catholic backgrounds, or parents whose experiences explicitly exclude them from the Catholic Church, might have expressed much reluctance at registering their children in Catholic school. In any case, in 1996 the elementary French-language Public school Madeleine-de-Roybon opened on the Kingston military base. In 2012, the school moved to Gilmour Avenue, closer to downtown. At the time of my fieldwork, Madeleine-de-Roybon housed almost 500 students in addition to the French-language Public high school Mille-Iles, which comprised less than 100 students altogether.

While I was doing my fieldwork, the Conseil des Écoles Publiques de l’Est de l’Ontario (the French-language Public school board) and the Conseil des Écoles Catholique du Centre Est (the French-language Catholic school board) jointly presented a project to the Ontario Ministry of Education for a new school-community-hub. This hub would include both Marie-Rivier and Mille-Iles high schools, the Centre culturel Frontenac, and other community groups and amenities now found at 711 Dalton (CEPEO and CECCE 2018; Pierroz 2018). Through this project, the CEPEO and the CECCE were capitalizing on the increased interest of the Ontario Government for the community-hub model. Operating under a neoliberal rationality, the Ontario Government sees community-hubs as means to concentrate public spending, establish partnership with private-
sector organizations, and to reduce funding for operating costs of community services (Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group 2017). In January 2018, the CEPEO and the CECCE received confirmation of governmental funding (CEPEO and CECCE 2018; Pierroz 2018; Morissette 2018a). For the Francophone population, the new hub will provide access to improved facilities, namely a gymnasium, scientific laboratories, and technological equipment that the two high schools and other organizations will share. Around 50 new daycare spots will be available (Pierroz 2018). The Public schools Madeleine-de-Roybon and Mille-Iles will particularly benefit from the increased space, as they have been suffering from overcrowding for the last few years, forcing them to resort to temporary trailers (Morissette 2018a, 2018b). The new school community-hub will open in 2020 at 700 Gardiner’s Road, near Taylor Kidd Boulevard. Once again, it is likely that this new hub will shift the location and influence of centers of convergence within Kingston Francophone geographies.

The small proportion of Francophones in the wider city of Kingston makes the Francophone school-community-hubs, and more generally French-language institutions, even more important. According to the Canadian 2016 Census, there were 4,085 people with French as their mother tongue living in Kingston, which is around 3.5% of the population. 15,280 indicated they had working knowledge of both French and English, and 270 declared only knowing French (Statistics Canada 2016). These small numbers mean that Kingston Francophone population forms a “minority cell”, after geographer Anne Gilbert (1999), who uses the term to describe environments where French-language is not present in the general fabric of social life (see also Gilbert 2010). In 2009, the Government of Ontario designated Kingston a bilingual area. This implies that the city is now covered by the 1986 Language Services Act, and that provincial government services must be made available in both French and English (Office of Francophone Affairs 2009). Despite this
designation, French remains marginal in Kingston, and is mostly limited to places specifically designed as Francophone or to private homes.

Research participants

For the purpose of this research, I defined Francophone mothers as mothers for whom French was familiar from their childhood or youth, and who now passed it on to their children. I did not predefine what was 'passed on' this way (e.g. language, relationships, culture, etc.), as discovering this was part of my project. For a mother to be included, French needed to present an element of continuity in her life trajectory – even if an interrupted continuity. French had to be a significant language of her childhood or youth beyond a single institutional setting (not just the language of schooling, for example), and she needed to directly or indirectly integrate French in her regular mothering practices. Thus, I would not have included a mother who sent her children to French-language school, and who was striving to speak French herself, but who did not identify French as a significant language of her youth or youth. In that sense my definition of Francophone differed from the inclusive definition of Francophone, promoted by French-language institutions, and which includes Francophiles and French-speakers who learned the language later in life (Office of the French Language Services Commissioner 2016).

I did not determine age limits for participants: in fact, I strove to talk to mothers of different generations in order to gather a broader temporal portrait of experiences of mothering and of French-language in Kingston. I did not ask participants to disclose their age. The youngest women I interviewed were in their late twenties (as far as I could judge), and the oldest was in her seventies.
It quickly became apparent that all of my research participants had migrated to Kingston at some point in their lives. This is not surprising, given the high number of professionals who move to Kingston to occupy a position in one of the several public-sector institutions (Donald and Hall 2016, see discussion above). Francophone minority communities in Ontario are particularly prone to migration. As Duquette and Morin (2003) note, a third of “Franco-Ontarians” actually originate from another Canadian province, and about a third come from abroad. Québécois.es form an important proportion of Francophones in Ontario, and particularly of French-language teachers (Gérin-Lajoie 2004). In Kingston, the presence of the Canadian Forces Base represents an important migration pole for Francophones, mostly from Québec. Out of the 32 mothers I interviewed, 21 were originally from Québec (the province), seven from elsewhere in Ontario, and four from abroad. All of the mothers but these last four were White. Most participants had migrated to Kingston as adults, but three first came as children. These three women had all left Kingston as young adults, but had eventually come back to establish their families permanently. 11 of the 32 mothers came to Kingston as spouses of military members, and one other mother had come as a member of the military herself.

Francophone mothers I met came to Kingston either to occupy professional employment, or to follow a spouse offered a professional job there. Consequently, most women were part of a household with at least one professionally employed adult, and to the best of my knowledge, most participants were middle or upper-middle class, although I did not ask specific questions about their income. Kingston is also the site of several prisons, and some families of inmates have migrated to be nearby. There may be Francophone families among this population, and these families may be experiencing considerably different socio-economic realities than the mothers.
included in this study. Unfortunately, I was not able to gain access to this potential Francophone population.

24 mothers lived with the father of their children. Six other mothers had separated from their children’s father, and in two other cases, the father had died. None of the participants disclosed being involved or having been involved in relationships other than exclusive (as in non-polyamorous), heterosexual, and with cis-gendered partners. Again, I did not ask specific questions about their sexuality. None of the participant exhibited physical and/or learning disability or debilitating illness.

Dissertation outline

Aside from the presentation of the theoretical context (chapter 2) and of the methodology (chapter 3), there are five chapters of analysis and discussion in this dissertation (chapters 4 to 8), followed by a conclusion (chapter 9). The central chapters present my answers to my research questions, regarding Kingston Francophone mothers’ subjectivities; the ways in which their linguistic, social, cultural, and economic context shape their lives; and how different power regimes accrue to shape their horizons of possibilities. I approached these queries from two conceptual and analytical departure points: that of life-stories, and that of places. I understand these two foci not as contradictory, but rather as presenting different angles, different perspectives that capture different images of a same ensemble of elements. Shifting from one to the other creates a more nuanced, multifaceted and complex portrait of Francophone mothers’ experiences of mothering, gender, and minorities in the places they inhabit in Kingston.
Chapters 4 and 5 start from a center of convergence: the social category that I delineated to determine who this dissertation was about. These first chapters unpack the social category of Francophone mothers in Kingston and its presupposed (at least by me) common axes of difference: mothering, and its particular implications in terms of gender, subjectivities, and social roles around care and reproductive labour; French-language minority; and migration. Chapter 4 delves into three mothers’ life stories to cast light on the intersectional processes of space, place, and identity formation. It reveals the crucial importance of relationships as motors of life trajectories and subjectivity, shaping possibilities of affiliation, belongings, and socio-economic integration. Chapter 5 recedes from chapter 4’s close and intensive look into specific stories to explore various axes of difference that emerge within and between Francophone mothers’ lives. These axes include coming to Kingston as a primary or a secondary migrant, and being affiliated, or not, with the military. Chapter 5 reveals how these different experiences significantly influence the impact of motherhood as an institution in individual mothers’ lives. It shows that secondary migration and the military experience combine to gender mothers’ subjectivity along much stricter heteronormative lines by reinforcing the patriarchal model of nuclear family, with its feminization of care and reproductive labour, and the separation of women performing this labour from other possibilities in terms social roles and subjectivities. This chapter also shows how these new axes of difference interplay with language to exacerbate contexts and experiences of exclusion and marginalisation.

While the first two chapters expanded and nuanced the portrait of Francophone mothers in Kingston, chapters 6, 7, and 8 re-anchor these scattered stories in the shared geographies and structures of places in Kingston. The mothers I met experience drastically different degrees of gendered constraint, socio-economic integration and independence, and control over their own
lives. However, their daily lives and senses of place were all inhabited by primary responsibility for their children’s well-being and growth. They all navigate places that assumed this responsibility – even banked on it – while remaining blind to the complexities it brought to these mothers’ lives. As well, their everyday geographies were all coloured – and made more complex – by their relationships and commitments to French-language.

In chapters 6 to 8, I anchor Francophone mothers’ life stories, including their spatial moments of identifications, axes of differences, and experiences of power and powerlessness, into their lived geographies of Kingston. Chapter 6 explores how Francophone mothers cope with the encumberment and confinement that emerge from the treatment of their mothering, minority language, and other experiences of difference within dominant spatial orderings in Kingston. To do so, it casts lights on the epistemological processes at play in Francophone mothers’ everyday geographies. Particularly, chapter 6 reveals how these mothers’ negotiation of relationships and of alternative knowledges inserts elements of subversive alterity in the space they navigate. Chapter 7 presents a more sophisticated conceptualization of places as crucial elements in shaping possibilities and impossibilities for Francophone mothers’ to pursue various projects for themselves and their children, including – but not limited too – their relationships to French-language. I mobilize Sara Ruddick’s “maternal thinking” (1995) and Povinelli’s “future perfect” (2011) to theorize mothers’ temporal projects to foster the unfolding, continuity, and growth of their children’s beings. I then use Moser and Law’s concept of passages (1999) to describe places’ actions in promoting, or at least allowing, and conversely in barring these temporal projects. Finally, chapter 8 discusses the influence of Kingston Francophone institutions in shaping mothers’ subjectivities, their social and cultural context, as well as their horizons of possibilities and impossibilities. In this chapter, I reinforce the argument underlying the entire dissertation
about the gendering action of the combined experiences of mothering, French-language minority, and migration in Francophone mothers’ lives. I argue that their experiences of Kingston Francophone institutions, as beneficiaries or as employees, reiterates the feminized nature of social reproduction and cultural transmission, and normalizes the accomplishment of this labour by Francophone women and mothers. As a whole, these five chapters expose the multiple ways in which power regimes around motherhood, care and reproductive work, and cultural labour orient Francophone mothers’ subjectivities, circumstances, and possibilities following heteronormative and patriarchal articulations of gender.
Chapter 2 - Theoretical context

This dissertation emerges at a crossroad of many things: experiences of mothering, language, cultural minority, life stories, daily life, and places. My purpose throughout is to reveal material and discursive resonances of these things, and of the relationships between them, in the lives of French-speaking mothers in Kingston. It implies catching shimmers of meanings in mundane and sometimes unlikely quarters. I believe that imposing a unified theoretical frame on my thinking would not serve this purpose well. Instead, I follow a “situated epistemology”, through which “knowledge is counted as always and everywhere contextual [and] theory becomes a practical means of going on rather than something concerned with enabling us to see, contemplatively, the supposedly true nature of what something is” (Thrift 1999, 304). The chapters of this dissertation accomplish different theoretical projects, and so they draw on various conceptual lineages to “go on”. Chapter 4 and 5 builds on feminist intersectional analyses of space, place, and identity, and on gendered geographies of migration. Chapter 6 looks at geographies of daily life, particularly the works of Isabel Dyck and Michel de Certeau. Chapter 7 is centered on theories of place, on Moser and Law’s concept of passages (Moser and Law 1999), and on Sara Ruddick’s “maternal thinking” (Sara Ruddick 1995). Finally, chapter 8 concentrates on analyses of Francophone institutions in minority contexts and on gendered treatment of social reproduction during neoliberal times. Rather than proposing a comprehensive review of all this literature, this chapter traces the main theoretical threads of this research: the gendered experiences of mothering, social reproduction, and care in liberal and neoliberal contexts; and the realities of Francophone minority existence and continuity in Ontario.
Mothering, social reproduction, and care

The concept of social reproduction emerged from the divide between notions of waged and non-waged work associated with the rise of industrial capitalism (Katz 2001; Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2003; Vosko 2002, 2006; Hopkins 2015). In contrast to salaried productive work, social reproduction is the feminized, devalued and often non-monetized “fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life” (Katz 2001, 711). Isabella Bakker identifies three aspects of social reproduction: biological reproduction of the species; reproduction of the labour force through subsistence, education and training; and caring labour accomplished within families and kinship networks or through institutions (Bakker 2007, 541; see also Vosko 2002; Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Braedley and Luxton 2010).

Although closely related to social reproduction, concepts of care do not stem from the same theoretical orientation. Ideas of care emphasize the inevitability of relationships of dependence as an inherent part of human experience (McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby 2002; Watson et al. 2004; Sophia Bowlby et al. 2010), and without which « we would [simply] fail to thrive » (Milligan and Wiles 2010, 737). Although sharing the concerns of feminist political economists regarding the gendered marginalization and exploitation of social reproduction labour, care theorists tend to discuss care in terms of epistemology and moral agency, anchored in relationality and an ethical posture of responsiveness and responsibility (Kittay and Meyers 1987; Tronto and Fisher 1990; Tronto 1993, 1995; Held 1995, 2006; Sara Ruddick 1995; Bowden 1997; Sevenhuijsen 1998; Maihofer 2000; Meyers 2000, 2002). Duffy argues that the focus of care scholarship on personal relationships of nurturance and emotional support tends to obscure disparities in the distribution of care and reproductive labour, with the least socially valued and emotionally rewarding work
(e.g. cleaning, washing bodies, cooking and serving food) consistently performed by poorer women, racialized women, and women with precarious immigration status (Duffy 2005).

Related to both concepts of care and social reproduction, mothering is theorized as a set of practices born out of a particular relationship (that of a mother and her child or children) (Arendell 2000; Chandler 2007; Allen, Klein, and Hill 2008). In Sara Ruddick’s words, “to be a “mother” is to take upon oneself the responsibility of child care, making its work a regular and substantial part of one’s working life” (Ruddick 1995, 17). Mothering implies shoudering the responsibility for the social reproduction of children: “the provision of food, clothing, shelter, basic safety, and health care, along with the development and transmission of knowledge, social values, and cultural practices and the construction of individual and collective identities” (Bezanson and Luxton 2006, 3). Mothering, as experiences, practices, and relationships, is shaped by the social institution of motherhood. Since at least Ann Oakley (1979) and Adrienne Rich (1986), feminist theorists have described motherhood as an institution that is historically, socially, culturally, economically, politically, and morally shaped along the lines of dominant power regimes: capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, racism, colonialism, liberalism, etc. (Collins 1994, 2005; Glenn, Chang, and Forcey 1994; O’Reilly 2004a, 2004b, 2009; Wells 2011) Drawing on Butler’s performativity (1990), some of these theorists argue that the reiteration of practices, labours and responsibilities of mothering combine with social discourses of motherhood to shape mothering subjectivities. For Chandler, for example, “[t]o be a mother is to enact mothering. It is a multifaceted and ever-changing yet painfully repetitive performance which although, like ‘woman’, involves the way one walks, talks, postures, dresses and paints one’s face, orients these activities directly and instrumentally” (Chandler 2007, 531).
Concepts of social reproduction, care, and mothering refer to different dynamics and analyses that cannot be conflated although they build on one another. In this dissertation I speak of care and social reproduction inasmuch as they are inextricably connected to the labours and experiences of mothering. Mothering involves a crucial relationships through which everyday labour of social reproduction is accomplished (Katz 2001; Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2003; Dyck 2005; Bakker 2007; Barker 2011). Mothering is also generally upheld as the quintessence of caring practice, and serves as a model for ideological and ethical constructions of care (Bowden 1997; Massey 2004; V. Held 2006). Significantly, experiences of mothering, and the social institution of motherhood, are an epitomic example of how gender relations shape labours of care and social reproduction and the conditions of their accomplishment (Vosko 2002, 2006; Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2003; Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Fox 2006; Braedley and Luxton 2010). The birth of a child to heterosexual parents spectacularly transforms the economy of reproductive work and exacerbates gendered unbalance within households, even when there was a former commitment towards a more-or-less egalitarian division of domestic labour (Aitken 1998; Fox 2001, 2006; McDowell et al. 2005; Loutzenhisser, Sevigny, and Thompson 2010; Luzia 2010; Barker 2011; Jupp and Gallangher 2013; Kohlman and Krieg 2013; Sweeney and Aldridge 2013; Hamelin 2017). This unbalance is reinforced through social institutions and practices, for example parenting leave programs and health and social services discourses on breastfeeding (Evans 2007; Loutzenhisser, Sevigny, and Thompson 2010; Hamelin 2017). As they become mothers, women see their subjectivities, rhythms, and geographies transformed to various degrees and in various ways by the experiences, imperatives and practices of mothering, while fathers do not – or not as intensely and, importantly, not necessarily (Aitken 1998; Arendell 2000; Aitken 2009; Barker 2011). Mothering is a ‘gendering moment’: a turning point where social gender norms and roles
around care and reproductive labour catch up with a woman’s lived experiences and with the horizons of her possibilities (W. Holloway 2002; Miller 2005; Baraister 2009; Luzia 2010; S. H. Holloway 2014). As argued by Adrienne Rich (1986), mothering takes place within a patriarchal social world, where ideas of womanhood are closely tied with female reproductive bodies and motherhood (see also Beauvoir 1986; Grosz 1994; Kukla 2005) and where “the possibility of mothering is a central constitutive of [all] women’s identities” (Bowden 1997, 23). Motherhood as a social institution is profoundly anchored in the ‘silent logic’ (Sevenhuijsen 1998) naturalizing women’s care and social reproduction as inherent founding attributes of both female gender (as natural caregivers) and of care and reproductive labour (as natural women’s work) (see also Young 1995; McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby 2002; Watson et al. 2004; Dyck 2005).

**Social reproduction in a (neo)liberal world**

In Western liberal capitalist societies, the social, political, cultural, and economic marginalization and devaluation of social reproduction is anchored in liberal social organization, its ontology, and its ideals of subjectivity. Liberalism as a political ideology emerged during the 17th and 18th centuries as a radical rejection of totalitarian regimes of royalty and religion. Drastically departing from logics of divine and kingly rights, liberal thinkers centered their social project upon Enlightenment values of humanism and liberty, and an ontological commitment to the self-bounded rational individual (man with property) as the primary unit of governance (Code 1991; G. Rose 1993; Fraser 1997; Holmstrom 2000; Maihofer 2000; Meyers 2000; Moody-Adams 2000; Chandler 2007). Liberalism developed as an ideology centered on normative values of individual rights to liberty and autonomy, and anchored in a core belief in the self-regulatory
properties of society and the market economy. It prescribes the limitation of government’s power and prerogative to the strict protection of individual rights and freedom, and expects its citizens to perform normative ideals of rationality and independence. In other words, liberalism relies on its subjects ‘freely’ choosing to act in ways expected of them – that is, as independent and rational beings eager to engage in public and economic ventures. The possibility of liberal government rests on the capacity of power (the state, or the market) to entice individuals into being thus ‘properly free’ through disseminated practices, discourses and policies (Foucault 1991; N. Rose 1999; E. M. Power 2005). As Power (2005) argues, liberal governmentality is achieved through the treatment of vast groups of individuals as ‘Others’, that is persons who are deemed not capable of properly governing themselves through freedom – or at least not yet (Hindess 2001; Povinelli 2011a). Such ‘others’ include those whose imbrication in relationships of dependencies bar them from performing norms of self-bounded and individualized rational subjectivity: children; the sick, the elderly, but also mothers and other individuals (women) responsible for social reproduction (Fraser and Gordon 1994; Young 1995; McDowell 2004).

Feminist critiques of all horizons have decried the exclusionary implications of the liberal ideal of individuated autonomy (Young 1995; Fraser 1997; Sevenhuijsen 1998; McDowell 2004; Pratt 2004; Braedley and Luxton 2010). They have argued that it is fed by and feeds into normative standards of white, male, able-bodied, heterosexual subjectivity, that it marginalizes care and social reproduction, and that it reifies gendered and hierarchical separations of labour and space (G. Rose 1993; Glenn 1994). Despite liberal ideals of self-bounded independence, the inescapable fact remains that “we all have needs and are in need of different types of care and support at different stages in our lives” (Watson et al. 2004, 144). Capitalist liberal democracies function following the ‘common-sense’ assumption that these needs will naturally be accomplished (by
women) within family units, in what is ideologically constructed as the private sphere (Young 1995; Fraser 1997; Aitken 1998; McDowell 1999; Domosh and Seager 2001; Delphy 2003; Dyck 2005; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Lawson 2007; Young and Allen 2011). This spatial separation, combined with the capitalist obsession with productive work and capital accumulation, contributed to the omission of considerations for care and reproductive labour from liberal philosophical postures, and to the ideological conflation of reproductive labour with women, the home, and families (Meyers 2000; Sullivan 2000; McDowell et al. 2005; Blunt and Dowling 2006).

The feminization of reproductive labour, its marginalization from capitalist liberal social life, and its economic devaluation combine to form what Christine Delphy decries as the class relation of (heterosexual) marriage (1995, 2003). Following Delphy, marriage is an exploitative institution in which a woman’s socially invisible labour constantly supports not only current and future possibilities for her children but the freedom, power, status, and self-realization of her co-parent (G. Rose 1993; Delphy 1995; Young 1995; Young and Allen 2011). In the case of single mothers, their labour supports the continuity of the patriarchal liberal state (C. Brown 1981; Gordon 1990; Young 1995). As their time, energy and labour are at least partially bound to reproductive work, women engaged in care and social reproduction are barred from full engagement in liberal citizenship and economy (Katz and Monk 1993; Staeheli and Cope 1994; Young 1995; K. England 1996; Fraser 1997; McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby 2002; Staeheli and Brown 2003; McDowell 2004; McDowell et al. 2005; Sophia Bowlby et al. 2010; P. England 2010; Young and Allen 2011). These women are at least for a time economically and socially dependent upon their partners (or the state), who themselves depend upon their continued devalued domestic and care labour to exist (Fraser and Gordon 1994; Young 1995). Women, and especially mothers, occupy fewer decision-making roles in all areas of social life (cultural, economic and
politic) and accumulate less income throughout their lives (McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby 2002).

In this analysis, Delphy and kindred theorists echo the pioneer words of Adrienne Rich: “We know far more about how, under patriarchy, female possibility has been literally massacred on the site of motherhood. Most women in history have become mothers without choice, and an even greater number have lost their lives bringing life into the world.” (Rich 1986, 13)

Ironically, both the dominant ideological associations between reproductive labour, femininity, and the private sphere, and white liberal feminist analyses of gendered inequalities in areas of reproductive labour tend to normalize the hegemony of the nuclear family as the ‘natural’ site of childrearing in liberal capitalist societies (Glenn 1994; Collins 1994, 2005). The nuclear family model is a social institution prescribing more-or-less independent households headed by two gender normative heterosexual adults who are responsible for the care and social reproduction of their own biological or legally adopted children, and where reproductive labour is naturalized as pertaining mainly to the female parent (Sophie Bowlby, Gregory, and McKie 1997; Aitken 1998; Arendell 2000; McDowell et al. 2005; Luzia 2010; Barker 2011). The generalization of the nuclear family, and particularly of the white upper-middle class version, as a universal norm of childminding obscures other versions of families more closely imbedded in kin networks and/or communities, as described by African American and Latina feminist authors (Collins 1994, 1990; Lorde 1984; Glenn 1994; Segura 1994). As well, it leads to social and economic vilification and disciplining of other forms of families as faulty or defective (Aitken 1998; Roberts 1999; Arendell 2000; O’Reilly 2004a, 2004b), particularly families headed by single mothers, and especially when they are racialized and/or on social assistance (Young 1995; Michaud 2001; E. M. Power 2005).

Importantly, the normalized acceptance of the nuclear family as the natural site of care and reproductive labour tends to depoliticize households and to obscure power imbalances within
them, both between men and women and amongst women (Collins 1994, 1990; Stoler 2002, 2006; Pratt 2003; Collins 2005; Braedley 2006; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Braedley and Luxton 2010). As Glenn notes, “[m]othering takes place in social contexts that include unequal power relations between men and women, between dominant and subordinate racial groups, between colonized and colonizer. Mothering cannot escape being an arena of political struggle” (1994, 13). For racialized women, and particularly women under the yokes of colonialism and slavery, social reproduction in the family can be a powerful act of resisting oppressing dominant ideologies and practices by providing conditions for the continuity and transmission of other ways of being (Caulfield 1975; hooks 1990; Glenn 1994; Collins 1994, 2005; see also Povinelli 2011b). Black feminists such as Audrey Lorde (1984), bell hooks (1990), and Patricia Hill Collins (1990) have articulated mothering as an act of subversion and political resistance against interlocking systems of oppression. Scholars and activists have mobilized this theorizing to condemn social violence, such as forced sterilization, forced adoption, workfares, and overseas domestic workers programs, that discourage or prevent Aboriginal women, poor women, women on social assistance, women with mental and physical disabilities, and some immigrant women from having and caring for their own children (Glenn 1992, 1994; Segura 1994; Michaud 2001; Steele 2004; Pratt 2004, 2012; Arat-Koc 2006; Henning 2007; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010; Jacobs 2011). Finally, the evacuating of the inherent politics of the nuclear family obscures the exploitative global care chain, through which care and reproductive labour is transferred from women who hold stronger position in the labour market to women who are more vulnerable (Pratt 2003, 2004; McDowell et al. 2005; Dyck 2005; Lawson 2007). Since the 1990’s, middle and upper class women – and mothers – have largely re-entered the labour market (K. England 1996; K. England and Lawson 2005). As their male partners have not met this change with increased participation in care and reproductive labour
(Aitken 1998; Arendell 2000; Fagan 2001; Fox 2001, 2006; McDowell et al. 2005), these women pass on some of their reproductive tasks unto others – kin, or most usually women who are poorer, racialized, have a vulnerable legal status in Canada and/or whose opportunities are conditioned by structures of global capitalism (such as live-in nannies) (Arat-Koc 2006; McIlwaine 2010; Pratt 2003, 2004, 2012).

The conditions of the current neoliberal moment enhance the various tensions, oppressions, and exclusions of care and social reproduction in a liberal world. As Braedley notes, “the practices of neo-liberal governments have made the labour involved in social reproduction more fraught, more anxious, and more materially difficult for the women who perform it.” (2006, 220). Neoliberalism refers to more than the gradual impoverishment of life through increased abandonment—such as cuts in public health and social services, dismantlement of avenues of collective recourse against capital, and punitive regulation of the poor (Braedley and Luxton 2010). It is the imposition of an epistemological hegemony, a “regime of truth” (McDowell 2004), a “naturalization of capitalist values” (Mohanty 2003, 508). Through this naturalization, the “truth games of capitalism” (Povinelli 2011b, 21) extend beyond the spaces of the market, such that values of the market—competition, individual success and capital—become the measures by which to appraise all aspects of life, even the non-monetizable ones (W. Brown 2015; Dardot and Laval 2010). Neoliberalism is hegemonic in that it is accepted as natural or commonsensical even by those who suffer most from its violence (Rankin 2003; Dyck 2005).

The neoliberal remaking of social life to conform to market ethics and logics extends to the reshaping of individual subjectivity (Dardot and Laval 2010; W. Brown 2015). It entails a diversion of liberal ethical norms and ideals of citizenship based on ‘rights’ to freedom and autonomy (as exclusionary as these norms and ideals may be). Under neoliberalism, the normative
value of ‘freedom’ moves from citizens to the market, which is to be as liberated as possible from encroachments – from the state, or from any other collective actors (unions, social movements, etc.) (Dardot and Laval 2010; W. Brown 2015). Liberal ‘autonomy’ is reformulated through neoliberalism into moral imperatives and civic duties of subjects to be self-sufficient, particularly financially, and to achieve this through paid employment (as opposed to relying on state support) (Lister 1998; Apple 2001; Michaud 2001; Mitchell 2001, 2003, 2006; McLaren and Dyck 2004; McDowell 2004; McDowell et al. 2005; E. M. Power 2005; Cheshire and Woods 2009; Wainwright et al. 2011; Dyck 2018). As the unwaged provision of reproductive work falls outside of the logic of the market, it also falls outside of recognized neoliberal citizenship accomplishments. Thus, women engaged in unpaid reproductive work are not exempt from the civic duties of self-sufficiency and competitive participation in the labour market (Apple 2001; McDowell 2004; McLaren and Dyck 2004; Wainwright et al. 2011; Dyck 2018). The state disciplines its subjects to adhere to neoliberal expectations through punitive measures such as workfare replacing social assistance (Michaud 2001; Power 2005) and the criminalization of the poor (Kaplan-Lyman 2012). Neoliberalism also relies on individuals perpetually re-adopting and re-iterating a “rapport à soi”1 (Foucault 2001) as market actors in all domains and activities – even where money is not at issue. Neoliberalism imposes the expectation that citizen-market actors act as entrepreneurial subjects, who “self-invest” in ways to increase their actual or figurative value, to diversify their portfolio, and to enhance their marketability across every sphere of existence (W. Brown 2015). As neoliberal subjects then, “we are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves” (McDowell 2004).

1 Self-understanding
The reformulation of subjectivity and citizenship under neoliberalism contributes to a dissolution of collective belongings. Wendy Brown (2015) describes neoliberal termite-like action of “undoing the demos”, that is of undermining the affiliations and recognitions central to liberal democratic encounters (including its struggles). In neoliberal rationality, “it is the individual who truly exists, in a way 'society,' 'community,' and 'the cosmos' do not. The state, in particular, lacks any finality of its own; it is the individual, whose rights are predicated on self-possession and property, whose purposes, knowledges, and practices truly exist, and whose 'interests' are 'obvious” (Mckay 2000, 619). This erosion of the collective blocks recognition and understanding of social injustice (Brown; Braedley 2006; McDowell 2004). Oppression such as poverty and other forms of structural marginalization are recast in market terms as a matter of individual attitude and ethic, and pathologized as incapacity (or unwillingness) to embrace the dominant “truths” of individual performance, worth, and competitiveness. The responsibility for socio-economic risks such as illness, violence, and unemployment are reshaped into issues of individual “self-care” (Wainwright et al. 2011). Neoliberalism obscures both uneven needs for care and the unequal division of labour of care (Braedley 2006). Furthermore, the normative value of competition at the heart of neoliberal market-centered rationality entails an inevitable division between winning and losing, which actively erodes the normative relevance of equity in neoliberal democracy. In such a world order, equity “ceases to be our presumed natural relation with one another [and] inequality becomes normal, even normative” (W. Brown 2015, 38).

The structuring function of competition has had dramatic impacts in the funding and design of social programs and services in neoliberal states. Competition as an ethical normative value implies that efforts – including at the level of the state – which are not organized following market terms represent potential risks and that “any social investment that does not have a clear end in
market value … fails economically and morally” (Povinelli 2011b, 23). Public spending such as social services and social welfare programs are seen as burdens that threaten to inflate public debt and sink the state as a competitive agent on global markets (Braedley 2006; Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Braedley and Luxton 2010). Neoliberal states have actively adopted policies and discourses to redirect responsibility for reproductive work away from public institutions to individuals and families (Braedley 2006). This has led to a reinforcing of the nuclear family model as a ‘natural’ institution of care and reproduction, accompanied by a ‘retraditionalization’ of gender divisions (Adkins 2000; but see also McDowell et al. 2005; Braedley 2006; Fox 2006; Barker 2011; Braedley and Luxton 2010). As Isabel Dyck comments:

Work in these caring spaces, taking up the slack of gaps in services left by neoliberal policy, tends to be hidden from view as a ‘commonsense’ solution in the context of normative expectations of what ‘the family’ is and does. […] the notion of the nuclear family with a conventional gendered division of labour still underpins policy and informal expectations of who will bear the primary burden of a wide range of care work. (Dyck 2005, 238)

In Canada, Braedley (2006) describes how the Federal Government’s National Child Benefit actively recreates a private sphere of “families” as the primary site of reproductive work by directing its funding to individual households rather than to public institutions. Such policies, combined with financial cuts to public institutions offering direct care-work, increase the volume and importance of reproductive labour for which individuals are responsible while decreasing economic support to accomplish this labour (Braedley and Luxton 2010; Lawson 2007). As women tend to be the primary unpaid caregivers in households, these neoliberal policies also reiterate gendered division of labour and the naturalness of caring as ‘women’s work’ (Adkins 2000; Dyck 2005; Braedley 2006).
The neoliberal project of devolving reproductive work onto individual women finds a powerful ally in the ideology of intensive mothering. This ideology, first described by Sharon Hays, is grounded on “the assumption that [a] child absolutely requires consistent nurture by a simple primary caretaker and that the mother is the best person for the job” (Hays 1998, 8). It first emerged from mid 20th Century paradigmatic models of child development and psychology, which posited that “mothers should be the central caregivers of children and [that] ideal childrearing is time intensive and emotionally engrossing” (Christopher 2013, 189). Current articulations of intensive mothering ideology promote very high, and ever increasing, expectations about the work that mothers need to perform to raise a child, including complex prescriptions around emotional health and intellectual development (O’Reilly 2004b; Fox 2006; O’Brien 2007; Wells 2011; Christopher 2012, 2013). This ideology currently represents “the normative standard, culturally and politically, by which mothering practices and arrangements are evaluated” (Arendell 2000, 1195) and forms the hegemonic backdrop against which women think of themselves as mothers (O’Reilly 2004b). Fox describes intensive mothering as a “class act”, motivated by upper and middle class mothers’ impetus to equip their children with vast, varied, versatile, and elaborated skills that they could later draw upon to succeed in the increasingly precarious socio-economic context of neoliberalism. Intensive mothering also requires mothers to have the economic freedom, associated with upper classes, to expend large amounts of time and energy in unwaged labour, and to devote long periods to childrearing without fear of irremediably compromising their future earning capacities (Fox 2006). Although this ideology is a product of middle and upper class experience, and is particularly present in the practices and discourses of White middle-class mothers (see G. Rose 2004; Miller 2005; McDowell et al. 2005, 2006; O’Brien 2007; Sweeney and Aldridge 2013), its social discourses and expectations are also projected on women whose
circumstances starkly contradict this ideology. For these mothers, the dominant ideology of intensive mothering presents impossible standards that frequently trigger feelings of inadequacy, deficiency, and guilt (Roberts 1999; O’Reilly 2004b; Wells 2011).

The neoliberal model of ‘familialization’ (Vosko 2002, 2006) has also led to a shift in the mandates of public institutions from the reduction of social inequalities and their consequences (e.g. illiteracy, violence, ill health, etc.) to the management of individual responses to these consequences (McDowell 2004; Povinelli 2011; Power 2005; Braedley 2006; Vosko 2006). The onus of public service delivery is moving away from the provision of direct care to those in situations of needs – children, the elderly, people who are ill, people with disabilities or other special needs – to the surveillance and disciplining of unwaged delivery of care to ensure its compliance with neoliberal normative objectives (McDowell 2004; Braedley 2006; Bezanson and Luxton 2006). Agents of the state - nurses, social workers, school experts, and other ‘case workers’ – are increasingly acting as managers of informal and unpaid (female) caregivers within families. Their mandate is to regiment this unpaid work, so that it keeps producing and maintaining “good citizens [who are] consumer[s] in the market, make appropriate demands on the state, and conform to conventional family forms” (Bumiller 2008). Families remain responsible for reproductive work, no matter the complexity of the needs with which they are confronted and the capacity of their members to perform this work. Direct intervention of the neoliberal state in care provision is limited to punitive measures when families ‘fail’ (Roberts 1999; Braedley 2006).

The ‘management turn’ of state funded social reproduction has led to the development of early years’ policies focusing on parental training, while cuts in public funding has rendered access to affordable and quality childcare more difficult. The UK’s Sure Start program, which encompasses governmental initiatives around early years development and child support, is an
example of such policy emphasizing parental life-skills training of poor and unemployed parents rather than direct service delivery (McDowell 2004; Smith et al. 2008; Jupp 2012, 2013; Wainwright et al. 2011). The program, says McDowell, aims to instill “normative hegemonic moral values among sections of the community who have failed to sign up to labour market participation, deferred gratification, abiding the law and the whole gamut of social values that are part of the (neo)liberal agenda” (2004, 152). Through such programs, parental training in the ethical imperatives of neoliberalism becomes an obligatory and dominant element of the access to public services. This managing of parents, and especially poor parents, is reinforced by disciplinary actions through which services can be reduced or lost at any moment if they rebel against public normative injunctions. Moreover, individuals and families are always vulnerable to increased surveillance and kept ‘in line’ by fear of drastic state interventions, should they fail to conform to these injunctions (Braedley 2006). Braedley notes that, whereas many upper-class and some middle-class families can access the resources to arrange privatized care and free themselves from public service and its logics of surveillance and control, this is often impossible for working class families. In a sad irony, it is therefore those families and individuals most dependent upon the state who are most vulnerable to its controlling actions (Braedley 2006; but see also Young 1995; Michaud 2001; Power 2005; Braedley and Luxton 2010).

Meanwhile the increasingly merciless global economy, characterized by the near disappearance of low skilled ‘breadwinner’ waged jobs, brings new pressures for women. The increasing need for white middle-class women to earn or at least supplement household incomes has changed economic gender dynamics and has reduced the overall time available for ‘care’ labour, increasing the physical and emotional strain on mothers (McDowell 2004, 2008b; McDowell et al. 2005; Dyck 2005, 2018; Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Braedley and Luxton 2010).
The combined imperatives of waged and reproductive unwaged work create painful time budgeting problems. These are euphemistically termed “work/life” balance, adding a temporal dimension to the marginalisation of social reproduction and to the oppression of women (Hochschild 1997; Jurczyk 1998; McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby 2002; Ranson 2004; McDowell et al. 2005; Bryson 2007; Johnston and Swanson 2007; Barker 2011; Smith et al. 2011; Boyer 2018). As Braedley notes, “The work-life balance is, for many people, a very simple care versus money dilemma. If labour-force participation is reduced in order to provide necessary care, then household income will not meet the expenses of daily life.” (2006, 219). The end of the economic feasibility of the breadwinner model has not brought a better recognition of women’s contribution in the salaried work force. Mothers, especially in working class households, juggling the constraints of reproductive work, often hold precarious, part-time, and low pay employment. (McDowell 2004; McDowell et al. 2005)

Through neoliberalism, McLaren and Dyck comment that “women’s unpaid, caring work has become even more invisible and irrelevant to the calculations of how individuals contribute and belong to society” (McLaren and Dyck 2004, 43). Despite this obscuring and marginalization of women’s reproductive labour, the neoliberal order draws on this labour for its very continuity. Women’s reproduction labour, despised and made invisible, is also coopted by its old enemies capitalism and patriarchy. As Lorraine Code comments,

[P]articipation in nurturing and mothering activities, and the social ideologies and institutions that support them, have been instrumental in maintaining women’s subordination, oppression and economic dependence, not just because they have been assigned to women as their sphere, but because they have been managed by patriarchal expertise and constructed as a site for blaming women when anything, at any point in her/his life, ‘goes wrong’ with the child (Code 1991, 90).
In a blatant contradiction, neoliberalism both relies on reproductive labour for its present and future existence and undermines the very possibilities of its accomplishment. Left to its own devices, the aggressive obsession of neoliberalism for competition and marketable accomplishments would not spare enough resources – in time, energy, and money – for its subjects to accomplish the reproductive work necessary for its survival (Fox 2006). Neoliberal governance, with its incapacity to recognize other forms of citizenship then that of the atomic and independent market actor, and to protect the conditions of the continued existence of its citizenship, cannot prevent capitalism from devouring resources and bodies past the limits of people’s capacity to survive (Katz 2001). Neoliberalism overlooks this contradiction by assuming that women, in situations of increased precarity and of drastically decreased access to public resource and direct care, will nonetheless irrevocably commit to their tasks of rearing autonomous and economically competitive citizens. This assumption, sadly, often proves sound. As Cindy Katz points out, social reproduction is essential, almost by definition (2001). She further comments:

One thing that has been both astonishing and heartbreaking to me […] has been the myriad ways in which capitalist production and its entailments have pushed people to drastic limits of their own resilience, and how willing capitalists have been to draw on that resilience for their own ends. (Katz 2001, 718)

Women everywhere do resist exhaustion and neoliberal abandonment in order to perform care, at least to a minimal level, and keep open alternative possibilities of life (Povinelli 2011b; Simard-Gagnon 2016).

**Mothering subjectivity: ontology, epistemology, spatiality, temporality**

Mothering emerged as a subject of feminist scholarship in Western Anglophone academia at the end of the 1970’s- early 1980’s. Pioneer theorists laid conceptual grounds to approach
mothering as an experience and a subjectivity, and motherhood as an institution (Chodorow 1978; Oakley 1979; Sara Ruddick 1980; Rich 1986). Coming from various disciplinary backgrounds (philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology), they highlighted how mothering both departs from and is structured by the patriarchal and capitalist world order. Their contributions have been and are still enormously influential in researching the practices, discourses, and ideologies around mothering (O’Reilly 2004a, 2009). In 1994, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey published *Mothering: Ideology, Experience and Agency* (Glenn, Chang, and Forcey 1994), an edited collection exploring mothering as ideologies and experiences, with a stated aim to challenge the white middle-class universalizing assumptions about families, children, and mothers of early mothering scholarship. These first decades of research into mothering accomplished ground-breaking work in shattering the common sense ‘naturalness’ of mothering and to reveal it as a site of gendered, but also intersecting power dynamics. Mothering, notes Madge and O’Connor, is “a constructed [social relation] which is experimented through particular practices, discourses and experiences which sediment over time to produce an ‘identity effect’” (Madge and O’Connor 2005, 90).

The conditions and discourses of mothering vary over time and space, and are bound up with normative ideas about femininity (W. Holloway and Featherstone 1997; W. Holloway 2002; S. H. Holloway 2014). In democratic liberal ontology, the treatment of femininity and of female bodies is anchored in conceptual binaries between autonomous reason and the body (or the world, see Grosz 1994). The self-bounded rational subject is linked to a dominant norm of masculinity through which the ‘neutral’ subject is constructed as independent and male, but also as white, cis-gendered, middle class and above, adult to middle-aged, heterosexual, able-bodied and emotionally well (Code 1991; G. Rose 1993; Lister 1998; Gabb 2005; Chandler 2007; Chouinard.
Bodies that depart from that norm are ‘othered’. Female bodies are inescapably gendered in a way that men’s, as embodying the ‘neutral’ norm, are not (G. Rose 1993). This gendering is expressed in the incessant sexualization of women’s bodies (Grosz 1994; Braidotti 1991, 2000), and particularly of women’s breasts as an epitome of reproductive ‘otherness’ (Young 2005a; Boyer 2018). Masculinist bodily normativity also upholds impermeable boundaries between selves as a necessary attribute of rationality (Grosz 1994; Chandler 2007). This leads to othering, sur-visibility, and even abjection of female embodiments that breach these boundaries, such as menstruation and pregnancy (Davidson 2001, 2003; Kukla 2005; Young 2005c, 2005d).

There is a profound ontological clash between the normative subjectivity of liberalism and the subjectivity of mothering, as the latter necessarily entails leakiness, that is, interrelationships and a sense of porosity of the self (Sara Ruddick 1995; Bowden 1997; Davidson 2001; Büskens 2004; Chandler 2007; Baraister 2009). Mothering babies, small children, or children who are ill or with disabilities, presents particularly acute tensions between the imperatives of independent engagements of liberal sociability and the rhythms, practices, and senses of self that emerge from a perpetually renewed commitment to address needs (Bowden 1997; Landsman 1998; Kittay 1999; Chandler 2007; A. Power 2008). Being a mother is defined by relationality, as it is primarily a matter of being in a mothering relationships with a child or children (Sara Ruddick 1995; Arendell 2000; W. Holloway and Featherstone 1997; W. Holloway 2002; G. Rose 2004, 2005; Chandler 2007; Allen, Klein, and Hill 2008). Following birth, babies’ sense of self gradually changes from inextricable boundedness to their mothers (when, as is usual, mothers are the primary caregivers) as they develop a sense of bodily, and later social individuality (W. Holloway 2002). This slow process of progressive individuation unfolds against a backdrop of complete dependency, where young children make incessant demands upon their mothers to fulfil their every need, without
consideration whatsoever for mothers’ states of being (W. Holloway and Featherstone 1997; W. Holloway 2002; G. Rose 2004; Baraister 2009). The invasive and never-ending nature of babies’ needs contributes to unbounded notion of selves between mothers and children. As Bowden puts it:

[they] are simultaneous two and one, mother and child, in varying degrees of relationship to each other. [...] For there is a very real sense in which children are not “other” to their mothers: the boundaries between self and other, mother and child, child and mother, frequently seem to dissolve in the activities of protecting and nurturing. (Bowden 1997, 22 & 30)

The senses of self of mothers with their young babies entail a sense of radical embodied ‘togetherness’ (G. Rose 2004, 2005), which Wendy Holloway (2002) refers to as ‘intersubjectivity’ (see also W. Holloway and Featherstone 1997). The intensity of the relationships between mothers and children, and the repetition of the mothering practices, “constitute[s] one as so profoundly interconnected that one is not one, but is simultaneously more and less than one” (Chandler 2007, 532, emphasis in the original).

The radical relationality at the heart of mothering subjectivity (or intersubjectivity) serves as a model for the articulation of a care-based moral agency (Bowden 1997; V. Held 2006). The concept of care as an ethics emerged firstly in the works of Carol Gilligan (1982). Gilligan theorized care as the ethical base of a feminized moral agency that would be unrecognized and devalued in a liberal capitalist social order (Sara Ruddick 1995; Kittay and Meyers 1987; Maihofer 2000; Meyers 2000, 2002). The ethics of care stands as an alternative to the dominant ethics of justice, itself based on an ideal of individuals defined by qualities of reason and independence, who coexist in society at the intersection of their respective individual aspirations and rights. An ethics of justice understands moral dilemmas as deriving from the competition between these different rights and aspirations. It proposes to resolve such dilemmas by applying abstract
principles of justice and equality unilaterally and so-called neutrally to all situations (Sara Ruddick 1995; Held 2006). In contrast, the ethics of care understands individuals as inextricably woven into relationships of identification and solidarity with others. According to this perspective, the individual exists only within a particular network of social relations, through which other individuals do not represent constraints to individual freedom but the basic conditions to the possibility of existence (Meyers 2000; Maihofer 2000; Moody-Adams 2000). The ethics of care is a conception of morality rooted in the experience of sociability: it is the recognition of the links between individuals that leads to assuming an obligation of mutual responsibility, as well as an awareness of the need for sympathy as a normative value (Tronto 1993; Bowden 1997; Sevenhuijsen 1998; O’Grady 2004; V. Held 2006; Donohoe 2010). The ethics of care is intrinsically particularistic, and upholds solutions to moral dilemmas that consider all the relationships and obligations in a particular situation (Gilligan 1982; Sara Ruddick 1995).

Thinking of mothering as a form of care-based moral agency suggests a particular epistemological posture that emphasizes normative imperatives of alertness and responsiveness (Held 2006, Tronto 1993). Alertness and responsiveness imply an awareness of being in relationships with others, as well as an attentiveness to the fluidity and the specificity of circumstances in which particular needs arise. A caring epistemology entails a “willingness to 'see' and to 'hear' needs,” and taking responsibility for meeting these needs (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 83). Beyond this general orientation of relationality and responsibility, alertness also requires “close attention to the feelings, needs, desires, and thought of those cared for, and a skill in understanding a situation from that person’s point of view” (Held 2006, 3).

For Ruddick (1995), the ontology of mothering – i.e. what being a mother is – is anchored into a constantly reiterated double epistemological commitment: to see the fact of a child or
children’s needs, and to take responsibility to address these needs (Ruddick 1995). These reiterated commitments, and the repeated acts that mothers perform in following these commitments, structure an epistemological orientation of mothering, which she refers to as “maternal thinking”. “I speak”, says she, “about a mother’s thought – the intellectual capacities she develops, the judgements she makes, the metaphysical attitudes she assumes, the values she affirms. … [To describe] maternal thought presumes not maternal achievement, but a conception of achievement” (Ruddick 1995, 24, emphasis in the original). Ruddick refers to maternal thinking as a ‘discipline’, structured by three ‘criteria’ determining adequacy, success, or failure of maternal practice: to protect life, to nurture growth, and to foster social acceptance. These criteria represent ethical imperatives of mothering. The first two (protecting life and nurturing growth), according to Ruddick, originate from children themselves, and demand an epistemological commitment to concreteness that recognizes the unalterable individuality of children’s beings. That commitment does not mean that mothers have a clear understanding of who and what these beings are. Ruddick gives the example of a baby crying:

The mother interprets the cry in one way or another, establishing meaning retroactively, fixing meaning momentarily, allowing the illusion that we know what is going on. […] The ‘knowing’ is really a kind of imagining, a guessing in order to make some kind of coherent narrative in the face of the absolute impossibility of really knowing: she’s hungry, wet, cold, hot, over-stimulated, bored, tired, teething, windy, has growing pains… They are all stabs in the dark. (Sara Ruddick 1995, 73)

However, concreteness implies a recognition that a child’s needs are specific expressions of his or her being as it encounters the world. It means “to relish complexity, to tolerate ambiguity, to multiply options rather than … abstraction [which is] to simplify, generalize, and sharply define.” (Sara Ruddick 1995, 93)
A range of feminist theorists has sharply criticized Ruddick’s maternal thinking. She joined the long line of white middle-class women generalizing their experiences, needs, and desires as universal (Code 1991; Collins 1994; Glenn 1994; Bowden 1997; Roberts 1999). Particularly, she assumes that mothers, at least in the US, have the resources to meet the bare necessities of their children’s lives. For Ruddick: “Mothers often find themselves unable to deal with the complexities of their children’s experience because they are overwhelmed simply tending to their children’s survival or are preoccupied by their own projects or are simply exhausted and confused. Children survive nonetheless.” (Sara Ruddick 1995, 20) As Collins notes, this is a misguided assumption in a context where a terrible proportion of poor, black, and Aboriginal children do die or suffer irreparable harm (1994). Ruddick’s assumption of the ‘naturalness’ of moral imperatives of protecting life and fostering growth reinforces the hegemony of privileged models of motherhood, and thus the oppression of mothers who do not meet such models (Code 1991; Bowden 1997). Nevertheless, Ruddick’s work is a pillar of maternal theory. Lorraine Code notes that “[e]ven feminists who are critical of [Ruddick’s work] have derived their articulations of problems, complexities, and ambiguities from within the conceptual space she has opened up.” (Code 1991, 88) The relational, situational and concrete epistemology she has sketched out brings an important conceptual element to the unboundedness of mothering subjectivity described above.

The unbounded subjectivity of mothering – with its relational ontology and epistemology – creates mothering spatialities that are characterized by encumberment and confinement. Mothers, in Chandler’s words, are the “blatantly encumbered” (2007). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Kate Boyer uses the term “mother-baby assemblages” to describe the close entanglements between mothers, infants, and more-than-human elements (such as prams) that shape mothers’ subjectivities as they attempt to move in space (Boyer 2018). Mothering encumberment is both a
stretching of subjectivity through space (through these different assemblages), as well as a filling of space (material, but also mental and discursive) by the motley and cumbersome elements of what McKie et al. refer to as “caringscape”:

planning, worrying, speculating, prioritizing, ensuring quality of care, accessing care, controlling, paying for care, shifting patterns of work, job (in)security, the potential for promotion, moving home, managing family resources, supporting school work, being involved in the school or care group, and so on. (McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby 2002, 915)

Mothers’ spatialities are encumbered by the very presence of children and their incessant needs, as well as by the bulky ghosts of mothering’s mental and emotional charge (McDowell et al. 2005, 2006; Smith et al. 2011). Individualization and feminization of mothering labour, resulting in mothers not only carrying the brunt of this labour, but also in their ceaseless responsibility for it, enhances this encumberment (Chandler 2007). Neoliberal moral imperatives of paid work, coupled with changing values about what constitutes a fulfilling life and what women can (or should) aspire to, further congests the daily life-worlds of mothers (McDowell et al 2005; McDowell et al 2006). As discussed above, mothers in North America and Europe are increasingly employed, especially mothers of school-aged children (Duffield 2002; McDowell et al 2006). The competing obligations of carework and paid work in their everyday lives create emotional strain for many mothers, which further crowds their life-worlds with feelings of inadequacy or guilt (Ranson 2004; McDowell et al. 2005).

The counterpart to the mothers’ encumbered spatialities is confinement. Gillian Rose identifies confinement as “a recurring image in women’s account of their lives” (1993; 144). Here I use confinement to mean a sense of unease in space and a reduced span of accessible space (G. Rose 1993; Di Méo 2012a, 2012b). Ideologies (such as liberalism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity) confine mothers’ spaces as they prescribe which practices and imperatives are
acceptable and expected where, frequently along conceptual divisions between public and private space (G. Rose 1993; Hardy and Wiedmer 2005; Marotta 2005). Mothers’ confinement thus stems not only from their encumbered subjectivities, but also from the dominant ideological attribution of their practices and preoccupation to certain (private) places, creating friction and obstruction in other (public) places – the workplace, but also the bus, the grocery store, the doctor’s office, etc. (Marotta 2005; Boyer 2018). Yet the spatiality of mothers and mothering practices spans and challenges simplistic binaries of private and public space. Domestic work of poor women and women of colour in white middle-class households have long revealed the narrowness of a model tying the private, the intimate, and the domestic with mothering (hooks 1990; Glenn 1992; Glenn, Chang, and Forcey 1994; Collins 1990; Stoler 2002; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Pratt 2004; Jacobs 2011). Encumberment in mothers’ lives also shatters divides between private and public space. Encumberment confines both the places of direct care and reproductive work, where needs are incessant, repetitive yet unpredictable, and the places away from the bodily presence of children, that are also cluttered by planning and worrying about children and care (Dyck 1996; K. England 1996; McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby 2002; Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2003; G. Rose 2004, 2005; K. England and Lawson 2005; Barker 2011; Smith et al. 2011).

The unbounded quality of mothering subjectivity also translates into a temporality characterized by interruptions (Baraister 2009). Children incessantly interrupt mothers’ trajectories and narratives with needs that are repetitive; foreseeable in their general nature but always unpredictable in their particular occurrence. Children, in Baraister’s words, perform “constant attacks” on their mothers’ temporal coherence: “literal breaking into maternal speech, and as well as her own self-narrative which is punctured at the level of constant interruptions to thinking, reflecting, sleeping, moving and completing tasks. What is left is a series of unconnected
experiences that remain fundamentally unable to cohere” (Baraister 2009, 10). Although Baraister writes mainly of the experiences of mothering infants and small children, interruptions continue as children age. Mothers, especially those employed, juggle precarious balances of reproductive needs and other engagements. The reduced social support of neoliberal times erodes the flexibility of mothers’ arrangements, which fall apart when unexpected needs arise – and they frequently do. Mothers must improvise (Arendell 2000). The interruptions of mothering time, brought about by the combination of needs and of lack of support, leads to experiences of “seemingly endless series of ‘microblows’: […] breaches, tears or puncturings to the mother’s durational experiences bringing her back ‘again and again’ into the realm of the immediate, the present, the here-an-now of the child or infant’s demand” (Baraister 2009, 68). Mothering interrupts the durational flow of mothers’ time and repetitively ties mothers back to the present time. In Rose’s words: “Mothers forget. This forgetting is caused by being absorbed in the actual child’s presence, and is so deep that it is another way that an image of a child can become other” (G. Rose 2005, 224). The present of mothers’ time is woven both of the inescapability of the moment of interruption (now) and of the insertion of this moment into a teleological projection of children’s development or growth (from then to there) (Sara Ruddick 1995; G. Rose 2004, 2005). However, insertion of mothers’ experiential present into the projected duration of time (from then to there) remains fragmented as time is always interrupted, leading to temporalities that are episodic rather than continuous. Rose explains:

For the mothers, their past […] is not progressive but rather episodic. […] [T]he sense of time implied by the notion of children ‘developing’ (or mothers ageing) is [supplemented by] another temporality much more episodic, or periodic. Time proceeds and then slows down, stops or flies. The calculus of weeks, months and years is no longer credible in comparison to this experiential [moment]. (G. Rose 2003, 14)
The cycle of interruptions of mothers’ time, with its associated experiential rupture from a linear progressive time, is the epitome of what Davies referred to as ‘women’s time’ (Davies 1989, 1994). For Davies, the caring responsibilities of women shape a temporality that is relational, that is oriented on needs and tasks at hand rather than on strictly delineated clock time. Relational time implies multiple intersections but few lacunae, as women’s time is seldom free of care (Davies 1989, 1994; Hochschild 1997; Bryson 2007). Bryson (2007) argues that time is an important site of gendering as the importance of social reproduction on women’s subjectivity is reinforced by the experience of a feminized care-based temporality. She also notes that power imbalances linked to the socio-economic marginalization of reproductive labour and to its uneven gender, class, and racial distribution translate into inequalities in time (such as unequal time pressures and leisure time) (Bryson 2007).

The cyclical feminized time of mothers contributes to their exclusion from liberal world order, punctuated by capitalist clock-time and oriented towards teleological projections of linear progress (Massey 1994, 2005; B. Adam 2004; Büskens 2004; Bryson 2007; Povinelli 2011a, 2011b). Simone de Beauvoir theorized women as being stuck in immanence through their imposed caregiving roles and identities. For Beauvoir, women’s actions are lost to answering the ever emerging needs of others, and hence do not allow for lasting contributions or projects through which they could construct individualities of their own (Beauvoir 1986; Young 2005b). “Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition. The clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present.” (Beauvoir in Young 2005b, 137) In Beauvoir, the cyclical time of women engaged in unwaged reproductive work (housewives,
mothers, etc.) bars them from equal and fulfilling participation in future-oriented temporalities of liberal society, and hence full access to citizenship (see also Büskens 2004; Bryson 2007).

Francophone minorities in Ontario and reproductive work of cultural transmission

French has been present in Ontario since the beginning of the European colonial efforts. However, the development of French settlements took place mostly during the 19th century, following migration of French families through the East and the North of the province, roughly along what is now highway 17 (Farmer and Poirier 1999; Gilbert 1999; Gervais 1999; Thériault 2007). The presence and support of the Catholic Church and its clergy was critical to the life of these settlements, as they most often represented the sole source of public services (mostly of education and health). Thus, whether through ideological conviction or through pragmatic considerations, the imagery and value system of the French Canadian Catholic Church strongly oriented the lives of Canadian Francophones (Gervais 1999). French-Canadianness as an identity crystalized during the later half of the 19th century through nation-wide political struggles to protect Francophone rights and to resist English assimilation (e.g. the Patriot’s War of 1837-1838 in what is now Québec and Ontario, and the Métis and Francophone Red River Rebellion of 1869-1870 in Manitoba). Through this period the idea of French-Canada as a nation emerged, with a common identity defined along linguistic lines (Cardinal 1994; Thériault 2007, 2014), but also religious affiliation and French European ancestry (Heller 1999; Berger and Heller 2001; Heller 2003; Madibbo 2006).

During the later half of the 20th century, Francophones experienced a major shift in identification, from a Canadian-wide nation to more-or-less fragmented minorities within discrete
provincial jurisdiction and contexts (see Juteau 1994). This shift is attributed to the growing social and political importance of the provinces. Following WWII, the rise of the welfare state resulted in social services increasingly becoming a provincial responsibility and prerogative (Cardinal 1994; Thériault 2014). Québec’s Francophones political shift to a province-centered identity project further undermined the continuity of a Canadian-wide Francophone nation and reinforced this ‘provincial turn’. Provincial governments, rather than parishes or the federal government, became the primary interlocutors of Francophones in the struggles to maintain political levers and linguistic rights. As a result, Francophones in Canada outside Québec shifted their identifications from French-Canadian to provincially centered identities. In Ontario, they became Franco-Ontarien.es or Ontarois.es, as exemplified by the adoption of the Franco-Ontarian flag in 1975 (Farmer and Poirier 1999; Cardinal 1994, 2010, 2012; Thériault and Meunier 2008; Thériault 2007, 2014).

For theorists and analysts of the ‘Ottawa school’ of Francophone minorities in Ontario², these minorities persist in their existence because of the galvanizing action of their shared project to “faire société³” or “faire communauté⁴” (Thériault 2007). Although there are debates as to what this shared project entails in terms of identity and exclusion (Juteau 1994; Deveau 2008; Thériault and Meunier 2008; Cardinal 2012), there is a general consensus that the continuity of Francophone minorities rests in their capacity to establish and control autonomous institutions in their own language that reach all aspects of social life: political, religious, educational, literary, etc.

² The ‘Ottawa school’, broadly centered around the University of Ottawa and, to a lesser extent, the Université du Québec à Montréal, was established by historians and sociologists Joseph Yvon Thériault, Jean Lapointe, Danielle Juteau-Lee, and geographer Anne Gilbert, among others. Its paradigms and analyses often contrast to those of the ‘Toronto school’, headed by anthropologist and political economist Monica Heller.
³ Create and perform a society
⁴ Create and perform a community
The works of Raymond Breton on institutional completeness were very influential in placing institutions at the heart of theoretical and analytical preoccupations of Francophone minorities scholars and activists. Breton argued that the cultural and linguistic survival of a minority group rests not so much on identity, attachment, or will, but rather on the institutional resources available to, and controlled by, members of the group in their everyday life (Breton 1964; Thériault 2014). Following Breton, institutions became central sites of analysis of Francophone vitality in minority context. Institutions by and for Francophones are presented as crucial places around which a distinct Francophone society, and more generally life in French, can unfold. As sites of French-based relationships and of Francophone cultural models, institutions structure the participation of individuals into a French-language community and provide means by which minorities can survive and adapt to change (Thériault 2007; Gilbert 2010a; Cardinal 2010).

The challenges of Francophone experiences in Ontario, both individual and collective, enhance the importance of institutional completeness, both as a theoretical concept and as a political goal. Ontarian Francophones proportionally suffer poorer health, and encounter more difficulties accessing health and social services than Anglophones (Louise Bouchard and Leis 2008; Clennett-Sirois 2015; Drolet, Bouchard, and Savard 2017). They experience higher rates of poverty and illiteracy (Louise Bouchard et al. 2006; Pacom and Thibault 1994). Pockets of local Francophone majority (e.g. Hearst, Timmins) are for the most part located in remote, economically depressed areas characterized by lack of vitality and exodus of youth towards urban centers (Gilbert 2010a). Conversely, in urban centers, there are smaller proportions of Francophones (e.g.
1.3% in Toronto (Statistics Canada 2016)) and French-language institutions, programs and services are less visible (Gilbert 1999, 2010a; Huot 2013; Huot et al. 2013; Huot, Dodson, and Rudman 2014; Huot and Veronis 2017; Veronis and Huot 2017). Francophones in cities experience increased pressure to function in English in their day to day lives, leading to linguistically segmented lives (Korazemo and Stebbins 2001; Huot 2013; Huot and Veronis 2017; Veronis and Huot 2017).

The struggles to establish and maintain institutions for and by Francophones in Ontario are important sites of French-language minority definition, both legally and in terms of collective identity construction and affiliation. The struggle over Regulation 17, for example, is an important crossroad in the history of French in Ontario (Gervais 1999; Gilbert 1999; Pilote and Magnan 2008). In 1912, the ministry of education under the Whitney government issued Regulation 17, which restricted the use of the French language in all schools to the first two years of schooling. The Regulation was widely opposed, and eventually in 1927 the Ontario government relented and officially recognized bilingual schools. The mobilization against Regulation 17 is understood as a turning point at which Ontario Francophones effectively ‘became a minority’ (Farmer and Poirier 1999), that is, at which they clearly articulated an identity that was strongly grounded in their differences from the English majority (Lévesque, Croteau, et Gani 2015; see also Juteau 1994; Cardinal 1994, 2010). When the provincial conservative government of Mike Harris announced the closure of the only French-language hospital in Ontario, Montfort, in 1997, the ensuing mobilization of Francophones to save their institution reinforced collective affiliation to French-language culture and identity (Pilote and Magnan 2008; Gilbert 2010a). The Montfort saga ended with a decision by the Ontario Court of Appeal in December 2001, ordering the provincial government to maintain the French-language hospital as part of their constitutional obligation to
respect and protect Francophone minorities. This decision built on legal gains of the 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s, cumulating with the constitutional recognition of French as an official language in the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the adoption of the 1986 Ontario French Language Services Act, which obligated the provincial government to provide French-language services in designated bilingual areas (Farmer and Poirier 1999; Pilote and Magnan 2008; Louise Bouchard and Leis 2008).

Despite legal, political, and institutional gain in Ontario, recognition of Francophone realities, presence, and institutional needs is always fragile, as illustrated by the announcement on November 15th 2018 by the provincial Conservative Ford government to cancel the project of l’Université de l’Ontario français and to eliminate the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner (Simard 2018). As Huot and Veronis note,

The fact that [Francophone minority communities] are characterized by their minoritized contexts implies that their very existence must always be understood in relation to the dominant Anglophone community. … The lack of opportunities to live everyday life in French [makes] resisting the pressures of assimilation to the dominant society even more challenging. (Huot and Veronis 2017, 6)

Francophones will always be a minority in Ontario, and will always engage with the world through cultural practices that differ from that of the English majority (Breton 1964; Juteau 1994; Cardinal 1994, 2010; Denis 2001). Despite politics of recognition and special rights, being Francophone in Ontario entails an obligation towards bilingualism, with proficiency in English representing both a prerequisite capacity and a fundamental right of individual citizens through a (neo)liberal model of English majority governance (Sonntag 2010; Heller 2010; Heller and Duchêne 2012; Huot 2013; Huot et al. 2013; Huot, Dodson, and Rudman 2014; Huot and Veronis 2017; Veronis and Huot 2017).
There are now 622,340 Francophones in Ontario (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages 2018) under the Inclusive Definition of Francophone. This definition considers all “persons whose mother tongue is French, plus those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English but have a particular knowledge of French as an Official Language and use French at home” as Francophone (Office of the French Language Services Commissioner 2016). Many of Ontario Francophones are internal or international immigrants. In 2018, 25% were born in another Canadian province and 17% abroad (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages 2018). As discussed in the introduction and throughout this dissertation, an important number of Québécois.es migrate to Ontario every year, and occupy a considerable proportion of positions within Francophone institutions province-wide (such as schools) (Duquette and Morin 2003; Gérin-Lajoie 2004). As well, international Francophone immigration to Francophone minority communities nation-wide is promoted by the federal government through policies and programs facilitating the establishment of French-speakers outside of Québec as a means to counter Francophone assimilation (Jedwab 2002; Farmer and Labrie 2003; Farmer 2008; Veronis and Huot 2017; Government of Canada 2018).

Immigration in Ontario Francophone minority communities brings great diversity to these communities, in terms of origin, race, religion, culture, history, and other sites of affiliation. It also implies a challenge to formerly unquestioned markers delineating representations of Franco-Ontarian identity, collective belongings, and political and cultural claims (Boudreau and Nielsen 1994; Cardinal 1994; Heller 1999, 2003; Thériault and Meunier 2008). In the last decades, it has become apparent that the normative cultural, genealogical, territorial, religious, historical, and racial coding of French in Ontario is misleading (Heller 1999, 2003; Berger and Heller 2001; Gérin-Lajoie 2004; Farmer and Labrie 2003; Farmer 2008; Pilote and Magnan 2008; Gallant 2010;
Huot et al. 2013; Huot, Dodson, and Rudman 2014; Huot and Veronis 2017). The nostalgic versions of white, rural and Catholic Franco-Ontarian identities have always entailed the marginalization of subaltern subjectivities within these communities, including women (Cardinal 1994; Juteau 1994; Denis 2001). However, emerging intersectional analyses of lived experiences of French-speaking individuals in minority contexts have called for the recognition and validation of a diversity of Francophone voices, including immigrants, along with their conflicting discourses and claims (Beausoleil 1996; Bernier 1996; Cardinal 2012; Madibbo 2006, 2009, 2014, 2016). These analyses reveal that static discourses of Franco-Ontarian identity fail to recognize the increasing urbanization of Francophone communities in Ontario, the significance of international immigration – particularly from African countries – to these communities, and more generally the multiple ways in which Francophone individuals in Ontario participate and identify with their language choices and practices as cultural markers (Breton 1994; Boudreau and Nielsen 1994; Pacom and Thibault 1994; Denis 2001; Deveau 2008; Cardinal 2012; Madibbo 2016).

Francophones in Ontario are coming to rethink the nature of the collective project of “faire société” as Francophone minorities, including the very definition of what it is to be Francophone (Heller 1999, 2003) and the means to promote inclusive affiliations and belongings (Huot and Veronis 2017; Veronis and Huot 2017). As Huot and Veronis note, “an emphasis on one shared marker of identity alone (in this case language) is likely insufficient for overcoming separations between newcomer and receiving populations; indeed, race emerge[s] as a significant dimension in FMCs [Francophone minority communities]” (Huot and Veronis 2017, 12). Madibbo (2016) notes that Francophone immigrants frequently experience multiple affiliations emerging from intersecting identities (anchored in immigration status, ethnicity, race, and language). These diverse affiliations are often unrecognized or rejected by established members of Francophone
communities who adhere to normative performance of belongings (see also Gilbert et al. 2014; Huot, Dodson, et Rudman 2014; Veronis 2015; Veronis et Huot 2017; Huot et Veronis 2017). This leads to difficult interactions between immigrants and other Francophones within minority community places, and to what Veronis and Huot refer to as a “parallel integration”, where relationships remain at the level of the individuals and don’t expand to a sense of collective or community belonging (Veronis and Huot 2017).

Francophone immigrants have testified to experiencing lack of sensitivity or active discrimination from established (White) Francophones in minority communities of Ontario, linked to the latter’s adherence to static cultural and ethnic markers, isolationist perspectives, and a historical consciousness that recognizes English assimilation as the sole possible source of oppression (Veronis 2015). Immigrants’ testimonies point to a general non-recognition of the multiple and overlapping structural oppressions that “minorities within a minority” (Madibbo 2006) experience. For example, in Ontario, Francophones who are racialized, and particularly racialized Francophone women, experience higher rates of poverty and unemployment than other Francophones (Farmer and Poirier 1999; but see also Huot, Dodson, and Rudman 2014). Immigrants and non-white Francophones experience racism in their everyday life, both outside and within Francophone minority communities (Korazemo and Stebbins 2001; Farmer and Labrie 2003; Gallant and Belkhodja 2005; Gallant 2010; Madibbo 2006, 2009; Huot 2013; Huot, Dodson, and Rudman 2014; Huot and Veronis 2017; Veronis and Ray 2013, 2014; Veronis 2015; Veronis and Huot 2017). As well, Francophone minorities in Ontario speak different varieties of French (Huot and Veronis 2017). Accents and usages of French are important sites of discrimination within communities, particularly from Québec Francophones, who themselves perform particular linguistic practices which may feel exclusionary to others (e.g. swearing) (Veronis 2015; Vachet
Madibbo’s works (2006, 2016) reveals how discriminations of French accents and usages work in concert with racist and sexist oppression, especially in the experience of Black Francophones. Racism and discrimination pose important barriers to social and economic integration of Francophone immigrants, including their employment opportunities (Korazemo and Stebbins 2001; Huot et al. 2013; Huot, Dodson, and Rudman 2014; Madibbo 2014; Veronis and Ray 2014).

Despite the increased diversity of Francophone experiences in Ontario, Francophone institutions tend to maintain a discourse of normative Francophone identity and history leading to important power inequalities between established White Francophones and immigrants – particularly those who are racialized (Bélanger 2015). Gallant and Belkhodja (2005) note that although Francophone community organizations frequently declare a desire to welcome and celebrate diversity, their discourses still betray a perception of immigrants as the “perpetual others”, forming a more-or-less monolithic group. Discursive practices of delineating ethnically, racially, religiously, and territorially defined boundaries of belonging and identity are particularly prevalent in French-language schools. French-language education is one of the central pillars of the Francophone collective project, because past struggles for French-language schools crystalized political and identity building, but also because schools are considered the paramount institution to maintain French language and culture in Ontario (Gérin-Lajoie 2004; Louise Bouchard et al. 2006; Pilote and Magnan 2008; Gilbert 2010b). The importance of education in the never-ending battle against English assimilation imposes a heavy political and emotional load on French-language schools, often leading to an adherence to stilted and exclusionary identity discourses and curricula (Heller 1999; Berger and Heller 2001). Gérin-Lajoie notes:
Force est de constater que l’école compose avec des élèves qui ont souvent peu en commun avec la francophonie telle qu’elle est souvent perçue en Ontario, c’est-à-dire une francophonie qui s’inscrit dans une réalité que je qualifierais de « folklorique », qui ne tient pas compte de la nouvelle réalité pluraliste de la société francophone urbaine.\(^5\) (Gérin-Lajoie 2004, 116)

While there is a relative abundance of research discussing Francophone minority experiences, the importance of French-language institutions as vectors of survival and continuity and as anchor of a collective project, and the challenges and exclusions faced by individuals diverging from certain norms of Francophone identity (particularly racialized immigrants), this literature includes very few analyses of gender-differentiated experiences. There is a small body of studies, mostly from the late 1990’s, documenting Francophone women’s life circumstances (D. Adam 1996; Picard and Hébert 1999; Lyne Bouchard and Cardinal 1999; Denis 2001; Cardinal, Plante, and Sauvé 2006). Nonetheless, women’s experiences and participations in the political, social and cultural life of Francophone minorities remains largely unaddressed (Juteau 1994; Cardinal 1994; Heller and Lévy 1994; Denis 2001). As Lee and Cardinal remark, it is mainly Francophone women who do cultural work, “whether they do it as teachers, volunteers, or mothers” (Lee and Cardinal 1998, 231). As elsewhere, the obscuring of women’s social and political contributions, the devaluation of reproductive labour, and the normalization of cultural transmission as women’s work go a long way to limit recognition of women’s roles to strictly feminized performances (Cardinal 1994; Lee and Cardinal 1998; Denis 2001). Recognized feminine contributions in the history of French Ontario are mostly restricted to those of educators or nurses, religious or lay, who struggled with patience and fortitude to continue dispensing French-language schooling and health services in the face of English assimilation pressures.

\(^5\) It is clear that the school deals with students who often have little in common with Francophonie as it is often perceived in Ontario, that is to say, a Francophonie that is part of a reality that I would call "folkloric", which does not take into account the new pluralistic reality of the urban Francophone society.
Furthermore, while the crucial role of families in French minority culture and language transmission is widely recognized (Deveau 2008; Deveau, Allard, and Landry 2008; Pilote and Magnan 2008; Gilbert 1999, 2010b), the gendered division of this social reproduction work remains mostly silently taken for granted (Lee and Cardinal 1998). This gendered division becomes evident when looking at statistics of French-language retention within heterosexual families, where children of exogamous couples (where one partner is originally French-speaker and the other English-speaker) retain French twice as frequently when it is their mother who is Francophone (41%) as opposed to their father (20%) (Office of the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario 2014; see also Heller and Lévy 1994).

Outside Francophone literature, the significance of mothering as a vector of cultural continuity and transmission has been widely theorized, particularly in contexts of racial and cultural minority and marginalization (Caulfield 1975; Lorde 1984; Glenn 1992, 1994; Collins 1994, 1990, 2005; hooks 1984, 1990, 2009; Steele 2004). Mothering, notes Bowden, “has a preeminent role in the creation of new persons, in shaping their language and culture, and developing their morality” (Bowden 1997, 21). As the identity of particular places is produced and stabilized through the reiteration of the multiple identities of the individuals that occupy them (Valentine 2007; G. Rose 1999), mothering practices become critical in terms of performing, transmitting, and creating places of counter-hegemonic meanings and values (Hardy and Wiedmer 2005). Dyck and Dossa (2007), for example, have documented how British Columbia Punjabi and Afghan women’s reiterated practices around food, medicine, and prayers actualize and transmit cultural meanings. Importantly, thinking about counter-hegemonic mothering leads us to depart from a white middle-class-centered feminist theorization of care and mothering that is focused on
issues of male domination and of oppression through a public/private sphere divide (Caulfield 1975; Glenn 1992, 1994; hooks 1990, 2009; Collins 1994, 2005; Christopher 2013). For racialized and culturally othered mothers, the “locus of conflict [also] lies outside the household” (Collins 1994, 47) as they strive to maintain and foster cultural survival and empowerment in the face of normative adversity.

Counter-hegemonic mothering, however, is fraught with contradictions. As Katz notes: “social reproduction is vexed because, almost by definition, it is focused on reproducing the very social relations and material forms that are so problematic. Social reproduction is precisely not ‘revolutionary’ and yet so much rests on its accomplishments” (Katz 2001, 718). For Francophone minority mothers, contradictions lie in the choices they make around the continued practice of a language that diverges from the norm, in a context where individuals need to be able to conform to the English majority in order to be competitive and thrive (Louise Bouchard et al. 2006; Huot 2013; Huot et al. 2013; Huot and Veronis 2017; Gilbert et al. 2014; Veronis 2015). These choices negotiate tensions between the imperatives of cultural commitments and meanings associated with French – whatever they might be – and those of fostering social acceptability (see Ruddick 1995), and “raising children who are prepared - intellectually, physically, morally and emotionally - to take their place as law-abiding and independent citizens” (Galston in Young 1995, 537).

Conclusion

This dissertation mobilizes concepts of care, social reproduction and mothering. It builds on feminist scholarship documenting the gendered marginalisation of social reproduction in liberal capitalist democracies, and the added stress and hardships of responding to needs of existence in
a neoliberal moment characterized by individualism, competition, and market rationality. It also draws on feminist mothering scholarship, aiming to theorize the social reality of mothering in terms of ideologies, identities, and experiences. The experience of the relationship between a mother and her children shapes mothering subjectivity. It is characterised by a sense of self that is unbounded, a care-based epistemology and moral agency, an encumbered and confined spatiality, and an interrupted and cyclical sense of time.

Placed in the context of Francophone life in Kingston, I necessarily draw on literatures documenting realities of Francophone minorities in Ontario. This scholarship reveals a collective political project carried by Francophone institutions and anchored in history of French-language struggles in Ontario. This project is racially, ethnically, and territorially coded, with exclusionary implication for an increasing diversity of experiences, namely from racialized international immigrants. This project also relies on cultural work of social reproduction and linguistic transmission, overwhelmingly performed by women in social roles that are under-recognized and taken for granted.
Chapter 3 – Methodologies

Stories are the heart of this dissertation. They form the material, the methods, and the process of my research. This dissertation is about the stories of Francophone mothers in Kingston. It is about the dominant discursive and material stories that structure their lives: liberalism, neoliberalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and how these stories treat mothering, linguistic minority, and other axes of difference (see Theoretical context). It is about the stories mothers tell about themselves, both to themselves and to others, to make sense of their lives and of who they are (see Miller 2005). This dissertation is based on the stories mothers told me, and on the stories we wove together through our conversations. Finally, it is made of the stories that I tell as I write it. All of these stories are interconnected but differ as they emerge from different voices, at different moments, and are delineated by different boundaries, drawn at different places by different narrators to determine what belongs in and constitutes the story (McKay 2002).

In this chapter, I present the methodology I used in crafting this dissertation. I describe my approach to life story analysis, informed by an “analytical sensibility” to intersectionality (Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013). I detail the specific methods I deployed. Finally, I place myself – as well as my own intersecting stories – at the heart of these methods.

Analysing life stories

Life story analysis is a broad term that refers to the study of how particular persons make sense of their lives in their own words through the telling of stories (Atkinson 1998, 2007; Blunt 2003; Miller 2005; Buitelaar 2006; Burrill 2015). Life stories are produced in texts or in
conversations, through which participants share what they want of the course of their lives (Blunt 2003). Through this weaving of “life-as-a-whole personal narratives” (Atkinson 2007), participants-narrators reflect on their particular social locations, and orient themselves in relation to their specific historical, cultural, and social contexts (Miller 2005; Atkinson 2007; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010; Ziegler 2012). The resulting stories often present “vivid and compelling accounts of everyday life, experiences and emotions on subjects as wide-ranging as human life itself” (Blunt 2003, 86). They also provide rich accounts of social relations, such as gender, families, social networks, as well as the spaces and times these relations span (Bailey 2009). In that sense, life stories weave narrative relationships between individual identities, time, and social, cultural, and political contexts (Miller 2005; Atkinson 2007; Gaudet 2013; Veronis and Ray 2013; Gilbert and Ray 2014). Life stories bridge conceptual and empirical work as they allow for the theorization of individual lived experiences, as well as the unveiling of empirical expressions of social and political phenomena and analyses (Gaudet 2013).

The political value of life story analysis as a feminist methodology is well recognized (Miller 2005; Buitelaar 2006; Roets and Goedgeluck 2007; Essers 2009; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010) – as exemplified, in geography, by the important work of Cindy Katz and Janice Monk Full Circles: Geographies of Women over the Life Course (Katz and Monk 1993). Life story analysis opens up space for the expression of voices that tend to remain unheard, or at least marginal, in social research: women, and particularly women who are racialized, poor, physically or mentally unwell, or older, amongst others (McKay 2002; Blunt 2003; George and Stratford 2005; Atkinson 2007; Essers 2009; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010; Ziegler 2012). The open structure of the texts or conversations, through which participants organize their narratives in ways that make sense to them, allows the unfolding of marginalized (and feminized) temporality, such as a focus
on cyclical time and the everyday (Dyck 2005; Bryson 2007). Based on her extensive experience of doing oral history with working class women in Québec, Denyse Baillargeon notes that the stories these women tell of their lives tend to be punctuated by events associated with close relationships and family life rather than grand socio-political events, which dominate both masculine stories and written accounts (Baillargeon 1993). Through life stories, participants are free to dwell on, and give social and political significance, to particular events, intimate or otherwise, that are meaningful to them or represent crossroad in their lives. In that sense, life stories not only “give voice” (Atkinson 2007) to marginalized groups, but also raise challenges to masculinist versions of what knowledge is (Code 1991; Baillargeon 1993; G. Rose 1993; Miller 2005; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010). Feminist life story analysis “expose[s] hegemonic power arrangements and inherent silences, highlight[s] secrets of oppression and resistance, and revalue[s] knowledge that risks being disqualified in current social sciences” (Roets and Goedgeluck 2007, 85).

Life stories reveal personal trajectories that encompass sedimentation (see Thrift 1999; Young 2005), cyclicity (of care and everyday life), progressions (e.g. careers, or children’s growth), ebbs and flows (for example, of illness and recovery (see Moss and Dyck 2003; Bradstreet 2004; Parr and Davidson 2009)), and transitions (such as birth, death, migration). Crucially for my research, life stories are means for narrators to produce a plot of their lives that provides continuity between these different temporalities – the everyday, significant events or changes, and duration. The production of a plot provides narrators with a sense of coherence, both in their trajectories and their subjectivities (Miller 2005; Buitelaar 2006; Atkinson 2007; Essers 2009; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010). “Human life” noted MacIntyre “is composed of discrete actions which lead nowhere, which have no order; the storyteller imposes on human events retrospectively an order
which they did not have while they were lived” (MacIntyre, quoted in Miller 2005, 9). Producing a life story allows the narrator to gather scattered actions, experiences, and breaks, as well as temporary ‘bafflement’ (Miller 2005), into a coherent discursive edifice. It also allows the narrator to negotiate between multiple self-representations and identifications to shape a social identity that ‘makes sense’ (Buitelaar 2006), meaning that is intelligible and recognisable both to them and to intended audiences (e.g. the interviewer). Thus, narrators construct their lives in a way that is logical, and express a sense of self that endures through time and space and through change, both in terms of material conditions and in terms of identifications and belongings (Atkinson 1998, 2007; McKay 2002; Blunt 2003; Miller 2005; Buitelaar 2006; Essers 2009; Ziegler 2012; Burrill 2015; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010).

That life stories bridge daily lives, fragmented moments, and duration into coherent narratives makes this methodology particularly fruitful for my study of subjectivities and geographies of Francophone mothers in Kingston. The life stories these women told me are perched on particular spatial and temporal moments that they recalled vividly, because of their exemplary quality or because they represented significant crossroads: namely mothering, migration, and changes in relationships to the French-language. They are also perched on specific and often distinct moments of identification and belonging (see Valentine 2007), as well as on the moment of their conversations with me. Within and between those moments of different times and spaces mothers weave narratives that orient their lives in a way that is coherent and is intelligible – both for them and for me. It is through these stories that these women answer my question: what does mothering, as Francophone women, in Kingston, do to their subjectivities, their social and material circumstances, and their possibilities. These stories tell me that mothering, sustaining relationships with French-language, and being in Kingston matters in mothers’ lives, in the
conditions in which their everyday unfolds, but also in whom they know themselves to be and how they perceive their future horizon.

Life stories analysis builds upon lives as they are woven into stories through conversations or texts, and not as they are actually lived (if such a thing were possible). Participant-narrators produce life stories out of their experiences and memories, but also out of the relational process that triggered their storytelling. Thus, when life-as-storytelling occurs through interviews (such as in my research), the interviewer is an active agent in the construction of the story. Despite Atkinson’s prescription that life stories should unfold free from theoretical frameworks (1998; 2012), it is generally acknowledged that “to a large extent this ‘freedom’ [is] illusory” (Buitelaar 2006, 262). The interviewer usually orients the storytelling, consciously and unconsciously, towards particular tracks (McKay 2002; Miller 2005; Buitelaar 2006; Essers 2009; Burrill 2015).

I approached this research with a strong belief that experiences of mothering, of being Francophone, and of being in Kingston all have to do with how gender and motherhood are treated and produced through norms, economies, and labours in North American English-centered Western democratic liberal societies during neoliberal times. As well, in my own experience, mothering is powerful and joyful, but also hard and fraught with bitter tensions, powerlessness, feelings of inadequacy, and a sense of being the butt of the sad joke of our social and economic shortcomings. My partiality, both theoretical and experiential, certainly oriented the stories that mothers wove with me. Furthermore, storytelling is a performance that is aimed at a particular audience, based on what the narrator understands of that audience (Buitelaar 2006). In my research, mothers related their stories based on who they perceived me to be, what they knew of my interests, and what elements of their lives they thought would be recognizable and intelligible to me (McKay 2002; Essers 2009).
Relationality, beyond its importance in the storytelling process, is an inherent element of narratives produced through life-storytelling. The subjectivities of narrators, as they express them at any moment of their life stories, including at the moment of storytelling, are always inherently linked with other times and spaces (Bailey 2009; Ziegler 2012; but see also Massey 1994, 2004). Life stories reveal the complexity and multiplicities of narrators’ identities, which “shift in their multiple constitution over time and space” (Blunt 2003, 72; but see also Mohanty 2003; Valentine 2007). Life stories, as well as the trajectories, identities, and subjectivities they reveal, are deeply coloured by the power relationships that underlie the spatial contexts in which they unfold. Thus, life stories points to the geometries of power at the heart of spaces and places, and also at the role of space and place as active actors of social life. In geography, life story analysis fruitfully serves theoretical commitment towards relationality of space and place (Bailey 2009; Ziegler 2012). Life stories are also relational in that they are constructed in connections with collective experiences, affiliations and histories (Blunt 2003; Miller 2005; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010; Buitelaar 2006).

The relationality of life stories, expressed through their weaving of coherent trajectories out of fragmented temporalities and through their negotiation of multiple identities, makes them a particularly fertile ground for intersectional analysis (McCall 2005; Buitelaar 2006; Valentine 2007; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010; Ziegler 2012). Firstly articulated in critical legal studies, intersectionality emerged as a challenge to liberal modes of recognition and treatment of sameness and difference, and of the power dynamics underlying categories of identities such as gender, race, and class. Kimberlé Crenshaw articulated the conceptual foundation of intersectionality in her analysis of a collection of legal cases in which Black women plaintiffs attempted to contest workforce discrimination, unsuccessfully (Crenshaw 1989). Crenshaw
attributed the repeated failures of these cases to the ideological construction of differences at the heart of the legal ontology, which assimilated Black women’s experiences to unproblematized monolithic categories of ‘women’ or of ‘Blacks’. Anchored in that ontology, judges’ interpretations of the cases remained blind to the specific discriminations faced by these women, both as women who are Black and as Black people who are women (Crenshaw 1989). Crenshaw also used intersectionality to describe the impact of the combined effects of structural power dynamics on racialized and immigrant women in creating situations of particularly acute susceptibility and vulnerability to domestic violence (Crenshaw 1991). Through these early works, intersectionality started to expose the liberal ideological reification of categories of difference, and “how single-axis thinking undermines legal thinking, disciplinary knowledge production, and struggles for social justice” (Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013, 787). Over the following decades, intersectionality expanded from its original discipline and content specialization to develop as a normative and empirical research paradigm deployed in a vast variety of domains, such as feminist studies, ethnic studies, queer studies, history, sociology, literature, and geography (McCall 2005; Hancock 2007a, 2007b; Valentine 2007; McDowell 2008b; Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013).

Intersectionality is characterized by a theoretical and empirical commitment to recognize diverse and interlocking relationships of power, and how they relate to and activate one another in the lives of specific individuals or groups (Collins 1990; Hancock 2007a, 2007b; Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Collins and Bilge 2016). In that sense, intersectional analyses challenge perspectives of identities where sameness and differences are understood through the addition of individual traits (such as gender, race, and class) departing from a white masculinist norm of subjectivity and citizenship (what Watson et al (2004) refer to as ‘cohorts’ of difference).
As Hancock notes, one of the “normative claim[s] of intersectionality [is] that intersections of these categories are more than the sum of their parts” (Hancock 2007a, 251). Intersectionality’s focus on the multiplicity of relationships of power and on the interaction between these relationships reveals how power and identities are experienced organically, simultaneously, and at different scales: interpersonal, institutional, societal (see Hancock 2007a; 2007b; Collins and Bilge 2016). Intersectional analysis of life courses also exposes the cumulative effects of interacting power relationships and imbalances (such as health and income disparities) over lifetimes (Bailey 2009; Ziegler 2012).

Intersectionality’s core focus on multiple and interacting power relationships translates into an interest for identities as political locations (Alcoff 2006). Intersectionality as a concept first emerged as Black American women theorists and activists reflected on the particularities of Black women’s identity within interlocking systems of oppression. This work mobilized notions of shared identity as a political project of consciousness raising, collective affiliation, and solidarity building, establishing a common ground to combat multiple and simultaneous oppressions faced by Black women (Collins and Bilge 2016). Intersectionality thus promotes a concept of identity that emphasizes the connections of individual life experiences to broader social forces as a means to foster collective political awareness.

As individual lives are intertwined in relationships that are simultaneous and manifold, identities comprise many dimensions, and these dimensions are themselves interlinked within various power dynamics (Mohanty 2003; Buitelaar 2006; Yuval-Davis 2006; McDowell 2008b; Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Collins and Bilge 2016). Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty theorized identity as fluid accomplishments, performed through particular social practices and engagements, and mobilizing specific power relationships, histories, and meanings
They developed this conceptualization based on Minnie Bruce Pratt’s autobiographic narrative describing her performances of identity in various encounters with family, neighbours, and lovers, themselves informed by social contexts and histories of white supremacy and racial oppression in Southern US, and of heteronormativity and its treatment of lesbianism. Feminist geographers further emphasized the temporal and spatial variability and contingency of identities. Building on the life trajectory of a D/deaf woman, Valentine has emphasized how particular spatial-temporal moments foster specific identification and dis-identification (Valentine 2007). Meanwhile, McDowell (2008), Pratt (2003, 2004, 2012), and Mohanty (2003), along with other feminist theorists of migration (see Silvey 2004, 2006), have explored how identities are constructed and treated through interlocking social structures which contribute to producing and reinforcing social categories of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. They have revealed how governmental programs, institutional policies and cultural assumptions around race and gender combine to cast particular subjects into specific categories of migrants, which shape individual social and economic possibilities (Mohanty 2003; McDowell 2008; Pratt 2003; 2004; 2012).

Linking identity and power, intersectionality presents a research orientation that permits unveiling complex interplays of social phenomena and relationships in people’s lives (Collins and Bilge 2016). In that sense, intersectionality “primarily concerns the way things work rather than who people are” (Chun, Lipsitz, and Shin 2013, 923). Intersectionality treats identity as affiliations, belongings, and exclusions that emerge in particular power relationships, anchored in specific spatial and temporal contexts (Valentine 2007). Intersectionality recognizes that individuals and groups experience multiple, and often contradictory, identifications and affiliations at once (Buitelaar 2006; Madibbo 2006, 2016; Hancock 2007b, 2007b), and that these multiple
identities create uneven power distribution within collectivities, even as members of these collectivities suffer from particular oppressive dynamics as a whole (Yuval-Davis 2006; Buitelaar 2006; Madibbo 2006, 2016; Hancock 2007a, 2007b). It is this normative framing, “conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power” (Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013, 795), that characterizes intersectionality. In that sense, intersectionality is best understood in terms of what it does (i.e. how it orients theories and practices) than in terms of what it is (i.e. a coherent concept or theory of identity and differences) (Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Tomlinson 2013; Collins and Bilge 2016). What intersectionality does is to point a way out of stilted and unilateral thinking emphasizing rigid and essentializing categories of differences, and to explore “which differences make a difference” (Tomlinson 2013, 1012) and how power and identities are articulated in particular individual and collective contexts. In my research, adopting an intersectional approach helped me be aware of and engage with contextual dynamics of power as they emerged in different spatial and temporal moments of Francophone mothers’ lives. It allowed me to capture axes of affiliations and differences that unfolded within and between individual stories and that, although unexpected and unforeseen to me, were most significant in these women’s lives. Although I approached my research participants as women who shared particular traits or differences, namely mothering, and relationships to French-language, it became apparent that these traits refracted into other experiences that were paramount in their lives. Migration emerged as a common and crucial experience. However, other circumstances shaped the ways migration combined in individual women’s lives with mothering and linguistic minority. These circumstances included whether they were primary or secondary migrants (see particularly chapter 5 and chapter 8); whether they belonged to the military community (chapter 5
and chapter 6); race and religion (chapter 4 and chapter 7); and fluency in English (chapters 4 to 8). All these combined in complex and organic ways to form configurations of identification and dis-identification, and of power and powerlessness that shaped Francophone mothers’ life trajectories as well as their present-day geographies in Kingston.

Doing the research

I started fieldwork in the fall of 2015. My first step was to visit the Frontenac Francophone cultural center, located within the school-community-hub in the building of the French-language Catholic high school Marie-Rivier (see Introduction). The staff was very helpful in providing me with contact information for resource persons and gatekeepers within organizations providing services to Francophone mothers in Kingston. I contacted these individuals, and the vast majority agreed to meet with me individually, even referring me to other people and organizations. Throughout 2016, I conducted fifteen informal or approach interviews with such gatekeepers. My purposes were to make my work known, but also to understand the landscape of Francophone places, institutions, and services in Kingston. I asked each resource person to describe the structure of their organization – their mandates, their targeted clientele, how and by whom were they funded –, their realities, as well as their relationships with other institutions. I was also exploring what they knew and understood of the local Francophone population. Finally, I wanted to hear their opinions on the thinking behind my project, and to secure their help in suggesting and recruiting participants.

To the best of my knowledge, I was able to meet with individuals holding key positions in all of the Francophone or bilingual organizations providing services to mothers or children in
Kingston. These were: the French-language daycares, Croque Soleil and La Garderie Éducative; the French-language Catholic schools, Rémi Gaulin and Marie-Rivier; the French-language Public schools, Madeleine-de-Roybon and Mille-Îles; the Centre de la Petite Enfance (Early Years Center); the Centre de ressources pour les familles militaires de Kingston (Kingston Military Families Resource Center); the adult literacy center La Route du Savoir; the Club Optimiste; the Association Canadienne-Française de l’Ontario – Mille-Îles; the Réseau de soutien à l’immigration francophone de l'Est de l'Ontario (Support Network for Francophone Immigration of Eastern Ontario); and the Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario (French Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario). All of these resource persons were women. This fact is noteworthy, although unsurprising given the generalized feminization of reproductive labour, including waged labour within community or government institutions providing health and social services (see Theoretical context and chapter 8). Some of these women were also mothers, and their interest in my research translated into a willingness to be interviewed as participants. Thus, five of the Francophone women who were resource persons and gatekeepers also became research participants.

Over the duration of my fieldwork, I joined two networks of French-language services providers in Kingston. The Réseau Régional de Langue Française du Sud-Est de l'Ontario (RRLFSE) includes organizations (community, school boards, and government) providing or managing French-language services for children aged 0-6 in South-Eastern Ontario. The French-language Services Committee of the Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington (KFL&A) Public Health agency strives to improve Francophone access to health and social services in Kingston. Most of the Francophone or bilingual organizations listed above (the daycares, the schools, the military family resource center, the ACFO-MI) were members of one or both of these
networks. Participating in these networks helped me get a clearer sense of the politics of these institutions. The Réseau Régional de Langue Française du Sud-Est de l'Ontario, entirely composed of Francophone institutions, held its meetings in French. It anchored its work in a common and taken-for-granted understanding of the pertinence of French-language services and rights. Conversely, the KFL&A Public Health French-language Services Committee grouped both Francophone organizations (who were also members of the Réseau Régional de Langue Française) and non-Francophone organizations who might have Francophones amongst their users (e.g.: Autism Ontario, St-Lawrence Youth Association, Kids Inclusive Centre for Child & Youth Development). The fact that some of the representatives of the non-Francophone member organizations did not speak French meant that meetings were held in English, despite the presence of many Francophone individuals and the French-centered mandate of the committee. This linguistic regime set the tone of the network, which functioned quite differently from the smaller-scale, by-and-for Francophones, Réseau Régional de Langue Française. Instead of articulating Francophone services from a perspective of official language and acquired rights, the committee at KFL&A Public Health approached French-language as one source of vulnerability and unequal access to services identified in provincial public policies (other such governmentally delineated axes of vulnerability and differences were disability and being Aboriginal). The committee framed its advocacy work strategically around ‘alliances’ and ‘equity’. Members were acutely aware that they navigated a neoliberal context of public programs orientations and funding, and they meant to take advantage of the marketization of ‘equity’ as an indicator of performance in neoliberal state services management (Cardinal and Deneault 2007; Ahmed 2012; Huot 2013). Individual Francophone organizations followed different strategic approaches to French-language services. The French-language school boards functioned with a framework of acquired linguistic rights; the
bilingual Military Family Resource Center and Early Years Center aimed to fill their obligations to provide baseline programs in both English and French; and the Association canadienne-française de l’Ontario (ACFO) collaborated and cohabitated with the Canadian Ministry of Employment and Social Development to secure basic operational funding.

When I first joined the Réseau Régional de Langue Française and the French-language services committee of the KFL&A Public Health, I asked members how my research could be useful to their work. They suggested that I write research reports around my findings germane to each of their mandates. I produced two such reports: one for the Réseau Régional emphasizing identified challenges particular to Francophone mothers in Kingston (Simard-Gagnon 2017a), and one for KFL&A Public Health on Francophone mothers’ experiences and challenges with health care in Kingston (Simard-Gagnon 2017b).

In the spring and summer of 2016, I attended six of the French-language playgroups of the Ontario Early Year Center as a guest musician. At that time, there were such playgroups four mornings a week. There was one morning at the Early Year Center office on Hudson Drive; one morning at St-Patrick Catholic School on Patrick Street (the school has since moved, and at the time of writing the building houses the French-language Public high school Mille-Iles); and there were two mornings at the French-language Catholic elementary school Rémi-Gaulin. Going to the playgroups provided me with important contextual knowledge as the vast majority of Francophone mothers who participated in my project frequented the French-language programs of the Early Years Center. It allowed me to observe the dynamics of the program, to introduce my research, and myself, and to chat informally with mothers who attended. I gained crucial insight into how mothering, French-language, and gender play out within the structure and ideology of the
programs, and more generally of the Francophone institutions, a point that I elaborate on in chapter 8.

I recruited interview participants through snowballing; starting with some of the resource people in the different Francophone and bilingual organizations. They referred mothers they knew to me, and they posted my recruitment notice on two Facebook pages: one open to all Francophones in Kingston, and one open only to Francophone military spouses (I discuss the importance of this Facebook group for military spouses in chapter 6). One of the mothers I met at the playgroups referred some of her friends to me. I also circulated my recruitment notice via email to staff and parents of French-language schools (both Catholic and Public), and to organizations and individual members of the Réseau Régional de Langue Française du Sud-Est de l'Ontario and of the Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario (French Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario). Most mothers interested in participating let me know via email, but two phoned me and one texted me on my cellphone.

I conducted 32 interviews in total. I held the first one in the spring of 2016, and the last one in December 2016. All of the interviews were in French, except for one held in both French and English. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to three and a half hours, but most were about two hours long. I interviewed each participant only once. I let the participants choose the venues for their interviews. The majority opted for a neutral public place: cafés (mostly Tim Hortons, but also Starbucks, the Juniper Café behind the Tett Center, and Coffee and Company on Princess Street) or libraries. Others invited me to their homes. Five received me at their workplaces. For the majority of the interviews, other people were present. In cafés and other public places, the fact that we spoke French diminished the presence of others and created a sense of privacy. In two cases, the participants’ husbands were present during the interview: once the participant had asked
me to meet her on her lunch hour at work and she and her husband shared their lunch room, and once the participant had invited me to her home on an evening when her husband was present. In one other case, the participant received me in her home at the start of her children’s summer vacation, and her children and her parents were in the house. Finally, in one case the participant’s children came in and out of the house as we talked. I did not ask these participants why they chose to have the interview when family member(s) could overhear our conversation. My sense was that logistics drove these decisions (they could cook or otherwise multitask while talking to me). They also did not appear to think that they would be disclosing anything sensitive or particularly private. Maybe the general depoliticizing of women’s lives, and the taken-for-granted nature of gendered inequalities and power imbalances inherent to mothering, are such that it did not feel awkward for these women to disclose lived evidence of such inequality and imbalance in front of family members? I do not know.

I conducted the interviews in a flexible and fluid manner, to provide participants room and comfort to tell their stories as made sense to them. My priorities were to establish good rapport with the mothers, to be open to their experiences, their words, and their silences, and to adapt to the unplanned, both in terms of the direction of the conversation and of the circumstances of the interview (Atkinson 1998, 2007; Wells 2011). I usually started with a review of the consent form, which broke the ice and clarified our mutual expectations. The interviews then proceeded collaboratively, as participants initiated their narratives from whichever spatial and temporal moment they chose (Atkinson 2007; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010). Here, for example, the participant decided to begin her narrative with her arrival to Kingston:

Participante : t’as des questions toi? Comment ça se passe?
Laurence : Ah… ben… moi j’vais te poser des questions si tu veux… mais… mais tsé vas-y là. Pis euh…
In cases where participants needed more prompting, I initiated the interviews with broad “storytelling type” opening questions (Dunn 2005), such as « d’où viens-tu? Comment c’était là-bas? » or « depuis combien de temps es-tu à Kingston? Comment ça s’est passé quand tu es arrivée? ». Here is an example of an interview starting with such opening questions:

Laurence: Faque c’est ça, tu disais, toi tu viens de [nom du lieu]?

Participant: You’ve got questions? How do we do this?
Laurence: Well... ah... me l’ll ask questions if you want... but... but you know, go ahead. And ah...
Participant: I tell it like I feel like, then.
Laurence: Yes, yes, tell... tell it like you feel like...
Participant: Hum hum
Laurence: And ah...
Participant: Yeah
Laurence: And ah... if I want to know something...
Participant: Hum hum
Laurence: I’ll ask you a question
*laughter*
Participant: So you know we came... we came here [to Kingston] in [year]
Laurence: Ok, in [year]...
Participant: And ah... When I arrived, it was...

1 Participant: You’ve got questions? How do we do this?
Laurence: Well... ah... me l’ll ask questions if you want... but... but you know, go ahead. And ah...
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Participant: Hum hum
Laurence: I’ll ask you a question
*laughter*
Participant: So you know we came... we came here [to Kingston] in [year]
Laurence: Ok, in [year]...
Participant: And ah... When I arrived, it was...

2 Where are you from? How was it there?
3 How long have you been in Kingston? How was it when you came here?
At this point, this particular participant started telling of the different places she had lived, from childhood on, in chronological order. On her own initiative, she had prepared prompts – pictures of her children – to illustrate her narrative. Many participants however told their story in non-chronological order, emphasizing parts of their lives that stood out for them as key to understanding their trajectories and who they were (Atkinson 2007; Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell 2010).

I oriented the interviews based on broad key themes that I had identified in my research proposal. These were: participants’ senses of who they are, and how they are positioned in their social, cultural and economic context; their experiences of multiple, intersecting, and perhaps competing identification and dis-identification in their daily life and in their broader life trajectories; the constraints and pressures they experience in Kingston; and their strategies to resist or cope with these constraints and pressures. I gently suggested these themes to the participants using opening questions, and encouraged them with prompts, inviting them to clarify or elaborate on a particular point (e.g.: “Ah? Comment ça?” or “Ok? Comme quoi?”), or simply by nodding or uttering simple cues (“uh-uh”, “ah oui han?”) (Blunt 2003; Dunn 2005; George and Stratford 2005). Not all participants covered all of these themes, as the interviews (and the lives they narrated) differed widely.

I recorded all of the interviews except one, for which the participant declined. Through most of the interviews, I also took extensive notes, unless I felt that by doing so I was making the

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4 Laurence: So that’s it, what you were saying, you’re from [place name]?
Participant: Yes, I’m from [place name]... So really my life path has been...

5 Ah? How’s that? Ok? Like what?
participant nervous or self-conscious, or that my notetaking was distracting me from the conversation. I frequently validated with participants that they were comfortable with my writing things down. In many cases, naming this process seemed to demystify my notetaking. It also frequently served as a non-verbal indicator of my interest, which often directed mothers’ narratives (i.e. participants tended to elaborate on aspects of their stories on which they thought I had taken notes). My handwriting is very bad, and so participants could not easily decipher what I had written, which I felt helped them get over the distracting effect of notetaking as they rapidly stopped trying to read my notes.

As immediately as I could after the interviews, I took time to write down everything I remembered from the participant’s story and that struck me as significant. When I was able, I listened to the recording right away, as I was walking or riding the bus towards wherever I was going next. In transcribing my interviews, I omitted most of my secondary or follow-up questions so that the text reads as a series of narratives. I kept the opening or thematic question. In that way, I loosely followed Atkinson’s system for transcribing life-stories (although Atkinson suggests taking questions out of transcripts all together) (Atkinson 1998, 2007). I coded my interview transcripts manually, on Excel spreadsheets. I started to code in the summer of 2016, as I was still in the process of interviewing participants. My code sheet had two sections: the first with background information (e.g. age, age of children, race, religion, origin, sexuality, affiliation with military, etc.) had discrete answer choices (e.g. yes/no). The second section comprised thematic codes. I started with 48 thematic codes refracted from the key themes identified above. I added and modified codes as new themes emerged through my interviews or as I developed new ideas. In the end, I had 52 thematic codes. I used coding more as a means to play with ideas and interview material, and to bring new elements to light, than as a strict interpretative structure. As Atkinson
notes, life-story interviews provide more data than any researcher can actually use (Atkinson 2007). All through 2017, I immersed myself in my interview recordings. I listened to them while cooking, cleaning, walking, jogging, grocery shopping, and waiting at my children’s schools or at various doctors’ offices. Participants’ stories, their voices, and the memories of our encounters inhabited me. In all truth, it is while listening thus that I developed the analyses that structure the chapters of this dissertation. I frequently revisited both transcripts and codes to elaborate on these analyses, and to find particular extracts to illustrate them (Blunt 2003).

In writing women’s stories I was aware of issues of privacy and confidentiality in the particular context of the small and tightly knit Francophone population of Kingston, where there are high chances of recognition (see Marshall 2002). In this dissertation, I not only changed participants’ names, but I also camouflaged personal information that did not have an impact on my analysis: the number, age, and gender of their children, their particular employment, the employments of their partners, etc. Importantly, I also changed their places of origin. In each story in which I present migration trajectories, I chose alternative places of origin and of transitory residence based on the following criteria: similar percentages of Francophone or importance of French-language as the real place; similar population or history; and similar distance to an urban center with an important Francophone population.

Although I conducted the interviews in ways that gave as much control to the participants as possible, control was unilaterally mine when it came to analysing data, linking the stories to the theoretical context I chose to mobilize, and writing the research (Mullings 1999; McKay 2002; Essers 2009). “Writing up research”, notes McKay, “involves drawing a line separating “the story” from the rest” (McKay 2002, 192). I alone chose where to draw that line, where it best suited my purpose. However, I made a conscious choice to write mothers’ stories in French, the language
they used, in the main body of the text, and to provide English translations in footnotes. “The key to the life story”, tells Atkinson, “is keeping the story in the words and voice of the one telling it” (Atkinson 2007, 233). Crucially, this dissertation is about language and how language channels experiences, both in terms of material circumstances and subjective understandings. The life stories told here tell of places shaped relationally, including through language. The words that participants used, and how they used them, evoke particular relationships to language, and thus to particular places that I cannot translate in all their complexity and nuance. As well, the way participants used language both refers to and shapes particular identifications throughout their lives, including at the times of the interviews. To take seriously the co-construction of life-stories, and the intersectional understanding of identities as produced and performed in particular spatial and temporal contexts, requires considering the ways participants used language as significant and non-interchangeable elements of how they narrated themselves. Women’s words and use of words in our conversations were their own, but also those they thought that I would understand. The multiple trajectories of Francophones in Kingston means that many different forms and uses of French cohabit (see Introduction and Theoretical context). Each participant’s use of language expressed social and cultural elements and meanings she felt we shared.

Who I am, the complexity of my own shifting constellations of affiliation, identification, and differentiation, certainly shaped my research at all stages, including the relationships I established with participants. For one thing, mothers wanted to know who I was, and why this research mattered to me (McKay 2002). Like everyone, I had a complicated and multilinear story to tell. I am originally from Québec, and I lived as a young adult in Toronto, where both of my children were born. At that time, I was an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto. I went through hardship to secure daycare subsidies for my son, and lost them at the birth of my daughter.
due to the system’s rigidity. I left Ontario because I could not make ends meet and continue my studies without daycare subsidies. Had the system been different – just a bit more indulgent –, my possibilities would have been different, and I might have had a completely different story to tell. I came back to Québec City, my hometown. In the following years, my son was diagnosed with autism and I left the father of my children. When enrolling at Queen’s for my PhD, I debated whether or not to move to Kingston. I did not want to uproot my children, and shared custody in two different cities and provinces would have been difficult to negotiate. In addition, I could not find satisfactory services for my son – or at least no better than what we could access in Québec City. I quickly understood that what services I could find would be in English. Elements of this story resonated in my conversations with Francophone mothers and shaped planes of sameness and difference (Valentine 2002). Of course, we shared a relationship to French-language. We also shared experiences of multiple migrations involving different linguistic regimes, and of navigating complex and, in many ways, unsatisfying systems of health and social services. Conversely, our conversations often involved a moment when I explained that my children and I do not live in Kingston. My story is of someone who has made a choice contrary to that of the research participants – not to come to Kingston. I can recognize and understand much of their worries about their children, and about accessing services, but I am also the distressing figure who thought the fight hopeless – for me, in the context of my own complexity.

For more than two decades, feminist researchers have pointed out how social identities and senses of selves are constantly made and remade throughout interviews (G. Rose 1997; Mullings 1999; Mohammad 2001; McKay 2002; Valentine 2002; Essers 2009). As Mohammad notes, “[t]he sharing of personal information is part of everyday interaction, but in a research setting it becomes a conscious act.” (Mohammad 2001, 107). In my conversations with mothers, I emphasized
elements of my own story of mothering, French-language, and migrations that created commonality between us. I also downplayed areas of difference, based on what I understood of each participant’s politics, her sense of self and of her social world (Mohammad 2001; McKay 2002; Valentine 2002). I did not talk, for example, about being raised in a family that did not follow a heteronormative two-parent nuclear model. Neither did I reveal my abhorrence for institutionalized and state sanctioned violence that structures a lot of our (including their) lives: the army, the police force, colonialism, neoliberal capitalism, and patriarchy, to name but a few. I did not disclose how my research interest for mothering and minority experiences was coloured by my experiences and politics. Concealing such information was not meant to mislead participants, but rather to keep space open for them to express their views freely, and to allow me to acknowledge those views (Mullings 1999). I also felt that too much of my story would uselessly clutter our conversations (Essers 2009). Although feminist researchers have effectively advocated for more open acknowledgment of imbalances in power and control over research between researchers and interviewees, it is also good to keep in mind that “participants usually do not hold the needs of a project nearly as highly as do [researchers]” (Aitken 2001, 80). It is therefore unclear whether participants need – and indeed would welcome – the same amount of information from the researcher as they might choose to disclose (Essers 2009).

Despite such conscious performances, much of the dynamics of identification and differentiation in my conversations with mothers operated beyond my control (Mullings 1999). My identity as Francophone made my interest for my research topic self-evident to mothers, but it also frequently created particular assumptions about my positioning within particular discourses and imperatives around French-language minority and survival. In other words, women mostly assumed that my main political commitment was towards minority French-language community
and survival in Ontario. I am a White woman in my mid-thirties. My accent in French (and English), the words I use, and the way I use them, clearly mark me as having learned French in Québec. The combination of my two surnames (Simard-Gagnon) is almost caricatured Québécoise. Whether I liked it or not, my ethnicity as White Québécoise established rapport grounded in sameness with participants who were also White and Québécoises, and particularly those of similar age – and whose uses of French-language were most similar to mine, among other things. The words of this participant, a Québécoise French immersion teacher in her late thirties (as far as I could tell), illustrate this dynamic:

Souvent les autres profs [d’immersion], oui sont bilingues, mais pas vraiment bilingue, et souvent j’ai l’impression qu’il faut que je parle len-te-ment. Tu sais ce que je veux dire? [Pis les Québécois] on parle vite, pis on pense vite, pis on rapetisse les mots, pis… Ça va vite. Tsé, pis surtout quand t’es fatiguée, pis que t’as passé la journée à l’école avec des enfants, pis moi je veux juste te dire de quoi vite, pis… je veux m’en aller chez nous. Mais là c’est comme… « pardon? » … C’est comme… trop pénible de, tsé… de peser mes mots, et d’articuler, pis là faut je pense « ok, tu vas-tu comprendre ce mot-là? Non… » Pis c’est épuisant. … Ça m’a fait du bien de trouver quelqu’un avec qui je peux parler vite. Parce qu’en anglais, oui je suis bilingue, mais tsé ça restera toujours que ma langue, et j’ai beaucoup de connaissances, et d’éléments culturels… mon sens de l’humour, des fois un petit peu différent…

This participant narrated her experiences in this way because she knew that, as a Québécoise used to speaking French in minority settings, I would understand what she meant, both in terms of her particular Québécois usage of the French-language and in terms of how it clashed with other usages in Kingston. Conversely, my being Québécoise raised boundaries of difference between

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6 Often other [immersion] teachers, they are bilingual yes, but not really bilingual, and often I feel like I have to speak sloooowly. You know what I mean? [And us Québécois] we speak fast, we think fast, and we shrink words, and… It goes fast. You know, and especially when you’re tired, and you spent all day with kids at school, and me I just want to tell you something fast, and… I want to go home. But now it’s like… “pardon?”… It’s like… too painful to, you know… consider my words, and to articulate, and now I have to think “ok, are you going to understand this word? No…” And it’s exhausting… It felt good to find someone with whom I can speak fast. Because in English, yes I’m bilingual, but you know it will never change my language, and I have a lot of knowledge, or cultural elements… my sense of humour, sometimes a little different...
non-Québécoise mothers and me. For example, participants originating from long-standing Francophone communities in Ontario frequently evoked the devaluation of Franco-Ontarian French by Québécois. One mother, for example, told me:

[Mes enfants] parlent très bien français. Mais toi... toi tu entendrais l’accent. [Au Québec] ils se font dire « heille t’as pas un accent… t’as un drôle d’accent! » ou quelque chose… « Tu parles tu anglais! » Ils se font souvent dire ça. […] parce qu’ils ont pas le… le slang québécois […] Faque juste le fait de se faire dire ça, ça coupe han, le sentiment d’appartenance, tu te dis « ben coudonc, c’est pas ma gang… » même s’ils ont à cœur leur francophonie…

As the words of this mother illustrate, the differences in French and usages of French between non-Québécoises mothers and me (as a Québécoise) sometimes evoked different meanings of French, particularly in terms of inclusion and exclusion.

Planes of sameness and difference, as uncontrollable as they often were, between research participants and me sometimes oriented which experiences they broached in our conversations (Essers 2009). Four of the participants were racialized women, all of whom were international immigrants. Only two discussed experiences of racism, one directly (see chapter 4) and one indirectly, as she discussed her experiences of deskilling in Canada. These four women spoke European French, which in Canada tends to be valued as ‘more proper’ than Québécois French, and certainly than Franco-Ontarian French. They therefore might not have experienced the particular intersection of racism and linguistic discrimination of ‘foreign’ (such as African) French that operates in minority Francophone communities (Madibbo 2006, 2009, 2016). Perhaps because I framed my project in terms of language, and not in terms of race, they felt that their experiences

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7 [My children] speak French very well. But you... you would hear the accent. [In Québec] they are told “hey, don’t you have an accent... you have a funny accent!” or something... “Do you speak English!” They’re often asked that. Because they don’t have the... the Québec slang [...] So just the fact of being told that, it cuts, the feeling of belonging, you tell yourself “well, this is not my crowd I guess...” Even if French is important to them...
of racism were not relevant to me. Perhaps they did not feel inclined to discuss racism with me. Alternatively, perhaps I simply did not recognize and understand expressions of racism woven through their stories.

Identities, connections, and distance were made and unmade throughout the interviews beyond these somewhat static identity markers (being Québécoise or not, being racialized or not) (Mullings 1999; Valentine 2002; McKay 2002). The boundaries between a researcher and participants are highly unstable (Mullings 1999). Various layers of sameness and difference are often activated at the same time, and they wax and wane at different moments throughout the interview (Valentine 2002). As Valentine notes, “[i]n research encounters the interviewer and interviewee are not locked into static positions described by the usual co-ordinates of class, race, gender, etc. Rather, the way we are positioned in relation to each other is a shifting product of our own fluid performances of the self and the ways that these are read by each other.” I would argue that laughing delightfully at a funny anecdote, or expressing that I understood the significance behind seemingly mundane day-to-day experiences, mattered at least as much as social categories of age and origins in creating trust in the interview process. These moments allowed the emergence of what Mullings refers to as “positional spaces”, that is, “areas where the situated knowledges of both parties in the interview encounter, engender a level of trust and co-operation.” (Mullings 1999, 340)

The truth of the matter is that there is no way for me to know exactly how my performances of sameness and difference, and of connections and distance, were read by mothers, and thus how they identified and dis-identified with me. As Gillian Rose famously noted, the research process is inherently “complex, uncertain and incomplete. Complex, because our position is a very particular mediation of class and gender and race and sexuality and so on; uncertain, because our
performances of them always carry the risk of misperforming an assigned identity; and incomplete because it is only in their repetition that identities are sustained.” Mothers, like any research participants, reacted to how they read me, and to how this reading was sustained and transformed at different moments of the interviews, by performing particular identities (Mohammad 2001). The interviewees anchored desired identities in their narratives and the narratives of the lives they wanted to convey, based also on what they understood of my research project, intentions, and partialities. My research elicited much interest in Francophone mothers in Kingston, and I had no difficulty in recruiting participants. The reasons mothers chose to participate are multiple, and not transparent to me. As Atkinson notes, “the vast majority of people really want to share their life story” (Atkinson 2007, 236). Most participants expressed genuine pleasure at narrating memories and elements of their daily life to a sympathetic and attentive listener. Many mothers also expressed that they wanted to share their stories so that their realities would be known, and might fuel changes that would impact theirs or others’ lives (McKay 2002; Essers 2009). Some felt that my findings could feed political struggles for improved French-language services, and framed their participation in my study partially in terms of moral imperatives. Many mothers who were military spouses expressed a desire for a greater general awareness of their particular circumstances.

Importantly, the stories that mothers wanted to tell unfolded in contexts of complex power dynamics at different scales: provincial, institutional, through their daily lives in the city, but also within their households (Aitken 2001). Consciously or perhaps unconsciously, they controlled the way in which they evoked these power dynamics, the impacts they had on their daily lives, and how they infused their collective affiliations (for example: to the Catholic Church, to the military, etc.) (Mohammad 2001; Marshall 2002). Part of this control may stem from a desire to present a
cohesive facade to me as an ‘outsider’ (Marshall 2002). It may also be that no one likes to think of themselves as a sociology case.

Part of mothers’ interest in participating was also to discuss their life trajectories and daily experiences raising children in a linguistic minority context with me, not just the researcher, but also the Francophone mother. As Isabel Dyck (1989, 1990, 1996) and Sara Ruddick (1995) have argued, conversations, and particularly stories, are potent avenues through which mothers evaluate, validate, and justify their mothering choices and practices (see chapter 6). Mothers most concerned about their children’s continued relationships with the French-language were often keen to know what I thought about their linguistic strategies, and how they compared with mine. “Là”, one particularly anxious mother told me, “j’ai besoin que tu me dises que je fais la bonne affaire.”8 As well, two of the participants opened up to me about one of their children who had or was suspected of having ADHD. These mothers wanted to hear my story of mothering a child with autism, how I coped, the types of services I received, how I set these services up, what I thought of different schools of thoughts around neurodiversity and disability. My stories illuminated aspects of their experiences, and suggested strategies to them. One participant, whose first born had had a degenerative disease and was now deceased, was considering having another child. She was keen to hear my account of choosing to have a second child after knowing my firstborn was autistic. All of these mothers were addressing me, the mother of my own children. They wanted to know my opinion of their mothering stories. These dynamics in our conversations illustrate Hester Parr’s call to “recognise the research subject as embodied, as thinking, as feeling, as acting and as more than just a container for information about geographical patterns and relationships.” (Parr 1998, 343). How each mother and I identified and dis-identified throughout the interview shaped the

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8 I need you to tell me that I’m doing the right thing.
narratives that emerged from our conversation, but also the impacts this conversation had in her life (Aitken 2001).

There is much unknown in the ways my research unfolded, and particularly in the relationships I wove with participants. I cannot have a transparent and complete knowledge of the identities I performed, nor of how each mother at different moments of our conversation read these identities. I cannot know how my performances, our planes of sameness and difference, and our identifications and dis-identifications influenced how they chose to orient their narratives and what they chose to disclose. I would venture to say that it does not matter. This dissertation does not anchor its power and validity on the transparency of the experiences, identities, and subjectivities of the women who participated in the research, or of the relationships underlying the conversations I had with them. What matters is that, through our conversations, the research participants and I were able to manage “positional spaces” (Mullings 1999), however transitory, where trust in the process and in each other allowed for moments of “deep” understanding to take place (Parr 1998).

Conclusion

I produced this research through the analysis of life stories of Francophone mothers living in Kingston at the time of the fieldwork. I gathered these life stories in broadly unstructured interviews. Through these interviews, each participant crafted a narrative of her life and who she was that she thought I would understand, based on how she perceived me, and identified and dis-identified with me. I adopted an intersectional approach in analysing these life stories. Although intersectional “sensibility” (Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013) is evident throughout this
dissertation, the next chapter describes particularly vividly intersectional processes of space, place, and identities that emerged through Francophone mothers’ life stories.
Chapter 4 – Migration, mothering, and linguistic minority: intersectional space, places, and identities

Embedded deeply within Western liberal democracy, and its current neoliberal rationality, are stories about mothers and mothering that shape the discursive and material conditions in which women mother. Social stories of motherhood, both moral and material, infuse particular (and accrued) articulations of patriarchy and heteronormativity in the lives of women who mother. Drastically increased care and reproductive responsibilities, as well as hegemonic notions of heterosexual femininity, orient mothers’ senses of self and of possibilities. For Francophone mothers in Kingston, imperatives of minority cultural and linguistic transmission add to their care and reproductive labour, simultaneously reinforcing the normalization of the gendered distribution of this labour (see Theoretical Context). Of course, mothering, linguistic minority, and their associated social stories do not act in unilateral ways. Mothers’ different social positions – class, race, employment, linguistic skills, personal history, age, sexuality, dis/ability, etc. – are significant in shaping how mothering and linguistic differences are articulated in their lives.

In the following two chapters (4 and 5), I explore how minority language and migration shape Francophone women’s experiences of mothering in Kingston and their understandings of what it means to mother. This first chapter delves closely into individual women’s lives to reveal how intersectional processes of space, place, and identity produce different stories of mothering and minority language. I focus particularly on the role of migration in orienting these stories, and in creating contexts of affiliation, marginalization, power, and powerlessness. I use Gill Valentine’s (2007) case study approach as I follow closely three Francophone mothers’ migration
trajectories, all leading to Kingston. The first story reveals how intersecting identifications, emerging in particular spatial and temporal contexts and relationships, shape these migrant mothers’ identities and subjectivities. Francophone mothers inhabit and move through space that is plural and non-linear, as the second story illustrates. The third story portrays the co-constituted, relational, and dynamic nature of these mothers’ places and identities. These three migration trajectories expose the significance of fluid and intersectional processes of space, places, and identities in shaping Francophone mothers’ experiences of mothering and minority language, their subjectivities, and their circumstances in Kingston and throughout their lives.

**Migration and identities as intersectional spatial experiences**

Migrations, and the circumstances through which migrations take place, are central events shaping migrants’ life stories. As Veronis and Ray note, «la prise en compte de l’action de changer de lieu ou d’emplacement ainsi que de l’établissement dans un nouveau lieu est essentielle à l’analyse des parcours de vie.¹» (2013, 123). Geographers and other theorists have focused on experiences of migration to highlight how power relationships are reconfigured or reinforced as individuals move from places to places (Cresswell 2010). Cresswell has called for a politics of mobility that would recognize power differentials and dynamics in practices and representations of mobility, particularly the motivation, speed, rhythm, route, feeling, obstacles, and the cessation of movement. In the context of migration, such a politics of mobility would imply tracing the re-inscriptions and transformations of migrants’ subjectivities as they move from ‘there’ to ‘here’, and as they navigate different sets of economic and social positions, normative ideals of

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¹ Taking into account changing places or emplacement, as well as establishment in a new place, is essential to life story analysis.
citizenship, and regimes of classed, raced, and gendered meanings (Ong 1996, 1999). Feminist geographers have argued that migration is a gendered process, embedded in practices and ideologies articulated at different scales: globally, and through state institutions, labour markets, households, and bodies (Willis and Yeoh 2000; Hyndman 2000, 2001; Hyndman and Walton-Roberts 2000; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Pessar 2005; Silvey 2004, 2006; McIlwaine 2010; Erdal and Pawlak 2018). McDowell (2008), Pratt (2004, 2012), and Mohanty (2003), for example, have demonstrated that local and global discourses around race and gender are inscribed through state and market practices and policies, which cast migrant and racialized women into particular roles and subjectivities as workers within global capitalist economies. Migrations represent key events in the life stories of Francophone mothers in Kingston. For most of the women I met, moving to Kingston implied drastic shifts in their linguistic identities and practices, as well as in their experiences and subjectivities as mothers.

The gendered subjectivities and senses of place of Francophone mothers in Kingston are centered in affiliations, belongings, exclusions, identifications, and dis-identifications shaped through their experiences of migration, mothering, and linguistic minority and through the places of Kingston. These relationships become intelligible through an analysis that emphasizes intersectionality-as-lived-experience, as advanced by Valentine (2007) in her landmark piece on intersectionality and feminist geography. Reviewing theoretical approaches that deal with conjunctions of multiple social locations and axes of oppression within lived experiences, Valentine suggests that we should see identities as situated accomplishment. By this, she aims to elude the essentialism, the analytical constraints, and the staticity that accompany notions of identities as stable positions, anchored in particular and fixed locations within and between bounded categories of difference such as gender, race, and class. Wanting to acknowledge
individual agency, as well as the fluidity and ambiguities of subjectivities, she suggests that we think of identities “in terms of a doing, a more fluid coming together, of contingencies and discontinuities, of clashes and neutralizations in which positions, identities and differences are made and unmade, claimed and rejected” (Valentine 2007; 14).

Valentine’s insistence on the situated nature of identity accomplishments points to the importance of context and of relationality in shaping identities, and of the possibilities and impossibilities of relationality that emerge in different contexts. In this assertion, she echoes Code, who notes that

Specific relationships and practices position each life at a nexus of many other lifelines and experiences, partially separate and partially interrelated and interdependent … People are never quite what they were or will be, in the multiplicity of the relationships – economic, social, political and environmental – that engage them. (Code 1991, 87)

In other words, different contexts comprise specific planes of encounter and nexus that will influence how individuals think of themselves and orient themselves between possible inclusions and exclusions. Subjectivities are coloured by these situated regimes of affiliations and belongings. They are also historicised in that they build on past stories and subjectivities. Mohanty reminds us: “The ‘unity’ of the individual subject … is situated and specified as the product of the interpretation of personal histories.” (2003, 83) Thus, elements of life stories – where a person is from, whom she has been – as well as actual circumstances – body, sexuality, family, financial and other resources, language – can present sites of encounter, identification and differentiation. These sites are juxtaposed and often contradictory within individual experiences. Valentine’s contribution to this theorizing is to insist on the spatiality of these situated accomplishments – how affiliation, recognition, and identification is rendered possible and impossible in different spatial and temporal moments. She insists that “individuals experience [constant movement] between
different subject positions, and the ways that 'who we are' emerges in interactions within specific spatial contexts and specific biographical moments” (Valentine 2007, 18).

Approaching Francophone mothers’ life stories in terms of spatially situated intersectional relationships leads to an understanding of the multiple ways in which migration, minority language, and mothering interweave in their lives – in their present in Kingston, and at other spatio-temporal moments of their trajectories. This approach helps reveal the crucial impacts of the reconfiguration of possibilities of belongings, affiliations, and inclusion when moving from ‘there’ (wherever that may be) to Kingston in shaping and shifting mothers’ identities and subjectivities. The story of Maryam illustrates such shifts and reconfigurations. Maryam grew up in France. Her parents were Muslim Maghrebin and moved to France during the 1960s to find employment. Neither of them developed full fluency in French, and the primary language between Maryam and her parents remained Arabic. She started learning French at three years old (the age at which children commence school in France) and French quickly became the language in which she was most fluent.

On parlait français à l'école, hop, on rentrait… surtout ma mère, elle parlait très peu le français, donc … on n'avait pas le choix, on devait parler arabe avec elle en fait, quoi. Moi j'ai grandi, tu sais, avec une mère qui parlait pas bien français, et même si je parlais arabe … je me souviens qu’au niveau de l’adolescence, il y a comme une sorte de rupture langagière avec ma mère. Et, c’est-à-dire que la conversation ne pouvait pas aller… atteindre certaines profondeurs avec ma mère. Moi j’avais pas le bagage langagier, en arabe, et elle avait pas le bagage langagier en français, pour qu’on se rencontre quelque part et qu’on ait des conversations profondes, quoi.2

2 We would speak French at school, hop, we would get home... especially my mother, she spoke very little French so... we didn’t have a choice, we had to speak Arabic with her, then. Me I grew up, you know, with a mother who didn’t speak well in French, and even if I spoke Arabic... I remember in my teenage years, there was a sort of linguistic rupture with my mother. Meaning that the conversation couldn’t go... get to certain depths with my mother. I didn’t have the language skills, in Arabic, and she didn’t have the language skills in French, for us to meet somewhere to have deep conversations, then.
In Maryam’s childhood and youth French language played an ambiguous role: being both her language of ease in daily life and deeper thoughts, and a site of rupture in her relationship with her parents, and particularly her mother. As well, if French was the dominant language of her public life, Arabic language and culture were woven deeply into filial relationships, family history, and latent places kept alive by her parents’ nostalgia for their country of origin and by their hope of moving back one day. In wider French society, Maryam grew up experiencing complex and interlocking cultural, linguistic, and religious minority identities, embedded in hegemonic racist and class-based discourses, policies, and practices marginalising Arabic (and stereotypically Arabic-looking) ethnicities.

Moi je me rappelle, j’ai eu des profs, pourtant on était quelques enfants issus de l’immigration dans la classe, mais les profs ils avaient un certain discours qui nous excluait de la classe. Je me rappelle, une prof une fois elle rendait des copies, elle avait fait un discours à la classe, et nous on se regardait, les arabes, on se regardait, mais… elle nous parle pas quoi. Tu te sens vraiment exclu. Elle leur avait dit « c'est inadmissible que ça soit les enfants d'étrangers qui soient meilleurs en français. » Elle parlait donc aux Français, nous on était des enfants d'étrangers donc on était des sortes de… satellites là, qui gravitent autour de la classe… Les arabes de ma génération … au collège qu'est-ce qui se passait, tout le temps on les évacuait vers les filières techniques. Dégagés tout le temps, ils allaient pas à l'université. Moi je me rappelle … des Arabes de ma classe, ils étaient très intelligents, mais… les parents ils sont analphabètes donc ils connaissent pas le système, hop, on les évacuait vers les BEP. Les filières techniques. Oh, il va faire plombier, électricien… C'est pas des politiques qui sont entrées dans le règlement du collège, mais c'est des choses qui sont implicites, et c'est ça le racisme qui est difficile à prouver.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) I remember I had teachers, and even though we were several children of immigrant parents, teachers adopted a discourse that excluded us from the class. I remember once a teacher, she was giving back marked papers, and she made a speech to the class, and we were looking at one another, the Arab kids, we were looking at one another, but... she’s not talking to us. You feel really excluded. She told them "it’s inadmissible that foreigners’ children are best in French". So she was talking to the French kids, we were foreigners’ children so we were some kind of... satellites, gravitating around the class... Arabs of my generation... once in college they were shunted towards technical programs. Always cast out, they didn’t go to university. I remember ... Arabs in my class, they were very intelligent, but... their parents were illiterate and didn’t know the system, hop, they were steered towards apprenticeships. Technical programs. Oh he’ll be a plumber, or an electrician... These are not policies written in the college regulations, but implicit things, and that’s the racism that’s hard to prove.
Maryam spent her childhood and youth in France negotiating ambiguous sites of affiliation and ostracism as a French-speaking French citizen of Arabic appearance and filiation. Importantly, Maryam’s family was also Muslim, a religion to which she has always been devoted. She began to wear the hijab as a teenager, at a time where French state policies around the regulation of religious symbols in public institutions – and particularly Muslim women’s veils – became more punitive. Maryam experienced increased surveillance and control of her body, and of her embodied religious affiliation, to the extent that she was eventually excluded from public school:

Moi je l’ai porté j’avais quinze ans et demi je crois mon foulard et… mes parents aussi ils voulaient pas. Je me rappelle à l’époque. Et surtout que… parce que moi je l’ai porté à la rentrée, en seconde, fin seconde … je me faisais jeter quoi. Donc mon père il était très perturbé, il me dit « pour un bout de chiffon tu vas sacrifier tes études... »

For Maryam, her faith in Islam, and the embodiment of her faith in the hijab, quickly became strong elements shaping her subjectivity. Ambiguous and conflictual encounters with both French public institutions and her parents, and daily experiences of exclusion and marginalisation, molded her identity as a young Muslim woman. Her marriage to a devout Muslim man and their joint project of building a Muslim family also reinforced her Muslim identity.

Maryam moved to Kingston fifteen years ago. A company in Kingston offered her husband a high-ranking position. Maryam herself has been mostly unemployed while in Kingston, partly because she wanted to devote herself to homemaking and the education of her two children, and partly due to the difficulties encountered by migrant Francophone mothers in finding qualified employment (as discussed in chapter 5). Upon arrival in Kingston, Maryam experienced a profound sense of isolation. It was through the mosque that she eventually developed a sense of

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4 I started wearing my head scarf [hijab] when I was fifteen and a half I think and... my parents, they didn’t want me to. I remember that time. And especially that... because I wore it at the beginning of the year, in Grade 10, and at the end of Grade 10... I was thrown out, then. So my father was very perturbed, he told me “for a piece of cloth you’re going to sacrifice your studies...”
belonging in Kingston. Islam had always been a significant element in her sense of self and of her social and familial bounds. In migrating to Kingston, Maryam mobilized her faith as an site of continuity that helped her maintain a coherent subjectivity in the face of the changes and marginalization of migration. Emerging friendships with other Muslim women reinforced her affiliation to the mosque, and reiterated her social identity as a Muslim woman. In this Maryam’s experience echoes Madibbo’s argument that “ethnic” (including minority religion) identities and belonging play “an important role in supporting [racialized immigrants] and cultivating their sense of self against the backdrop of imposed marginality” (Madibbo 2016, 861)

Maryam’s social, cultural, and subjective orientation towards the mosque may also have been crystallised by feelings of ostracism in Kingston. Although Maryam insists that there is no racism in Kingston (as compared to France), she nonetheless expresses a sense of unease with the social sur-visibility of her religious embodied affiliations, and most importantly her hijab.

Quand il se passe les attentats en France, ou en Belgique, j'ai vraiment peur... parce que moi quand... le lendemain, ou le jour même quand y'a ça, je vais à Costco, tout le monde me regarde de travers han... Surtout quand il y a des événements internationaux comme ça. Je suis pas la seule han, tu vas parler à d'autres qui sont voilées, on le sent toutes han... C'est pas quelque chose... d'objectif mais tu sens des sales regards han.5

Throughout our conversation, Maryam repeatedly stated that Canadian society is not racist. She substantiated this appreciation with many anecdotes where her identity as an Arabic-looking hijab wearing Muslim women did not prevent her from accessing social and economic opportunities the way it did when she lived in France. Although Maryam may not have witnessed many overt manifestations of racism in Kingston, racial ideologies remain powerful social forces.

5 When the terrorist attacks happen in France, or in Belgium, I get really afraid... because for me, when... the day after, or the very same day, I go to Costco, everybody looks at me funny, right... Especially when there are international events like that. I'm not the only one, right, you talk to others wearing a veil, we all feel it right... It's not something... objective, but you feel the dirty looks all right.
They disseminate beliefs about races and racialized individuals that are conditioned by White dominant experiences and interests and that assign hierarchical meanings to racial differences. Racism in Kingston, and more generally in Canada, upholds Euro-Canadian Whiteness as the norm against which racialized groups are constituted and characterized in stereotyped and oppressive ways, for example through association with different forms of violence and criminality (Madibbo 2006, 2009, 2016; Galabuzi 2011). In Maryam’s experience, as in the experiences of many Francophone Black immigrants in Canada (see Madibbo 2006, 2009, 2014, 2016), systemic and structural articulations of racism combine to undermine racialized people’s social legitimacy, opportunities, freedom, and power. Maryam felt that, as a Muslim woman with embodiments that differed visibly from dominant norms (being Arabic looking and wearing the hijab), her inclusion and even safety in the spaces of Kingston were always tenuous.

Feelings of marginalization, sur-visibility, and vulnerability infused Maryam’s experiences, including in Francophone places. She did not build many relationships within Francophone networks and institutions, even though French was the only language in which she considered herself to be fluent. At first, she did not know such networks and institutions existed. Eventually, her children started attending the Public French-language schools, but still she did not feel particularly drawn to these places, nor to the Francophone community within these places. She was acutely aware of the dominant White Christian norms of the Public French-language School, and of her otherness in the face of these norms (Gérin-Lajoie 2004; Madibbo 2006, 2009, 2016, see also Theoretical Context and chapter 7). Her understanding of her otherness, and of the social stories around Islam in Anglophone and Francophone Kingston alike – and more generally in Europe and North America – translated in a sense of watchfulness and fragility, also felt in the Public French-language schools.
c'était à la rentrée… il y a une Pakistanaise, elle est venue avec sa fille. Donc c'était une petite fille de cinq ans, quatre ans… Moi, qui suis Musulmane, j'étais extrêmement choquée. La fille, la petite, elle est venue avec un foulard sur la tête. J'étais, mais… j'en revenais pas … et je me rappelle, il y avait une des éducatrices … elle aussi donc elle la voit arriver, et j'ai vu le choc … donc moi j'ai essayé de parler un petit peu avec la mère. Donc on parle, je lui dis « elle est pas… un peu trop jeune pour que tu lui fasses porter ça ? » Elle me dit « c'est elle qui veut. Elle veut porter ça, elle veut faire comme maman. » Je lui dis « tu sais, moi aussi ma fille quand elle était petite elle faisait ça. Mais je lui dis, quand dehors, hop tu l'enlèves » … Elle se rend pas compte, du pouvoir que ce geste, ce qu’il peut avoir dans le reste de la société. … Je te dis mais la prof si elle pouvait se liquéfiée là… elle se serait liquéfiée. Elle était… choquée.\footnote{It was the beginning of the school year… There was a Pakistani woman, she came with her daughter. So she was a little girl of five, maybe four years old… Myself, a Muslim, I was extremely rattled. The daughter, the little girl, she came with a scarf on her head. I was, but… I couldn’t get over it… And I remember, there was one teaching assistant… so she saw her coming as well, and I saw the shock… so I tried to speak a little bit with the mother. So we’re talking, and I tell her “isn’t she… a little too young for you to make her wear this?” She tells me “it’s she who wants to. She wants to wear it, to do just like mummy.” I tell her “you know, my daughter as well, when she was young she would do that. But I told her, when outside, right, you take it off” … She doesn’t realize, the power of this gesture, what it can do in the rest of society… I tell you, the teacher, if she could have disappeared… she would have disappeared. She was… horrified.}

Maryam’s insistence on the « pouvoir de ce geste, ce qu’il peut avoir dans le reste de la société »\footnote{the power of this gesture, what it can do in the rest of society} illustrates her incessant awareness of the ways narratives dissonant with her daily lived experiences are imposed on female Muslim bodies. These narratives complicate and block safe access to public space and threaten social inclusion and safety for her religious community as a whole. She dreads that, in this social context, what she and the other Muslim mothers could consider a game (“faire comme maman”\footnote{to do just like mummy}) would be taken as a confirmation of Islamophobic stereotypes dominant in Western world around oppression of girls and women. Her sense that she must remain incessantly vigilant, and police her own and other Muslim women and girls’ self-presentation to avoid exacerbating their marginalization, makes it impossible for Maryam to develop feelings of comfort and familiarity in the French language school (see also Madibbo 2016). Thus, even though Francophone places are the only places outside of her household where
she can communicate in French, the one language she feels most fluent, they do not offer her familiarity, safety and belonging.

Upon arriving in Kingston, Maryam yearned to find a “home”, “a secure place from which to speak, within which to act”, infused with “sense of coherent group identity, commonality, and shared experience” (Mohanty 2003, 101 & 99). She turned to the mosque, and the networks of friendships of Maghrebin women who gravitated around the Muslim community. Finding ‘home’ there was difficult, and Maryam felt ostracised on the basis of her French background and filiation, and of her linguistic barriers in English and in Arabic.

J’avais l’impression que j’étais ni de là, ni de là, quoi. Ni vraiment arabe. Parce que les arabes me faisaient remarquer aussi que… c’est bizarre, ton accent et tout… et puis y’a un décalage culturel aussi… J’ai dit une fois à mon mari « je me suis vraiment cassé les dents, à tous les niveaux, quand je suis venue à Kingston, quoi. » J’étais pas anglophone, donc pas intégrée de ce côté, mais pas aussi arabe, aussi. C’est un ami, une fois, il m’a fait la remarque, il m’a dit « t’es différente, han, toi ». Et moi, je pense que lui il l’avait dit de façon positive, mais moi je l’ai mal pris. Parce que moi je voulais absolument fit in tu vois… Donc pour moi ça a été une autre bataille, parce que je devais perfectionner mon arabe, souvent j’avais des réflexions sur mon accent aussi… De mes ami.es arabes ouais. Ah oui! « Pourquoi tu parles arabe avec cet accent toi, d’où tu viens? ». Donc toujours allez hop! On se justifie! Et souvent y’a des gens qui… pour eux c’est bizarre, une arabe, qui parle pas arabe quoi.  

Finding ‘home’ in Kingston Muslim community was complicated further by the differences in life stories, and particularly experiences of migrating to Kingston, between Maryam and many of the women she met. The Muslim community, very much like the Francophone community, is

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9 I had the feeling I was neither from there, nor from there. Not really Arab. Because Arab folks would remark upon... it's funny, your accent and all... and there is a cultural gap as well... Once I told my husband “I really hit a wall, on all fronts, when I came to Kingston all right”. I wasn’t Anglophone, so didn’t integrate on that front, but not Arab-speaking, either. It’s a friend, once, he noticed, he told me “your different, right, you”. And me, I think he meant it in a good way, but I took it badly. Because I absolutely wanted to fit in you know... So for me it was another battle, because I had to perfect my Arabic, and often I had reflections on my accent as well... From my Arab friends yes. Oh yes! "Why do you speak Arabic with that accent, where are you from?" So always, go! You justify yourself! And often there are people... for them it’s weird, an Arab woman, who doesn’t speak Arabic, you know.
comprised mostly of individuals and families who migrated to Kingston to follow an economic opportunity or to study. Thus, migration can be a common experience that crystallizes bonds of shared identity as Muslims. However, the meanings and outcomes of migration differ widely in different life stories (and often between members of the same household, an idea elaborated in chapters 5 and 7). Most of the women Maryam met through Muslim networks had not come from European countries, or French-speaking ones. Importantly, they expressed positive feelings about their migration to Kingston, which contrasted sharply with Maryam’s general impression of loss and regression. These differences exacerbated her feeling of dissonance and marginalisation within these networks.

Maryam’s experience of migration is a deep source of grief. For her, coming to Kingston resulted in linguistic and cultural exclusion, isolation, and the loss of professional and social opportunities: an important step back, never to be recovered. These feelings were neither shared nor recognized, and even less embraced, by the women she met within the Muslim community in

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10 I realized that... there was a cultural divergence with these women because me, to begin with, I grew up in France. I came from another society. They grew up in Arabic countries. I get the impression that, when they came to Canada, it was a step up. They upgraded in fact. But... for me my impression is that when I came... not to Canada... when I say Canada I feel like I’m talking nonsense. When I came to Kingston I feel that I downgraded. And so I have a friend who called me Grouchy Smurf *laughing* She said “nothing is to her liking here”. And my other friend, a Moroccan who lived in France for a while, she said “listen, she’s from France. She’s used to something else.”
Kingston. Her affiliation and identification with this community implied great compromises, both in putting aside important feelings and elements of her sense of self, and in adopting different cultural and linguistic traits to ameliorate her inclusion and cohesion within the group. In particular, this implied a massive investment in her Arabic skills.

Au début je comprenais pas les Égyptiens, je comprenais pas les Syriens, je comprenais pas les Jordaniens…là j'ai une copine égyptienne, elle dit tout le temps, quand elle me présente « Oh mon Dieu, si vous aviez connu Maryam y'a quinze ans. » Au niveau langagier, elle me dit maintenant tu m'impressionnes … maintenant je comprends leurs dialectes et… je me débrouille bien en arabe. Ah oui, tu vas rire, moi, je suis venue à Kingston, au niveau anglais c'est peut-être… c'est resté pareil, mais au niveau arabe ma courbe de croissance est exceptionnelle! *rires* Je suis venue à Kingston pour apprendre l'arabe.\footnote{At first I didn’t understand Egyptians, I didn’t understand Syrians, I didn’t understand Jordanians... Now I have an Egyptian friend, she always says, when she introduces me, “oh my God, if you’d known Maryam fifteen years ago.” In terms of language, she says now you impress me... now I understand their dialects and... I get along fine in Arabic. Oh yes, you’re going to laugh, me, I came to Kingston, in terms of English maybe... it stayed the same, but in terms of Arabic my learning curve is exceptional! *laughing* I came to Kingston to learn Arabic.}

The meaning of Maryam’s Arabic background, and her practice of the Arabic language, drastically changed following migration. Initially an ambiguous element of her life anchored in family and past migration, in the spaces of Kingston it became a primary site of possible social identification and affiliation to a community. Maryam’s story illustrates that migration entails navigating shifting possibilities and impossibilities of affiliation and identification. At the time of our conversation, Maryam’s subjectivity was woven out of the loss of networks, the impossibility of feeling at ease in Francophone places, her exclusion from the wider Anglophone social world (also accountable to her full-time mothering, as discussed in chapter 5), and her primary identification with the mosque and the Muslim community. These relationships both reinforce and transform her subjectivity as a racialized Muslim woman, enhancing the importance of Arabic as a vector of inclusion and as an element of her identity.
Maryam’s life story is certainly coloured by her position at the crossroad of multiple categories of difference: as a woman, as a Muslim, and as a racialized individual. However, it would not do justice to the complexities and ambiguities of her experiences to think of this crossroad as fixed. In Maryam’s life, specific embodied differences were exacerbated and waned at different times, and she renegotiated categorical boundaries in different contexts. Her various identifications around religion, race, language, and gender presented her with opportunities of affiliation with people “who have a lot in common” (Huot and Veronis 2017, 8) in some places and relationships: the mosque, her friendships with other Muslim women, and to some extent the Francophone community (after all, she did identify to me as a Francophone mother). Conversely, different settings marginalized and excluded particular intersections of her identifications: her lack of English skills in Kingston; her Muslim Arabic embodied identity in dominant Anglophone and Francophone space; and her French language, background, and migration history in relationships with other Kingston Muslims (see Buitelaar 2006; Madibbo 2016). Much as Valentine (2007) argues, a history of emplaced encounters shaped Maryam’s subjectivity: in Kingston, in France, in latent places of Maghreb as well as in imaginary places where she would rather have been.

**Non-linearity and multiplicity of space and trajectories**

Maryam’s story illustrates that identities and subjectivities are relational (born of encounters and possibilities of identification and affiliation) and spatial (those encounters and possibilities are emplaced). Feminist geographers argue that not only are identities spatially constituted, but that identities and space are co-constituted through interactions (see Massey 1994, 1999, 2004; McDowell 1999; Rose 1999). Further, for Massey, if space is produced through interactions and
interrelations, then space is necessarily “predicated upon the existence of plurality” (Massey 1999; 280). The plurality of space, she argues, is anchored in the multiplicity of narratives and trajectories and in their non-linearity. In theorizing the plurality of space, Massey aims to take a stance against conceptualizations of place that promote homogenizing narratives and strict boundedness, as well as against teleological views of places and spatial relationships (Massey 1994, 2005). Massey’s ideas are helpful to my analysis of Francophone mothers’ life stories and subjectivities, as they point to the multiplicity and the non-linearity of trajectories that weave space and identities. In her words:

Space is the sphere of the possibility of existence of multiplicity, the sphere in which distinct narratives co-exist, the sphere of the possibility of the existence of more than one voice. … It implies the existence of trajectories which are not simply alignable into one linear story. … [Space] is the sphere of both their independence (co-existence) and of their interrelation (Massey 1999, 279, 281 & 283).

Life stories of Francophone mothers not only weave trajectories that imply trans-formations of subjectivities anchored in shifting possibilities of identification and dis-identification, as we saw with Maryam, but these trajectories are also multiple and multi-directional. This means that the space they produce, and the places that emerge from them, are inherently plural.

Agnes’s account well demonstrates the plurality and non-linearity of trajectories even within a single family following the same migration trajectory. Agnes came originally from Baie-Comeau and, following crises in her family, decided to move to Ottawa with her three-year-old daughter. At the time of her move, she had very little English, and her daughter had none. She chose to move to Ottawa as she had a close teenage friend living in the city upon whom she felt she could rely “pour m’aider à m’installer et tout ça, et dans les coups durs…”12 Upon moving, she registered

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12 To help me settle and all that, and for the rough times...
with social assistance, and started attending in a French-language post-secondary education institution. Meanwhile her daughter started to attend an Anglophone daycare, to which she was assigned through provincial social assistance programs.

Je restais dans l’ouest d’Ottawa … et puis il y avait une école française tout près d’où je restais, l’école française était plus proche que la garderie où j’allais conduire ma fille chaque matin. Pis cette école-là avait une garderie francophone et je le savais pas. Aussi, parce que j’ai dû être sur l’aide sociale, pendant le temps de mes études, ben c’est l’aide sociale qui m’a trouvée une place en garderie. Pis quand y’a eu de la place c’était une garderie anglophone, alors… Je connaissais pas la francophonie hors Québec, alors… j’étais pas en position de dire non. Pis je me disais « ça va être bon pour la petite qu’elle apprenne l’anglais tsé, ça va être plus facile maintenant que plus tard. »

Coming to Ottawa implied a brusque shift in Agnes’ daughter’s linguistic trajectory, at least in the context of her daycare, which comprised a very important part of her life. The motivation for this shift lay not in Agnes’ preferences. Although she decided to make the best out of the situation and take it as an opportunity for her daughter to learn English, her decision to send her daughter to the Anglophone daycare was determined by her dependence on the institutional structures of the social assistance program and on her perceived lack of choice around what the services offered. Agnes’ belief that she lacked choice was also linked to her limited knowledge of the geography of Ottawa, of her neighbourhood, and, more generally, of the reality of Francophone rights and services in Ontario. Like many Québécois.es who spent most of their lives in the province of Québec, Agnes had no prior knowledge of the continued existence of Francophone populations and struggles outside of Québec. Importantly, she was also unaware of the vast

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13 I lived in the West side of Ottawa … and then there was a French-language school very close to where I lived, the French-language school was closer than the daycare I brought my daughter to every morning. And in that school there was a Francophone daycare and I didn’t know. Also, because I had to be on social assistance for the duration of my studies, well it was social assistance that found me a spot in daycare. And when there was a spot it was in an Anglophone daycare, so... I didn’t know about Francophonie outside of Québec, so... I wasn’t in a position to say no. And I thought “it will be good for the little one to learn English, you know, it will be easier now then later.”
institutional differences in governmental programs and structures between Québec and other
Canadian provinces, particularly in terms of education:

Ma référence c’était le système d’éducation au Québec. Faque quand ils m’ont parlé à
la garderie de… kindergarten, moi je comprenais pas ce que c’était… le junior pis tout
cça, je comprenais pas ça, faque je pensais que c’était quelque chose qu’il fallait payer.
Alors… je parlais très très peu anglais, donc j’ai pas bien compris, et je pouvais la
laisser en garderie, faque je l’ai laissée en garderie, plutôt que de l’envoyer au jardin,
et quand ça a été le temps, dans ma tête à moi, de la maternelle… qu’eux autres c’est le… eux autres c’est la maternelle, ensuite c’est le jardin? En tout cas. Faque là j’étais
complètement confuse par rapport à ça. Mais quand je suis arrivée pour l’inscrire au
jardin [à l’école de langue française], le directeur d’école m’a fait tout un chapitre là,
sur l’assimilation pis tout ça….14

The city of Ottawa presents a peculiar context in terms of provincial governmental
institutions. Expanding on both sides of the frontier between the provinces of Québec and Ontario,
the city houses two governmental systems and logics that coexist in close proximity (Gilbert et al
2014). For new residents, this dual structure can offer a variety of opportunities (linguistic and
otherwise) linked to each system’s policies and practices, present within their specific places of
jurisdiction: Ottawa for Ontario, and Hull/Gatineau for Québec (Veronis 2014, 2015; Veronis and
Ray 2014). Upon arriving in Ottawa, however, Agnes experienced several constraints that hindered
her negotiation across the spaces of Ottawa and Gatineau/Hull, and thus across the two linguistic
systems, at least in terms of choosing her daughter’s daycare. Being a single parent of a toddler,
studying full-time, and subsisting on social assistance left her very little time, energy and resources
to question, and eventually reform, an arrangement that, on the whole, she felt was tolerable.

14 My reference was Québec’s education system. So when they talked to me at daycare about… kindergarten, I
didn’t understand what it was… Junior and all that, I didn’t understand that, I thought it was something I had to
pay for. So… I spoke very very little English, so I didn’t understand properly, and I could leave her in daycare, so I
left her in daycare, instead of sending her to maternelle [French-language Junior Kindergarten], and when it was
time, in my head, of kindergarten... that for them it’s... for them it’s maternelle [French-language Junior
Kindergarten], and then jardin [French-language Senior Kindergarten]? Anyway. So then I was completely confused
about that. But when I came to register her to jardin [French-language Senior Kindergarten] [at the French-
language school], the school principal gave me quite the lecture then, about assimilation and all that...
Ironically, her lack of English also prevented her from accessing French educational services for her daughter earlier, as she didn’t have the linguistic skills to understand the daycare workers’ suggestion that her daughter start school a year earlier in maternelle (Junior Kindergarten). Coming from a context of rural Québec, where French language was the taken for granted background of daily life, she also was unfamiliar with the narrative of Ontario Francophone minority anchored in linguistic precarity and struggles (see Lévesque, Croteau, and Gani 2015 and Theoretical Context and chapter 7.) Her decision lead to a clash with the French-language school principal that was, for her, completely unforeseen. Agnes’ perception of the spaces of Ottawa and, ensuing from this, of her options for her and her daughter, was anchored in a particular epistemology shaped by her migration trajectory, and the combining of experiences and knowledge of Baie-Comeau and Ottawa and, more generally, of Québec and Ontario. Agnes’ trajectory, in turn, shaped her daughter’s linguistic experiences, namely her experience of the spaces of Ottawa as Anglophone.

Ça a été difficile les premiers mois parce qu’elle était la seule petite francophone avec quarante-quatre petits anglophones. Pis y’avait seulement une éducatrice qui était bilingue, pis moi en pensant bien faire j’ai dit à l’éducatrice « tu vas la comprendre mais je veux pas que tu lui parles en français parce que je veux qu’elle apprenne l’anglais ». Et y’a fallu qu’elle emmagasine un certain nombre de vocabulaire, et… à un moment donné elle a mordu un autre enfant. Parce que elle pouvait pas s’exprimer jusqu’à temps que… qu’elle puisse dire « don’t touch ». Faque quand elle a compris, « tu dis ‘don’t touch’ », elle a pu faire son territoire, après ça elle a déboulé là, elle a débloqué.  

While in Ottawa Agnes spent her time mostly within Francophone places, namely her school and social networks. Meanwhile, for her daughter, the spaces of Ottawa that, as a three-year-old

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15 It was tough the first months because she was the only little Francophone with forty-four little Anglophones. And there was only one daycare worker who was bilingual, and me I thought I was doing well by telling her “you will understand her but I don’t want you to talk to her in French because I want her to learn English.” And so she had to learn some words, and... at one time she bit another child. Because she couldn’t express herself until she... she could say “don’t touch”. So when she understood, “you say ‘don’t touch,’” she could make her own territory, and after that she ramped up, she was unblocked.
child, were centered upon her daycare, were only accessible once she mastered enough English to be able to “faire son territoire.” 16 These linguistic relationships to space changed drastically when mother and daughter moved to Kingston at the end of Agnes’ studies to follow a job opportunity in a local Francophone institution. Although she did her work mostly in French, being in Kingston brought acute linguistic shock for Agnes.

On pouvait pas espérer que tout le monde allait parler français… Y’avait des rencontres avec des gens qui étaient unilingues [anglophones] là, faque fallait que je l’apprenne pis que je le pratique pis que je développe mon anglais… C’était pu des cours là… des cours de langue, c’était la vraie affaire. … Pis à Ottawa quand j’étais tannée… je traversais à Hull, je traversais à Gatineau. Si je voulais acheter quelque chose pis que je trouvais ça trop compliqué de négocier en anglais, je me sentais pas capable de le faire, je traversais la rivière. Mais là ici la rivière était pas mal loin *rires*

17 For Agnes, being in Kingston represented a brusque and difficult immersion in English. It meant having to speak a language on a regular basis in which she was uncomfortable, but also an inescapable feeling of isolation and ostracism.

Quand je suis arrivée à Kingston, ben c’est ça, les seuls postes à la télévision c’était Radio Canada français et TFO. … Y’en avait pas. Y’en avait pas, donc… là le choc, là ça a été, ben comment je communique? …. Donc… ça j’ai trouvé ça difficile…. Ça m’est arrivée que les gens, ils me comprenaient pas, parce qu’ils comprenaient pas l’accent, ou même si je faisais des efforts pour parler, ils comprenaient pas… Aussi ils comprenaient pas que je leur parlais en anglais mais que ma fille me parlait en français. Ils me regardaient là, pareil que si j’étais une extra-terrestre là. « Why does she speak French? » ou « What language is she speaking?» 18

16 Make her own territory
17 You couldn’t expect everyone to speak French… There were meetings with people who were unilingual [Anglophone] then, so I had to learn and practice and develop my English… It wasn’t courses anymore… language courses, it was the real thing… And in Ottawa when I was sick of it… I would cross over to Hull, I would cross over to Gatineau. If I wanted to buy something and I felt it was too complicated to negotiate it in English, I felt I couldn’t do it, I would cross the river. But now the river was quite far… *laughter*
18 When I arrived in Kingston, that’s what it was, the only channels on television were French CBC and TFO … There wasn’t any. There just wasn’t any, so then the shock, then it was, well how do I communicate? … So… that I found difficult… It happened to me that people, they didn’t understand me, because they didn’t understand the accent, or even if I made efforts to speak, they didn’t understand… Also they didn’t understand that I wouldn’t speak to them in English and that my daughter would speak to me in French. They looked at me then, as if I was an alien you know. “Why does she speak French?” or “What language is she speaking?”
If Agnes’ experiences of Kingston entailed the shock of sudden immersion in a context of Anglophone majority and a feeling of marginality, her daughter’s experiences followed quite a different trajectory. Upon arriving in Kingston, Agnes registered her daughter in a Francophone daycare for the summer and in a French-language school for the following fall. Now a 5-year-old child, her daughter had spent the last two years, almost half of her life, in a social setting that was exclusively Anglophone. For her, coming to Kingston also represented an important linguistic shift, but from English to French.

Les autres enfants parlaient français, pis les éducatrices aussi, donc… y’avait pas d’enjeux de langue … mais tsé y’a des choses aussi bêtes que… quand elle était plus jeune, quand elle était en garderie anglophone, des mots qu’elle a appris pis qu’elle a été capable de retenir, si elle l’avait appris en anglais elle le savait pas en français. Tsé comme ‘bonhomme de neige’, elle l’avait pas. C’était snowman. … Elle les avait appris dans un environnement anglophone, donc sa référence était là. … Quand elle arrivait pour m’expliquer des affaires des fois elle était obligée de me le dire en anglais parce que là… Je disais « je comprends pas ce que tu me dis, ce que t’essaies de me dire. » Faque je disais « dis le en anglais. Le sais-tu en anglais? » faque là elle me disait « oui », faque je disais « ben ok, dis le en anglais ».19

For Agnes’ daughter, coming to Kingston also represented a bifurcation in her linguistic trajectory. As she had always spoken French with her mother, the transition was perhaps less traumatic that when she started attending daycare in English in Ottawa. Nonetheless, she went through an important shift in the linguistic settings of the dominant social world in her life. And although Agnes’ daughter’s experiences of linguistic transitions in moving to Kingston may not have entailed the same sense of marginalization as her mother’s, she nevertheless did have to

19 The other kids spoke French, and the daycare workers too, so... there were no linguistic issues... but you know there are silly things like... when she was younger, when she was in an Anglophone daycare, the words she had learned and had been able to remember, if she had learned it in English she didn’t know it in French. You know like ‘bonhomme de neige’ [snowman], she didn’t have it. It was snowman. ... She had learned it in an Anglophone environment, so her reference was there... When she wanted to explain things to me sometimes she had to say it in English because otherwise... I would tell her “I don’t understand what you are saying, what you are trying to say.” So I would say “say it in English. Do you know how to say it in English?” so then she would say “yes”, so I would say “well ok, say it in English”.

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readjust her social position within new linguistic dynamics and to redefine herself as a Francophone child, inclined to use English expressions, in a Francophone minority educational institution.

The story of Agnes and her daughter points to the possibility of a plurality of trajectories and narratives within a household of two, following similar general landmarks: Baie-Comeau, Ottawa, Kingston. More specifically, the story highlights two interesting spatial phenomena ensuing from this plurality. The first one is that although Agnes and her daughter’s linguistic trajectories run in different directions, they also entail difficult moments of linguistic dis-identification and ostracism at different times: Agnes in Kingston; and her daughter in the Anglophone daycare in Ottawa and, to a much lesser extent, in the Francophone daycare and school in Kingston. Secondly, through these plural trajectories, the space of Kingston acquires a density of meaning. It is both a site of exclusion from the English majority for Agnes, and a site of Francophone immersion and revival for her daughter.

Importantly, Agnes and her daughter’s story indicate that there is no linearity, no one clear sense of logical progression, in the linguistic trajectories that meet in Kingston. Of course, the trajectories of Agnes and her daughter are interlinked, but the causal relations between them are not straightforward. Multiple elements, such as Agnes’ knowledge and beliefs at different times, the structures and regimes of truth of institutions she encountered, and elements of sheer chance, came into play so that her life and her daughter’s life unfolded in unexpected ways with linguistic experiences and meanings that could hardly have been foreseen. These trajectories coexist in space and collude in producing space that is plural and non-linear.


Places and identities as relational processes

The ideas explored above of intersectionality as spatial lived experience, and of the multiplicity and non-linearity of space, point to a backdrop conceptualization of space as relational: that is, of space as the product and the unfolding of interactions (Massey 1994; 1999). Thinking of space in terms of interrelations implies two things. Firstly, the multiple is contemporaneous. Multiple narratives are taking place simultaneously and, as we saw with Agnes and her daughter, they pull in different directions. Secondly, conceiving the relationality of space implies understanding identities and places as processes that are co-constituted with space, “not through the closures of counterpositional boundedness, but through … links and relations.” (Massey 1999, 288). For Massey, places are articulations through which networks of relationships stretching both far and near (the global and the local) are materialized (Massey 1994; 2004). In her paper Geographies of Responsibilities (2004), she uses Latour’s example of the railway to illustrate the groundedness and emplacement of relationships that are both articulated locally – in the railway stations, the workers, and the power dynamics that structure their labour, the important history of local development, etc. – and globally – as the railway connects faraway destinations. This example points to two ideas: that the ‘global’ is material and grounded and, more germane to my analysis, that place is produced through the embodiment and materiality of relationships. Combined with feminist geographers’ argument that identities and places are co-constituted (see McDowell 1999), Massey’s conceptualization of place as articulation of interaction leads to an understanding of places and identities as material and embodied products that are perpetually emerging together at “the intersection of disparate trajectories” (Massey 2004, 3).

To illustrate these relational processes of places and identities I use the story of Brigitte. Brigitte grew up in Kapuskasing, a town in Northern Ontario with a majority Francophone
population. Her husband, Henri, is from Kingston. They met when he moved to Kapuskasing to complete a contract as a human resource consultant with a local forestry company. Although Henri’s father was Anglophone, his mother was Francophone originally from Québec. She moved to Kingston as a young woman and had her family there. She was very active in advocating for the development of the French-language elementary school Rémi-Gaulin. In Kapuskasing, Henri’s work unfolded mostly in French, and the networks he built there were mostly Francophone. Brigitte and Henri met as Francophones and established their relationship within her family and friendship networks, all in French.

Four years into their relationship, Henri’s father in Kingston became gravely ill. Henri asked Brigitte if they could move back to Kingston with their one-year-old son. « J’ai dit « ok… je suis correcte avec ça, mais pour le petit? L’école francophone? » Il dit « maman est une des fondatrices de l’école francophone. » Faque ça, ça m’a beaucoup soulagée, parce que je voulais que le petit soit parfaitement bilingue.20 » Brigitte agreed to move to Kingston because she felt confident there would be a French-speaking social world in which she and her son could integrate. She had always known her husband as a Francophone and she accepted the narrative of her husband’s mother as an advocate and pioneer of French-language education in Kingston. She also felt that, on the long run, her son could access more opportunity in Kingston then in Kapuskasing.

Le petit avait plus de chances ici aussi… tsé si je regarde, l’université Queen’s, aller à Ottawa, Toronto… tsé on est plus proches, aussi. Ben même si il veut faire des études aux États, on est collés … Ça pour moi c’était gros. Comme je t’ai dit je voulais avoir une école francophone, pis quand que Henri m’a mentionné ça… Pis aussi plus tard,

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20 I said “ok… I’m ok with that, but what about the little one? The French-language school?” He said “mom is one of the founders of Francophone school.” So that, I felt much relieved, because I wanted the little one to be perfectly bilingual.
si il voulait aller à un collège, ou une université, c’est où les gros centres, que les jeunes vont. Tsé… Pis je veux qu’il aille plus de choix. Peu importe ce qu’il veut faire…

Brigitte felt that in moving to Kingston she was getting the best of both worlds: she was giving her son access to opportunities and choices, and she would remain in a linguistic environment in which he would develop strong linguistic skills in both French and English. Once in Kingston, she felt disillusioned. « Je les trouve pas les choix, dans la communauté francophone. C’est difficile… C’est comme qu’ils disent, few and far between… Quand on est arrivé ici des activités francophones y’en avait pas pour lui. Faque tout le temps qu’il était bébé, c’est vraiment anglais là. » In Kingston she had difficulty finding French-language activities for her son, and Francophone social networks that she and her son could share.

This experience of linguistic break was exacerbated by their living on Amherst Island, rather then in a more central location in Kingston. Amherst Island is located 10km west of Kingston and is host to a close-knit community of around 450 people. Henri had grown up on the island and his extended family on his Anglophone father’s side was still an important element of the population. Living on the island had the double effect of mostly limiting Brigitte and her son’s daily social encounters to the other islanders, and of setting the vast majority of their interactions in an Anglophone context.

Tsé à Amherst Island, c’est anglais, Kingston c’est anglais… faque… c’est difficile… Tous ses cousins cousines proches étaient anglophones! Sur le côté à Henri… il a ses cousins à lui, et eux ont des petits enfants, et eux c’est strictement anglophone. Sur Amherst Island. Faque pour [mon fils] sont anglophones. Bon un de ses cousins a

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21 The little one had more chances here too… You know if I look at it, Queen’s University, going to Ottawa, Toronto… You know we’re closer, too. So even if he wants to study in the US, we’re close by… For me it was big. As I told you I wanted to have a French-language school, and when Henry mentioned it to me… And also later, if he wanted to go to a college, or a university, where the big centers are, where young people go. You know… And I want him to have more choices. No matter what he wants to do…

22 I don’t find them, the choices, in the francophone community. It’s hard… It’s like they say, few and far between… When we got here there were no francophone activities for him. So all the while he was a baby, it was really English then.
envoyé ses enfants en French immersion, à l’école Cathédrale … faque leurs petits garçons vont là, mais c’est pas pareil. Parce que… y’auront pas l’instinct de parler tout de suite en français avec mon fils. Pis vice-versa là. Parce que lui il a grandi… sont anglais là. Les petits garçons sont anglais.23

Living in Kingston, and more particularly in the somewhat secluded spaces of Amherst Island, and belonging to a family network that was almost strictly Anglophone represented an abrupt shift in Brigitte and her son’s linguistic experience. From a context of Francophone majority in Kapuskasing, they were now in a context of overwhelming Anglophone majority. As well, daily lived family relations unfolded now within Henri’s kin network on his Anglophone father side. This meant that, for Brigitte’s son, the language of affiliation and family belonging also switched from French to English, compromising in the young child’s mind the pertinence of maintaining a Francophone linguistic practice.

Tsé il parle le français, il va le lire, mais… au commencement il était ben gêné. Parce que tout le monde dans son entourage parlait anglais. Sauf sa grand-mère. Pis moi. Pis Dad, son père. Faque c’est difficile. Il me parlait, et je lui parlais français, et à méné il arrêtait, et je lui disais « non on continue en français », et il me disait « je suis tanné… » Et moi je disais mais « c’est important là, c’est ta culture francophone… » Il disait « non… »24

In addition to feeling the need to struggle to maintain her son’s relationship and commitment to French, on Amherst Island Brigitte also encountered a different socio-linguistic subjectivity in her husband. Henri’s ties to the community on the island had always been through a family network

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23 You know Amherst Island, it’s Anglophone, Kingston, it’s Anglophone… so… it’s hard… All his close cousins were Anglophone! On Henri’s side… he has his cousins, and they have grand children, and for them it’s strictly Anglophone. On Amherst Island. So for [my son] they are Anglophone. Well, one of the cousin sent his children to French immersion, at Cathedral school … So their little boys go there, but it’s not the same. Because… they won’t instinctively speak in French right away with my son. And vice-versa you know. Because for him he grew up… they are Anglophone you know. The little boys are Anglophones.

24 You know he speaks French, he will read it, but… at first he was very shy. Because everyone in his surrounding spoke English. Except for his grand-mother. And me. And Dad, his dad. So it’s difficult. He would speak to me, and I would speak French, and after a while he would stop, and I would tell him “no we keep going in French”, and he would tell me “I’m tired of it…” And me I would say “it’s important, it’s your francophone culture…” He would say “no…”
in which English was the dominant, and almost only, language. Within this network, and throughout the Island, he was known as an Anglophone, even though his mother was Francophone and he himself was bilingual. This linguistic subjectivity contrasted sharply with the one he had adopted and performed when he and Brigitte met, and all through their time in Kapuskasing.

C’était bizarre, les premières fois que je suis arrivée sur l’île Amherst, parce que … quand que les personnes parlent à mon mari ils l’appellent… son nom c’est Henri [ɔʁi], mais ils l’appellent Henry [ˈhɛn.iː]. Moi quand que j’arrive dans le décor, je vais dire « ah, have you seen Henri? [ɔʁi] » Je le dis en français. Mais là… c’est qui Henri [ɔʁi]? Faque là ça a pris un bout, mais là finalement quand j’arrive pis je dis son nom, ou que je parle en français ben sont pu surpris là. Sont comme « ah, ça c’est la femme à Henry [ˈhɛn.iː]. » *rires*25

Coming to Amherst Island implied a parting in the linguistic trajectories and subjectivities of Brigitte, her son, and her husband. Her husband went back from his Henri [ɔʁi] interlude in Kapuskasing to being Henry [ˈhɛn.iː] once more. Her son switched an important part of his linguistic affiliation and belonging from French to English. Brigitte, however, could not command the same plasticity in her linguistic subjectivity even if she wanted to. Being on Amherst Island thus implied embodying a minority identity.

Pis une fois j’avais envoyé Henri au petit magasin, je lui dis « Henri tu peux-tu aller me chercher… » c’était du Pepsi pis tsé là, les petits gâteaux, caramels … Faque là il rentre, pis c’est ça qu’il demande, mais y’avait le Pepsi mais y’avait pas les petits gâteaux Vachon. Faque là la caissière elle dit « ah ta femme est assez francophone… » *rires* Ils en ont commandés pis j’en ai eus *rires* Je savais pas que c’était une affaire francophone mais ça a l’air que oui là *rires* … Faque ça c’était drôle. Pis là je suis considérée la French girl à Amherst Island.26

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25 It’s weird, the first times I came to Amherst Island, because… when people talk to my husband they call him… his name is Henri [ɔʁi], but they call him Henry [ˈhɛn.iː]. So when I come by, I’ll say “ah, have you seen Henri [ɔʁi]?” I say it in French. But then… who is Henri [ɔʁi]? So then it took a while, but now finally when I come by and I say his name, or I speak in French, they’re not surprised anymore. They’re like “ah, this is Henry’s [ˈhɛn.iː] wife.” *laughing*

26 And once I sent Henri to the little store, I tell him “Henri can you go get me…” it was some Pepsi and you know, those little cakes, caramel… So then he gets in, and that’s what he asks, but they had Pepsi but they didn’t have those Vachon little cakes. So then the cashier she said “ah your wife is so Francophone…” *laughing* They ordered
Although Brigitte had lived all of her life prior to coming to Kingston in Ontario, she had never felt such a sense of minority and othering, as good humored as it might be. In her narrative, she places this feeling in the spaces of Kingston and contrasts it with the feeling of comfort and ease associated with her hometown, where Francophones formed an important enough proportion of the population for the common intelligibility of French to be taken for granted. « Comme quand je suis à Kapuskasing, ok là, là je suis ben là. On parle comme qu’on veut, pis c’est correct, pis tout ça… 27 »

In Kingston, and particularly on Amherst Island, Brigitte not only felt that she was cast into a subjectivity of difference and minority, she also felt that she was going through this experience alone. Feeling that she was being othered, while her husband, as a native of Amherst Island raised in this Anglophone context, was not, shifted the ways in which she thought of his linguistic identity. From the Francophone man she had known in Kapuskasing, in Brigitte’s eyes Henri had now changed to being an Anglophone, whose cultural and linguistic lineage was tightly woven within an Anglophone kin network that had lived in Amherst Island for generations. Brigitte felt Amherst Island’s “situated accomplishment” (Valentine 2007) keenly.

Henri je trouve que… il est bilingue, mais il est plus anglophone. …. Lui son milieu c’est yink anglophone. … Il parle toujours en anglais avec [sa famille], mais moi je vais arriver pis je vais dire des mots en français en travers de mes conversations faque je pense peut-être c’est ça la différence? Pis son père était strictement anglophone. Pis il vient de Amherst Island. Je pense que c’est peut-être là le lien… Tsé c’est « ah, il est anglais là ». Même s’il a un nom français il est anglais. 28

27 Like when I’m in Kapuskasing, ok then, then I feel good. You speak the way you want, and it’s all right, and all...

28 Henri I find... he is bilingual, but he is more Anglophone. ... For him his environment is all Anglophone. ... He’s always speaking English with [his family], but me I’ll come in and I’ll say words in French within my conversations so I think maybe that’s what makes a difference? And his father was strictly Anglophone. And he’s from Amherst Island. I think maybe that’s the link there... You know it’s “ah, he’s English then”. Even if he has a French name, he is English.
This change in Brigitte’s perception of her husband’s linguistic identity brought changes to the dynamic of their relationship. Language and linguistic practice became a site of difference and of struggle: Brigitte took on the task of protecting bastions of French language within their relationship and their household, as well as in their wider family and friendship network.

Oui y’a une couple de ses amis qui parlent en français mais ils se parlent toujours en anglais. Pis moi je vais rentrer dans le décor pis… je fais ça par exprès là. Je vais commencer à leur parler en français. C’est fait par exprès… Pis si je vois qu’ils sont pas confortables, bon ben c’est correct, on va retourner à l’anglais là tsé, mais… Mais la majorité de son milieu lui c’est les anglophones.29

Brigitte’s action of forcing French language upon her husband and his friends is not motivated by a hope that they will have Francophone interactions. She is well aware of the overwhelming likelihood that “on va retourner à l’anglais”30. Rather it is a performance, a reiteration of the possibility of an alternative lifeworld grounded in different linguistic practices. This possibility is never actualized – French language is never permanently achieved. Thus, it must be maintained through ever-repeated actions and enduring efforts of pursuing other linguistic practices in the face of the crushing torrent of majority (see Povinelli 2011 – this idea is also elaborated upon in chapter 7). For Brigitte this incessant endeavour, combined with the feeling of always having to strive to ‘pass’ as English in order to communicate, creates an important strain in her daily life. This strain translates into feelings of isolation and loneliness.


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29 Yes there is a couple of his friends who speak French but they always speak together in English. So I’ll come in and... I do it on purpose you know. I’ll start talking to them in French. It’s done on purpose... And if I see they’re not comfortable, well it’s ok, we’ll switch back to English then you know, but... But the majority of his surrounding it’s Anglophones.

30 We’ll switch back to English
Je lui dis « tu me comprends tu là? Parce que là ça me tente pas là, de parler en anglais. Ça me tente vraiment pas là. » Faque elle est correcte avec ça par exemple. 31

For Brigitte, incessantly being in what she feels to be an othering context leads to a heavy feeling of marginalization deeply anchored in place: in Kingston, and particularly in Amherst Island. This feeling contrasts with the feelings of comfort and belonging anchored in latent Francophone places.

Y’a une fois je m’ennuyais tellement, on est allés à Ottawa, j’ai dit là là, j’ai dit à Henri, « je veux m’en aller… je veux qu’on aille à Gatineau ». Il dit « ok, pourquoi? » « Parce que je veux m’asseoir dans un restaurant, je veux me faire servir en français, pis je veux avoir un menu en français ». Il dit « ok, pas de problème », faque c’est ça qu’on a fait. Pis je lui dis « aussi, je veux que le petit, je veux qu’il voit. Il voit là, tsé… que c’est pas yink en anglais. » 32

Brigitte’s story points to the co-production of identity and place through inter-relations. Her sense of self as other emerges in conjunction with the places of Kingston and of Amherst Island, an Anglophone community woven in kinship ties through which her husband Henri [ãːri] shapeshifts into Henry [ˈhɛn.ɹiː]. This change in her husband’s performed identities is tied to the specific place they now inhabit, and in turn produces for Brigitte a particular place made of new configurations of possible and impossible affiliations and identifications. Migration to Amherst Island, the constitution of that specific place, also entails a reduction of some of Brigitte’s social horizon to an identity of “la femme francophone à Henry [ˈhɛn.ɹiː].” 33 This moulding of both

31 Sometimes… sometimes I get choked up, right here *pointing her chest*. I miss… I miss my folks… I only have to think about it and I get emotional. I miss my folks… I don’t have anyone in French, in Kingston, that I can call friends. Well, it’s not quite true… Henri’s cousin, she speaks French but… she’s more comfortable in English. So you know… So I stay in English. There are days where… it’s really tough, well then I will speak to her in French. I will say “you understand me right? Because now I really don’t feel, like speaking English. I really don’t feel like it.” So she’s ok with that.

32 Once I missed it so much, we went to Ottawa, I said now, I said to Henri “I want to leave… I want us to go to Gatineau”. He said “ok, why?” “Because I want to sit down in a restaurant, I want to be served in French, and I want to have a French menu.” He said “ok, no problem”, so that’s what we did. And I told him “also, I want the little one, I want him to see. To see now, you know… that it’s not only in English.”

33 Henry’s [ˈhɛn.ɹiː] Francophone wife
Amherst Island and of Brigitte’s identity as Francophone other is fueled by Brigitte’s relationships with Henri and Henri’s family, namely her sense of dependency on this family network reinforced by her new isolation from her own family. The presence of her son and his need for socializing and belonging exacerbates this sense of dependency.

Lived relationships, and their underlying linguistic regimes, shape both the places of Kingston and Amherst Island and Brigitte’s subjectivity within it. To quote Massey: “Identities of subjects and identities of places are constructed through interrelations…We make, and constantly remake, the spaces and places and identities through which we live our lives” (1999, 288 & 290). Migration presents an important bifurcation moment through which relationships are reshuffled, so that new places and new identities emerge (Silvey 2006).

The experience of Brigitte, as well as that of the other Francophone migrant mothers I met, leads me to think of places and identities in terms of embodied and material relationships and stories rather than in terms of counter-positional self-bounded phenomena. Brigitte’s, and also Agnes’ and Maryam’s stories demonstrate that trajectories, stretched in time but also in space, give place its peculiar materiality. Being, following Malpas (1999) is inherently emplaced. But places, and identities, are woven of stories. Recognizing the relationality and boundlessness of place is necessary to hear the polyphony (or cacophony) of narrative wefts that underline it. Brigitte’s narrative demonstrates that the openness and relationality of place, far from leading the way to an eternal expansiveness of homogenizing space at the expense of the unique peculiarities of place (see Malpas 2012), repositions depth, contradictions, ambiguities, as well as grief and dispossession, into place (see Mohanty 2003).
Conclusion

The ideas of intersectionality as lived spatial experiences of identification and differentiation, of the multiplicity and non-linearity of space, and of the relationality of places and identities structure an analytical framework through which the complexity of Francophone mothers’ experiences in Kingston can be recognized. This analytical framework allows me to identify some of the social elements and dynamics that produce constellations of meanings, and of possible affiliations and exclusions, through which Francophone mothers’ subjectivities are shaped and, importantly, gendered. Some of these elements and dynamics emerge from the structure of our (neo)liberal social world, and its exclusion of care and mothering. Others stem from the hegemony of English language in Kingston, and the associated marginalization of French as a minority language. Experiences of migration, and the particular circumstances and relationships through which these experiences unfold, also significantly form and transform mothers’ social contexts. “Place”, notes Silvey, “is a process that makes and is made by migration” (2006, 61), and the same applies to identity. Through intersectional lenses, it becomes possible to highlight how these interrelated and multilinear processes shape Francophone migrant mothers’ senses of self, material and social conditions, future possibilities, and ultimately their experiences of power and powerlessness.
Chapter 5 - Gendered constellations of mothering, migration, and linguistic minority in Kingston

In the last chapter, I argued that we can best understand Francophone mothers’ life stories through an intersectional approach to space that emphasizes identities and places as relational processes. In this chapter, I put intersectionality to work as an analytical lens to explore how individual mothers’ experiences of migration, linguistic minority, and mothering in Kingston shape different constellations of possibilities and impossibilities, and of power and powerlessness. I build on Collins and Bilge’s (2016) conceptualization of intersectionality as an approach sensitive to the multiple and interrelated articulations of power through different social domains. Collins and Bilge argue that social power is refracted within interrelationships, in social structures, in cultural power, and in disciplining forces. They explain that, among other dimensions, “power operates by disciplining people in ways that put people’s lives on paths that make some options seem viable and others out of reach” (Collins and Bilge 2016, 9). The disciplining of mothers through individual relationships and social structures, and reinforced through dominant cultural discourses around femininity and motherhood, is a fruitful theme in feminist geography of mothering (see Marotta 2005). In this chapter, I explore how the relationships, social structures, and cultural power that underlie Francophone mothers’ experiences of mothering, migration, and minority language discipline mothers. I argue that social power combines in different ways in different Francophone mothers’ lives, shaping social constellations that channel their subjectivities more or less tightly towards patriarchal expectations and norms of mothering and femininity.
Constellations as an intersectional metaphor

Geographers interested in identity formation and subjectivities frequently use the metaphor of constellations. Massey, for example, refers to identities as “constellations, always inter-relationally hybrid but none the less, and to varying degrees, with viable different stories to tell.” (1999, 291). Tim Cresswell also uses the constellation metaphor, this time to describe phenomena of mobility, “particular patterns of movement, representations of movement, and ways of practising movement that make sense together” (2010, 18). Thinking in terms of constellation allows us to recognize both complexity and (loose) coherence. The image of constellations points to a multiplicity of elements, and to a multiplicity of relationships between these elements. Constellations are dynamic, and as elements move and reorient one towards another new configurations emerge, and elements change in resonance and meanings. As stars brighten and wane so elements gain and loose significance and predominance at different times. Yet, even as they change, constellations remain deeply set in landmarks – such as places and personal and collective histories. Here I use the metaphor of constellations to explore accounts of the multiple, shifting, and sometimes simultaneous ways that self and other are represented, the way that individuals identify and dis-identify with other groups, how one category is used to differentiate another in specific contexts, and how particular identities become salient or foregrounded at particular moments. (Valentine 2007, 15)

I find the constellations metaphor fruitful to address the multiplicity of these accounts because constellations are multifaceted and can be observed from different angles. This metaphor also addresses McCall’s (2005) discussion of intra vs inter-categorical analysis of intersectional social locations. McCall describes intra-categorical and inter-categorical intersectional approaches as lenses of analysis that aim to highlight how connections between social categories, most often race, gender, and class, are experienced at different scales (with, as McCall insists, a healthy
wariness towards strict and static categorical boundaries) (McCall 2005). Although they share a similar object (the intersectional connections between social categories in lived experiences), intra- and inter-categorical analyses approach this object from different starting places. As McDowell summarizes: “While intra-categorical analysis starts with complexity and works its way towards unravelling the implications, inter-categorical analysis takes the opposite approach: it begins with an analysis of each element, investigating its effect in turn.” (2008, 503) 

Going back to the constellations metaphor, analysis can start from within, from the places, identities, and experiences at the center of constellations, ‘intra’ particular locations, as I did with the three life stories discussed in the last chapter. Alternatively, it can start from without, shifting ever slightly the constellations to shine light on articulations of particular connections – similar to McCall’s inter-categorical approach (McCall 2005).

Constellations point to the possibilities and impossibilities of affiliations, belongings, identifications, and dis-identifications of Francophone mothers in Kingston. Social constellations emerge through each mother’s life story. Constellations are dynamic, and they change through life course, and particularly through the power relations underlying experiences of migration, of minority language, and of mothering. Of particular interest are the ways in which these constellations channel subjectivities and shape the possible places of these mothers in Kingston. Migration and minority language in the spaces of Kingston can buttress the gendering of subjectivity along the heteronormative patriarchal lines that are reinforced when women mother (see Theoretical Context). The constellations metaphor helps me pay due attention to how this buttressing unfolds in the particular social, economic, and cultural configurations of different women’s lives. It leads me to recognize that the narrative linking power, mothering, gendered subjectivities, migration, minority language, and Kingston, and to which I adhere throughout this
dissertation, weaves through mothers’ life stories in vastly different ways. As Butler would say, the narrative “is not always constituted coherently or consistently” (1990, 3).

**Mothering constellations: marginalized gendered subjectivities and linguistic barriers**

The gendered marginalization of care and reproductive work and the ostracism of minority languages, characteristic of English-dominant liberal capitalist social order, and particularly of the neoliberal moment, combine in various relational manifestations in different Francophone mothers’ lives. Exclusion, isolation, and vulnerability or, conversely, inclusion, friendships, and belonging in alternative spaces emerge depending on each woman’s context, itself anchored in inextricable intersections between life story and social circumstances in Kingston. In this section, I build on the constellations metaphor to reveal the significance of Francophone women’s particular contexts, woven of their experiences of migration and of minority language, in shaping their experiences of becoming mothers in Kingston. I compare the experiences of three women, all employed in public-sector professional jobs with maternity leave benefits, during their first year as mothers.

Maternity leaves can present particularly acute moments of liberal institutionalized exclusion of mothering subjectivities and practices in employed women’s lives. For Francophone mothers, the exclusion of maternity leave can be further exacerbated by the alienating effects of migration and of linguistic minority. Gained by labour rights organizations through lengthy struggles, maternity leaves (and later paternity or parental leaves) are governmental programs through which employed and eligible parents can temporarily devote themselves to their newborn child or children, while maintaining job security and some income through a combination of
employers’ inputs and state benefits (Kamerman and Moss 2009). Maternity leave was unquestionably an important gain for feminist and labour movements. However, the structure of the program, as a time away from habitual daily networks and rhythms of employed life, encloses new mothers in gendered subjectivities, temporalities, spatialities, and social roles revolving around caring for babies (Alsveit, Severinsson, and Karlsen 2010, 2011; Holloway 2014; see also Theoretical Context). The intense, incessant, and unpredictable nature of newborns’ needs enhances this enclosure in mothering, and in its particularly coded feminine roles and subjectivities. These needs hinder mothers’ initiative and possibilities of movements as their trajectories are always interrupted and interspersed. Baraister notes:

Yes motherhood is the pitilessness of the present tense. There are days that follow nights that follow days in which I am punch-drunken from interruption. The interruption constantly re-establishes the present by demanding a response now. The interruption is such that it cannot wait, or it struggles to wait, or teaching it to wait is in itself another interruption, a doubling of the interruption. No one seems to want to let on. In conversations I have with other mothers we all nimbly dance around, pretending that our speech is not slurred, that we are not falling over, staggering to right ourselves as we cheerfully pronounce: 'It's really hard work'. (Baraister 2009, 66)

Alienating experiences of migration and of minority language can dramatically enhance the exclusion of mothering subjectivities and practices from dominant normative liberal sociality. This was the case for Alma. Alma and her husband are both from Uruguay, which they left for political reasons. They met in Ottawa, where they were both studying to become schoolteachers. Both held post-graduate degrees in biology from their home country, but had a hard time finding employment matching their qualifications. Resigned to forego careers equal to their credentials, Alma and her husband turned to education to make the best out of their situation as deskilled migrants. « Quand t’arrives pas dans ton propre pays à tirer ton épingle du jeu à cause de situations sécuritaires ou
sociales, tu dis ok, t’arrives à avoir une vie décente, une famille, une vie plus ou moins correcte. […] Il y avait plus de chances en éducation.¹ »

Alma and her husband are both fluent in Spanish, their mother tongue, and in French. Neither was fluent in English before moving to Kingston. Upon completing their studies, Alma and her husband applied to French-language school boards all over the country, and finally were each offered a full-time permanent position at the elementary school Rémi Gaulin. This provided them with the stability and financial security to have children. As a school-board employee, Alma was entitled to a full year maternity leave, which she took for each of her three children. Alma found maternity leave alienating, in part because of the break it entailed from normative liberal capitalist daily temporality.

Après ça quand tu as un bébé sur les bras… ton mari travaille, tu es seule, pis là 24 sur 24 tu es là, parce que là le soir tu peux pas le lui confier parce que lui le lendemain il travaille, c’est pas la même chose quand on se retrouve… les responsabilités sont pas les mêmes. Lui il a besoin de dormir, parce que le lendemain il a besoin d’être fonctionnel. Il doit sortir… Moi à la limite si le bébé dort je pourrai piquer un somme par-ci par-là. J’ai senti l’épuisement. C’est la partie que j’ai trouvé la plus difficile dans ma vie, c’est le moment d’être quand on est une maman, loin de la famille, pas d’amis, de milieu social proche, ça j’ai trouvé que c’était difficile.²

For Alma, the hardships and exhaustion of new motherhood was enhanced by the fact that she was alone in performing most of the tasks of mothering, and that she was alone in following a sense of time drastically different from institutionalized liberal sociality and economy (Davies 1989, 1994; Bryson 2007; see also Theoretical Context). Significantly, her husband did not take

¹ When in your own country you can’t make it on account of social or security issues. Here you tell yourself ok, you can get a decent life, a family, a life that is more or less ok […] There were more opportunities in education.
² After that when you have a baby to take care of… your husband works, you’re alone, and now 24 on 24 you’re there, because in the evening you can’t just give it to him because the next day he has to work, it’s not the same when we find… the responsibilities are not the same. Him, he needs to sleep, because the next day he has to be functional. He needs to go out… For me, worst comes to worst, if the baby sleeps I will get a nap here and there. I felt the exhaustion. That’s the part of my life I found the hardest, it’s that moment of being, when you are a mom, far from family, no friends, no close social network, I found that was difficult.
parental leave, and thus did not break from a dominant liberal capitalist temporality, with clear and predictable patterns of paid work and rest. Not only was he unavailable to partake in mothering labour with her, but she also felt the need to protect his rhythm from this labour. Therefore, Alma was alienated from liberal capitalist temporality, but her husband’s continued employment still subjected her to that temporality. Furthermore, the alienating effects of this break from liberal temporality and mode of sociability was more acute due to Alma’s limited social network following her migration to Kingston, which did not spread beyond the French-language school where she was employed. « Parce que le milieu est anglophone et que nous notre anglais n’est pas très fort, notre milieu c’est l’école. On n’a pas d’autre milieu. Autre que l’école.³ » Isolation at home, and temporary removal from the one social network she had access to in Kingston (i.e. her place of employment), combined to create social seclusion.

Ton premier bébé, tu le partages pas… l’émotion pis le bonheur… T’achètes une maison, tu partages ça avec personne… T’as un bébé tu partages ça avec personne… T’as une grave maladie, tu partages ça avec personne… Ça c’est la partie que j’ai trouvé…. Ben c’est la réalité des immigrants han… Sauf que c’est ça, le problème de la langue c’est plus à ce niveau-là qu’il s’est posé pour moi.⁴

For Alma, alienation within her household stemming from her husband’s continued participation in normative liberal temporality and sociality, combined with her isolation as a newcomer to Kingston with only her employment as a social network, made her maternity leaves experiences of devastating loneliness and exclusion. As well, the linguistic barriers she faced in Kingston hindered accessing new places and networks that might have embraced her new mothering labour and subjectivity.

³ Because the environment is Anglophone and that our English is not very strong, our environment is the school. We don’t have other places. Other then the school.
⁴ Your first baby, you don’t share it... the emotion, the happiness.... You buy a house, you share it with no one. You have a baby, you share it with no one. You have a serious illness, you share it with no one. That’s the part I found... well, that’s the immigrant reality. But that’s what it is. The linguistic problem that was more it for me.”
Là le problème de la langue s’est posé très sérieusement pour moi. Parce que Kingston est une ville anglophone. Alors si tu n’as pas la langue, oublie ça … je sors pas… y’a un petit centre commercial en face de moi, le Cataraqui Center… Je prends mon bébé, je vais à Timmies, je prends un café, je reviens… ça se limitait à ça. Ça c’est dur … Parce que Kingston c’est vraiment anglophone. Des fois on avait pensé chercher du travail à Ottawa ou à Montréal, parce que même si les gens sont pas d’Uruguay, on pourrait avoir des ami-es francophones. C’est le défaut de Kingston.5

In Alma’s story, the combined actions of liberal exclusion of motherhood, social isolation following migration to Kingston, and linguistic minority – and, importantly, lack of fluency in the dominant language – carved a context of dire alienation. The absence of one or two of these synergistic factors can create quite a different context of sociability and inclusion. Take for example the story of Agathe. Agathe and her husband are both members of the military and came to Kingston when they were posted there together. Agathe gave birth to her first child shortly after moving to Kingston. Like Alma, she had not developed a social network outside of her immediate colleagues prior to her maternity leave. However, Agathe had an experience of maternity leave that was diametrically opposed to that of Alma, mostly because she and her husband decided to share their allowed leave time equally, and to take their leaves at the same time. The result was that as a whole they had a shorter leave (six months instead of one year) but both were at home sharing a similar temporality and mode of sociality for the duration of the leave.

C’est la plus belle opportunité familiale qu’il n’y a pas… Les enfants ont tellement bien interagi avec leur père tellement tôt, comme lui a changé autant de couches que moi, il ne m’a jamais laissée me lever toute seule toute la nuit avec les enfants, on a partagé ça 50/50, à part l’allaitement, parce que j’ai allaité tout le long, mais on a partagé 50/50, le changement de couches, les choses… Un était fatigué il pouvait prendre une pause, faque pour tous les risques de dépression post-partum c’est quasiment mieux parce que t’es pas toute seule, isolée… Surtout pour ma première

5 There the linguistic problem became very serious for me. Because Kingston is an Anglophone city. So if you don’t have the language, forget it. I don’t go out… there’s a little shopping center near the house... I take my baby, I go to Timmies, I get a coffee, I come back... That was it. That’s tough ... Because Kingston is really Anglophone. Sometimes we thought about looking for work in Ottawa or in Montréal, because even if people are not from Uruguay, we could have Francophone friends. That’s the big draw back in Kingston.
fille … on venait d’arriver, on avait pas d’ami.es, moi j’avais pas de réseau, j’avais pas mes ami.es, j’avais pas ma famille, faque avoir été toute seule en congé ça aurait été beaucoup… Nouvelle expérience, nouvelle ville, tu connais personne… Juste le fait d’avoir lui, pis moi, pis notre petite unité familiale, on n’avait pas vraiment besoin d’avoir tout le reste du réseau.6

Following the birth of her first child, being away from the social network of employment meant for Agathe a social seclusion into mothering labour and subjectivity. In that sense, her experience echoes that of Alma. The crucial difference between the two women’s accounts is undoubtedly the availability and willingness of Agathe’s partner to take part in mothering. It seems like a truism to point out that having someone to entrust some of the care of the newborn to, and thus being able to rest, is critical for new mothers’ emotional wellbeing (Rosenberg 2009). What Agathe describes goes further. In her account, sense of responsibility and accountability for meeting the needs of the child is shared, and her partner is not merely helping her but is actively co-mothering (see Ruddick 1995; Aitken 1998). Sharing the mothering role, and the different temporality of mothering, such that her partner never let her “me lever toute seule toute la nuit,”7 mitigates the drastic change in gendered subjectivities that comes with mothering when one partner shoulders the bulk of mothering tasks, and of the ensuing hardships and exclusions. Thus, even though Agathe still felt ostracized in wider social spaces of Kingston, she did not experience the sense of alienation that Alma described since the whole of her household functioned upon sociality and temporality structured by care.

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6 It’s the best family opportunity there is… The kids interacted with their father so well, and so early, like he changed as many diapers as I did, he never let me get up alone all night with the kids, we shared it all 50/50, except for breastfeeding, because I breastfed all the way through, but we shared it 50/50, changing diapers, and things… When one got tired we could take a break, so for all the post-partum depression risks it’s almost better because you’re not alone, isolated… Especially for my first born… we had just arrived, we didn’t have friends, me, I didn’t have a network, I didn’t have my friends, I didn’t have my family, so being alone on leave it would have had been a lot… New experience, new town, you don’t know anyone… Just the fact that he was there, and me, and our little family unit, we didn’t really need to have all the network.

7 get up alone all night
Comparing the stories of Alma and of Agathe to that of Marilou further highlights how different configurations of migration, minority language, mothering, and liberal exclusion in maternity leaves can shape different experiences of inclusion, marginalization, and gendered subjectivity (trans)formation. Marilou’s experience of maternity leave was characterized by alienation ensuing from her partner’s continued involvement in liberal capitalist temporality and sociality (like Alma), but this alienation was mitigated by her access to new sites and networks of affiliation centered on mothering (unlike both Alma and Agathe). Marilou is originally from Québec City, where she completed her B.Ed. At the end of her studies she received an offer of employment from Limestone District Schoolboard in Kingston, where she has been working as a French immersion teacher ever since. Marilou lived in Kingston for several years before she met her partner, an Anglophone man from Kingston, and had children. During that period, she developed extensive networks of friends and acquaintances, both in English and in French. Like Alma, Marilou was alone in caring for her newborn children during her maternity leaves. However, Marilou was fluent in English and had developed social relationships outside of her place of employment prior to having her children. This gave her the opportunity to access places and networks where modes of sociality accommodate for the different temporalities and subjectivities of mothering.

Ça a bien été parce que ma fille est née une heure après le bébé d’une de mes amies. On était dans la même chambre. Faque c’était pas mal spécial… Pis elle c’était son deuxième. Faque c’était rassurant aussi, parce qu’elle elle savait ce qu’elle faisait. Faque ça ça a vraiment aidé. Parce que d’avoir quelqu’un comme ça… Elle, c’est elle qui m’a dit « ok, on va au groupe de jeux », pis tsé j’ai eu mes enfants en hiver, faque je serais pas sortie si ça avait pas été d’elle. Tsé quand t’as un nouveau bébé, c’est comme « ahhh! » Faque je suis sortie, pis c’est à cause d’elle finalement que je me suis dit « ok je vais y aller », pis là j’ai regardé les autres groupes de jeux, pis j’en ai trouvé, pis je suis sortie, pis j’ai rencontré d’autres parents, pis ça c’était vraiment l’fun …. On se connaissait bien avant, on faisait des choses ensemble, mais on n’avait pas été aussi proches qu’on est maintenant, parce que… à cause des enfants. … Alors ça c’était
vraiment l’fun. Parce qu’elle était anglophone, mais je me suis vraiment rapprochée de cette famille-là, pis nos enfants sont meilleurs amis. Depuis qu’ils sont nés. … Pis nos maris s’entendent… Pis on fait des petits soupers ensemble, nos enfants jouent, pis on fait plein d’affaires ensemble, faque ça ça m’a vraiment aidée.\(^8\)

Like Agathe, Marilou highlights the importance of “avoir quelqu’un comme ça,”\(^9\) that is of being in a regular relationship of solidarity with someone who shares the marginal temporality and subjectivity of mothering. Unlike Agathe, this enabling relationship was not located within her household, which continued to function following dominant liberal capitalist rhythms and norms of sociality. This relationship with her friend however did allow her to invest places and networks outside of her household where her mothering practices, struggles, and subjectivity would be embraced.

Friendship relationships can be important vectors of place making (Luxton 2006; Valentine 2008b; Dyson 2010; Sophie Bowlby 2011; Bunnel et al. 2012; Jupp 2012; Cronin 2015). In Marilou’s case, the shared experience of otherness, of a marginal emplacement in a parenthesis outside of dominant liberal subjectivity and sociality, cemented this friendship, and in turn facilitated her inclusion in places and networks structured around this shared experience. As well, the bonds between the two mothers allowed them to create space and moments of sociability within and between their households, where their mothering subjectivities and practices could be fostered.

\(^8\)It went well because my daughter was born one hour after one of my friend’s babies. We were in the same room. So that was quite special … And for her it was her second child. So that was reassuring too, because she knew what she was doing. So that really helped. Because to have someone like that… It was she who told me “ok, we’re going to the playgroup”, and you know I had my children in the winter, so I wouldn’t have gone out if it hadn’t been for her. You know when you have a new baby, it’s like “ahhh!” So I went out, and it’s because of her finally that I thought “ok I’m gonna go”, and then I checked out other playgroups, and I found some, and I went out, and I met other parents, and that was really good … We knew each other before, we did things together, but we were not as close as we are now, because… because of the children … So that was really good. Because she was Anglophone, but still I got really close to this family, and our children are best friends. Since they were born … And our husbands get along … And we do little suppers together, our children play, and we do a whole bunch of things together, so that really helped me.

\(^9\)to have someone like that
without challenging each individual household’s liberal structure and orientation to social life. They successfully extended their relationship to other members of their families, so that “nos enfants sont meilleurs amis … Pis nos maris s’entendent… Pis on fait des petits soupers ensemble, nos enfants jouent, pis on fait plein d’affaires ensemble¹⁰ ». Thus, even if each family unit still functions on dominant liberal time and sociality, the fact that the whole of the family partakes in a relationship anchored in this sociality strengthens the possibility of a sociality centered on care.

The comparison of Alma’s account of maternity leaves with those of Agathe and of Marilou points to the interplay of factors that shape their contexts: mothering practices, gender regimes within households and within parental partnerships, shifts in daily patterns, temporality, and subjectivity following the coming of a child, and migration and minority language geographies in Kingston. Neither Agathe nor Marilou experienced the level of exclusion and seclusion that Alma expressed in becoming mothers, although they all lived in a context of liberal individuated and care-less normativity. Further, Agathe and Marilou owe their more positive experience to very different factors. In Agathe’s case the positive experience is due to the sharing of mothering subjectivity with her partner, and the projection of a care-centered temporality and practice on her whole household. In Marilou’s case it is due to her relationship with another mother, which opened possibilities of affiliations and inclusion both within and outside of her family unit. What these comparisons illustrate is that experiences of mothering, migration, minority language, and the spaces of Kingston cannot be analysed in isolation. They co-constitute the social constellations that shape Francophone mothers’ experiences of mothering and gendered subjectivities in Kingston.

¹⁰ our children are best friends ... And our husbands get along ... And we do little suppers together, our children play, and we do a whole bunch of things together
Migrating households and gendered subjectivities

Feminist geographers and other scholars interested in gendered and intersectional outcomes of migrations generally agree that the interplay of the various gender regimes that migrants navigate as they move from place(s) to place(s) shapes their social and economic experiences of migration. These gender regimes are reiterated or transformed through the particular circumstances of their migration, as well as through other elements of their social location (such as race, class, and family status) (Mohanty 2003; Silvey 2004, 2006; Pessar 2005; McDowell 2008b; McIlwaine 2010). One important insight of feminist analyses of migration has been the unpacking of power dynamics within migrant households along gender lines. While the household has long been perceived as a unified site of decision making and of migration outcomes, it is now apparent that individual experiences of migration are intertwined with shifting gender regimes from places to places, and that together they shape individuals’ relationship to space, subjectivity, and work (both waged and unwaged) (Pessar 2005; Silvey 2006). Unsurprisingly then, the migratory trajectories of Francophone mothers in Kingston shaped how they understood their gendered subjectivity in relationship to their daily lives, mothering practices, family relationships, carework imperatives, waged work opportunities, and future prospects. The outcomes of migration to Kingston translated into possibilities and impossibilities that differed widely between different mothers, and between each mother and other members of her family (especially her partner) along gender lines.

Whether they came as primary or secondary migrants shaped Francophone women’s experiences of migration and the role minority language played in their lives in Kingston (see Cresswell 2010). Some came to Kingston by personal choice (primary migrants), to follow an educational or professional opportunity, while others came as secondary migrants, following an
opportunity for their partners. Primary and secondary migrants found themselves in very different positions and this influenced their personal power, their possibilities and impossibilities in Kingston, as well as their sense of self as mothers, as women, and as Francophones. This (re-)orientation influenced the remainder of their life trajectories.

Table 1 presents a portrait of the employment outcomes of migration to Kingston for Francophone mothers based on primary and secondary migrant position. Researchers use the term *deskilling* to refer to individuals in positions unequal to their qualifications and credentials, which usually implies a loss of salary and other benefits (Chicha 2009; Chicha and Deraedt 2009). The realities outlined in Table 1 point to motivation for migrating resulting in sharply different employment outcomes for Francophone mothers in Kingston. In the sections below, I describe and compare the realities of mothers who are primary and secondary migrants. This disparity in access to employment equal to one’s qualification is intertwined with wider gendered power dynamics, that also translate into different experiences of patriarchal gender norms, heteronormative imperatives around reproductive labour and mothering, social inclusion, and possibilities of fulfillment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waged work</th>
<th>Primary migrants</th>
<th>Secondary migrants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed with deskilling*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Employed without deskilling**</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 - Participants' waged work*

*international immigration*

**includes remote work in Québec
**Primary migrants**

The first group of participants (primary migrants, first column in Table 1) moved to Kingston to pursue post-graduate education and/or because they were offered employment. Several among this group are schoolteachers (like Alma and Marilou), either in French-language schools or in English-language school teaching French immersion or core French (see chapter 8). All women in this group, teachers or otherwise, are professionals employed in high skilled jobs. Alma, Agathe and Marilou, discussed above, are part of this group. Alma alone did not find work equal to her original qualifications, although her job in Kingston is equal to the credentials she acquired in Ottawa. All women in this group except for Agnes (introduced in chapter 4) migrated well before they had children, and established themselves in their jobs before starting a family. All of them expect to live in Kingston for the medium term.

Mothers who came to Kingston as primary migrants were generally highly fluent in English. The only exceptions were Alma and Agnes, who moved to Kingston to occupy positions in French-language institutions. Apart from Alma and Agnes, linguistic barriers did not hinder the daily lives of these primary migrants. Importantly, once in Kingston primary bilingual migrants established networks of people and places in the city that spanned Francophone and Anglophone spaces well before having children. Marilou explains: “Les gens que j’ai rencontré au début, c’était à travers ma job. Faque c’était beaucoup des Anglophones.”¹¹ Some of these women (including Marilou) also met their partner, and father of their children, in Kingston. In these cases, their partners are Anglophone men with little or no French.

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¹¹ People I met at first, it was through my work. So mostly they were Anglophone.
For women fluent in English and employed in English-speaking contexts, establishing themselves in Kingston frequently implied a break in their Francophone linguistic practices, to which they returned when they had children. This is clear in the story of Claire. Claire grew up in Ottawa in a French-speaking household. She attended French-language schools, where she befriended the boy who was to become her husband. Upon completing their undergraduate degrees at University of Ottawa, Claire and her new spouse looked for a place where they could both continue their studies in their respective fields. Their best option seemed to be Queen’s University, so they decided to move to Kingston. For Claire, coming to Kingston presented a drastic change in her linguistic practices, both with her husband and in wider social networks.

Quand on est arrivé.es à Kingston, tout à coup whoop! On parlait pu en français du tout. Rien qu’en anglais. Entre nous. … On le faisait un peu à Ottawa … mon mari vient plus d’une famille Frenglish, où est-ce que sa famille parle pas vraiment français ni anglais, c’est comme un drôle de mélange, pis il se sentait jamais à l’aise en français donc mon mari toutes ses amitiés se faisaient en anglais. Avec moi c’était un peu des deux, mais là une fois qu’on a déménagé ici c’était vraiment exclusivement en anglais. On sortait en groupe avec des amis anglais… les profs étaient anglophones, y’avait pas de francophones, du tout là je pense… on avait aucun ami qui parlait français. Donc c’était tout en anglais. Pis ça ça a resté.12

The accounts detailed in chapter 4 pointed to the importance of space, and migration through space, in shaping linguistic practices, identities, and places. Claire’s narrative echoes this discussion. Her husband’s discomfort in French, linked to his family’s linguistic practices, created a tendency to slide to English from the start of their relationship. Being in Kingston, emplaced in English interactions and networks, exacerbated this tendency. However, for Claire, like many

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12 When we came to Kingston, all of the sudden whoop! We didn’t speak French at all anymore. Only English. Between us…. We did it a bit in Ottawa … my husband is from a more Frenglish family, so that his family doesn’t really speak either French or English, it’s like an odd mix, and he never really felt comfortable in French so for my husband all his friendships were in English. With me, it was a bit of both, but once we moved here it was exclusively in English. We would go out with groups of Anglophone friends … profs were Anglophone, there were no Francophone, at all I think … we didn’t have any friend who spoke French. So everything was in English. And it stuck.
Francophone mothers who went through a similar French ‘eclipse’, the coming of children was an important turning point in her linguistic trajectory, characterized by a conscious commitment to French language (see Iqbal 2005). For Claire, getting pregnant with her first child was a Francophone reckoning moment: passing on the French language to her child implied a drastic change in her family’s linguistic practices.

C’est quand je suis tombée enceinte … qu’on a recommencé à se parler en français. On a réalisé que c’est quelque chose qui était important pour nous, donc on se parlait en français. …. C’était comme un déclencheur là qui s’est passé, je sais pas, ça m’a rappelé que c’était quelque chose qui m’était important. Pis que j’avais oublié. C’est quelque chose que je voulais transmettre à mes enfants. … Donc je parle maintenant, avec mon époux, en anglais, mais on parle avec les enfants en français. C’est drôle han? Pis si mes enfants sont là on se parle ensemble en français mais aussitôt qu’ils sont partis c’est en anglais…

At this point in the interview Claire’s daughter, who was eavesdropping from the next room, interrupted her mother to claim that even when she and her sister are present, Claire and her husband speak English together. The child’s intervention is a potent reminder that willful efforts at interweaving minority cultural and linguistic practices into daily life are always punctual and potentially undermined by the incessant flow of hegemonic forms of life (e.g. English cultural hegemony). It also goes to show that children will thwart one’s best efforts at creating a coherent self-narrative. “Motherhood”, notes Chandler, shatters performances of all kinds “in much the same way I would imagine many larger catastrophes such as floods, earthquakes and wars do. One simply acts in panic and desperation.” (Chandler 2007, 538).

I discuss interplays between cultural and linguistic meanings, imperatives of transmission
through carework, reiterated practices, and the realities of present lives further in chapter 7. Here I want to draw out two important elements of Claire’s narrative. Firstly, it is the children of mothers who work, socialize, love, and befriend mostly in English who trigger reinvestment in often latent Francophone linguistic practices and subjectivities (Iqbal 2005). Children act as vectors of identification and Francophone subject formation (following Valentine 2007). One mother notes:

« [Élever mes enfants en français] ça me permet de restée branchée sur le français. C’est plus naturel pour moi. »14 Secondly, these mothers consciously weave Francophone experiences into an already existing backdrop of daily English places and relationships. Sophie came to Kingston from Québec City as a child. She moved back to Québec City for a few years to study at Laval University, after which she came back to Kingston to be employed as an occupational therapist. Back in Kingston, she met her unilingual Anglophone husband, and several years into their relationships they decided to have children. She describes her various social circles in Kingston and the links between them:

[At work] j’ai trouvé des gens qui me ressemblent. … Parce que mon domaine est… je sais pas, on travaille tellement ensemble que j’ai facilement développé des amitiés avec les gens avec qui je travaille. … Pis on est semblables, même si c’est en anglais. Les mêmes goûts, le même âge… Je recherchais ça [un réseau francophone]… je dirais pas que j’en avais de besoin à tous les jours mais je ressentais le besoin d’avoir une certaine connexion…. Mes amis francophones c’est toutes des amies que j’ai rencontré à travers mes enfants *rires*… On est toutes occupées pis on se voit pas de façon régulière, mais on est tout le temps en contact, que ça soit par email, ou au téléphone, on se rencontre de temps en temps. C’est comme des petits groupes. Pis là j’ai encore mon groupe d’amies du Québec. C’est comme trois petits groupes différents. Pis… Ouin, c’est vraiment différent. Pis mes groupes ils se mêlent comme pas. Tsé y’a comme une petite saveur différente à travers les groupes. Pis c’est des gens qui se rencontraient pas dans la vie de tous les jours je pense.15

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14 Raising my children in French allows me to stay connected to French. It’s more natural for me
15 [At work] I found people like me... Because my field is... I don’t know, we work so closely together that I easily formed friendships with people I work with... And we are similar, even if it’s in English. Similar tastes, similar age... I was looking for it [a Francophone network]... I wouldn’t say I needed it everyday but I felt the need for a certain connection... My Francophone friends are all friends I met through my children *laughing*. We are all busy and we
Both Sophie and Claire appreciate the importance of Francophone places and interactions for linguistic vitality, community belonging, and cultural transmission for themselves and their children. These two women, and most women I met who moved to Kingston as primary migrants and who live significant parts of their lives in English, actively looked for these Francophone places and interactions when they became mothers (see chapter 8). These places and interactions enhanced their social worlds but were not essential to counter social isolation. Both Sophie and Claire had rich relationships and networks prior to their new or renewed commitment to French language and to Francophone life in Kingston. In this sense, their experiences of minority language, Francophone networks, and mothering and Kingston differ sharply from those of most Francophone mothers who came to Kingston as secondary migrants.

**Secondary migrants**

Eighteen Francophone mothers I met followed their partners seeking employment in Kingston (see Table 1). Unlike primary Francophone migrants, most of these secondary migrants were already mothers (or about to be mothers) of young children upon moving. Many of them had poor English skills when they arrived. That they came to Kingston auxiliary to their partner tended to crystalize a gendered distribution of productive and reproductive work within their relationship, regardless of the gender regime prevailing prior to the move (see Halfacree 1995; Pessar 2005). Moving to follow an opportunity for the male partner effectively casts the male into a role of primary economic (as in remunerated) agency, and the female into a role of support (Halfacree

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don’t see each others regularly, but we’re always in touch, either by email, or by phone, and we get together from time to time. It’s like little groups. And then I also have my group of friends from Québec. It’s like three different little groups. And... yeah, it’s really different. And my groups don’t mix with one another. You know there is like a different little flavour to each group. And these are people who wouldn’t meet one another in day-to-day life I think.
This exacerbates the pre-existing hierarchy of importance attributed to men’s professional occupation within heterosexual migrant families (Chicha 2009; Chicha and Deraedt 2009). For secondary migrants, migrations also frequently reinforced the structuring importance of the nuclear family model in their lives, with all its patriarchal and heteronormative implications in terms of subjectivity and social role (see Theoretical Context).

While primary migrant Francophone women generally obtained some professional or educational betterment by coming to Kingston, for many secondary migrants moving resulted in important professional loss (there are some exceptions to this that I discuss below and in chapter 8). Halfacree, discussing socio-economic outcomes of internal migration of established heterosexual parents’ families, notes that

[the] association between internal migration and economic betterment through career advancement … can be seen ultimately to reinforce the patriarchal structure of society. Migration often acts to frustrate the development of a woman's career and thus should be associated more with economic disadvantage than advantage. Furthermore, gendering of migration serves to reinforce occupational segregation by gender. (Halfacree 1995, 159)

Halfacree’s analysis echoes many of the secondary migrant Francophone mothers’ stories. The economic betterment of the family resulting from migration often masks harm to the woman’s career, as is evident in the account of Marianne. Marianne moved to Kingston with her one-year-old daughter and her spouse, posted from St-Jean-sur-Richelieu (QC) to the Kingston military base. Before coming to Kingston, Marianne was an administrative assistant in Québec’s provincial government. She had worked hard to get that employment, was very proud of it, and appreciated its many benefits, such as paid sick days and maternity leave. For Marianne, moving to Kingston represented irredeemable professional loss.

C’est vraiment côté carrière que j’ai trouvé ça le plus dur. … Vu que j’avais enfin la job que j’aimais, où je me sentais valorisée… Parce que tsé revenir, je pourrais pas
As the partner of a Canadian Forces employee, Marianne expected frequent re-postings. From the beginning, Marianne assumed that his career would be paramount. However, the imbalance in the importance attributed to each partner’s professional path was less visible prior to coming to Kingston with their one-year-old. Marianne notes “tu le sais pas vraiment c’est quoi tant que tu l’as pas vécu »17. Marianne’s account illustrates that “gender travels” (Pessar 2005). In Kingston, gender difference divided and shaped her and her partners’ subjectivities as workers, and her daily life and prospects were drastically reoriented from remunerated participation in liberal capitalist social world to feminized unwaged labour.

The professional loss Marianne experienced when moving to Kingston had consequences beyond leaving a job. Interplaying with her new social role as a mother, and all its gendered implications in terms of marginalisation in a patriarchal liberal capitalist world (see Theoretical Context), migration implied a sharp shift in her subjectivity as a worker towards “womanhood and femininity … defined along a domestic, familial model, with work seen as supplemental to this

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16 What I found hardest was really career-wise... Since at last I had the job I loved, where I felt valued... And you know coming back, I couldn’t get the job I had back. In the government, once you go it’s over, you fall back at the bottom of the ladder like everyone else, to get a job back you have to go through all the steps you already went through.

17 You don’t really know what it is until you’ve gone through it.

18 I realized that for me, to think of having a career was to dream in technicolour. It won’t be possible anymore... It’s funny when you think about it... sometimes I feel I’ve been gone for years... I was in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, I had my job like everyone else and I did my things... and now all of the sudden it’s like... I became only that... I feel like I really became “the wife of...”
primary identity” (Mohanty 2003, 154). This brusque reorientation of mothers’ worker identities towards feminized social reproduction labour feeds what Christine Delphy describes as the class relation between men and women within (heterosexual) households (Delphy 1995, 2003; see Theoretical Context). It also implies an increased exclusion of women in a “state of exception” 19 (Delphy 1995) in which individuated rights of liberal citizenships do not apply to them directly, but only indirectly through their partner, the one liberal subject of the household (see also Young 1995).

For mothers who were secondary migrants, their remunerated employment, and more generally their social identity as liberal individuated subjects, took on a doubly supplemental quality: it became supplemental to their primary identity as mothers (and reproductive labourers), and it became supplemental to their partner’s identity as primary wage earner within the household. Table 1 illustrates that, of the eighteen mothers I met who were secondary migrants, only a third found employment in Kingston equal to their credentials. Of these women, one obtained a transfer within the company for which she worked. All others were already engaged in feminized fields of social reproduction: as teachers, social workers or health professionals, for which there were greater employment opportunities in Kingston, especially for Francophones (see chapter 8). Although these latter mothers found work in their previous professional domain, for many this work was still supplemental to their partner’s waged work, as well as to their role as mothers. For other mothers, who did not have such career transferability, finding any kind of work in Kingston was a challenge. Their frequent lack of English, as well as non-recognition of credentials across jurisdictions were significant obstacles to finding employment. Importantly, the needs of children, depending on the age and number of children, and the lack of availability of daycare and

19 State of exception
babysitting options also limited migrant mothers’ employment options (Chicha and Deraedt 2009). One consequence of Ontario’s neoliberal orientation towards public services and the management of social reproduction through individualization and familialisation is the prohibitive cost of childcare, with full-time care in licensed institutions averaging over $1000 per month for an infant and over $850 per month for a toddler (Godaycare 2018). Daycare subsidies are few and based on household income, making unemployed mothers mostly ineligible due to the income of their partner, even though they often have very little income of their own. Secondary migrant mothers of preschool age children often are caught in a vicious cycle of lack of childcare and unemployment. They cannot afford to pay for daycare without having a relatively high paying job, or paying for daycare is not considered a reasonable option for their family. Marianne experienced this vicious circle upon moving to Kingston, which resulted in her staying at home with her daughter and foregoing paid employment for the time being:

Faque c’était soit je faisais le choix de travailler à 11, 12, 13 piasses de l’heure pis de payer la garderie à 40$ par jour… Parce que tout ce que je voyais c’était des vendeuses dans des boutiques, ou même des jobs de secrétariat, ça fonctionnait pas parce que ça demandait au moins d’être bilingue parfaitement, ou c’était juste en anglais, pis peut-être que je finirais par l’avoir, mais j’ai pas la confiance pis je me sens pas encore assez fonctionnelle en anglais…

As Marianne’s account suggests, it is difficult for many secondary migrant mothers to obtain desirable employment due to language limitations, a poorly diversified economy, and their care and reproductive work responsibilities. As a result, six of the mothers I met, comprising a third of the category of secondary migrants (see Table 1), did not hold paid employment in Kingston. Some of these mothers expressed great satisfaction at being able to devote themselves to the care of their

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20 So it was either I chose to go work for 11, 12 or 13 bucks an hour and to pay 40$ a day for daycare... Cause all I could see was retail jobs, or even receptionist jobs, it wouldn’t work, because they all asked at least to be perfectly bilingual, or they were completely in English, and maybe I would end up getting it, but I don’t have the confidence and I still don’t feel functional enough in English...
households and their children. This was the case of Geneviève, a mother of four children, three in primary school and one still pre-school aged, who moved to Kingston following her partner’s posting at the Royal Military College. Geneviève decided to stay out of paid employment until her youngest child entered primary school. Discussing this decision, she expressed much pride in her commitment to meeting what she perceives as her children’s needs by staying at home.

S’occuper des enfants c’est un emploi de la plus haute importance. Vu que je suis à la maison, les enfants peuvent faire toutes les activités qu’ils veulent. Leurs muffins, leurs barres tendres, c’est tout moi qui fait ça… à six dans la maison ça prend tout le temps de la bouffe. … Mais tsé c’est ça, nous autres, les enfants arrivent de l’école y’a souvent quelque chose sur le four, y’a quelque chose en train de mijoter, les gens rentrent chez nous et disent « ça sent toujours bon ici! » … tsé mon chum [dit] aux enfants « voyez-vous comment vous êtes chanceux? » 21

For Geneviève, the gendered regime of her nuclear family, including the strict divide in social roles, labour, rhythms, and space between her and her partner, was congruent with her own values regarding mothering. She viewed the fact that her children could access activities without worrying about time constraints and, most importantly, the fact that her children were eating homemade food, as clear and value laden results of her ethical commitment to this “emploi de la plus haute importance”. Her particular insistence and pride about her homemade food speaks to current day intensive mothering ideology’s high valuing of time consuming home productions, portrayed as emotionally fulfilling for mothers, and as better fostering children’s health and growth (O’Reilly 2004b; Fox 2006; Christopher 2012, 2013).

21 Taking care of children is a job of the upmost importance. Since I am at home, the children can do all the activities they want. Their muffins, their granola bars, I do them all... with six of us at home, we always need food. ... But you know, that’s it, at our place, the kids get home and there’s often something on the stove, there’s something cooking, people come in and say “it always smells good here!” … you know my partner [tells] the kids “see how lucky you are?”

22 job of the upmost importance
However, for other unemployed secondary migrant mothers, staying at home clearly resulted from a lack of choice. Marianne explains:

Tsé pas avoir eu d’enfants… tsé je serais allée travailler pis j’aurais pris un peu plus n’importe quoi du fait que y’a pas de garderie à payer là. Pis au pire ça marche pas, faque tu prends d’autre chose… Les horaires aussi, j’aurais pu prendre un peu plus… Mais là quand t’as un enfant c’est plus compliqué! … Pas avoir eu mon fils, je serais allée me faire caissière et j’aurais appris l’anglais. Mais je paierai pas la garderie pour aller travailler au Shopper’s.

Whether a source of satisfaction or grief for mothers, this gendered realignment of working subjectivities within migrant heterosexual partnerships in which the male primary migrant is primarily cast as wage earner and the female secondary migrant as caregiver, reinforces a heteronormative patriarchal family structure (Aitken 1998). Halfacree summarizes: “the wife being a secondary migrant serves to reproduce 'original' patriarchal structures. In the domestic sphere, the wife's role and status as co-provider is undermined and her labour market marginalization as a support for her husband is enhanced.” (Halfacree 1995, 172) Thus, migration implies for secondary migrant mothers a sudden bifurcation in their subjectivities, and therefore an important shift in their life stories, in which particular heteronormative and patriarchal paradigms of mothering and femininity become central axes. Marianne laments: « j’ai l’impression des fois d’être comme dans les années 50, que c’était justement, la femme à la maison, qui fallait qui fasse tout… pis Mon Dieu que c’est pas ça que je m’étais imaginé comme vie. »

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You know had I not had children... you know I would have gone and taken any job because I would not have had daycare to pay for. And worst comes to worst it doesn't work, so you get another job... Schedule-wise too, I could have taken a little more... But now when you have a child it's more complicated!... Had I not had my son, I would have worked as a cashier, and I would have learned English. But I won't pay for daycare to go and work at Shopper's.

Sometimes I feel like I'm in the 50's, that it was like that, the woman at home, who had to do everything... and my God it is not what I had imagined as a life.
What Marianne also expresses is that, beyond the sharp bifurcation towards exacerbated gendered roles and labour, migration leads to a close tightening of her life around the daily needs of her household – the maintaining of the possibility of social and economic integration of her partner and child, but with no pre-existing network, landmarks, activities or projects of her own. Secondary migrant mothers see their day-to-day existences funneled into the repetitive rhythms of care, children, bodies, households, “daily ‘thinking’ about feeding, sleeping, dressing, manners, routines, good stuff, bad stuff, schools, friendships, more stuff, influences, environments, time, responsibility, freedom, control and so on” (Baraister 2009, 22). Although for some women having this opportunity to center their activities and responsibilities on their homes and children is welcome, others describe their existence in terms of a Beauvoirian dystopia: “Puisant auprès de l’épouse la force d’entreprendre, d’agir, de lutter, c’est [l’homme] qui la justifie: elle n’a qu’à remettre entre ses mains son existence et il lui donnera son sens. [Pour elle] ni le temps ni l’espace ne s’échappent vers l’infini, ils tournent sagement en rond.”

Beauvoir’s words resonate in Maude’s account. Maude is a mother of three girls who moved from Valcartier (Québec City) when her husband was posted to the Canadian Forces Base in Kingston. She arrived pregnant with her second daughter, and was never able to find paid work in Kingston.

Si j’avais été au Québec probablement que j’aurais retourné sur le marché du travail avant. Parce que je suis comme… j’ai atteint ma limite là. Je trouve ça plus dur d’être à la maison. … Tsé heureusement que j’ai les activités qui font que je sors de la maison, mais que ça soit tout le temps vingt quatre sur vingt quatre que… que ta vie est… je suis tout le temps à la maison, c’est tout le temps les mêmes affaires, mettons ma fille arrive de l’école, commence à s’obstiner, c’est comme… « bon, encore… » Mettons la nuit, des fois la plus petite se réveille encore, faque c’est comme vingt quatre sur vingt quatre, c’est comme tout le temps… tout tourne tout le temps autour des enfants. Pis là qu’est-ce que je suis rendue que je trouve dur c’est… là ça fait au moins sept ans.

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25 Drawing from the wife the strength to initiate, to act, to struggle, it is [man] who justifies her: she only has to put her existence in his hands and he will give it meanings. [For her] neither time nor space escape towards infinity, they tamely go round in circles
Maude’s account illustrates the potency of combined forces of migration and mothering in guiding secondary migrant mothers into an identity and a social role closely restricted to care and reproduction. The needs they address, and the exclusions associated with their care and reproduction practices, leave room for little else, especially as other aspects of who they were – namely their professional interests – were left behind at the time of moving. It is no surprise then that “passer en dernier” was a very common feeling expressed by secondary migrant mothers.

Maryam (introduced in chapter 4) describes this feeling poignantly.

C’est ce qu’il m’avait dit, mon mari, il m'avait dit « regarde du point de vue des enfants ». Pour une mère quand tu vois le point de vue de tes enfants t'oublies tout après. […] Ici, pendant quinze ans j'ai vécu sans projet. C'était juste une vie, comme ça, au jour-le-jour… je vivais comme ça, bon, mon mari travaille ici, c'est tout.

Similarly, this strong channelling of secondary migrant Francophone mothers’ experiences into a gendered subjectivity anchored in mothering and reproductive tasks also tends to homogenize their daily life in Kingston. The stories of Alma, Agathe, Marilou, Claire, and Sophie, discussed earlier in this chapter, point to the complexity and differences between daily lives of Francophone mothers who are primary migrants in Kingston. By contrast, the daily lives and social

26 If I’d been in Québec I would have probably gone back to work earlier. Because I’m like… I’ve reached my limit now. If find it harder to be at home… You know at least I have activities that take me out of the house, but the fact that it is always 24/7… that your life is... I’m always at home, it’s always the same things, let’s say my daughter comes home from school, and she starts arguing, it’s like... “that again...” Let’s say at night, sometimes the youngest one still wakes up, so it’s like 24 hours, it’s like all the time... Everything always revolves around children. And now what I’ve come to find difficult is... now it’s been at least seven years that I haven’t worked, not been on the job market, so now I’ve got to a point to... to think of me, what... not me as a mum, but me as... me what I want to do.

27 To come last

28 That’s what my husband said, to ‘look at it in terms of the needs of the children’. For a mother, when you think about your children, you forget everything else [...] I have lived fifteen years without aim. It’s just a life, you know, from day to day... I lived that way, well, my husband works here, that’s all.
trajectories of secondary migrants in Kingston tend to follow similar paths, despite the differences in their life stories. For these mothers, interrelations between migration, minority language, and mothering tend to subordinate their lives to structures of patriarchy which are “both the medium and outcome of the gendering of ‘labour migration’” (Halfacree 1995, 173). Importantly, these structures of patriarchy translate in a generalized economic and social dependency of secondary migrant mothers on their partners. Marianne notes: “J’ai toujours été quelqu’un d’indépendante, qui aimait faire mes petites affaires… Pis tsé là sentir que… c’est ton chum là, qui ramène l’argent à la maison… »29 This dependency can put secondary migrant mothers in situations of great vulnerability, despite their relatively affluent lifestyles as long as they remain with their partners. Lorraine Code warns,

> it is worth noting that ‘affluent women’ is a term with ambiguous reference. Class attribution on the basis of a husband’s or a father’s class is at best tenuous, at worst deceptive. Unless women are economically self-sufficient, calling them middle-class or affluent merely includes them in the class of their more affluent partner. Such women often, in fact, are poor (Code 1991, 92)

These drastic changes and tightening of secondary migrant mothers’ day-to-day geographies and life horizons following migration have long lasting impacts in their social and economic trajectories, thus warranting the terms ‘turning point’ and ‘bifurcation’ (Gaudet 2013). Tim Cresswell, building a case for a politics of mobilities, notes that

> [s]peeds, slownesses, and immobilities are all related in ways that are thoroughly infused with power and its distribution. … Everyday language reveals some of the meanings that accompany the idea of movement. We are always trying to get somewhere. No one wants to be stuck or bogged down. (Cresswell 2010, 21)

In that sense, these mothers’ common feeling of being “bogged down” or “stuck” illustrates the power imbalance underlying the migration of secondary migrant mothers’ households. For

29 I’ve always been an independent person, who liked to do her own things…. And you know now, feeling that... it’s your partner now, who brings money home...
many of them, the combination of mothering and migration has effectively thrown them outside of the unrelenting unfolding of liberal capitalist time where individuals engage as individuated economic and social subjects and, ideally, have a sense of progression in their professional life. Marianne notes « ça fait un an qu’on est arrivé.es pis j’ai l’impression d’être sur pause… » She then adds « Je pense que s’il me disait « ok on retourne à Québec l’an prochain » ça me ferait encore plus chier. Parce que j’aurais l’impression d’avoir tout sacrifié, tout perdu, pour finalement si peu… pour un an, ou deux, ou trois… » What Marianne underlines here is that this forced immobility throws her off the track of liberal capitalist time with irremediable consequences. Thus, although secondary migrants’ time of mothering pre-school age children may represent a limited period in their life span, the economic, social, and cultural losses ensuing from their intersecting experiences of mothering and migration have profound effects on the rest of their lives.

Maryam observes:

L’immigration c’est quelque chose qui va te chambouler toute ta vie….Et une fois j’ai discuté avec mon mari… il m’a dit « écoute, si on part de ton point de vue à toi, c'est vrai Kingston c'est pas bien. … Moi, franchement, ça me dérange pas. … Si on regarde du point de vue des enfants, tu trouveras pas mieux que le Canada. Que Kingston » … Et c’est là où j’ai ouvert les yeux et j’ai accepté en fait. J'ai accepté d'être au Canada. D'être toute ma vie.

For many secondary migrant mothers this life-changing bifurcation was experienced as an irremediable ‘step back,’ accompanied by grief for what might have been.

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30 We’ve been here for a year and I feel like I’m on timeout
31 I think if he told me “ok we’re going back to Québec next year” it would piss me off even more. Because I would feel I have sacrificed everything, lost everything, for so little in the end… for one year, or two, or three…
32 On normative temporal expectation of raising ‘normal’ children and the expectation that once they reach school age mothers can be free see Kittay 1999.
33 Immigration is something that will disrupt your whole life … Once I discussed this with my husband. He told me “listen, from your point of view, Kingston isn’t good. … Me, frankly, I don’t really care. … If you look at it from the children’s point of view, you won’t find better than Canada. Than Kingston.” And that’s when I opened my eyes, and accepted. I accepted to be in Canada. For my whole life.
These important differences in the outcomes of migration between primary and secondary migrant mothers translate into different possibilities of affiliations and belongings. Above, I used the examples of Sophie and Claire to discuss how networks and places of Francophone mothering come to be juxtaposed on pre-existing social worlds of most of the primary migrants. The social situations of secondary migrants are obviously quite different. Caring, or anticipating caring, for young children, these mothers had no time to establish social networks and seek economic opportunities in Kingston before meeting the demands, temporalities, and modes of sociality of mothering. As well, many secondary migrants had little knowledge of English before migrating, adding to their socio-economic exclusion in Kingston. For these women, the steep separation between their family-centered lives and the wider social, cultural, and economic worlds of the city mirrors the geographies of their linguistic practices. The French they speak in their houses, streets, cars, or in the bus, at the park, and at the shops, effectively cuts them off from daily life in wider English Kingston, and anchors their lives firmly upon their French-speaking partners, children, and friends (an idea approached by Gilbert 1999). Éloïse is a mother of two boys who arrived in Kingston speaking very little English. She recalls an anecdote that vividly illustrates the linguistic bubble that confines Francophone secondary migrant mothers not only to social subjectivities of motherhood, but also to a minority social-world of French:

L’autre fois j’étais au parc avec les enfants, pis y’avait une autre mère qui était là avec un chien, pis le chien s’est échappé de sa laisse. Les enfants ont couru après le chien, ça nous a donné un prétexte pour jaser un peu, mais c’est tout… Avoir été en français c’est sûr qu’on aurait pu avoir une conversation plus. Mais là vu que je m’enfarge à tous les mots…

34 Once I was at the playground with the children, and there was another mother who was there with a dog, and the dog escaped from its leach. The children ran after the dog, and that gave us a pretext to chat a little, but that was it... If it had been in French I’m sure we could have talked more. But now as I’m tripping on every word...
Relationships to French, and the social significance of French, are therefore quite different between Francophone mothers who came to Kingston as primary migrants and as fluent English speakers and those who came as secondary migrants with little English skill. For these latter mothers, their investment in Francophone places and networks of mothering is not motivated by a Francophone reckoning moment as described by Claire at the birth of her children. Almost unilingual Francophone secondary migrant mothers rarely express a feeling of urgency to protect the survival of French as a minority language in Ontario, which troubles other Francophone mothers.

Mostly unilingual Francophone migrant mothers tend to perceive French language less in terms of cultural transmission and survival than in terms of possibilities of access and barriers (a theme elaborated upon in chapter 7). The challenges of communication, modulated by the presence or absence of French in particular places and networks, shape these mother’s horizons in Kingston. Marianne for example explains how she chose to frequent particular Francophone playgroups with her daughter:

J’allais pas beaucoup à Rémi Gaulin … parce qu’au début je me faisais dire « ah Rémi Gaulin, y’a moins de monde, c’est moins bien organisé… » J’allais à celui qui est en anglais, pis j’aimais ça, mais finalement il m’est arrivé un petit… la fille qui était là-bas, pour elle c’était que anglais là. C’était une affaire en anglais. Pis c’est arrivé une fois qu’on était 2-3 parents francophones, pis on s’est parlé.es en français, pis elle l’a comme pas pris. Elle nous a dit « ici c’est en anglais, faque vous allez vous forcer pour parler en anglais ». Je suis tellement restée bouchée, j’ai fait « ouin mais ma fille, si je veux qu’elle me comprenne, je vais quand même lui parler en français… » Je comprends que les activités sont en anglais pis tout ça, pis je me disais c’est bien parce qu’elle va apprendre l’anglais, elle va parler avec des petits amis en anglais. Mais là ça a comme vraiment fait un froid. Depuis ce temps-là je suis partie, pis y’a pu grand monde non plus qui a continué à y aller de francophone… On se sentait un peu… délaisées… Faque là j’ai commencé à aller à Rémi Gaulin.  

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35 I didn’t go to Rémi Gaulin much… Because at first I was told “ah Rémi Gaulin there are fewer people there, it’s not as well organised...” I went to the one in English, and I liked it, but then something happened… the woman
French language carries many meanings for secondary migrant Francophone mothers with few English skills. French language can present an important site of inclusion into a clearly delineated community, and for some it fosters a new sense of self as a member of a cultural minority. Such meanings are further explored in chapter 8. Beyond these important elements, Marianne’s account illustrates that French language interactions, places, and networks present for almost unilingual Francophone mothers a safety net above which they congregate as they experience direct or indirect exclusion within Kingston’s hegemonic Anglophone social world.

Military spouses

An important number of Francophone secondary migrant mothers are also spouses of members of the military, although not themselves part of the Canadian Forces. I refer to these women as ‘military spouses’. As secondary migrants, they experienced the enhanced shift in their subjectivities and practices towards feminized labour of care and reproduction resulting from their combined circumstances of mothering and migration. This shift was further amplified by the imbrication of their lives with the army. The army is a totalizing institution that exerts an exceptional degree of control over the lives of its members. The overarching power it has over the entirety of its members’ households exacerbates the patriarchal hierarchy in the valuation of remunerated work between male and female partners in military spouses’ couples. The story of Christine clearly illustrates this. Christine arrived in Kingston as a mother of four children with who was there, for her it was English only there. It was an English thing. And once we were 2 or 3 Francophone parents, and we spoke together in French, and she would have none of it. She told us “it’s in English here, so you’ll make efforts to speak English.” I was so flabbergasted, I was like “yeah, but my daughter, if I want her to understand, I’ll still speak to her in French...” I understand that the activities are in English and all that, and I thought it was good because then she would learn English, she’ll speak with her little friends in English. But then it became really uncomfortable. After that I left, and not many Francophones kept going there... We felt a little... cast aside... So then I started to go to Rémi Gaulin.

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her husband, a high ranking military officer from whom she is now divorced. She was originally from Rimouski in Québec. She had followed her husband’s military postings to Gatineau, where she had her two first children, then to Valcartier (Québec City), where she had her two youngest, and finally to Kingston.

Oui il y a les missions, oui il y a les déménagements qui ont un impact, ils sont souvent envoyés sur des cours, mais même quand ils sont ici, ils peuvent avoir des horaires très irréguliers… mon ex est maintenant officier il est très haut gradé, il peut avoir des heures… tard, il est stressé, il se lève la nuit… Ce qui est difficile dans le couple c’est aussi qu’à quelque part, c’est comme si tu décides que la carrière de monsieur prime toujours. Pis toi en tant qu’épouse, quand t’as pas le gros salaire, quand t’as pas la grosse carrière, tu te sens mal de dire moi aussi j’aimerais ça retourner aux études, moi aussi j’aimerais ça avoir un travail… avoir le même travail pendant longtemps, avoir une évolution dans mon travail… J’ai l’impression qu’il a fallu que je m’oublie, pis tsé toute l’emphase était sur monsieur, sur la carrière de monsieur, moi j’ai comme eu comme réflexe, en tant que maman, de mettre toutes les forces sur la famille, sur les enfants, pis d’être le poteau de sécurité, le noyau familial.36

Christine’s story illustrates that, more than with most other types of employment, the military demands a surrender of spouses and families’ lives, projects, and options. For mothers partnered to military people, the shift towards gendered roles of reproduction associated with mothering and migration are amplified by the totalizing aspect of the institution and by the particular stresses it brings. Christine, like many military spouses, felt that taking care of the family and doing the best she could to cope with the stress of her partner’s work demanded all her time and energy. Stressors of military life include violence, inherent to the work of military men and women, and which is

36 Yes the missions, yes the moves have an impact, they’re often sent on training, but even when they’re here, they can have very irregular hours… my ex is now a very high ranking officer, he can have hours… late, he’s stressed, he gets up at night… What’s difficult for the couple is also that somehow, it’s as if you decide that Mister’s career is always priority. And you, as the spouse, when you don’t have the big salary, the big career, you feel badly to say I also would like to go back to school, I also would like to have a job… to have the same job for a long time, to progress in my work… I feel like I had to forget myself, and you know all the emphasis was on Mister, on Mister’s career, and I had the reflex, as a mom, to put all my strengths on the family, on the children, and to be the safety barrier, the heart of the family.
frequently projected unto their family’s life, furthering constraining military spouses’ life horizons (Rentz et al. 2006; Taft et al. 2011).

Il est revenu [de déploiement] avec une colère en dedans de lui, une rage de la vie, que pour nous la conjointe c’est dur à comprendre. Et un stress. Lui de la façon qu’il me décrivait, c’est comme si une personne normale a une échelle de stress, le matin quand tu te lèves t’es à zéro. Mais lui disait qu’il se levait toujours à cinq ou six. Faque ça prenait pas grand-chose dans sa journée pour qu’il soit irritable, qu’il pogne les nerfs… … S’il vit… pas un post-traumatique, mais un état de colère, ben moi ça me rassure que les enfants soient plus avec moi… 37

Mothers who are military spouses are also likely to experience secondary migration more than once. Military postings are highly dependent on an individual’s trade within the institution, and for many trades promotion is predicated on moving bases. Military professionals are likely to move early in their careers, which often corresponds to the period when they have young children, and thus when mothering imperatives are highest for military spouses. Serial moves erode the control secondary migrant mothers managed to keep over their lives despite combined pressures of mothering and previous migrations. Caroline is a mother of two who moved to Kingston more than twenty years ago, with her husband from whom she is now separated. Before coming to Kingston, Caroline followed her husband to Ottawa (where her children were born), Nova Scotia, and two different bases in northern Saskatchewan. Caroline describes the hardships of these numerous moves, all in the context of an Anglophone majority.

J’ai déménagé plusieurs fois… et c’est toff déménager. Parce que le conjoint, lui arrive, il a une job, pis il est tout installé. Pis en plus, quand t’es militaire, t’as le service médical, t’as tout. Moi j’arrive, j’ai pas de médecin, j’ai… une nouvelle épicerie, j’ai pas de coiffeur… toutes les petites affaires niaiseuses qu’on prend pour acquis mais non, tu recommences à zéro. … Et ensuite t’as la barrière de la langue. Je comprends

37 He came back [from deployment] with an anger inside of him, a rage against life, that is hard to understand for us as spouses. And a stress. For him, the way he described it, it’s as if a normal person has a stress ladder, in the morning when you get up you’re at zero. But he said he would always get up at five or six. So it didn’t take much happening in his day to make him irritable, for him to get mad… … If he’s going through … not a post-traumatic, but a state of anger, well for me it’s reassuring that the children are more with me…
This experience of serial moves described by Caroline is very common amongst military families, especially those with young children. Sharing this exceptional life trajectory and its hardships generates strong bonds of solidarity and fast-paced relationships between military spouses.

Beyond migrant realities, life trajectories of military spouses, as totally dependent on members of a totalizing institution, are so marginal in the normative model of individuated lives of liberal capitalist social world that they often feel unintelligible outside of the military. This peculiar isolation enhances the importance of friendships as means of coping and place making. Above I discussed Marilou’s story to illustrate how friendships between mothers can allow them to cope with social exclusion while they face the pressures of tending to very young children. For Francophone mothers who are also military spouses, friendships formed in Kingston also take on

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38 I moved several times... and moving is tough. Because the husband, he arrives, he’s got a job, and all is set. And then, when you’re military, you have medical services, you have everything. Me, I arrive, I don’t have a doctor, I have... a new grocery store, I don’t have a hair dresser... all those silly little things one takes for granted but no, you start again from zero... And then you have the language barrier. I understood very well, speaking got better. ... But... you always have to start all over again. And for the children, it’s new friends. So finally, for the husband all is well, but for us and the children it’s hard.

39 Military life is particular... you have to develop... you know, my pregnancies, I didn’t have family around to help me. ... You’re in a more emotional situation, you’ve just moved, you start anew, you worry: “will the school be good for my children, where do I go, do I have this, am I going to have a doctor...” You develop a sense of community. ... because you’re isolated right, so... and when you arrive in a place, you know that “ah, in this house, there’s a new one who just arrived.” So now, suppose you just arrived somewhere, everyone would go and see you. That’s for sure.
other and more intense dimensions. None of the military spouses I met had left Québec before their husbands were first posted in English-speaking Canada. Most of these women first experienced the totalizing power of the army and its crystallization of patriarchal gender roles within households during that first migration outside of Québec, as described through Marianne’s account. This first migration ‘away’ often entailed cultural shock, linguistic isolation, alienation from family and friends, and an abrupt loss of subjectivity and way of life. It also led to a drastic re-organization of their sense of place to one focused on the army and the community of military families (see chapter 6). Mylène is a mother of three boys, two of whom are school aged and one of whom was preschool aged at the time of our interview. She moved to Kingston three years earlier, when her youngest child was just a few months old. Prior to this, Mylène’s partner had been posted only in Valcartier (Québec City). She recalls the abrupt change in her social landscape upon coming to Kingston:

A Québec j’avais aucune amie qui était conjointe de militaire. C’était des amies de la job, des amies que j’avais rencontré via d’autres amies, ou tsé… C’était que ça là. … Mais ici, je sens que j’ai ce support-là pis… C’est ça. Faut qu’on se fasse un réseau parce que sinon ça devient beaucoup trop difficile. Faut s’entourer, faut savoir s’entourer, pis faut accepter de se faire aider. Ça c’est ben difficile là… Tsé quand y’en a qui partent ben on s’entraide pis on essaye de se donner le plus d’aide possible. …

Upon moving to Kingston, Francophone military mothers meet other mothers who share similar totalizing experiences. Despite their different trajectories prior to moving to Kingston, these women experience similar channellings of their lives and subjectivities towards gendered roles and labour, as well as a relinquishment of their agency to their partners, and more generally

\[\text{40 In Québec, none of my friends were military spouses. They were friends from work, friends I met through other friends, or you know... It was only that. ... But here, I feel I don’t have that support and... That’s that. You have to make a network for yourself otherwise it is much too difficult. You have to surround yourself, to know how to surround yourself, and to accept help. That’s very difficult that... You know, when some of us leave, well, we help one another and we try to give each other as much help as we can...}\]
to the army, upon which they are now dependent. This shared reality of uprooting, isolation, and disempowerment can lead to the development of very strong friendships between military mothers. These friendships take on the urgency, the importance, and the intensity of sisters-in-arms-like relationships. Mylène tells of such friendship:

J’ai une très très très très bonne amie … son chum était parti en même temps que le mien. … Pis on s’est jamais lâchées. Je la considère comme une sœur. Ils viennent souper, hier elle m’a invitée à souper, je suis allée souper avec les enfants, pis tsé, pendant que nos chums étaient partis elle venait souvent souper ici, on se faisait souvent des soirées. … Tsé on fait des sorties ensemble, on allait à Sand Banks durant l’été les deux ensemble avec mes trois pis son enfant pis elle enceinte là … Faque tsé on s’est pas empêchées de faire des choses, on partait … Tsé c’est toujours « ah mon Dieu ah mon Dieu ah mon Dieu qu’est-ce qui va se passer » … mais ça va bien, une fois que sont [couchés] pis y dorment, t’es comme « yé! Ça s’est bien passé ». Faque ouais, on faisait ça. … Quand t’en trouves une, avec qui tu t’entends super bien, ben… ça va bien. Tu la gardes.41

Mylène’s account points to the importance of such strong friendships for military spouses to cope with their daily lives. These mothers are tasked with the almost complete responsibility for reproducing the conditions of life and well-being of the members of their households, with little to no control over the circumstances in which these conditions must be reproduced. Allying themselves with someone in similar circumstances allows mothers to gain more power, both in informally sharing tasks (childminding, making supper, etc.) and in supporting one another to invest places, as illustrated by Mylène’s account of the Sand Banks visits. These friendships are strong, and anchored in a shared understanding of the extraordinary realities of their lives, which

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41 I have a very very very very good friend… her partner was gone at the same time as mine… and we never let go of one another. I think of her as a sister. They come for supper, yesterday she invited me over for supper, I went with the children, and you know, while our partners were gone she often came for supper here, we had little get-together at night… You know we go out together, we went to Sand Banks the two of us with my three children and her one child and her being pregnant then… So you know we didn’t stop ourselves from doing things, we would go… You know it’s always “ah my God ah my God ah my God what’s going to happen…” But it goes well, once they’re [in bed] and asleep you’re like “yes! It went well…” So yeah, we would do that… When you find one, with whom you get along super, well… it goes well. You keep her.
in turns allow mothers to make sense of these realities and to normalize them.

[Son chum] était en Afghanistan, faque c’était un peu plus stressant et elle c’était son premier tour. Pis je le voyais. … tsé on allait prendre des marches, je l’invitais à souper en plein milieu de la semaine, « viens, tsé, pas de problème », ça allait bien là. Elle elle me voyait aller pis elle était comme « mon dieu t’es mon idole, comment tu fais pour avoir une maison clean, pis comment tu fais pour si… » pis tsé elle était comme dépassée totalement là. Pis je lui disais « je crie après mes enfants, t’as pas idée là. Ils m’énervent! J’ai le goût de leur arracher la tête! Ça m’arrive des fois! » … Tsé ça nous fait vivre toutes sortes de choses…

As most things in the lives of military spouses, however, these strong relationships between mothers are established through their partners’ networks – the community around the army – and are at the mercy of decisions made unilaterally by the army and, to a lesser extent, by their partner. As annexes to their partners, the preferences and personal circumstances of military spouses weigh often very little in decisions made at the scale of their households. Thus, although their friendships with other military spouses can be the most significant relationships in their lives during their time in Kingston, bringing them resources to cope and to invest in place, there is no question that these relationships will be sacrificed once their partners are posted elsewhere. Maude expressed this particular combination of resignation and profound grief at the foreseen loss of such friendship. At the time of our interview, she had recently learned that her partner was to be reposted to Valcartier. Although she was confident that she would find more opportunity for employment, and more generally for fulfillment, in Québec, she mostly felt pain at the prospect of leaving the friend she loves behind.

J’ai une amie ici, que c’est comme… on va trouver ça dur. … Moi j’habite sur la rue là, pis elle elle habite sur la rue d’à côté. Faque on reste à une minute l’une de l’autre…

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42 Her partner was in Afghanistan, so that was a little more stressful and it was her first deployment. And I saw it... you know we would go for walks, I invited her over for supper in the middle of the week, “come over, it’s no problem”, it went well then. She would look at me go and she was like “my God, you’re my idol, how can you have a clean house, and how do you manage this…” And you know she was completely overwhelmed then. And I would tell her “I yell at my kids, you have no idea. They get on my nerves! I feel like ripping their heads off! It happens to me sometimes!”... You know it makes us go through all kinds of things...
Je sais pas. Ça a cliqué. On a des enfants quasiment dans les mêmes âges … c’est vraiment une bonne amie là. Faque là, quand j’ai su que j’étais postée je me suis en allée chez elle quasiment en braillant … qu’est-ce qui va me manquer ça va être le spontané. Desfois le matin on vient de se lever, c’est « viens-tu prendre un café? » Faque là… « Ok je m’en viens, j’hable les enfants pis je m’en viens! » …. On a le même rythme de vie, le même beat … On est tout le temps ensemble… Pis tsé, mon chum travaille de jour, on passe autant de temps… d’heures mettons, dans une semaine, avec elle qu’avec mon chum là… quasiment plus des fois parce qu’on se voit pendant le jour. … Ça c’est sûr que ça va être toff. … tsé je lui disais « je te souhaite de rencontrer quelqu’un d’autre avec qui ça va cliquer aussi pour… pour sortir quand même pis faire des affaires… »

The vulnerability and lack of control that characterises the experiences of some Francophone mothers who are military spouses in Kingston, epitomized in Maude’s account, is not shared equally among military spouses. The army is a highly hierarchical institution, and the professional circumstances of its members vary widely based on their rank and position. Unlike Mylène, Maude and Caroline, Geneviève’s partner works as a researcher for the army. Consequently, he is never deployed and is very unlikely to be posted elsewhere, which allows Geneviève to plan her life with a certain degree of certainty. As well, his flexible work schedule allows him to support Geneviève, an amateur play actress, in her artistic pursuits. Importantly, and as discussed above, Geneviève fully adheres to an intensive mothering ideology (see Theoretical Context) and was committed to staying home with her children before they were posted to Kingston. Moving for her did not represent the same drastic shift in gendered subjectivity around experiences of mothering and salaried work as it did for other mothers who are military spouses.

43 I have a friend here and it’s like… it will be hard for us… I live on that street here, and she lives on the next street. So we live a minute away from one another…. I don’t know. It clicked. And we have kids almost the same age… she really is a good friend. So then, when I knew I was posted, I went to her house almost crying… What I’m going to miss is the spontaneity. Sometimes we get up in the morning, and it’s “are you coming over for coffee?” And so… “Ok, I’m coming, I’m getting the kids dressed and I’m coming!” … We have the same rhythm, the same beat… We are always together… And you know, my partner works during the day, we spend as much time… of hours let’s say, in a week, with her than with my partner… more almost sometimes because we see each other during the day … It sure will be tough… You know I was telling her “I hope you meet someone else with whom it will click as well to… to keep going out and do things…”
Pour un militaire c’est vraiment enviable… moi je me plains jamais. … Tsé ça va super bien, je sais qu’on est vraiment chanceux… Y’en a beaucoup, pis je les comprends, sont restées à la maison pas par choix. Faque eux autres elles voient ça un peu… rester à la maison c’est un peu… un style d’oppression un peu… Faque tsé au fond, je leur en veux pas là, au fil des années j’en suis venue à réaliser… Pis en même temps à un moment donné, faut que tu t’assume là, quand t’as quatre enfants pis ça fait dix ans que t’es à la maison c’est parce que tu veux. … Moi je l’ai jamais senti comme une victime parce que je me suis jamais sentie dans cette catégorie-là.44

In her account Geneviève actively rejects the narrative of hardships, stress, isolation, and lack of control associated with the lives of mothers who are military spouses: she even expresses a sense a frustration with such narrative, which she finds victimizing. Geneviève was fluent in English before moving to Kingston, and she quickly established networks through her artistic pursuits that span beyond the military community. In a sharp contrast with accounts of other military spouses, characterised by a sense of constriction both in terms of spatial horizons and of life prospects, Geneviève insists she has an independent, rich, and fulfilling life of her own. « Pis tsé si tu me parles c’est à moi que tu parles. Pose-moi des questions sur moi. Moi tsé parler de mon mari, pis de ton mari, pis de leurs grades, pis leur commandants… j’ai jamais été là-dedans45 ». 

Geneviève jealously protects her social identity from patriarchal forces prevalent in military community that tend to reduce military spouses’ subjectivities to secondary gendered roles. Without undermlying Geneviève’s understanding of herself, and the fact that her life provides her with more freedom, control, and satisfaction than other military spouses in less happy
circumstances, it is interesting to note that much of Geneviève’s own activities and pursuits nonetheless emerged, and in some case still unfold, in the military world. For one thing, despite her claims of independent social identity, it is through her partner and her partner’s colleagues, all evolving in the institutional milieu of the army, that Geneviève met friends and was introduced to local amateur theater companies. Importantly, many of the relationships in Geneviève’s social life are constructed through her partner and as a woman who is wife to a member of the military. Take for instance this statement:

 Ça s’est passé vraiment super bien quand on est arrivé.es à Kingston. … Mon chum en même temps qu’il est rentré [à son] département, une autre famille arrivait aussi. … C’était des gens, ils avaient des enfants, presque les mêmes âges que les nôtres. … Faque ça a comme été nos ami.es instantanné.es, faque là, tu fais des affaires pis tu rencontres d’autres gens, mais on dirait que quand t’es deux t’es moins gênée. Pis elle c’est une anglophone, pis c’est une personne, elle arrive à quelque part pis elle prend de la place, pis tsé elle est pas gênée pis elle fait son affaire, faque en dedans de quelques mois elle avait plein de contacts. Pis tsé moi elle m’avait pris sous son aile là. Faque n’importe où que j’allais, j’étais comme sa meilleure chum, pis elle me présentait à tout le monde…

Here again Geneviève’s account points to the role of friendship as a vector of place making for mothers in times of transition, whether the transition be to new motherhood, like Marilou, or migration, like Geneviève, Maude, and Mylène. The fact that, unlike Maude and Mylène, Geneviève was not restricted to Francophone places and networks certainly helped her widen her horizon of possible places and relationships in Kingston more rapidly. What is common however in all of these accounts is that these friendships and their empowering qualities are anchored in a

46 It really went super well when we came to Kingston... At the same time as my partner entered his department another family came too.... They were people, they had children, almost the same age as ours... So they were like our instant friends, so then, you do things and you meet people, but when you’re two of you it’s like you feel less shy. And she’s Anglophone, and she’s the kind of person, she arrives somewhere and she makes her place, and you know she’s not shy and she does her things, so within a few months she had lots of contacts. And you know, me she had taken me under her wing then. So anywhere she went, I was like her best friend, and she introduced me to everybody...
particular gendering of social life. Geneviève’s account makes clear that, despite her claims for independent social subjectivity, encountering another family meant automatically a gendered assignation of places and social roles to individuals within the new relationships: the male partners rubbing elbows in the lab, and the female partners socializing with the children in playgroups.

The overwhelming control exerted on military spouses by their partners, as primary breadwinners and, thus, primary liberal subject within the household, and more generally by the army, translates into a situation of dependency in all aspects of these women’s lives. The accounts of Mylène, Maude, and Geneviève point to the subordination of women’s relationships, no matter how significant, to their partner’s circumstances and projects. Earlier, I also discussed the surrender of professional autonomy – and thus economic control – that in most cases characterizes the lives of serial migration spouses. This context of multiple and intertwined dependencies enhances the channelling actions of migration and motherhood that powerfully guide their lives into gendered paths of feminized labour and subjectivities. Theirs is a context of great vulnerability, characterized by a dire lack of personal choice. In the words of an employee of the employment program of the Kingston branch of Association Canadienne-française de l’Ontario – Milles-Îles (ACFO-MI): «Les femmes dans cette situation peuvent être prises pour accepter des choses inacceptables. Faire des compromis qu’elles devraient jamais avoir à faire.»

Importantly, resistance to such channelling of their lives is accomplished at great personal costs and hardship. For example, Christine’s decision to leave her husband and regain control over her own life obliged her to provide for all of her children’s needs on a considerably lower income, in a second language, and without a network of family or friends. She secured a job as kindergarten educational assistant.

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47 Women in this situation can be stuck in position where they have no choice but to accept intolerable things. Making compromises they should never have to.
in a French-language school while pursuing full-time schooling at night, which allowed her to follow her children’s school rhythm, but took a considerable toll on her health.

Quand j’ai fini l’année scolaire j’étais complètement brûlée. … On s’entend que travailler avec maternelle jardin c’est demandant physiquement, faut être en forme… Le temps de finir la routine, je pouvais pas m’y mettre concrètement [à mes études] avant huit heures le soir…. Je commença à huit heures, je travaillais jusqu’à ce que je ne sois plus capable. Je m’endormais vite, et quand je me réveillais dans la nuit je recommence à travailler jusqu’à ce que je ne sois plus capable, et je retournais me coucher pour quelques heures. Et ensuite je me réveillais pour ma journée à l’école … Il a fallu que je lâche prise, j’étais un peu perfectionniste sur le ménage, sur les choses comme ça, mais là j’avais juste pas le choix. … Cet été j’avais tellement pris une mauvaise routine de sommeil que ça m’a pris la moitié de l’été à casser ça. Je me réveillais la nuit, et c’est comme si mon cerveau cherchait quelque chose à faire…. Faque oui, des fois j’ai appelé mes parents en pleurant, en disant là là je suis pu capable …

Conclusion

This chapter reveals the complexity of constellations of affiliation and belonging, possibility and impossibility, and power and powerlessness, that emerge as experiences of migration, mothering, and minority language intertwine in the lives of these Francophone mothers. I argue that these constellations gender mothers’ lives. Exclusion from liberal norms of individuated subjectivity, linguistic barriers, secondary migration, and the imbrication of one’s life in the totalizing institution of the military tend to discipline mothers’ lives into grooves of feminized labour and identity. The stories presented here make clear that social exclusion in these many forms

48 When I finished the school year, I was completely exhausted… Obviously working with kindergarten children is physically demanding, you have to be in shape… By the time I was done nightly routine, I couldn’t get to [my studies] before 8 at night… I start at 8, I worked until I couldn’t do it anymore. I fell asleep fast, and when I would wake up during the night, I would start working again until I couldn’t do it anymore, and then I would go back to bed for a few hours. And then, I would wake up for my day at school… I had to let go, I was a bit perfectionist on cleanliness, that type of things, but then I just didn’t have choice anymore… That summer I had gotten into such a bad sleeping routine it took me half the summer to break out of it. I would wake up at night, as if my brain was looking for something to do. … So yes, sometimes I called my parents crying, saying now I can’t do it anymore…
are part of an organic, interactive, and dynamic system that shapes mothers’ contexts and options at specific spatial and temporal moments of their lives.
Chapter 6 – Francophone mothers’ geographies: relationships, knowledges, alterity, and everyday life

So far in this dissertation, I have explored how combinations of elements in the life stories of Francophone mothers in Kingston tend to channel their lives and subjectivities into gendered grooves. More precisely, I have shown that an intersectional approach to life story analysis can reveal the combined role of migration, mothering, and linguistic minority experiences in shaping constellations of identification, dis-identification, power, and powerlessness. At this point, I am switching my focus to Francophone mothers’ present-day geographies in Kingston. My aim for the next chapters is to explore the role of these geographies in (trans)forming these women’s subjectivities as mothers and as Francophones. More specifically, I want to show that Kingston presents Francophone mothers with possibilities, impossibilities, affiliations, belongings, and exclusions that further channel their lives along feminized paths.

This first chapter about Francophone mothers’ geographies in Kingston focuses on how they manage their linguistic realities as well as the complex, and sometimes contradictory, needs of mothering in their everyday lives. Drawing on Isabel Dyck’s 1990’s theorization of geographies of mothers’ daily practices, I argue that Francophone mothers cope with their particular experiences of encumberment and confinement by routine and seemingly trifling negotiation of knowledges and relationships. Dyck’s analysis, although dated, brings indispensable insights on mothers’ management of the conflicting needs of daily life through the establishment and maintenance of relationships between mothers, within which they create and share knowledge and transform their subjectivities as mothers. However, I argue that Dyck’s use of structuration theory as analytical framework obscures key aspects of mothers’ experiences because of unproblematized
epistemological assumptions. Although critiquing structuration is by no means a new endeavour in geography (see Gregory 1989; Thrift 1990), doing this through the experiences of Francophone mothers in Kingston allows me to reveal key elements of complexity and unknowability of their epistemologies and senses of place. I demonstrate that, through their experiences of subjugated knowledges and relationships, Francophone mothers insert alternative meanings and logics within the places they inhabit. Drawing on Michel de Certeau’s “tactics of everyday life”, (Certeau 1991) I explore how mothers mobilize such alternative meanings and logics through daily acts of ‘making do’ and ‘making with’ dominant powers that are unconducive to their needs as mothers and as Francophones. However, these daily practices are not performances of direct and conscious resistance to social power regimes (such as capitalism, liberalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity) that devalue feminized reproductive social roles and labours. In fact, I argue that these practices draw on and reiterate gendered and heteronormative meanings and social roles around mothering and linguistic minority.

**Francophone mothers’ daily geographies in Kingston**

The theoretical project of this chapter moves from the broader temporal scale of life stories that structures chapters 4 and 5 to refocus on minute everyday experiences in Kingston and their impacts on Francophone mothers’ subjectivities and practices. In that way, I am attempting to reveal daily articulations of dynamics identified in previous chapters that channel mothers’ lives and senses of self – i.e. migration, mothering, and linguistic minority, and their ensuing possibilities and impossibilities of affiliation, marginalisation, and gendering in a (neo)liberal and English dominated social environment. This approach draws broadly on materialist geographies
of everyday life. These geographies emphasize the importance of everyday life as a site through which routine sociality and materiality of places shape different peoples’ lives, and through which power relationships are reproduced and contested (see for example Dyck 2005; Ho and Hatfield 2011; Gilbert et al. 2014). A focus on everyday life highlights social structures and power dynamics obscured by the mundane and taken-for-granted qualities of daily micro-scale experiences. As well, the study of everyday life reveals how global structures and metanarratives (capitalism, transnationalism, and patriarchy) are supported and maintained through unremarkable norms, values, and activities performed on a daily basis and often at very small scale (Ho and Hatfield 2011). For Lefebvre, for example, the everyday is a totality of relationships and power structures spanning a multiplicity of scales:

Thus the simplest event – a woman buying a pound of sugar, for example – must be analysed. Knowledge will grasp whatever is hidden within it. To understand this simple event, it is not enough merely to describe it; research will disclose a tangle of reasons and causes, of essences and ‘spheres’: the woman’s life, her biography, her job, her family, her class, her budget, her eating habits, how she uses money, her opinions and her ideas, the state of the market, etc. Finally, I will have grasped the sum total of capitalist society, the nation and its history. And although what I grasp becomes more and more profound, it is contained from the start in the original little event. So now I can see the humble events of everyday life as having two sides: a little, individual, chance event – and at the same time an infinitely complex social event, richer than the many ‘essences’ it contains within itself. (Lefebvre quoted in Highmore 2001, 143)

Some geographers also favour the study of everyday life because it is through daily life that people encounter the spatial obstacles and opportunities of places, their materiality, and their sociality. Gilbert and Ray note:

C'est au quotidien que l'individu et les groupes structurent des espaces sociaux par lesquels ils font usage des lieux. C'est aussi dans l'espace quotidien que l'individu et les groupes vivent la différence et font l'expérience des relations de pouvoir induisant
Migration geographers have recently shown much interest in the study of everyday life, as it proves particularly fruitful to expose minute ways in which migrants experience new geographies and their underlying power configurations (Ho and Hatfield 2011; Erdal and Ryan 2018). It is through daily life that migrants experience opportunities or obstacles arising from different linguistic regimes, labour markets and their discriminatory practices, deskilling, long working hours, and night shifts, and shifting gender roles and expectations (McIlwaine 2010; Cook, Dwyer, and Waite 2011; Veronis 2014, 2015; Veronis and Ray 2014). Everyday life has also proven especially valuable for feminist geographers due to the devaluation of the routine, the mundane, and the private (Dyck 2005). In her landmark book Feminism and Geography (1993), Gillian Rose insisted that “the everyday routines traced by women are never unimportant, because the seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures which limit and confine women. … The everyday is the arena through which patriarchy is (re)created – and contested.” (G. Rose 1993, 17)

Everyday material and social circumstances in Kingston, anchored in wider structures and dynamics (capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, liberalism, English normativity, etc.), modulate the lives of Francophone mothers. These circumstances shape their possibilities of movements and access, of inclusion, of identification, and the meanings projected on their everyday practices. These circumstances are dynamic as the places of Kingston change and as new places are produced. Nonetheless, Francophone mothers, with their different subjectivities and

1 It is through daily life that individuals and groups structure social space through which they use places. It is also through daily space that individuals and groups experience difference and power relations leading to inclusion and exclusion – both material and symbolic – which affect minority populations.
needs, themselves born out of their trajectories of migration, mothering, and minority linguistic practices, encounter possibilities and impossibilities in their daily lives shaped by the conditions of their present-day experiences in Kingston. Consider, for example, the account of Mylène (introduced in chapter 5) as she recalls the difficulties of taking her children to swimming lessons:

On a été au Artillery Park, qui est dans le centre-ville…. mais comme il y a pas de moniteur qui parle français, ou qui comprend le français, ben pour mon garçon c’était très difficile. Pis il a failli se noyer. … Je vais avec mes deux garçons à la piscine, mon deuxième je suis avec lui dans l’eau, mon premier est avec sa monitrice, dans son groupe d’âge à lui. Je dis là, tsé, « mon fils parle pas anglais, faites-lui des signes, il va comprendre ». … Les enfants sont tous assis sur le bord de l’eau, pis elle en prend un à la fois, pis elle le fait nager. Pis elle le ramène. Mais moi mon gars … il s’est pitché dans l’eau. Mais il était pu capable de revenir. … je suis partie à courir, du bout de la piscine avec mon garçon dans les bras, jusque l’autre bord pour aller chercher mon fils dans l’eau, le ramener assis sur le bord, pis là il tousse, et y’a personne qui a réagi. Personne. … Je me dis si y’avait pu communiquer, peut-être que là ça aurait été différent… mais dans [le groupe de mon plus jeune], y’a un des moniteurs qui parlait français. Mais je me suis dit « pourquoi quand moi je vous ai dit que j’avais un fils qui parle pas anglais… vous avez pas pris ce moniteur-là pour le mettre dans ce groupe-là? Me semble ç’aurait été simple? » … C’était important pour moi qu’il fasse un cours de piscine. Mais à un moment donné parce que mon chum est parti [en déploiement] j’ai dû arrêter, parce que ça devenait trop compliqué de gérer ça, un bébé qui peut pas aller dans l’eau, pis que j’avais même demandé, « est-ce que je peux aller avec mon fils dans l’eau, comme parent accompagnateur, que mon autre soit dans l’autre groupe, pis avoir mon bébé avec moi dans un petit poisson flottant? » Parce que quand je vais à la piscine avec les trois c’est ce que je fais. … Ça se fait. Mais ils voulaient pas que j’aille mon bébé avec moi. Qu’est-ce que je fais? Je suis obligée de payer pour le faire garder. …. Faque c’est pour ça qu’à un moment donné on a arrêté.²

² We went to Artillery Park. … but since there were no instructors who speak French, or who understand French, well for my son it was very difficult. And he almost drowned. ... I go with my two boys to the pool, my younger one I’m with him in the water, my older one is with his instructor, in his age group. I tell her now, you know, “my son doesn’t speak English, use signs, he’ll understand”. ... The children are all sitting at the water edge, and she takes one at a time, and she makes him swim. And she brings him back. But me my boy... he threw himself in the water. But he couldn’t get back. ... I started running, from one end of the pool with my other boy in my arms, to the other end to get my son in the water, bring him back to the water’s edge, and now he’s coughing, and nobody reacted. Nobody. ... I think if he could have communicated, maybe then it would have been different... but in [my younger son’s group], there was an instructor who spoke French. But I thought “why when I told you my son doesn’t speak English... you didn’t take that instructor and assigned him to that group? Wouldn’t it have been simple?” ... It was important for me that they take swimming lesson. But at some point since my partner was gone [in deployment] I had to stop, because it was getting too complicated, with a baby who cannot go in the water, and I had even
Mylène’s account reflects how the dominant structures and practices of the swimming pool at the times of the children’s swimming lessons translated in a series of seemingly mundane obstacles that eventually culminated to cast her needs and practices as a Francophone and as a mother as ‘out of place’. As the mother of a unilingual French-speaking child, Mylène’s linguistic practices and needs were at odds with the dominant and taken-for-granted English-centered linguistic structure of the place. The institution managing the provision of the swimming lesson lacked the flexibility to recognize both the needs at hand and the existing possibility to address this need (by switching instructors so that another person who happened to speak French was assigned to the boy’s group). Watson et al. (2004) attribute such rigidity in service provision to a liberal model of recognition and accommodation that categorises individuals by cohorts of needs – as either, for example, children, or persons with disability, or elderly persons. Such a model, the authors argue, prevents health and social services institutions from recognizing and accommodating the intersectional complexity and the fluidity of needs, and has the disastrous consequence of pitting needs against one another in struggles for services (Watson et al. 2004). In Mylène’s account, this larger-scale liberal ‘cohort’ rationale dominating the structures and practices of the swimming pool translated into the inability of the service provider to cater for the needs of her unilingual Francophone child. As a child, Mylène’s son needed to learn to swim, and as unilingual Francophone he needed to be able to communicate. Both needs had to be addressed for the environment to be safe for him. The logic and structures of the swimming lesson prevented the institution from grasping the intersection of these needs and, further, from recognizing that a simple solution was available. Furthermore, as the mother of three young children without a co-

asked, “can I go in the water with my son, as the accompanying parent, and my older boy will be in the other group, and my baby with me in a little floating fish?” Because when I go swimming with the three of them that’s what I do... it’s doable. But they didn’t want me to have my baby with me. What do I do? I have to pay for babysitting. ... So that’s why at some point we stopped.
parent, Mylène’s mothering practices and needs were at odds with the dominant (if unnamed) model of family structuring the practices of the swimming lessons, which prescribes that one parent must always be present for each child under a certain age (see Aitken 1998). Mylène lacked the financial resources to pay for a babysitter and, thus, to conform to the model of parenting implicitly designed into the swimming lessons. In sum, Mylène’s son’s French unilingualism, her family structure (including her partner’s military profession), and her limited financial resources, all combined to cast her and her children as ‘out of place’ (Cresswell 2004, 2009). Being ‘out of place’ meant that Mylène experienced a series of obstacles: her son was denied a French-speaking instructor and she was barred from going into the water with both her toddler and her baby. These obstacles translated into micro catastrophes: her son almost drowning, and she having to pay for babysitting as well as the lessons, which eventually quietly combined to exclude the family.

‘Out of placeness’ is a common experience for Francophone mothers in Kingston, and it is linked to the encumberment and confinement that are common characteristics of mothers’ everyday life-worlds and geographies (see Theoretical Context). Mylène’s account of exclusion, for example, speaks both of encumberment, from the constant and multiple needs she has to address as a mother, and of confinement by the unconducive structures and routine practices of dominant space in Kingston. The everyday geographies of Francophone mothers in Kingston are encumbered and confined to various degrees. They are encumbered through their care and reproduction imperatives, complicated to different extents by their preoccupations with minority language and culture transmission. They are confined because their mothering and minority linguistic practices mark them as exceptional forms of life (in the sense of Delphy 1995) that are not counted as recognizable forms of citizenships (see Lister 1998). In that sense, Francophone mothers’ daily practices and experiences are written out of the liberal teleological grand narrative
as it unfolds in Kingston and they are, in Povinelli’s terms, “parts that have no part” (Povinelli 2011b). The routine ostracism and impossibilities that a Francophone mother encounters depend on how she diverges from dominant norms of subjectivity that structure the places she inhabits or, conversely, the degree to which she can ‘pass’ at embodying those norms (as discussed further in chapter 7). Primary migrants who are employed full-time, for example, are more likely to experience untenable time pressure and challenges in managing care. Meanwhile, secondary migrants tend to experience social exclusion linked to their minority linguistic practices (and lack of fluency in English), the alienation of mothering subjectivity and sociality in a liberal social world, and the loss of professional possibilities following migration.

Isabel Dyck’s geographies of mothers’ everyday: negotiating relationships and knowledges

An important way in which Francophone mothers manage daily needs and mitigate everyday encumberment and confinement is by investing in relationships with other mothers, with whom they share and create knowledges. In chapter 5, I discussed the importance of friendships between mothers on maternity leave and between military spouses – two social contexts that heighten the marginalising impacts of mothering, migration, and linguistic minority. Here I draw on Isabel Dyck to argue that networks, friendships, and relationships of comradery between mothers are crucial sites of epistemological negotiation, place making, and subjectivity transformation. Isabel Dyck’s analysis of mothers’ everyday geographies highlighted the importance of networking for mothers in coping with tensions of daily life and expanding the places, times, and means through which their mothering labour could be accomplished (Dyck 1989, 1990, 1996, 2005). She also described epistemological dynamics at play between mothers as they negotiate understandings about ‘good’ mothering, but also about themselves as mothers and as women (a point also
suggested by Holloway (1998) and by Ruddick (1995)). Dyck’s contribution to everyday geographies of motherhood is crucial, in that she points out how relationships between mothers, and knowledges shared and negotiated through these relationships, insert alternative meanings within dominant structures of place, and thus shape alternative senses of places that are more conducive to mothers’ needs.

Mothers’ everyday geographies became a central theme for Canadian, American, and British feminist geographers during the 1980’s and 1990’s as white middle- and upper-class women increasingly reintegrated into the workforce after having children. This change in mothers’ employment was a consequence of the increased cost of living and the growing incapacity of single (male) breadwinners to support a family, as well as of discursive changes around norms of femininity and wage labour (Dyck 1989; see also McDowell 2004; McDowell et al. 2005, 2006). This increased participation of white professional mothers in the workforce implied a change in their experiences of spatial encumberment and confinement, including challenges around arranging childcare and juggling the contradictory moral imperatives of mothering and paid work. Observing this, Isabel Dyck (1989, 1990, 1996), and others such as Damaris Rose (1993), Kim England (1996), and Sarah Holloway (1998a, 1998b), produced a considerable body of work exploring daily geographies of mothers, and of their experiences of enablement, constraints, agency, and networks as they attempted to balance the needs of everyday life.

The following decades saw a general shift of emphasis in conceptual approaches in feminist geographies away from materialist theories of everyday life. This shift was due, in part, to rising suspicion of conceptual binaries such as the public/private divide in geography of women’s waged work and care (Pratt 2003), to the increased complexity of paid work (Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2003), and to a mounting concern to acknowledge a multiplicity of gendered experiences.
Consequently, feminist geographers interested in mothering increasingly emphasized issues of identity, gender subjectivity, emotions, and neoliberalism (see Aitken 2009). In 2005, Dyck called for a theoretical return to the materialities of everyday life in feminist analyses of care and reproductive labour (Dyck 2005). Since the 2000s, the everyday has come back as an important site of investigation of mothers’ geographies. Geographers such as Robyn Dowling (2000, 2008) and John Barker (2011) have explored the implications of daily care practices and spatial patterns of mothering on gendered subjectivities of mothers and fathers. In a related vein, Karina Luzia (2010) has discussed the changes in everyday spatialities in same-sex parenting relationships after the birth of children in terms of sexual, gendered, and familial identifications. Feminist geographers have focused on the impact of everyday encounters and experiences on transnational migrant mothers’ subjectivity transformation, cultural conciliation, and senses of place (Dyck and Dossa 2007; Yax-Fraser 2011; Gilmartin and Migge 2015; Lisiak 2017). Linda McDowell has also explored the everyday geographies of mothering from a political economic perspective. She and her collaborators have discussed the everyday practices of mothering and class reproduction (McDowell et al. 2006), the everyday negotiation of the conflicting moral imperatives of mothering and waged work (McDowell et al. 2005), and the impacts of neoliberal rationale and material circumstances on everyday realities and practices of mothers (McDowell 2004). Isabel Dyck’s contribution, dating mostly from the 1990’s, may appear obsolete in the face of so much recent work on mothers’ everyday geographies. However, I argue that her analysis brought forward indispensable insights that since have gone mostly unaddressed: namely the links between everyday coping with encumberment and confinement and the epistemological dynamics at play within mothers’ daily friendships and relationships of comradery. As Bunnell et al. (2012) note, friendship tends to be an obfuscated site of social interactions in human geography. This is
certainly true of geographies of mothers’ everyday life (although see Jupp’s works on mothers’ friendships and encounters at drop-in centers (2012, 2013)). Dyck’s contribution remains original in pointing to the importance of mothers’ friendships and networking in coping with everyday life, as well as to the transformative actions of these relationships in terms of creating and sharing knowledges and transforming subjectivities.

Dyck based her analysis of mothers’ everyday responses to new configurations of encumberment and confinement on Gidden’s theory of structuration. She specifically used Gidden’s concept of regionalization to describe mothers’ sharing and negotiation of moral and practical knowledges, through which they expanded places conducive to their mothering. Structuration theory, and structurationist thinking in general, enjoyed much traction in the 1980’s and 1990’s in the social sciences. It is concerned with the duality of social structures, which it understands to be both the product and the orienting framework of human agency. Structuration theory argues that social practices of individual human agents are carried out under specific structural conditions, and that these structural conditions are themselves reproduced and created (or changed) through social practices (Dyck and Kearns 2006; Lippuner and Werlen 2009). Despite early critiques of structuration theory (Gregory 1989; Thrift 1990), Giddens’ work is still mobilized in social geographies today (Dyck and Kearns 2006; Lippuner and Werlen 2009; Warf 2011; Gilbert 2010a; Gilbert and Ray 2014). For example, feminist researchers have fruitfully explored his claims on the transformation of intimacy (Giddens 1992), albeit mostly in critical ways, in recent analyses of time and social reproduction (see Jamieson 1999; Gabb 2005; Bryson 2007). By choosing structuration theory as her conceptual framework, Dyck was aiming to celebrate mothers’ everyday agency and their active role as agents of social organisation, moral
norms, and changes in their own right, in a theoretical moment that she felt tended to portray women as passive recipients of patriarchal forces dominating space.

Important omissions in research have been a consideration of the meanings women attach to their daily life (which reveal the complexity of their relationship to the environment) and investigation of the social linkages developed among women (which may modify constraints). … Notions of structuration, however, emphasize the transformative and reproductive capacity of human agents as they engage in routine social practices in the locales, or settings for interaction, of everyday life” (Dyck 1989, 331)

In that sense, Dyck’s theoretical commitment is very congruent with Giddens’ structuration theory and its focus on agency and the everyday, as well as his interest in the tensions between the control individuals have over their own lives and options and the degree to which they are subjected to social structures. Dyck’s efforts also draw on structuration theory’s conceptualization of everyday practices as both adapting to and driving social change under the constraints of existing structures.

Dyck applied structuration theory to the analysis of mothers’ everyday actions and strategies in a suburb outside Vancouver, in a context of (then) new social and economic realities in which combining mothering and paid employment was becoming desirable and, in some cases, a financial necessity (Dyck 1989, 1990, 1996). She observed mothers’ everyday practices unfolding under social structures characterised by gendered inequality and power differentials. These power dynamics translated into a division of labour that framed women as secondary workers whose primary responsibility and subjectivities remained centered on mothering and domestic work. This division of labour echoed a gendered separation of home from wage workplace, and the “‘zoning’ of home and neighbourhood in time and space including sets of routinized social practices associating women with the home and accompanying notions of domesticity, privacy, and consumption” (Dyck 1990, 463). In Dyck’s analysis, this division was also shaped by varying
levels of commitment to childcare provision by the state. Recognizing the social structures underlying mothers’ daily experiences, Dyck was interested in how mothers created places that fostered practices and values of mothering coherent with their experiences of juggling mothering and paid work. For Dyck, such place-making was effected through regionalization, which in Giddens’ terms means “the zoning of locales in time and space by legislation or shared understandings, [such that] a particular distribution of resources comes to constitute both enabling and limiting conditions for human agents in particular contexts” (Dyck 1989, 331). Regionalization was effected by mothers through the negotiation of a moral consensus among them regarding good mothering and “what’s best for the children” (Dyck 1990, 472), and the projection of this moral consensus into practices governing places beyond the scope of any individual mother. Dyck observed that mothers, through interactions with one another in regularly frequented places of mothering (or locales, in Giddens’ terminology: the street, the playgrounds, the schoolyards, the locations of afterschool activities, etc.), formed loose networks anchored in these places and through which norms of ‘good mothering’ were negotiated and generalized. Dyck found that the generalization of these norms within networks implied that practices congruent with the commonly negotiated version of ‘good mothering’ (for example, the degree to which children should be supervised) could then be expected by individual mothers in places beyond their immediate control, such as the street or the neighbour’s home. Dyck argued that through these negotiated mothering norms, individual mothers were able to regionalize spatial regimes that promote their mothering values and objectives (for example, the safety of their children) outside of their traditional mothering space (e.g. the home) and while they were occupied with paid employment (Dyck 1989, 1990, 1996).

The perception that trusted sources of care are available when needed, even if they are not used regularly, means that the street is considered a ‘safe space.’ Relatively
enduring street relationships provide recurrent opportunities for the negotiation of understandings and conditions for reciprocity, fostering the maintenance of a valued resource which becomes integral to the management of the mother-child relationship. A mother is assured that her children will be tended or physically provided for in her absence by someone with whom she shares similar values and ways of managing children. (Dyck 1989, 336)

Place-making through negotiated moral consensus was therefore a way of creating enabling conditions for complex everyday realities of mothering, and their encumbered and confined geographies, under constraining structural conditions. It would allow mothers to adapt to the changes of paid employment while complying with their moral imperatives and subjectivities of good mothers, and even (in Dyck’s conception) transform these ideological imperatives (Dyck 1989, 1990, 1996).

In Dyck’s analysis, moral consensus at the heart of the place-making practices of regionalization was defined through conversations between mothers. Such conversations were also understood as a crucial vector of mothering subjectivity formation and change. Dyck argued that conversations between mothers were means of sharing and constructing knowledge in the face of new situations, and that this shared knowledge allowed for a shift in values enabling new practices (such as being employed while mothering) and producing new places (where children are tended for while mothers are working for pay). Dyck’s early research (1989, 1990, 1996), focused on mothers’ shared knowledges and practices of regionalization in the face of change from homemaking to employment. Later on, Dyck became interested in changes in the face of migration (Dyck and McLaren 2004; McLaren and Dyck 2004; Dyck and Dossa 2007; Dyck 2018) and illness and disability (Dyck 1995, 1999; Moss and Dyck 2003). However, the need to react to changes by constructing and sharing new knowledges among mothers is not limited to critical crossroads in life trajectories, but is omnipresent throughout the apparently uneventful daily lives.
of mothers. Ruddick (1995) argues that facing novelty and the unexpected is a constant of mothering, and that openness and attentiveness to change are inherent components of fostering growth, which she defines as an ethical orientation of maternal discipline (see Theoretical Context and chapter 7). Like Dyck, Ruddick emphasizes the importance of conversations among mothers in shaping mothering values and subjectivities and in defining ever-dynamic mothering practices. She notes:

In gossip and focused conversations, mothers refine their capacity for concrete ways of knowing, practicing together attentive noticing and disciplined reflectiveness about what they notice. … Maternal conversations are important instruments of self-confidence…. Individually and collectively, they rehearse their judgements and establish continuities in their ongoing nurturing activities. (Ruddick 1995, 98)

Regionalization, driven by conversations between mothers, is therefore an epistemological enterprise that extends in space to create particular places. In Dyck’s analysis, conversations between mothers generate and reinforce understandings about children (what children are and what they need, “encapsulated in a phrase commonly used, that is, "what's best for the children"” (Dyck 1990, 472)); about mothering (what good mothering values are, and what mothering practices are appropriate); and about places (where good mothering practices can be expected because knowledges and values are shared).

Francophone mothers in Kingston adapt to multiple changes in their life circumstances and subjectivities, linked for example to migration and the birth of children, and to the heightened encumberment and confinement of their everyday geographies by investing in friendships and relationships of comradery with other mothers. Congruent with Dyck’s analysis, Francophone mothers’ accounts illustrate that these relationships are important sites through which they negotiate and share new knowledges about mothering, about themselves as mothers, and about the places of their daily life. As illustrated in chapter 5, such relationships are particularly important
for military spouses as they allow them to break isolation and to widen their daily spatial horizons. These relationships are also crucial in guiding their daily practices and in defining their senses of possibilities in Kingston. It is not surprising that Dyck’s analysis of regionalization as an epistemological project of place making resonates most with the experiences of the mothers who are military spouses. As Dyck herself acknowledges, the epistemological dynamics she describes within mothers’ relationships require a high degree of homogeneity of experience:

The process by which the street becomes a controlled space, with conditions which may be extended to other spaces of the locality, involves the intertwining of three elements underlying the development of social relationships among previously unknown persons: the common occupation of mothering, negotiation of understandings about the management of the mother-child relationship, and reciprocity. (1989, 335).

Among the mothers included in my study, military spouses are those whose life circumstances in Kingston are the most homogenous. They are part of a concrete social group, delineated by clear identity markers (mothering, the military, and French language). As well, the totalizing nature of the military and their uprooting from their former milieus upon migration tend to render their experiences more uniform (as discussed in chapter 5). The importance of informal networks of military spouses in defining their daily possibilities and choices in turn feeds their conformity. Networks of military spouses are established formally and informally, with the overt mandate to share and project knowledge about places, mothering, and families in Kingston – or, in Dyck’s terms, to regionalize. All military spouses in my study insisted on the importance of such networks in (re-)organizing their sense of place when they arrived in Kingston. For the mothers who moved within the last five years, the most critical of such networks was a Facebook group of Francophone military mothers of Kingston. Importantly, it is through such networks that mothers gained knowledge of locations in the city conducive to relationships – i.e., of what
Kingston would be for them as a place (see chapter 7) –, and this even prior to their arrival and experience of Kingston. Marianne, for example, explains:

Je connaissais personne qui vivait ici! Je connaissais personne… Pis t’as beau regarder le plan de la ville, que ce soit Amherstview ou ben Greenwood, je veux dire… À part le critère qu’on avait qu’on voulait pas être trop loin de la base, les quartiers ont l’air de quoi… tsé on avait aucune idée! T’as pas vraiment de façon de savoir! Faque j’ai demandé aux filles, sur la page des conjointes de militaires, qui qui reste dans tel boutte, pis qui qui reste dans tel boutte… Si j’avais pas eu ça… Tsé nous autres au début on aimait Amherstview, mais un coup rendu ici tu te rends compte que c’est quand même un boutte là!… Pis je me suis dit si mon chum part six mois de temps, pis que je retrouve toute seule à Amherstview…³

In addition to assessing emplaced possibilities and impossibilities, sharing of knowledge on the Facebook page of Francophone military spouses also shaped the structure and movements of their daily lives once in Kingston. Mylène notes: « Le groupe m’a permis moi, de dire « quel quartier vous me conseillez? » La base est à telle endroit, les écoles… tsé n’importe quoi là. Le médecin, comment ça fonctionne, où est-ce que je vais pour mes plaques, pour faire faire l’évaluation de ma voiture quand j’arrive…⁴ » The Facebook page of Francophone military spouses, for younger mothers, and other forms of military centered network, such as the Military Families Resources Center, were crucial sites where knowledge was negotiated and shared - about geographies of daily life, but also about the types of families and mothering possible in these geographies.

³ I didn’t know anyone who lived here! I didn’t know anyone… And you can look at the city map all you want, be it Amherstview or Greenwood, I mean… Except for the fact that we didn’t want to be too far from the base, what do the neighbourhoods look like… you know, we had no idea! You really don’t have any way of knowing! So I asked the girls, on the military spouses’ page, who lives in this area, and who lives in that area… If I hadn’t had that… You know at first we liked Amherstview, but once you’re here you realize it’s quite a way away! … And I told myself what if my partner leaves for six months, and I’m alone in Amherstview…

⁴ The group allowed me to say "which neighbourhood do you recommend?" The base is at such place, the schools… you know, anything. The doctor, how does that work, where do I go for my license plate, to get my car evaluated when I arrive…
Through negotiation of relationships and knowledge, Francophone mothers also create and share moral values conducive to their realities. As Dyck (and Ruddick) highlight, conversations are sites of epistemological negotiation and transformation that allow mothers to both reiterate and contest social values and meanings. Therein lies, for Dyck, the promise of structuration theory to celebrate women’s agency in transforming the ideological limits placed on them. Dyck argues that, through informal and formal interactions, mothers can negotiate meanings and values that rework ‘expert’ views on mothering, easing for example the perceived tension between paid employment and ‘good’ mothering (see also S. H. Holloway 1998b; O’Reilly 2004b). This is again apparent in the accounts of military spouses’ use of their Facebook group, where informal conversations allowed for the possibility of negotiating institutional and popular discourses to create different mothering possibilities. A striking example of this is found in mothers’ accounts of their choices of school, and particularly of language of education, for their children. When thinking about schooling their children, Francophone mothers in Kingston encounter contradictory ethical projects, namely the continuity of French as a minority language, and the socio-economic integration and success of their children in the wider English-dominated world (see chapter 7). Individual mothers’ choices over language of schooling often imply meticulous negotiation between these projects. Conversations between mothers, within and beyond the Facebook group, frequently mediated such negotiations by normalizing particular strategies. Geneviève, for example, chose to send her children to her neighbourhood English-language school for Junior and Senior Kindergarten, and to the Catholic French-language school for grade one and up, following such conversations. She recalls:

Finalement je parlais à [une amie], elle elle a déjà quatre enfants, pis ses deux plus vieux c’est ça qu’elle avait fait, elle les avait envoyés à St Martha J pis SK pis elle les avait changés en première année pour les envoyer à l’école francophone. Pis je regarde ses enfants, pis je les trouve pas trop pire là *rires*, ça a l’air correct… Parce
These conversations allowed Geneviève to conciliate overarching ethical projects around language preservation and social integration with other preoccupations of her own – such as having her children’s school close to her home in their early years. Meanwhile, the epistemological negotiations of values and norms between the two friends allowed Geneviève to be comforted by the feeling of ‘bien faire’.

**Problematizing structuration: revealing alternative places and knowledges**

Dyck’s contribution is invaluable in bringing attention to mothers’ mitigation of encumberment and confinement in their everyday geographies through their creative uses of relationships, within which they share and collectively construct new knowledges about mothering, daily life, and moral norms. Her research is also key in pointing to the importance of conversations as epistemological enterprises, and to friendships and networks amongst mothers as vectors of place making. Applying Dyck’s analysis to Francophone mothers’ experiences casts light on their insertion of alternative meanings and of subjugated logics in the dominant liberal capitalist and English-centered structures of places in Kingston. However, her analysis is anchored in problematic assumptions about the knowledges and places that emerge through mothers’ relationships: namely that they are consensual and that they are unilaterally enabling. These assumptions emerge from Dyck’s theoretical framework of structuration theory and its

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5 Finally I was talking to [a friend], she already has four children, and that’s what she did for the two eldest, she had sent them to St-Martha’s for Jr and SrK and she had changed them in grade one for the French-language school. And I look at her children, and I find they’re not too bad, *laughs* they look ok... Because you know when it’s your first child you’re so unsure, and you so want to get it right...

6 Getting in right
conceptualization of knowledge and structures. While recognizing the value of Dyck’s work, we can identify the limitations of structuration theory as a framework to analyse the experiences of Francophone mothers – or of any mothers for that matter – and their everyday geographies. In this section, I invert my review of Dyck’s analysis and of her theoretical framework. Instead of using Dyck’s work to shed light on Francophone mothers accounts, I use these accounts to illustrate problematic epistemological assumptions of structuration theory. Doing so, I complete the argument presented in last section, by pointing out that while Francophone mothers do manage daily needs by investing in relationships and negotiating knowledges, these knowledges and the places they create are always multiple, complex, and partially unknowable.

Reviewing structuration theory in the light of daily geographies of Francophone mothers (or of any mother) reveals a first conceptual problem, which is the unproblematized assumptions of a consensus in terms of the knowledges and meanings that would be at the heart of everyday practices. These assumptions are embedded in structuration’s cornerstone concept of social structures. Structures are understood to emerge through individual practices and through the common knowledge and meanings associated with these practices. Structures are defined as “‘rules and resources’ which only exist temporally when ‘presenced’ by actors” (Dyck and Kearns 2006, 87), or when activated by individuals as they orient and make sense of their practices. Social structures, in this perspective, rest on the particular stocks of knowledge that imbue specific social systems. These stocks are both reproduced and transformed through social interactions, formal and informal, through which knowledge is negotiated, reiterated, and potentially challenged. Knowledge and, by extension, social structures are thus viewed as dynamic. Human agents react to new situations by accessing, sharing, and generalizing new information, norms and values, which can lead to broader social change. Importantly, at the heart of this dynamism lies the
assumption of epistemological commonality. The negotiation and generalization of knowledge at the heart of structuration relies on the idea that the everyday practices of individual agents are intelligible to one another within one locale, or setting for interaction (Dyck and Kearns 2006). Dyck notes:

Indeed, the mutual knowledge that people possess is crucial to structure, for structure can only exist through the knowledge that informs agents about their day-to-day activities. Giddens distinguishes between different types of knowledge… Discursive consciousness refers to what actors can put into words about their actions, whereas practical consciousness is what actors know about how to do things in a variety of contexts of social life, but may not be able to put into words. (Dyck 1990, 461)

The mutual intelligibility of practices assumed by structuration theory rests on disconcertingly problematic presumptions. Perhaps most strikingly, it presumes that knowledges informing daily practices, both discursively and practically, are homogenous within specific social settings to the degree that individuals in such settings can be confident that they are aware of the norms, values, stories, and meanings that underlie and guide their interactions. The presumption, in other words, is that there is one knowledge that everyone present in one setting knows (or should know). In that sense, structuration’s idea of ‘consciousness’, whether practical or discursive, is closely related to what Geertz referred to as ‘common sense’:

generally, the notion of common sense has been rather commonsensical: what anyone with common sense knows …

Common sense represents matters … as being what they are in the simple nature of the case. An air of “of-courseness”, a sense of “it figures” is cast over things … They are depicted as inherent in the situation, intrinsic aspects of reality, the way things go…

any person with faculty relatively intact can grasp a common-sense conclusion. (Geertz 1983, 77, 85 & 91)

Structuration theory fails to problematize assumptions of epistemic homogeneity, which naturalize such “of-courseness” of common-sense and of common consciousness. For example,
Dyck’s portrayal of mothers’ practices of place-making through negotiation and generalization of mothering norms and meanings only makes sense if we assume standardized and commonly held knowledge of social systems. Thus, the domestic work place, at the heart of her analysis, can only be regionalized if mothers implicitly adhere to its dominant symbolic order linking femininity to reproductive labour and domesticity. The naturalization of this knowledge of domesticity and childrearing is an effect of the misleading generalization of the reproductive experiences of white middle- and upper-class women as universal. Feminist standpoint theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins (1990), Sandra Harding (2008), and Donna Haraway (1988) have argued powerfully that epistemic dominance at the heart of systems of oppression such as patriarchy, colonialism, racism, imperialism, and capitalism obfuscate the knowledge of individuals who are in subjugated positions. Women “come together as mistress and maid, employer and employee, across a great divide of privilege and opportunity” (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003, 11). The fact that dominant versions of mothering, and of places of mothering, in the Western world emphasize certain privileged standpoints does not erase the knowledge held by women situated in different configurations of social positions. Notions of common intelligibility of practices and places reinforce dominant symbolic orders and consciousness and thus neglect other epistemological possibilities. However, recognizing the existence and the subjugation of non-dominant knowledges challenges these notions.

Importantly, structuration’s tendency to naturalize the emergence of common-sense knowledge within interactions in specific settings also tends to negate the disciplining action of such interactions on individual knowledge holders. In the previous section, I argued that Dyck’s analysis of regionalization is most helpful in unveiling the crucial roles that networks play in providing knowledge and in shaping senses of place, and more generally in mitigating
encumberment and confinement, for Francophone mothers whose partners are members of the military. Dyck’s analysis in this particular case was pertinent because of the relative homogeneity of Francophone military mothers’ experiences in Kingston. However, what structuration framework fails to recognize is that this homogeneity results from the disciplining of subjectivity and practices by the military, and by its patriarchal and heteronormative norms, rather than from any ‘natural’ epistemological tendency of mothers who are military spouses. Disciplining and homogenizing ‘common-sense’ knowledge is an important effect of networks of military spouses where conversations and place-making – or regionalization, in structurationist terms – occur. Agathe, as a military spouse who is also a member of the military, was in a good position to observe the disciplining and exclusionary actions of these networks in promoting very specific knowledges.

Je suis pas active beaucoup sur les groupes Facebook de conjointes de militaires… parce qu’eux autres souvent elles… c’est comme un sisterhood là, toutes les femmes sont là, faque moi, je lis beaucoup ce qui est écrit dessus, je vais souvent regarder, mais je poste pas souvent, parce que c’est comme, un pied dedans un pied pas dedans…. Beaucoup des conversations c’est sur les déploiements. Les femmes parlent de comment c’est difficile, mais tsé moi ça m’est jamais imposé, c’est ma part aussi d’exercice. C’est pas moi qui est toute seule à la maison à attendre qu’il revienne…. Des fois même elles parlent de des affaires pis… des affaires sur les forces, pis c’est pas exactement vrai, elles ont comme une mauvaise perception, mais elles ont comme toutes la même perception, mais c’est pas vraiment ma place d’aller leur dire… parce que finalement elles essaient d’avoir un moment à l’externe des forces, faque en étant la personne qui est dans les forces, c’est un peu… Tu peux pas être là pour le moment de solidarité, pour les maris qui partent, quand toi tu fais partie des personnes qui partent…. Faque c’est pas vraiment une réaction négative, c’est juste que y’a beaucoup de conversations que j’ai rien à contribuer parce que c’est pas applicable.7

7 I’m not very active on Facebook groups of military spouses... Because often amongst them... it’s like a sisterhood you know, all the women are there, so for me, I read a lot of what is written, I often go and take a look, but I don’t post very often, because it’s like, one foot in and one foot out... A lot of the conversations are about deployments. Women talk about how hard it is, but you know, for me it’s never imposed on me, it’s my share of exercise. It’s not me who stays at home alone, waiting for him to come back... Sometimes even they talk of things and... things about the Forces, and it’s not exactly true, they kind of have a false perception, but they kind of all have the same
Agathe’s account indicates that within conversations amongst mothers, in this case within military spouses’ support networks, solidarity builds through sharing of knowledge that is disciplined. Since shared knowledge, including norms and values, is inherent to the process of place making through regionalization, the compliance to the epistemic order within the setting is necessary to reap the benefits of the network and of the places it creates. This is something that Dyck acknowledges:

informal discussion of a variety of child-related concerns not only acts to transmit information about resources available in the locality but is also a means by which women gain knowledge of a neighbour’s views and values. This knowledge is integral to street control …

Some differences in rules can be incorporated with little difficulty into women’s control over the range and nature of children’s movement, but a wide divergence in values and rules may result in a woman’s inability to negotiate understandings and build up the reciprocity experienced by other women. (Dyck 1989, 335 & 337)

Although Dyck points to the exclusionary potential of such forms of place-making through knowledge negotiations – resulting in “a woman’s inability to negotiate understandings and build up the reciprocity experienced by other women” – she does not appear concerned with the normalizing actions of such processes. The normalizing and disciplining effects of knowledge generalization and projection into new places, and thus their oppressive implications, are a particularly troubling blind spot of structuration theory.

Finally, structuration theory, through its belief in mutual intelligibility and the commonality (at least to a degree) of consciousness, negates the inescapable partiality of knowledge, as well as the part of unknowability of other knowledges. In any setting, stories and meanings attributed to perception, but it’s not really my place to go and tell them... Because at the end of the day they are trying to have a moment outside of the Forces, so me being the one in the Forces, it’s a bit... You can’t be there for the moment of solidarity, for the husbands who leave, when you’re part of the people who leave. ... So it’s not really a negative reaction, it’s just that there are a lot of conversations where I have nothing to contribute because it’s not applicable.
encounters are multiple and composed of multiple elements, both absent and present, past and future, personal and collective, that are uncontainable in grand schemes of uniform knowledge. As Nigel Thrift notes, “[it] becomes too easy to relate a system of (theoretical) frames to scale. Theoretical categories are ‘big’ and [within grand theories] human practices count for little except as the raw material of the categorical aggregate.” (Thrift 1999, 297) Individual people know things that are beyond the logic of structural ‘common sense’, and it is impossible, from the ‘above’ of a theoretical gaze, to know what others know. Although a truism, this observation is crucial to understand and recognize Francophone mothers’ experiences of place in Kingston. Agnes’ account of finding a French-speaking ENT doctor for her unilingual Francophone son, and of ensuring that that particular doctor should see him, illustrates this eloquently:

L’ORL, c’est moi qui l’a dit à mon médecin de famille. Parce que ça marche par référence. Je veux avoir un rendez-vous avec lui, parce que je sais qu’il est bilingue… Je le savais à cause que nos enfants jouaient dans la même équipe de soccer. Pis ils étaient dans la même classe à l’école. Mais… mon médecin dit ‘je le connais lui, comment ça se fait que toi tu sais qu’il est bilingue pis moi je le sais pas?’ Ben c’est parce que toi tu n’en as pas besoin de savoir qu’il parle français là … Tsé moi c’est important pour moi. Faque moi je l’ai trouvé. Faque j’ai dit « ta secrétaire, faut pas qu’elle me prenne un rendez-vous avec les autres là, c’est avec lui que je veux prendre un rendez-vous. Parce qu’il va pouvoir parler à mon fils, pis mon fils va pouvoir le comprendre. Pis même s’il est petit il va lui répondre. Il y aura pas de questions d’interprétations ou quoi que ce soit là. »

Agnes’ account illustrates the argument of feminist standpoint theorists that women who “occupy a position whereby the inferior half of a series of dichotomies converge” (Collins 1990,

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8 For the ENT, it’s I who told my family doctor. Because it works by referrals. I want to have an appointment with him, because I know he is bilingual… I knew because our children played in the same soccer team. And they were in the same class at school. But... my doctor said “I know him, how come you know he is bilingual and I don’t?” Well that’s because you don’t need it, to know that he speaks French now… You know, it’s important for me. So me, I found out. So I told him “your secretary, make sure she doesn’t book me an appointment with the others, you know, it’s with him I want my appointment. Because he’ll be able to talk to my son, and my son will be able to understand. And even if he is small he will answer. There won’t be any questions of interpretation or anything like that.
have access to different knowledges and understandings of the multifaceted and interlocking power dynamics that they experience. Thus, Francophone mothers are more likely to have a deeper and more intricate knowledge of how linguistic dominance and devaluated reproductive labour unfolds. As well, Agnes’ account highlights the unknowability and unpredictability of people’s intelligence, inventiveness, and capacity for subversion, made invisible by the totalizing gaze of grand theories. As Michel de Certeau notes:

Mais là où l’appareil scientifique (le nôtre) est porté à partager l’illusion des pouvoirs dont il est nécessairement solidaire, c’est-à-dire à supposer les foules transformées par les conquêtes et les victoires d’une production expansionniste, il est toujours bon de se rappeler qu’il ne faut pas prendre les gens pour des idiots.9 (Certeau 1991, 255)

These problematic epistemological assumptions of structuration theory – i.e. that practices are intelligible, that people know similar ‘commonsensical’ things, and that we (as human agents and as theorists) can know what others know – are projected on ideas of place, which are understood through structuration to be dynamic and changeable (through regionalization), but always in intelligible and somewhat uniform ways. Structuration theory relies on an inextricable link between knowledge and places, as the social systems that animate locales are themselves reproduced, negotiated, and changed through the common intelligibility of reiterated practices and meanings. The assumption, then, is that places are knowable, and that dominant meanings and structures of particular social systems encompass the one stock of knowledge that defines specific places. Gillian Rose criticizes this theoretical claim to “exhaustive knowledge” of an “over-coherence of the text” (G. Rose 1993, 28). For Rose, unproblematized assumptions of epistemological consensus stem from unquestioned universalization of masculinist norms of

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9 But where the (our) scientific apparatus is inclined to share the illusion of the power in which it is necessarily implicated, that is to say, to imagine crowds transformed by the conquests and the victories of an expansionist production, it is always good to remember not to take people for idiots.
subjectivity and agency, leading to a “false exhaustiveness of the same” that “excludes other socialities, spaces and bodies from knowledge.” (1993, 39). Echoing feminist standpoint theorists, Rose stresses that different social identities and experiences translate into different spatialities (see also hooks 1990, 2009). “[Everyday] space”, she argues, “is not only not self-evidently innocent, but also bound into various and diverse social and psychic dynamics of subjectivity and power” (G. Rose 1993, 37).

The assumption of knowledges and places as coherent and intelligible ‘from above’ is drastically at odds with the relational view of places introduced in chapter 4 (and theorized further in chapter 7). Such coherence and intelligibility are untenable if we are to take seriously the relationality of place, and the intersectionality of power that underlies this relationality. In chapter 4, Brigitte’s account demonstrates that changes in place and changes in relationships function in relation to each other and play out in complex ways in a person’s life. Here I want to argue that the possibilities of relationships at the heart of place are themselves determined by partial and situated knowledges that stem from different stories and experiences of self, places, and power. The experiences of migrant Francophone mothers in Kingston suggests that the knowledges they had about themselves, and how they understand themselves as imbricated in particular social and political dynamics, define what Kingston is for them. For example, Carmen, a mother and French teacher from Québec in her late 40s, describes Kingston in the following terms: « Kingston c’est une ville loyaliste. Les gens qui se sont établis ici avaient fui les États Unis au départ, ou en grande partie, et ils ont une espèce de rigidité de pensée qui est pas facile à assouplir.10 » Knowledge of the social history of North America that Carmen gained through her life trajectory, particularly

10 Kingston is a loyalist city. People who came to settle here had fled the United States at first, or in great part, and they have a type of rigidity of thought that is not easy to loosen.
during her time as a school student in Québec during the 1980’s (Éthier, Lefrançois, and Demers 2013), informs her sense of Kingston. In sharp contrast, Mireille came to Canada from Ghana via Europe with very little knowledge of the dominant colonial history of Québec, Canada, or the United States. Mireille’s experience of Kingston, and her sense of her social position in Kingston, was therefore different. What defined Kingston for Mireille was its size, which allowed good availability of services and a pleasant pace of life, as compared to big cities like Toronto, and its convenient location between Toronto and Ottawa, where she had family members whom she visited and who visited frequently. She enjoyed the networks of acquaintances and friends she developed through her children’s daycare, through the school in which she was employed, and through other immigrants she met doing volunteer work within the organisation Immigration Services Kingston and Area. The historical significance of Kingston, its loyalist heritage, its military importance, and its recognition as a center of carceral institutions had very little weight in her experience of the place, as is clear from how she discovered the existence of the military base and of one of the old carceral-industrial facilities by chance:

En fait je savais pas qu’il y avait une base militaire. Je me suis retrouvée par accident sur la base en conduisant. J’ai manqué un tourment en auto et je me suis retrouvée sur le pont qui mène à la base. J’ai eu peur parce que j’ai pensé que c’était peut-être illégal. Mais c’était un accident, je ne connaissais pas les lieux au départ. … Ça a été la même chose avec la prison, sur Bath Road [Collins Bay Institution]. On pensait que c’était un château, et les enfants voulaient le visiter. C’est mes collègues qui m’ont appris que c’était une prison.11

Clearly, there can be no coherent and overarching knowledge of what Kingston is, or how structures define Kingston, because the possibilities of positioning oneself in particular

11 In fact I didn’t know there was a military base. I found myself on the base by accident while driving. I missed a turn and I found myself on the bridge that leads to the base. I was scared because I thought maybe it was illegal. But it was an accident, I didn’t know the places at first. ... It was the same thing with the prison, on Bath Road [Collins Bay Institution]. We thought it was a castle, and the children wanted to go and visit. It was my colleagues who told me it was a prison.
relationships that shape everyday experiences of place are uneven and tied to wider life trajectories, identities and power.

Importantly, the assumption of commonality of knowledge at the heart of the intelligibility of places presumed by structuration theory also demands a disciplining and a silencing of other non-dominant geographies. It demands “[transparent] space, [an] expression of social-scientific masculinity’s desire for total vision and knowledge, [which] denies the possibility of different spaces being known by other subjects” (Rose 1993, 40). This point, raised by Rose and other feminist standpoint theorists, is significant in Francophone mothers’ accounts of their daily lives. These mothers frequently mention being confronted with Anglophone senses of entitlement to access everyday interactions performed in their presence, which translates in unrelenting expectations for compliance with Anglophone linguistic norms. Carmen, for example, notes:

Ici j’ai découvert que les gens étaient offensés si tu parlais français avec un autre francophone devant des anglophones. Les anglophones étaient très offensés. Ils considèrent ça impoli. Puis… j’ai jamais vraiment compris … ils voient ça comme une offense, mais ils voient pas que c’est un besoin de communiquer le plus clairement possible, tsé tu vas le faire dans ta langue maternelle, pas dans ta langue seconde. Pis tu vois la même réaction des anglophones pour… par exemple des Coréens. Au dépanneur, c’est une famille de Coréens qui tient la place. Le père la mère le fils la fille. Et quand ils se parlent entre eux, ils parlent coréen. [Mais les anglophones] trouvent ça offensant. Parce que … « nous on parle pas coréen, donc ils devraient considérer qu’on est là… » Pis moi je me dis « ben coudonc ce qu’ils parlent c’est pas de nos affaires là, ils doivent parler de leur souper ou je sais pas quoi… »

12 Here I discovered that people were offended if you speak French with another Francophone in front of Anglophones. Anglophones were very offended. They consider it impolite. And... I never really understood... They see it as an offense, but they don’t see that it’s a need to communicate as clearly as possible, you know you’re going to do it in your mother tongue, not in your second language. And you see the same reaction from Anglophones for... Koreans let’s say. At the convenience store, it’s a Korean family who runs the place. The father, the mother, the son, the daughter. And when they speak together they speak Korean. [But Anglophones] find it rude. Because... “us, we don’t speak Korean, so they should have consideration when we are here…” And me I think “well, what they’re talking about is none of our business, they must be talking about their supper or I don’t know what...”
The example evoked by Carmen of the Korean family in the convenience store is an illustration of how a sense of complete intelligibility of everyday geographies is artificially created through the imposition of an imperative of “transparency” (see Rose 1993), that is in this case of complying with the dominant linguistic regimes. I say ‘artificially’ because, by forcing English-language imperatives, the Anglophone customer(s) in Carmen’s story do not in fact gain access to the nuanced and complex relationships that shape the everyday geographies of the Korean family – incarnated in mundane things like talks of their next meal. Rather, this disciplining of everyday practices unintelligible to the dominant gaze prevents the expression of these relationships. It is a commonly shared – and a commonly lamented – experience among the vast majority of Francophone mothers that as soon as a unilingual Anglophone joins the conversation, they feel obliged to switch to English, no matter the degree of discomfort this may cause. In that sense, everyday Francophone practices are always fragile and vulnerable to interruption by the disciplining action of Anglophone dominance. Carmen recalls:

Par exemple une des premières années que j’enseignais, on est allés souper chez un couple d’amis.es, alors toutes les enseignantes parlaient français, deux ou trois des conjoints parlaient français, un des conjoints parlait pas français. Et y’a fallu switcher la conversation en anglais. Et à chaque fois que je commençais à parler en français on me disait « Carmen, switch to English ». Et je disais « pourquoi, voyons, pourquoi? » « Ben, Carmen, until il parle pas français » « Ben oui mais qu’il apprenne » *rires* si sa blonde est francophone là, sérieux…

The imposition of imperatives of Anglophone linguistic practices in the presence of non-French speakers forces French out of the dominant discursive landscape of Kingston. Francophone

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13 For example during the first years I was teaching we went to a couple of friends’ for dinner, and all of the women teachers there spoke French, one or two of the partners spoke French, one of the partners didn’t speak French. And we had to switch the conversation into English. And every time I would start speaking in French I would be told “Carmen, switch to English.” And I said “why, what’s the matter, why?” “Well Carmen, so and so doesn’t speak French.” “Well, then, let him learn!” *laughs* if his girlfriend is Francophone, seriously...
geographies thus become invisible to the gaze of non-Francophones who, while taking English for granted, remain often unaware of other relationships and places. Christine declares:

La communauté francophone à Kingston est grosse, mais les anglophones ont aucune idée de ça. Quand tu leurs dis ça là, tu leur dis que ça fait trois ans que t’es ici, que tu travailles juste en français, pis là ils voient ben que ton anglais est pourri là, eux sont comme « vraiment? Pis tout ton réseau est en français? Ils vivent où? » … Les anglophones ont aucune idée que c’est gros comme ça la communauté francophone.¹⁴

Place and identity emerge together through everyday relationships, and so the disciplining, denial and erasure of places is also felt in individual subjectivities. Mothers who participate in day-to-day English life in Kingston but also cultivate French-based relationships, and inhabit places anchored in French, often feel that a part of themselves is unacknowledged and unrecognized in their daily lives, limiting the potential and depth of their relationships. Jeanette explains:

On fait partie d’une société, c’est sûr, qui est anglophone, pis canadienne, pis c’est une réalité, mais… on est différents. On a beau dire…. Je m’en aperçois avec mes collègues de travail, mes intérêts… c’est pas les mêmes. C’est sûr qu’il y a des choses qu’on a en commun, mais… tsé comme moi je suis branchée sur Radio Canada. Faque mes nouvelles c’est pas nécessairement les mêmes qu’eux autres là… Même chose pour la télévision. Ou la musique… y’ont aucune idée, que ça existe… Je pense pas que je pourrais être amie avec un anglophone qui ne pourrait pas être ouvert sur ma culture. Qu’il soit capable de comprendre… de vraiment voir qu’est-ce que c’est le contexte francophone. Pas nécessairement qu’il parle français, mais de l’ouverture…¹⁵

The complex relationships that mothers have to French defy all attempts to totalize linguistic practices and their meanings into a unified, coherent, and intelligible stock of knowledge.

¹⁴ The Francophone community in Kingston is big, but Anglophones have just no idea. When you tell them that, you tell them that you’ve been here for three years, that you work only in French, and now they can see that your English is horrid, they’re like “really? And your network is all in French? Where do they live?” … Anglophones have no idea that the Francophone community is that big.

¹⁵ We are part of a society, of course, that is Anglophone, and Canadian, and it’s a reality, but… we are different. Say all you want… I see it with my colleagues at work, my interests… they’re not the same. Of course there are things we share but… you know, like me, I’m plugged into Radio Canada. So my news, it’s not necessarily the same as what they get… Same thing for television. Or music… they have no idea, that it exists… I don’t think I could be friends with an Anglophone who couldn’t be open to my culture. That he be able to understand… to really see what it is, the Francophone context. Not necessarily that he speaks French, but the open-mindedness…
supporting overarching and unifying social structures. This is because French-based relationships, although they are all more or less subjugated, are imbricated in wider relationships that span the whole of individual mothers’ life trajectories, and that are thus difficult to predict and impossible to generalize. In that sense, mothers’ relationships to French resist an analysis of regionalization such as that proposed by Dyck. They resist totalizing arguments, for example that the presence and valuing of French within certain interactions or networks would facilitate all Francophone mothers’ daily practices. In fact, French within specific settings is not necessarily facilitating to mothers if it is tied to meanings and practices that conflict with their own stories and knowledges underlying their use of the language. Carmen, for example, describes her different experiences in settings that either promoted or obfuscated French linguistic practices, including schools at which she taught and in Gananoque, the rural community outside of Kingston in which she lived. Her account challenges an easy categorization of French-friendly places as enabling and French-hostile places as constraining:

Ce qui a été vraiment le pire c’est que pendant deux ans et demi j’ai été vraiment au centre-ville de Kingston. [J’enseignais] dans deux écoles, une qui s’appelle Central et une qui s’appelle Sydenham pis c’était deux populations complètement différentes. L’école de Central c’était une population éclectique qui compte des enfants de professeur.es de Queen’s, des enfants d’artistes, beaucoup d’enfants de couples du même sexe, parce que c’est une école qui est très sécuritaire pour ces enfants-là. Et il y avait une pochette de gens qui habient les HLM, qui vivent dans une pauvreté assez... tragique. ... Tandis que la population de Sydenham c’était... enfants d’avocats, de docteurs, d’ingénieurs, de professeurs… donc avec un niveau socio-économique très très très élevé, dont les attentes scolaires sont très hautes de la part des parents, puis… le besoin de réussir est très très grand. Comparé à l’autre, qui était un besoin de développer la justice sociale chez les enfants, puis l’ouverture sur le monde, puis… l’environnement, les droits de la personne. [Le contraste] était énorme, puis ni un ni l’autre ne représente ce que moi… mes valeurs personnelles. Faque j’étais toujours en train de changer de personnalité là, pour essayer de plaire à tout le monde, ce qui est pas faisable. Pis ça j’avais trouvé ça très très très très dur. Faque quand on m’a envoyé à Gananoque c’était le paradis. Là en plus c’est des gens qui ont des grands terrains, on a des pick up trucks, on s’en fout si c’est pas bon pour
l’environnement … C’est pas je m’en fous là, je sais que c’est important pour la planète, mais c’est… dans le quotidien, puis que oui, les gens vont aller à la chasse quand c’est la chasse au chevreuil, ça fait partie de l’héritage, pis non c’est pas pour un sport, c’est vraiment parce que ça va … offrir de la viande à la famille pour toute l’hiver, puis oui on fait du quatre roues, parce que c’est ça qui est l’fun en campagne… C’est très rural. Et c’est drôle parce que c’est beaucoup plus proche de moi, malgré le fait que le français est beaucoup plus valorisé à Central et à Sydenham, qu’il peut l’être à Gananoque. Mais on a beaucoup plus de choses en commun à Gananoque que je peux en avoir avec le côté artistique de Central par exemple. … La crowd urbaine je suis pas capable *rires*

Carmen’s account of her experiences of these three places, Central school, Sydenham school, and Gananoque (both the school and the wider community) is telling of the complex, un-generalizable, and hardly predictable qualities of place. As suggested in chapters 4 and 5, and as argued further in chapter 7, place entails specific constellations of possible meanings through which manners of being in place gain particular social resonance. Carmen acutely expresses her awareness of these differences in constellations of meanings as she compares how certain practices, namely driving a pick-up truck or an ATV, or going deer hunting, are interpreted through different values and relationships to place: as a sense of close connection to land, or as callous

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16 What was the worst really was that during two and a half years I was in Kingston downtown. [I taught] in two schools, one named Central and one named Sydenham and they had two completely different populations. Central school it was an eclectic population that included children of Queen’s professors, artists’ children, many children with same-sex parents, because it’s a school that is very safe for these children. And there were a few people who live in social housing, and who live in a poverty quite… tragic. … Meanwhile Sydenham population was... children of lawyers, doctors, engineers, professors... so with a very very very high socio-economic standing, with very high parental expectations towards the schooling, and... the need to succeed is very very high. Compared to the other, which was a need to develop social justice in children, and openness to the world, and... environment, human rights. [The contrast] was enormous, and neither one nor the other represents what I... my personal values. So I was always in the midst of changing personality, to try to please everyone, which you cannot do. And that I found very very very hard. So when I was sent to Gananoque it was heaven. There people have big yards, we have pick up trucks, we don’t care if it’s not good for the environment... It’s not that I don’t care, I know it’s important for the planet, but its... in daily life, and yes, people will go hunting when it’s deer hunting season, it’s part of the heritage, and no it’s not a sport, it’s really because it will... provide meat for the family through the winter, and yes we ride ATVs, because that’s what’s fun in the country... It’s very rural. And it’s funny because it’s much closer to me, even though French language is much more valued at Central and at Sydenham, than it can be at Gananoque. But we have much more in common at Gananoque than I can have with the artistic side of Central, for example... The urban crowd, I can’t stand it *laughs*
disregard for environmental degradation. Furthermore, what is particularly interesting about Carmen’s account of these places is the ways in which it speaks to her previous statements regarding the oppressive implications of dominant imperatives of intelligibility – i.e. of speaking English. What Carmen expresses is that in Central and Sydenham schools, while such imperatives were countered by a promotion of the French language, the values and dynamics that motivated such Francophilia were painfully strange to her own relationship to French. Thus, neither the insertion of French-language in quest of academic (and eventually socio-economic) success, which she associated with Sydenham, nor the valuing of French as part of a general openness to diversity and social justice, which she associated with Central, spoke to her own appreciation of French-language interactions. She was comfortable with a French that allowed her to be who she is and to “communiquer le plus clairement possible”. In her account, both Central and Sydenham implied a mobilization of French into processes of identity building that she refused because they clashed with her ways of being in the world. However, she still yearned for a greater freedom and valuation of French-language practices in Kingston. Carmen’s account suggests that, if identity positions emerge at specific times and in specific spatial contexts (see Valentine 2007), a variety of such spatial and temporal moments can take place in the same conversation, about the same locations, as different relationships are evoked (see Buitelaar 2006). Regionalization, as a theoretical process of expanding specific social systems into locales, cannot acknowledge such complexity in relationships, identities, and places.

Regionalization, by emphasizing one system of meanings and relationships as defining a specific locale (although this system can change), fails to acknowledge the diversity of regimes at play at the same time in one place. Feminist political economists, for example, have highlighted

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17 Communicate as clearly as possible
the increased porosity between regimes of waged work and the domestic (Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2003). As well, if mothers can indeed challenge and transform some knowledge and practices performed in their particular geographies, wider power relationships, structures and institutions - capitalism, patriarchy, the liberal state, the spread of neoliberal rationality, etc. – nonetheless underlie these geographies. Thus, despite all structuration theories’ promises regarding individual agency, mothers’ capacity to alter the balances of power organizing their social world remains limited. Adepts of structuration are wary of “the reification of social relations, or the discursive naturalization of the historically contingent circumstances and products of human action” (Dyck 1990, 463). Nonetheless, an over-emphasis on agency and everyday actions as sole motors of social structures often leads to an overly sanguine denial of solidly engrained inequalities (Jamieson 1999). Importantly, structuration’s uncritical celebration of agency can lead to framing the pursuing of life under extremely and increasingly harsh circumstances as a form of resistance rather than as coping. For example, Dyck’s later work with immigrant mothers to Canada celebrates these women’s “hidden citizenship practices” and their role of “capital transformation” in promoting their children’s passage into “Canadiennes”, all the while describing siege-like experiences of coping with tragic poverty, discrimination, precarity, and uncertain immigration status (Dyck 2018). As Povinelli grimly puts it: “Hegel might be right that in the end it is the position of the slave that moves history. But most slaves die. They are worn to death. They have no energy left to make a revolution. And so their tactics of world making within the waiting rooms of history often never appear.” (Povinelli 2011, 99)
Michel de Certeau’s tactics of alterity

Michel de Certeau’s theorization of everyday life can fruitfully expand on Isabel Dyck’s insights into the importance of friendships, comradery, and networks for mothers’ routine coping with encumberment and confinement, and the epistemological dynamics at play in these relationships. Certeau shared Dyck’s interest for the daily epistemological micro-dynamics of ‘ordinary people’ (his terms). However, he was wary of totalizing social theories and unilateral analyses that impair the recognition of creativity and of the elements of radical alterity in individuals’ daily practices and their senses of place. Certeau opened avenues for the close investigation of everyday life that avoid some of the problematic epistemological assumptions of structuration theory. These ideas were taken up by multiple geographers who mobilize Certeau to capture daily inventiveness in a variety of social contexts, for example migration (Gilbert and Ray 2014; Veronis 2014), mothering and neoliberalism (Wainwright et al. 2011), homelessness and urban planning (Susan Ruddick 1996; Robinson 2011), and sex work (Hubbard and Sanders 2003).

Certeau’s theorization of daily practices and spatialities is anchored in his analysis of oppositional dynamics between powers (capitalism, liberal democracy, science, etc.) and the everyday practices of individuals. Central to his analysis is his belief in the totalizing agenda of powers that structure space. Inspired by his childhood observations of land ownership in early 20th century Savoie, and of the relationships between landowners and poachers, Certeau describes the unceasing aspiration of powers to control and expand by delineating, circumscribing, and regimenting the circumstances of existence of an ever increasing area or space (Certeau 1991). In Certeau’s view, it is through such processes of constraint that powers produce a place. Unlike the relational theories of place that I adhere to in this dissertation, a place for Certeau is something akin to a bounded seat of power. Powers, in Certeau’s view, secure dominant social order by
establishing and reinforcing a place, which protects against counter powers and allows outward expansion. Powers’ use of “polemological” strategies, then, shapes place and endeavours to establish totalizing hold over space:

I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. (Certeau 1984, 35–6)

The elaboration of a spatial arrangement, and of economic, cultural, political, and social relations that are controlled, allows the isolation of powers or powerful subjects. Through such isolation, powers aim to achieve a permanence in structures, a durable protection against threats (those that seek to undermine them), and a basis from which to conquer targets (those they seek to extend their power upon). Place is established to provide this isolation and this permanence, and to allow for control over the contingencies and circumstances of time.

Certeau’s work is also animated by his firm belief that powers’ efforts towards totalization are never completely successful, and that total control over space and time is never fully achieved. Inspired by his studies of mysticism and by his reading of Lacan, Certeau is convinced of the “unsutured nature of the social, the impossibility of the full colonization of daily life by the system, the continued fact of resistance to the temporal logic of democratic capitalism, and the ubiquitous eruption of the heterogeneous” (Highmore 2001, 150). Luce Giard, a close collaborator, says of him,

On dirait que, sous la réalité massive des pouvoirs et des institutions et sans se faire illusion sur leur fonctionnement, Certeau discerne toujours un mouvement brownien de microrésistances, lesquelles fondent à leur tour des microlibertés, mobilisent des ressources insoupçonnées, cachées chez les gens ordinaires, et par là déplacent les
Certeau entertains no cheerful illusion regarding the control exerted by powers, such as science and capitalism, on the spaces and productions through which ‘ordinary people’ navigate their daily lives. However, he argues that, although incapable of isolating themselves the way powerful subjects can, and thus lacking the ability to maintain and capitalize advantages and to plan out expansions, ordinary people wield a certain type of unruly power through their daily actions. In contrast with a “rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous production”, this ordinary subversive power is expressed in what he calls “tactics of everyday life”.

Tactics are

an entirely different kind of production [...] characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products (where would it place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it. (Certeau 1984, 31)

The metaphor of poaching suggested by Certeau is useful to understand tactics of everyday life. Tactics are wielded by ‘ordinary people’ who, like poachers, have no place of their own to control and structure according to their aims. Ordinary people poach as they ‘make do’ with the product of the powers that control the spaces of their daily lives, and ‘make with’ these products through unforeseeable acts of appropriation and re-employment (Certeau 1991, see also Highmore 2003). Like poaching, tactics of ordinary people imply a vigilance and an awareness of punctual circumstances that, although emerging under would-be totalizing spatial regimes, can be diverted

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18 It seems as though, under the massive reality of powers and institutions, and without illusion upon about their processes, Certeau always detects a Brownian movement of micro-resistances, which build micro-freedoms, mobilize unforeseen resources hidden within ordinary people, and through these moves the frontiers of the powers’ grip on the anonymous multitude.
to their own aims. Tactics are a seizing of opportunities. “A tactic […] must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse.” (Certeau 1984, 37)

In Certeau’s view, the tactics of ordinary people, located in the realm of disguise, surprise, wink, wit, play, bluff, and so on, express an orientation to time and space radically anchored in the fleetingness of the present time and its fugitive configurations. This orientation contrasts sharply with that of powers (such as capitalism, liberal democracy, science, etc.), whose strategies rely on a projection in time to maintain their spatial hold.

A cet égard, la différence entre les unes et les autres renvoie à deux options historiques en matière d’action et de sécurité […] : les stratégies misent sur la résistance que l’établissement d’un lieu offre à l’usure du temps; les tactiques misent sur une habile utilisation du temps, des occasions qu’il présente et aussi des jeux qu’il introduit dans les fondations d’un pouvoir.19 (Certeau 1991, 63)

The interplays that Certeau establishes between strategies and tactics resonate with Francophone mothers’ experiences of place, and with their accounts of ‘making do’ and of ‘making with’ powers that structure their daily lives in Kingston. This is exemplified in Chloé’s account. A widowed mother working as a teacher at the Royal Military College, Chloé describes her ‘tactical’ appropriation of her son’s school bus schedule as she manages the time pressures of her morning routine:

On habite pas loin de Rémi Gaulin, c’est à dix-douze minutes de conduite. Il prend l’autobus, parce que l’autobus passe à 7:30, alors si j’ai un cours à 8:30 ça me permet de partir en auto et d’arriver à 8:00 pour préparer mon cours. Alors que si je vais le porter je peux pas le laisser avant 8:10, ou quelque chose comme ça. … Je le ramasse

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19 In this respect, the difference corresponds to two historical options regarding action and security: strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the establishment of a place offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents and also for the play that it introduces into the foundations of power.
Chloé’s mundane and apparently trifling action of choosing to put her son on the school bus, even though the school is on her route to work, is a diversion of imposed structures: an example of a tactic of everyday life. By her use of the school bus, Chloé is ‘making do’ with a production (i.e. the structure of the bus service) that is not hers, but a creature of powers and institutions that structure her daily life: capitalism, clock time, liberal democracy and its education system, the political project of linguistic minority and its institutions. The French-language Catholic school board hires school buses to carry children who live further than a set distance from the school, depending on children’s school levels: from 0 km for kindergarten to 3km for high school, unless there is a hazard on their route such as a major artery (Conseil des Écoles Catholique du Centre Est 2018b). Whereas many children in English-language schools go to their neighbourhood schools, at least for elementary years, families of children registered in French-language schools live all over Kingston and surroundings. Thus, a proportionally higher number of children in French-language schools travel to school by bus, resulting in long and complicated bus routes. Francophone children frequently spend half an hour to an hour in the school bus each way. Such is the case for Chloé’s son, for whom the bus ride is much longer than the 10 to 12 minutes between their home and the school. However, by putting her son on the bus Chloé is buying time in her busy mornings, while ensuring that her son remains under adult supervision until he gets to school. Thus, through her use of the school bus, Chloé is ‘making with’ an imposed production by seizing

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20 We live close to Rémi Gaulin, it’s a ten to twelve minutes drive. He takes the bus, because the bus goes at 7:30, and so if I have a class at 8:30 it allows me to drive and to get there at 8:00 to prepare my class. While if I drive him I can’t drop him off before 8:10, or something like that... I pick him up every night, it’s not really a detour... But in the mornings it’s just, the schedule is too tight, it’s more convenient that he take the bus.
an opportunity to appropriate the products of powers – the bus route and schedule, the start time of the school, her work schedule – to serve her own aims.

Chloé’s capacity to seize this opportunity, and thus to tactically divert the school bus schedule, rests on underlying alternative knowledges that are always latent and that are punctually activated, through fleeting alignments of circumstances. Chloé interprets the school bus schedule through knowledges that are subdued because they are both unknowable and deemed insignificant in the grand scheme of social structures and institutions: the tasks she needs to accomplish in the morning; the locations of her house, her son’s school, and her work; the distances between these locations; her course loads; students’ expectations; etc. It is these knowledges that allow her to perceive and seize the opportunity that the bus schedule opened for her in a way that was entirely unplanned by either the school or the school board. This is because these knowledges emerge from Chloé’s own logic, oriented on her daily experiences and needs, and thus completely alien and unforeseeable to the rationale of these institutions. In Certeau’s view, the knowledges underlying tactics of everyday life are elusive: they are sequences of a more-or-less conscious train of thought rather than elements solidified in discourse. They compose, in Giard’s words, “a subtle intelligence full of nuances and strokes of genius, a light and lively intelligence that can be perceived without exhibiting itself, in short, a very ordinary intelligence” (Certeau 1988, 158). It is this elusiveness and this ordinariness of the knowledges mobilized, and the fleetingness of the diversions, that allow tactics to remain unaccounted for. « Sauf exception, » note Gilbert and Ray, « les pratiques du quotidien ne figurent pas dans les statistiques et ne sont consignées dans aucun registre.²¹ » (Gilbert and Ray 2014, 92) Thus, ordinary subversive acts can weave an anti-discipline within frames of powers without disrupting them, so that the subversion remains unknown and un-

²¹ In most cases, daily practices do not figure in statistics and are not consigned in any record.
addressed as such. Tactics take cover under the overarching and universalizing tendencies of powers, which make powers incapable of seeing their own blind spots.

The unrecognizability of alternative linguistic experiences, knowledges, and relationships in the dominant space of Kingston represent such blind spots through which Francophone mothers can perform tactics of everyday life. The accounts of Carmen and Christine, quoted above, point to the invisibility of Francophone geographies to the non-Francophone gaze. As well, mothers’ accounts speak of subjugated Francophone knowledges of alternative trajectories and relationships. This is exemplified in Agnes’ account above of her knowledge of a French-speaking ENT doctor, and of the surprise of her unilingual Anglophone family doctor at such knowledge. This example clearly illustrates Certeau’s point that “[t]he gaze of power transfixed objects but also thus becomes blind to a vast array of things that do not fit its categories.” (Highmore 2001, 149) As discussed above, Agnes’ family doctor not only could not know what Agnes knew – because he didn’t have access to the same experiences and relationships –, neither could he be aware that there was something to know that he did not know. These double blind spots leave small and fleeting pockets of opportunities for Francophone mothers like Agnes to highjack imposed places, relationships, and meanings.

Francophone mothers tell of such subversive tactics particularly in their experiences of health care services. As illustrated above by Mylène’s account of her experiences of the swimming pool, the structure of places in Kingston rarely allows for a comprehensive and organic accommodation of the combined sources of encumberment and confinement of Francophone mothers’ geographies (see chapter 7). Thus, the structure of health care institutions frequently fails to recognize the complexity of their needs both as Francophones and as mothers. One effect of such failure is that, even though there are many health care professionals in Kingston who are
Francophone, in most institutions there is no systematic assignment of Francophone patients to these Francophone professionals. Francophone employees, aware of both of mothers’ needs and of the deficiencies of the institutional gaze, frequently resort to tactics of ‘making do’ and ‘making with’. This is a frequent experience for Sophie, who works as an occupational therapist for children at Kingston General Hospital:

On en a des familles au travail, justement, que c’est ça leur réalité … Tu te ramasses avec le parent bilingue, qui est militaire, qui est parti là. C’est la maman francophone qui est toute seule. … Quand t’as un parent qui parle pas du tout l’anglais là… Ah my God. C’est difficile! … Les patients francophones ont pas priorité pour avoir accès aux professionnels francophones… Mon poste est pas désigné francophone. Y’a un registre… Le Réseau des services de santé en français, quelque chose comme ça, en tout cas, moi mon nom est là-dessus… Mais ça donne pas priorité à personne. … On s’arrange pour que ça fonctionne.22

Here tactics are performed within gaps in the structures of the health care institutions, when gaps are wide enough to allow individual employees – from the receptionists to the health care professionals – to fleetingly divert their services to serve an alternative aim. Through such punctual diversions, “on s’arrange”23 to channel Francophone patients to Francophone professionals. Meanwhile there is no institutional awareness of this diversion, made of elusive knowledges and circumstances: that so-and-so is on call today and their mother always spoke French at home so they can get by in French, that Dr. So-and-so just took on a French-speaking resident, etc. Emma Wainwright et al. (2011) produced a similar analysis of the use of subversive tactics by mothers, and by people working closely with mothers, to promote mothers’ aims within institutional

22 We have families at work, and that’s just their reality… You have one bilingual parent, who is a military man, and he’s gone now. It’s the Francophone mom who remains on her own… When you have a parent who doesn’t speak English at all… Ah my God. It’s hard! … Francophone patients don’t have priority to access to Francophone professionals… My position is not designated as Francophone. There’s a register… The Réseau des services de santé en français, something like that, anyway, my name is on it… But it doesn’t give anyone priority. … We arrange so that it works.

23 We arrange
structures not conducive to mothers’ needs, in this case in the context of government learning centers for individuals on social assistance. Highlighting ways in which the centers were used to serve purposes invisible, and therefore unforeseen, to the neoliberal structures of the places, they note that places are not only created by dominant powers and their institutions, but are also “produced from below by their users to meet their needs, desires and fit with their own lives.” (Wainwright et al. 2011, 649). Gilbert and Ray (2014) and Veronis (2014), also drawing on Certeau to explore everyday tactics of immigrants in Ottawa, arrive at similar conclusions.

Beyond a recognition of the potency of everyday practices in promoting alternative and unsuspected aims within structures of power, Certeau draws attention to the radical alterity and unknowability of the knowledges and logics at play in subversive tactics and the fleeting places they create. For Certeau, subversion is not only found in the inventiveness of individual people and their capacity to seize opportunities, but in the continued existence of other knowledges and memories – incarnated in bodies; in sounds, smells, and touches; in stories and myths; in the logic of games; etc. Highmore notes that “[t]he ‘resistance’ of the everyday (de Certeau’s leitmotif) is a resistance born of difference, of otherness: bodies that are at variance to the machines that they operate; traditions that are unlike those being promoted; imaginings that are different from the rationale governing the present.” (Highmore 2001, 148). In that sense, the subversion of tactics does not imply a challenge to dominant powers so much as the expressions of “stubborn” otherness (Certeau 1984). To illustrate this, I go back to Chloé’s account of her daily life in Kingston. Chloé moved to Kingston with her husband Louis when she was offered a position at the Royal Military College. Her work implied demanding work hours in an isolating workplace. Meanwhile Louis, who was also Francophone and an elementary school teacher, started to work at the Catholic French-language elementary school Rémi Gaulin. Through his work and his volunteering, he
developed strong ties to the Francophone community within the small world of the French-language Catholic schools and of the Centre culturel Frontenac. Through Louis, Chloé developed links to this community, which became her main social network in Kingston. After a few years in Kingston, Louis was diagnosed with cancer. He passed away a year later. After Louis’ death, Louis’ Francophone network became paramount in polishing the rough edges of Chloé’s daily life as a now single and bereaved mother. Here is how she remembers this period:

[Louis] had a way of connecting with people. I saw it in his teaching, and I saw it a lot through his illness. ... You know, he always made connections, people remembered him. ... He had a way, he always knew how to click with someone. ... He was gifted that way. Not me. *laughing* He had a very natural way of making friends. ... The school networks, and... the daycare was superb, letting us come and go, come and go, and it felt like... there was always a place for our son. ... It was really humane.... And even after Louis died it was a similar thing... My son had just
Chloé’s account of her experience of belonging to a community following her husband’s death, and of the importance of this community in alleviating some of the worries and grief she feels for her child, points to the emergence of alterity and unknowability into places even as they are dominated by institutional structures. In Chloé’s account, alterity appears as her daily experiences of the school are mediated through her dead husband, and through relationships converging through him – their couple, their parenting, his colleagues, his former friendships rekindled through shared experiences of a small minority setting. Memories of Louis, and of his multiple relationships, introduce alterity into the place of the school, not only through his continued presence but through the different times that his presence evokes. This experience of memories and alterity resonate with Certeau’s understanding. For Certeau, as in Chloé’s story, “the alterity is that these memories do not just contain events, but still carry the remains of different conceptual systems from whence they came. These then are the ghosts in the machine.” (Highmore 2001, 150).

Crucially, the feeling of community that Chloé describes is woven from relationships anchored on knowledges that are partially shared and partially mutually intelligible, anchored in these different memories, and the different times they conjure. This community contrasts with ideas of the Kingston Francophone community as a political project, shaped by the “clamorous...
production” (after Certeau 1984) of liberal regimes of recognition (Povinelli 2011b), structured through French-language institutions, and animated by specific narratives crystallized around symbols such as the raising of the Franco-Ontarien flag on Franco-Ontarian day and the Franco-Ontarian hymn (see Theoretical Context). Chloé’s community operates in parallel fashion, on a different register, unintelligible to dominant knowledge and symbolic order. It is anchored in complicity and solidarity, born of a shared awareness of an alternative form of life made of relationships and their associated emotions, meanings, and practices. Chloé’s community resonates with Gillian Rose’s description of the familial ‘togetherness’ produced by mothers as they display, look at, and show family pictures and, doing so, weave a “complex geometry” of presence, absence, past, and future (G. Rose 2003, 2004, 2005). For Rose, the integration of the place (mothers’ homes), and of the individuals in this place (mothers’ immediate family), into a familial network is effected by the performance and viewing of togetherness of individuals who are now absent, or at least not present as they were.

[Family pictures stretch] domestic space through a relation with people, places and times that are not in the home at the moment of looking, or at least if they are, they no longer appear as they did in the photo. The temporality of this stretching is also complex, supplementing the here and now of the photograph’s presence with a there and then located in both the past and the future. (G. Rose 2003, 13)

The kind of radical alterity – in terms of absence, and in terms of temporality – that Roses attributes to family pictures is akin to the alterity that memories of Chloé’s husband insert into everyday relationships. Crucially, in both Rose’s description and Chloé’s accounts, it is the shared awareness of this alterity that nourishes the ties of community or ‘togetherness’. As Rose notes straightforwardly, “knowing the people pictured is vital to the togetherness generated by viewing family photos” (2004, 555). However, this shared awareness does not imply that individuals who form Chloé’s community – Louis’ friends, colleagues, etc. – share the same understandings and
feelings of this alternative form of life. For Chloé, the community she now feels is anchored within the complexity and nuances of her relationship with her husband, including how she perceived him as anchoring her into social networks. For Louis’ friends and colleagues, their senses of community with Chloé (in Chloé’s account) were anchored in their work relationships with Louis, their appreciation for his commitment, their feelings of this “click” between them. It is also woven by the feelings and meanings that emerge as the presence of his son arouses memories of these relationships. The feelings and meanings evoked by these different relationships are neither similar nor mutually knowable between Chloé and Louis’ former friends and colleagues. Even though only partially shared and partially intelligible, these relationships potently converge to shape the place of the school in Chloé’s experience. It is the recognition by both Chloé and by Louis’ former friends and colleagues that there is a relationship that nourishes Chloé’s sense of belonging to a community.

The presence of alterity in Chloé’s everyday geography also emerges in memories of feelings and relationships that are no longer active in the same way. For example, her experiences of closeness and solidarity in the network around the French-language Catholic school soon after the death of her husband grounds her present sense of her son’s security and care. As life goes on, the intensity of these feelings and these relationships has somewhat yielded to daily routine and realities. She remarks:

J’ai pas le temps que j’aimerais avoir pour continuer à cultiver ces amitiés-là pis ce réseau-là. Je me tiens… c’est surtout, j’ai une ou deux personnes avec qui j’essaie de vraiment, tsé se revoir… Mais même à ça, même quand je fais des efforts tsé des fois c’est aux six mois que tu vois le monde *rires* Tsé parce que tout le monde… On a tous des vies très occupées, pis… Faut vraiment faire l’effort, ok, on va se rencontrer
là, d’ici un mois, pis… Pis des fois les mois filent, pis là t’oublies, oh my god, ça fait six mois qu’on s’est vu.es…

In Chloé’s account, the fact that these relationships were not active at the time of the interview in the same form as they were in the past does not alter the trust that remains. Dyck also observed this temporal alterity that mothers mobilize in their everyday practices when transitioning from being at home to paid employment:

It was […] through promotion of the social and educational development of their children during the period when women were at home full-time, that the women began to forge linkages and understandings with other mothers that could be translated into practical and moral support. It was to these trusted relationships that women turned as they extended their activities beyond the domestic workplace, making transitions in and out of the wage labor force. (Dyck 1996, 124)

Mobilising feelings and practices born of other times, and of relationships now altered, brings elements of alterity into the mothers’ everyday geographies. This alterity generates an opacity within these geographies, as they are inhabited with fleeting evocations of feelings and moments past or anticipated. Thus mothers’ geographies remain partially unknowable, which allows for the emergence of unforeseen and sometimes surprising tactics and “strokes of genius” (Certeau 1998, 158).

The “resistance” that Certeau attributes to daily practices and tactics emerges from the irrepressible underlying alterity of individual knowledges and geographies, rather than from concerted and active efforts to challenge dominant powers. As Highmore notes, “such resistance is clearly not synonymous with being ‘oppositional’ or ‘progressive’…. ‘Resistance’ here is both

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25 I don’t have the time I would like to have to keep nourishing these friendships and this network. I hang out... specifically, there are one or two people whom I really try to see... But even then, even when I make effort, you know sometimes it’s every six months that you see people *laughing*. You know because everyone... We all have very busy lives, and... we really have to make an effort, ok, we’re going to meet up now, before the month is up, and... And sometimes months go by, and then you forget, oh my God, it’s been six months since we saw each other...
a preservative and a creation of something new: rather than presenting the inverse of power, it offers a different and pluralized account of powers.” (2001, 153). Francophone mothers’ tactics that I have discussed here do not aim to change the structures of society. These tactics stem from mothers’ need to cope with the hardships of pursuing alternative projects and forms of life – that is, mothering in a minority language – in space that is not structured to recognise such projects and forms of life. They aim to get through the day while trying to achieve some of the confused and contradictory imperatives of “‘what is best’ for their children” (McDowell et al. 2006, 2165), and not (or not necessarily) to try to change the world. Moreover, the ‘resistant’ daily practices of Francophone mothers, as well as the alternative relationships and meanings they insert into place, are coloured by normative assumptions and experiences of subjectivity as mothers and as Francophones. The ways in which Chloé’s alterity emerges in her relationships with the school bus schedule and the networks around the French-language school, for example, are products of her intertwined identifications and knowledges as a Francophone and as a mother.

Crucially, in Chloé’s case, her identification as a Francophone emerged through changes in her subjectivity as she became a wife and a mother. As illustrated in chapters 4 and 5, Francophone mothers’ relationships to French as a minority language are not consistent throughout their lives, but change following new meanings and possibilities of affiliations and belongings. Thus, Chloé did not consider French an important part of her cultural identity as a young adult, although her father was Francophone and she attended French-language school.

Disons j’avais pas une fierté de francophone. Mais je savais que je voulais garder cette langue-là, à cause je voyais ça comme ok ça va me servir de quoi. Dans le futur. C’était plutôt un choix pratique qu’un choix de… culturel. … Je suis partie pour étudier et je suis allée à l’université en anglais. Alors… à vrai dire, je crois que j’aurais probablement perdu mon français entièrement si c’était pas le fait que j’ai rencontré
mon mari, qui lui était un Franco-Ontarien … Pour moi ça a tout changé. Parce que si tu regardes mon frère et ma sœur, maintenant ils parlent à peine le français.26

Chloé’s identity as Francophone at the time of our interview was grounded in significant relationships in her life, firstly with her husband, a very active member of the community around the French-language Catholic schools, and secondly through her son whom they raised as Francophone.

[Quand on est arrivé.es à Kingston] je travaillais tellement fort… Alors, c’était juste à travers de Louis, et lui, des enseignants, avec qui que tu travaillles plus en équipe… l’environnement d’une école est beaucoup plus sociable, pis ça donne des amitiés beaucoup plus… Alors des gens avec qui je me tiens beaucoup à Kingston c’est des gens de l’école francophone… Pour moi je voyais pas le français comme ma langue première. Parce que moi je parlais surtout l’anglais à la maison. Pis le français est devenu plus ma langue première, en fait que c’est la langue première de mon fils, parce qu’on a pris ce choix-là. … Lui le seul monde qu’il a jamais connu c’est notre tit coin, de notre rue, pis son école Rémi Gaulin, pis… lui son monde là, c’est très petit pis c’est là là.27

Chloé’s words illustrate that, for her, being Francophone is associated with the importance in her life of particular social roles that are highly gendered and heteronormative: those of wife and of mother. It is through her identity as a Francophone but also, and crucially, as a mother that she is integrated into relationships and meanings within the network of the French-language school. It is as a Francophone mother that people recognize and care for her and her son.

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26 I didn’t have Francophone pride. But I knew I wanted to keep the language, because I thought ok, it’ll help me somehow. In the future. It was more a practical choice than… cultural. … I left to study and I went to university in English. So… to be honest, I think I would have probably lost my French entirely if it wasn’t that I met my husband, who was a Franco-Ontarian… For me it changed everything. Because if you look at my brother and my sister, now they barely speak French.

27 [When we got to Kingston] I worked so hard… So it was only through Louis, and him, through teachers, with whom you work more in a team… the school environment is much more sociable, and you create a lot more friendships…. So people with whom I hang out much in Kingston they’re people from the French-language school… For me I didn’t think of French as my mother tongue. Because I spoke mainly English at home. And French became more my mother tongue in fact because it’s my son’s mother tongue, because we made that choice … For him, the only world he’s ever known is our little corner, our street, and his school Rémi Gaulin, and… him, his world it’s very small, and it’s there.
Importantly, this continued recognition and care rely on Chloé to shoulder, appropriate, and perform relationships that were not necessarily hers to begin with, but that she inherited as a Francophone mother and now widowed wife. They necessitate not only that Chloé integrates and identifies within these relationships, but also that she invests herself – both emotionally and in terms of her sense of self. Part of this imposed sense of self is the heteronormative assumption that women – and particularly mothers – perform the emotional and social labour of maintaining community and familial bonds. As Rose notes, the sense of ‘togetherness’ produced by the performance of relationships that are unique (albeit common) relies on the feminized labour of maintaining such relationships through the integration of alternative presences and temporalities.

Togetherness is constituted both by the content of the photographs and by the way their viewing is structured. Seeing, naming and talking about family members makes a verbal and a visual network of connections between the pictured and the picturing…

It is as if, along with the ties that mothers feel bind them to their children, being a mother for these women also entails being obliged by the ties of the wider families. Having a child inserts them into this wider network and demands that they maintain it through the appropriate display and circulation of photos. This is a togetherness orchestrated by clear conventions of familiality (G. Rose 2005, 227 & 229).

Similarly, albeit more prosaically, it is Chloé’s particular experiences and knowledges as a Francophone mother that allow her to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the school bus schedule in the morning. These experiences and knowledges themselves emerge from her routine performance of care and reproductive work. In that sense, while an important part of coping with the particular needs of mothering and Francophone minority experience is through mobilizing alternative relationships and knowledges, they themselves stem from experiences as mother and as Francophone. In the lives of Francophone mothers, tapping into these relationships and knowledges emphasizes and reinforces the subjectivity from which they emerge, along with their
gendered and heteronormative assumptions around mothering, feminized reproductive labour, and cultural transmission.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I explored how Francophone mothers manage complex and conflicting needs linked to their care and reproductive labours and their linguistic minority experience in their everyday life. Drawing on Dyck’s work, I argued that an important element of this management is the daily negotiation of relationships and knowledges, through which they mobilize meanings and logics subjugated in the dominant liberal capitalist and English-centered structures of places in Kingston. Although daily practices allow mothers to cope by inserting alternative meanings into place, I argued with Michel de Certeau that these practices do not challenge the regimes of power that dominate place. Furthermore, the relationships and knowledges mobilized by Francophone mothers to manage daily life tend to reinforce particular gendered grooves of subjectivity around mothering and Francophone minority identity.
Chapter 7 – Places of Francophone mothers in Kingston: relationships and passages

In the last chapter, I explored everyday geographies of Francophone mothers in Kingston as they cope with particular configurations of encumberment and confinement that emerge from mothering and minority language experiences. I revealed the importance of relationships and of alternative and subjugated knowledges in inserting elements of alterity within these geographies, and in shaping mothers’ subjectivities and senses of place. In so doing, I shifted focus from Francophone mothers’ broader life trajectories to their present-day emplaced experiences in Kingston. This chapter pursues this new focus by centering on the places of Kingston. My aim here is to reveal the effects of these places on mothers’ possibilities and impossibilities, their sense of power and powerlessness, and their subjectivities. I present places as relationships anchored in particular reiterated stories and materialities, activated in mothers’ lives through routine and minute encounters. I draw on Moser and Law’s concept of passages to explore how places allow or bar mothers’ continuity in their practices, movements, projects, and subjectivities. Intersecting temporal projects around raising children and pursuing minority linguistic practices and identities complicate Francophone mothers’ emplaced passages in Kingston. I argue that these passages, even the smoother ones, imply a channeling of mothers’ gendered subjectivities, as their possibilities for recognition and for movements in specific places rest on their adopting particular identifications of femininity and motherhood.
**Theorizing the relational nature of place**

Place matters as a social phenomenon, that extends beyond individual trajectories and experiences, and that gives meaning to and determines the possible horizons of individual daily lives and wider trajectories. So far in this dissertation, place has been in the background of my analysis, ever present and dynamic, composed of meshed relationships and experiences, and shaping shifting affiliations, belongings, exclusion, alienation, linguistic (re-)orientations, mothering, reproductive labour, temporalities, moral imperatives, etc. However, place is not an empty or unspecified vessel. The relational approach I advocate in chapter 4, and that I suggest in chapter 6, locates place at the heart of the multiple and interlocking processes and events of life stories, but also at “the coincidence[s] of a range of interconnected social processes operating at different scales over different time-periods” (McDowell et al. 2006, 2163; see also Massey 1999). Place is anchored in large scale geopolitical histories, struggles, and changes that produce configurations of jurisdictions, boundaries, and legislations. These in turn define places in the tangible scales of individual daily lives (Godlewska 2013). In a striking example of such interplay of scales, Gilbert et al. (2014) have explored how the Ontario-Québec border crossing through the twin cities of Ottawa and Hull/Gatineau produces particular configurations of legislation, material circumstances, social services, and linguistic regimes that shape the places, as well as the opportunities and obstacles, of daily life (see also Agnes’ account in chapter 4). Similarly, larger scale phenomena produce the daily places through which Francophone mothers in Kingston lead their lives. Such large-scale phenomena include: the rising importance of provincial governance at the turn of the 20th century; struggles for Francophone rights in Ontario; industrialization and economic migration in the Kingston region from the mid-20th century on; and decisions at the state level regarding the emplacement and function of the Canadian Forces Base.
The social processes that shape place thus also shape how people experience place, firstly because they shape what people know and feel about place and about themselves. Place, in that sense, is “inseparable from being” (Godlewska 2013, 217, quoting Malpas 1999). Cameron (2009) explores how political, economic, and cultural regimes create stories that are projected unto place, along with these regimes’ structures and practices. She gives the example of how 19th-century British explorers wove dominant symbolic orders of capitalism, British imperialism, and Victorian cultural esthetics into stories of places in what is now North-Western Canada. These stories served to impose colonial affective meanings on newly encountered landscapes, while negating pre-existing stories and senses of place of Aboriginal groups inhabiting the area. Cameron argues that these stories were instrumental in incorporating newly encountered places into the colonial symbolic orders (Cameron 2009). Similarly, in Kingston, the ubiquity of Loyalist imagery points to a dominant feeling of entitlement to place (and land) linked to a particular British English-Canadian ethnic affiliation, and anchored on serial dispossession of Aboriginal land and of French settlements. These stories, re-inscribed through Loyalist toponymy and symbols, shape how people think of Kingston, the relationships defining this place, and who they are within these relationships.

Agnes, introduced in chapter 4, moved to Kingston to occupy a job in a Francophone advocacy agency. She recalls her encounters with relationships of entitlement and dominance in Kingston, woven into the context of the linguistic minority through which she experienced this new place:

Quand j’ai dit que j’allais à Kingston, on m’a dit « à Kingston tu vas te faire dire *speak white* »… tsé juste pour te donner un exemple, une des questions d’entrevue d’embauche c’était quelle serait ma réponse à un employeur qui dirait à ses employé.es de ne pas parler français. Que c’était interdit de parler français. Qu’est-ce que je conseillerais au francophone qui travaille là, pour parler à son patron. … Ça m’avait un peu… c’est une question d’entrevue, j’y avais repensé longtemps après, je me suis dit « pourquoi il.les m’ont posé ça comme question? »… Arrivant du Québec, où est-ce que j’ai jamais vécu en minorité, le sentiment minoritaire, je l’avais pas. C’était une notion qui était totalement inconnue pour moi. … Mais c’était
Relationships, articulated in power dynamics, shape meanings and material structures and, in turn, the places Francophone mothers inhabit. Thus, as different mothers migrate to Kingston to and through different relationships (as described in chapters 4, 5, and 6), Kingston itself becomes a different place for each of them, although located at similar coordinates. Agnes migrated to Kingston for work at a French-language community development and advocacy organization. The dominance of English linguistic practices and entitlement in Kingston, and the type of relationships it entailed for her as a minority French speaker, were paramount to her sense of the place. For many other mothers, these relationships of English dominance and French minority, although present in their lives, were secondary to other more determining relationships that shaped Kingston for them. In chapter 5, I detail the combination of circumstances that eroded the social power of military spouses and the control they can have over their own lives. These circumstances are tractable to interpersonal and structural relationships – of dependency to their husband and the military, of social invisibility, of solidarity amongst military spouses – that are paramount to defining what Kingston is for them. In chapter 6, I used Mylène’s account of her experiences at the swimming pool to describe the interplay of these power relationships in forming encumbered and confined geographies. Mylène also noted the discrepancy between her own and her partner’s experiences: « On vit deux réalités complètement différentes, nous à la maison avec

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1 When I told people I was moving to Kingston, I was told “in Kingston you’re going to be told speak white”... You know just as an example, one of the questions in my job interview was what would I tell an employer who would tell his employees not to speak French. That it was forbidden to speak French. What would my advice be to the Francophone who works there, to speak to his boss... I felt a bit... It was a job interview question, and I thought about it long afterward, and I thought “why are they asking me that question?”... Coming from Québec, where I had never lived in context of minority, the minority feeling, I didn’t have it. It was a totally unknown notion to me... But it was a sensibility... people heard it frequently. People suffered different situations... There is still resistance... You know “why, we know you speak English, why do you keep insisting on speaking French”.
les enfants avec le stress du quotidien, pis eux ben le stress d’être pas là, d’avoir des missions parfois dangereuses…² » Mylène’s words make clear that, for military spouses, Kingston is a place drastically different from the one experienced by their partners, as they are located differently in configurations of relationships and power dynamics. While, for Mylène, Kingston was defined by feminized labour of mothering, relationships of friendships and comradery amongst Francophone military spouses, and the inescapable ‘hereness’ of the present time of care, for her partner it was characterised by the strict and hierarchical relationships of the military, as well as the ‘thereness’ and uncertainty of deployment.

As place is produced through relationships, it ensues that place reproduces power dynamics that underlie these relationships, and infuses these dynamics in the economic, cultural, political and social context of individual lives (Erdal and Ryan 2018). In chapter 5, I drew on Collins and Bilge’s (2016) analysis of social power unfolding in interconnected domains: structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal. Social power in these different forms orient the relationships that produce place, and that are also reproduced through the materiality, meanings, and practices that comprise place (Cresswell 2004). Returning to the examples of Agnes and Mylène, the hegemony of English language and its oppressive implications for French minority language (in the case of Agnes), and the totalizing power of the army and its patriarchal and heteronormative action (in the case of Mylène), not only shaped Kingston as each woman experienced it. Kingston itself, as a place, activated these power dynamics in ways other places do not. These particular ways, specific to particular places, through which relationships and their meanings unfold promote or bar different practices and possibilities – such as speaking French, or

² We live two completely different realities, we at home with the children and the stress of daily life, and them well the stress of not being here, of sometimes having dangerous missions...
enjoying a sense of socio-economic independence and control over one’s life. Practices reinforce and contest the orientations of places (who and what they are for). Thinking of place as iterations of relationships through accumulated practices points to both the dynamism of place and to its sedimented quality. Sedimentation is used by Young, drawing on D. J. Van Lennep and on Edward Casey, to refer to “the arrangement [of things] in space in a way that supports the body habits and routines of those who dwell [in a place]” (Young 2005b, 139). Sedimentation is the product of repeated routines that shape material structures and deposit meanings into place, and in turn orient the possibilities of bodies and movements, “the sedimented conditions that constitute what is in place in the first place” (Thrift 1999, 313). Sedimentation brings tangibility to the relationships that mould place – and to the power dynamics underlying it, as experienced by Mylène and Agnes. Sedimentation is made of “numerous past associations” (Thrift 1999, 317) which always need to be reactivated and reiterated. In chapter 6, I argued that alternative relationships and knowledge insert elements of alterity into places of daily life. I referred to Gillian Rose’s work on mothers’ use of family pictures to “fill homes with the presence of those they picture” (G. Rose 2005, 231). Importantly, Rose argues that mothers’ production of ‘togetherness’, achieved by integrating alternative spatialities and times into the place of the home, rests on repeated practices of displaying and audiencing. It is through these repetitions that the relationships – and thus the home – are kept alive and active. The corollary to this argument is that although places “may be designed to elicit particular practices (including particular subject positions and emotional responses) … [they] can never be pre-ordained.” (Thrift 1999, 310). However, places are not infinitely plastic. Practices do not carry equal weight, and certain types of relationships and spatial performances tend to recur (McDowell 1999; G. Rose 1999). “[The] people with the power to do so … build the buildings and monuments and inscribe texts on the material fabric of place” (Cresswell 2009, 173)
and such dominant texts are reinforced through combinations of structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal power. Sibley (1995), for example, describes how the English countryside as a place is produced through the combination of legislation, land division and ownership (structural power), policing (disciplinary and interpersonal power), and stereotypes and popular discourse (cultural power), in ways that validate and promote practices of country landowners, as well as the meanings of peaceful sedentary communities that these landowners project onto this place. Meanwhile, these power dynamics exclude other practices and meanings, such as those of transience and nomadism (associated with Gypsies and New Age Travellers) and of political resistance (from environmental groups, for example), and inscribe them as transgressive and out of place (Sibley 1995). As Valentine notes, “encounters never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power” (Valentine 2008a, 333). Thus, analysing emplaced encounters demands an attention to “sociospatial inequalities and the insecurities they breed, and … to understand[ing] the complex and intersecting ways in which power operates” (Valentine 2008, 335, see also Philo 2000). The intersections of social power shaping material and social characteristics of places also circumscribe the possibilities of identification and subjectivities of individuals inhabiting these places (Parr and Philo 1995; see also Ho and Hatfield 2011).

Multiple and multi-scalar relationships and power dynamics that shape place also shape how place structures and orients people’s lives and possibilities. It is the interwoven histories, socialities, structures, and meanings at the heart of place that produce its particular configurations, and determine its material and social circumstances of enablement and obstruction. Such circumstances include availability of different language of education (Veronis and Ray 2013, 2014), linguistic regimes (Veronis 2014, 2015), local values and stereotypes (Sibley 1995, 1999; Valentine 2008a), labour market (Barker 2011), welfare regimes, housing availability and prices
The lack of affordable daycare in Kingston, lamented in chapter 5, is an example of such an emplaced circumstance. It is directly attributable to the conservative ‘common-sense’ heteronormative vision of family and reproductive work characteristic of the Harris Government’s neoliberal rationality, which was projected in the program design and overarching philosophy of the Ontario Early Year Plan (Vosko 2006, see also chapter 8). Lack of daycare in Kingston, in contrast to its accessibility in Quebec, contributes to normalising certain practices of mothering, such as staying at home full-time (see S. H. Holloway 1998b; McDowell et al. 2005), as celebrated by Geneviève and deplored by Marianne in chapter 5. For both these women, lack of daycare options, the neoliberal rationality that anchors this lack, and the particular gender regimes it activates, are at the heart of the place of Kingston is, just as the English language is dominant. What Kingston is for both women also emerges from their particular relationships to other places, where different social processes (e.g. the availability of publicly universally funded daycare) combine to create alternative cultures of mothering (S. H. Holloway 1998b). This sense of Kingston as a place resonates with the analysis of some migration geographers, who describe migrants’ everyday life-worlds as composed of a ‘here’, in settlement places, that is imbued with one or multiple ‘there’: latent places, often the location of past experiences and of significant others (Erdal and Ryan 2018). ‘Here’ and ‘there’ are intertwined in both Geneviève and Marianne’s experiences of Kingston as a place of mothering. Geneviève highlighted Kingston’s enabling quality in terms of her own values of mothering, which she felt were marginalized in Québec:

Le fait est que y’a beaucoup plus de mères à la maison ici qu’au Québec, pis tu te sens beaucoup moins marginalisée. Qu’au Québec. Après un an – bon, y’a le congé de maternité, pis ça y’a pas de problème, mais après un an … ici, depuis qu’on est arrivé.es à Kingston ça a disparu cette affaire-là. Les mères à la maison c’est plus courant, pis y’a pas de monde qui vont te demander « quand est-ce que tu retournes travailler? » ou
« pourquoi tu retournes pas travailler? » … Les seules personnes qui m’ont demandé ça à Kingston c’est les autres québécois *rires* ³

Conversely, Marianne’s sense of Kingston as a mothering place is coloured by dominant cultures of mothering in Québec. There, the availability of publicly funded daycare feeds perceptions of good mothering and of children’s development needs (see Holloway 1998), which prescribe that children will attend daycare starting at the end of parental leave, usually around one-year-old. Marianne worried:

Au départ ça m’inquiétait, parce qu’on s’entend qu’aujourd’hui la grande majorité, après ton congé de maternité tu retournes travailler pis les enfants sont assez tôt en garderie, pis je me disais si je reste à la maison avec elle, c’est juste sa mère, elle voit juste moi… ⁴

Marianne’s perception about the “grande majorité”⁵ experience is coloured by the normalization of salaried work of middle and working-class mothers, and of collective care of pre-school aged children, in Québec (Hamelin 2017; Robert 2017). From this point of view, the lack of affordable daycare options in Kingston makes it a less than optimal place to perform good mothering. Thus, the social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics that shape what Kingston is also shapes what it does. The Kingston of Marianne and Genevieve, intertwined with past places, defines the type of mothers they are able to be and, as discussed in chapter 5, the types of personal and social trajectories open to them.

³ The fact is that there are much more stay-at-home mothers here than in Québec, and you feel a lot less marginalized. Than in Québec. After a year – well, there’s maternity leave, and that’s not a problem, but after a year… here, since we arrived in Kingston, that thing disappeared. Stay-at-home mothers are more common, and nobody will ask you “when are you going back to work?” or “why don’t you go back to work?” … The only people who asked me that in Kingston are other Quebecers *laughing*
⁴ At first I was worried, because we know that today, the vast majority, after maternal leave you go back to work and kids are quite early in daycare, and I thought if I stay at home with her, it’s only her mom, she sees only me…
⁵ Vast majority
Francophone mothers’ places: minute encounters and passages

People experience the multi-scalar social processes and power relations that produce place, and that are reiterated through place, in the minute encounters of everyday life. In the last chapter, I explored how such minute encounters, understood and oriented through different knowledges and relationships, shape Francophone mothers’ everyday practices, possibilities and impossibilities, and insert alterity into the places they inhabit. My analysis was anchored in materialist theories of space and of everyday life, which posit that daily experiences of materiality and sociality are grounded in and produce spatial elements of constraints and enablement. I was also inspired by phenomenological ontological understandings of being-in-the-world that recognize both being and place as becoming together, and orienting one another, through encounters (Ingold 2000; Kruks 2000; Ahmed 2006; Simonsen 2007). Much phenomenological work in geography is centered around Heidegger’s concept of Dasein, which is the capacity of ‘being there’ of human beings, expressed in engagements with the world, as well as in the capacity of human beings to reflect upon these engagements (Kruks 2000). Thinking in terms of ‘being there’ as the co-becoming of being and place leads to a focus on everyday life. In Simonsen’s view: “the only ground we have or need to have for the intelligibility of thought and action is in the everyday practices themselves, not in some hidden process of thinking or of history. But the skills involved in these everyday practices are in themselves remarkable” (Simonsen 2007, 169). Geographers adhering to phenomenological theories and analyses look to tease out, and sometimes challenge, remarkable meanings and social dynamics from the minutia of our everyday encounters with the world. They often focus on places of such encounters, for example bodies (Longhurst 1997; Longhurst and Johnston 2014) and emotions (Bondi, Davidson, and Smith 2005).
Building on this theoretical foundation, here I mobilize Moser and Law’s notion of passages to cast light on the minute encounters that shape places, life-worlds, forms of life, and subjectivities of Francophone mothers in Kingston. Moser and Law theorized their notion of passages in the context of their analysis of dis/ability, which they understood to be an experience highly specific and meshed with identity and subjectivity (Moser and Law 1999). They developed the notion of passages to show the endlessly varied ways in which individuals experience dis/ability and which, crucially, are always specific to a spatial and temporal moment. Following the story of a woman who was dis/abled in a way that made her unable to walk on her own, they paused on a moment when the woman could not enter a train due to a malfunction of the wheelchair lift. Unpacking this disabling moment, they illustrated that dis/ability was not located solely in the woman’s body, but rather emerged in different moments of specific materialities: the station platform, the wheelchair, the lift, the train wagon, and so on. As well, they demonstrated that passages – for example, from the platform to the train – are specificities and materialities in their own right, and represent spatial and temporal moments of dis/ability. Passages are the coming together, that can be either done or undone, of specific heterogeneous materials – e.g. the woman, the train, the malfunctioning lift. They are the “equally specific” movements between specificities (Moser and Law 1999, 201). As Valentine notes, Moser and Law’s notion of passages is powerful “to highlight, through a set of stories, the specific identifications/disidentifications that emerge […] in particular spatial and temporal moments” (Valentine 2007, 15). The idea of passages provides a useful lens to examine Francophone mothers’ experiences of place. “[G]ood passages”, Moser and Law explain, “have to do with moving smoothly between different specificities and their materialities. Bad passages are about awkward displacements, movements that are difficult or impossible” (Moser and Law 1999, 205). Thinking of Francophone mothers’ places as passages casts light on these places’
specificities and materialities, through which mothers can move smoothly or awkwardly, or not at all (a point also suggested by Ahmed 2006). As Moser and Law note, “people are dis/abled in endlessly different and quite specific ways” (1999, 198). Francophone mothers, with their own configuration of needs, possibilities, encumberment, and confinement encounter places as specific and contextualized passages. These passages facilitate, allow, hinder, or bar the movement, including the continuity, of their specific projects and forms of life.

Identity and subjectivity are central to Francophone mothers’ passages, in that passages define how mothers’ specificities are understood, articulated, and treated within the regimes that order different places. In previous chapters, I suggested that different mothers encountered different configurations of affiliation, possibilities, and impossibilities that were linked to their capacity to ‘pass’ into the dominant norms and relations of power structuring the places they inhabit, which were never conducive to the entirety and the complexity of their needs. Passages in that sense are a form of accommodation, in that they imply that Francophone mothers (or other forms of being) ‘make do’ or accommodate themselves with imposed specificities or contexts. However, they are a form of accommodation that departs drastically from the rigid, either/or, absent/present rationale of liberal democratic ‘cohort’ logic of accommodation (see Watson et al. 2004). As illustrated by stories in previous chapters, Francophone mothers do not experience mothering and linguistic minority as essential and additive traits of difference, possible to accommodate in vacuum (see Valentine 2007). Francophone mothers, like everyone, have trajectories that are complex and needs that are multiple. They go through crises, they and their family members get ill, and they have worries and anxieties: all of these experiences transcend their subjectivities as mothers and as Francophones, even though they experience them as Francophone mothers. Liberal institutional logic of recognition and difference cannot encompass
the multiplicity and complexity of mothers’ subjectivities and needs or, in Moser and Law’s terms, their “specificities and materialities” (see also Chapter 3 on intersectionality). Yet liberal logic shapes Francophone mothers’ experiences of passages in Kingston. These mothers’ passages are often composed of encounters, smooth or awkward, between their forms of being and the norms of liberal atomicity and independence, and of ‘neutral’ English-language intelligibility, that structure most places. These encounters, as Moser and Law note, “are passages that are presupposed, normatively prescribed: if they turn out to be bad passages for the subject, then they make lacks” (1999, 203).

When bad passages ‘make lacks’ they can result in a failure to ‘pass’ in different ways: in the sense of ‘moving’, but also in the sense of ‘being identified as’ or ‘being accepted as’. Thus, when a Francophone mother’s form of being is obstructed by incompatibilities between her specificities and dominant expectations of subjectivity, the difficulty, awkwardness, or impossibility of this passage also reiterates the ‘lacks’ of the mother as a normative subject. The accounts of mothers who feel insecure vis-à-vis their lack of fluency in English illustrated this. These mothers frequently observe that, although their English skills allow them to pass in normal daily public interactions and to navigate wider Kingston society mainly unnoticed, they feel vulnerable and without resources in the face of the unexpected. Agnes notes: « C’est aussi que dans certaines situations même si t’es bilingue dans ton quotidien au travail, dépendamment des situations stressantes ou… de vulnérabilité ou… émotive, ben… l’anglais est juste pas là, il est juste pas accessible… ⁶ »

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⁶ It’s also that in some situations, even if you’re bilingual in your daily life at work, depending on situations that are stressful or… vulnerable or… emotional, well… English is just not there, it’s just not accessible...
The bad passages Agnes describes, where one’s English is “juste pas là”\(^7\), are those moments when mothers fail to act the normative traits of subjectivity in Anglophone liberal places, that is to be independently functioning in the English neutrality of social interactions. They are passages where the continued movement of a mother’s specificities – of her form of being – is interrupted by her failure to embody such norms. Francophone mothers whose English skills are limited express distress about such bad passages that ‘make lacks’ particularly in the context of accessing health care for themselves or their children (see Louise Bouchard and Leis 2008). They fear they will be unable to express states of physical or mental ill health to health care professionals, and they are concerned about misunderstanding and misusing medical terms in English. Maude worries: “Je vais tu être bien comprise? Ou des fois l’expliquer je peux être capable, mais l’information qu’ils vont me donner je vais tu bien comprendre? »\(^8\) For these mothers, accessing health care services in English, especially when it is unplanned or uncommon, can be experienced as precarious passages where their capacities to communicate are pushed to the brink of collapse. Éloïse illustrates such experience:

Ben tsé ici [au Tim Horton’s] je prends tout le temps les mêmes affaires faque ça va bien, mais tsé mettons je vais chez l’optométriste, c’est quelque chose que je fais pas souvent pis y’a plein de termes que je connais pas, faque… ou quand c’est médical… tsé maintenant je le sais c’est quoi une toux, c’est quoi telle affaire… Mais tsé quand c’est des nouvelles affaires… Comme mon fils il s’est mis à se gratter, il se grattait à grandeur, ben… tsé c’est pas quelque chose que je parle souvent, faque…\(^9\)

\(^7\) Just not there
\(^8\) Will I be well understood? Or sometimes I can be able to explain, but the information they will give me, will I understand it well?
\(^9\) Well you know here [at Tim Horton’s] I always take the same things so it’s fine, but you know let’s say I go to the optometrist, it’s something I don’t do often and there are lots of terms I don’t know, so… or when it’s medical… you know, now I know how to say a cough, how to say such or such thing… But you know when it’s new things… Like one time my son started to itch, he was itching all over, well… you know it’s not something I talk about often, so…
Eloïse was recounting and apprehending passages where she could not smooth the encounters between her own specificities – the unusual event that toppled her beyond the reach of her English-language skills, the urgency of the needs she needed to see addressed – and that of a health care service – dominated by an expectation of English-language functionality. When passages are precarious, awkward, difficult, or bad, the action of passing is impaired or interrupted, both in terms of movement and in terms of recognition. When Francophone mothers encounter bad passages, their identification as a normatively functional individual is jeopardized, which further prevents their possibilities of smooth movement. Obstruction of a mothers’ specificities in bad passages can erode her control over how she is represented and understood in specific places, which in turn limits her power in these places. Éloïse recounts how a difficult passage with her son at the hospital undermined her mothering subjectivity and autonomy in that place:

Mon gars s’est cassé le bras pis le pieds pas longtemps après… On est allé.es à la plage pis… il courait dans une pente de sable… pis il s’est tourné le pied pis il s’est comme fêlé un os… Faque ils m’ont tellement questionnée à l’hôpital tu peux même pas t’imaginer… c’est parce qu’ils le regardent pis ils posent des questions, mais il parle pas en anglais, faque il était de même *mime un visage fermé* Faque eux ont dû se dire « ils l’ont battu », pis… Faque moi je disais « là, on lui a rien fait, si tu trouves n’importe qui parle en français là, viens poser des questions, je te promets il va répondre ». Pis ils m’ont redemandé l’histoire… ils m’ont redemandé l’histoire comme mille fois, pis à un moment donné ils ont même essayé de nous distraire avec mon autre fils, un *popsicle*, pour voir qu’est-ce que mon mari allait dire… si il allait dire la même version que moi… Je voulais pas me fâcher en plus pour pas avoir l’air, que c’était pas une vraie histoire, mais j’avais le goût de dire « peux-tu juste t’en occuper il a mal?? Pis il pleure?? »… A ce moment-là au triage y’avait personne qui parlait français.10

10 My son broke his arm and his foot not long after... We went to the beach and... he was running in a sand hill... and his foot turned and he kind of cracked a bone... So they questioned me so much at the hospital, you can’t even imagine... it’s because they look at him and they ask questions, but he doesn’t speak English, so he was like that *mimes a closed face* So they must have thought “they beat him”, and... So I kept saying “ok, we didn’t do anything to him, if you find anyone who speaks French, come and ask questions and he’ll answer, I promise he’ll answer”. And they asked me the story again... they asked me the story again like a thousand times, and at some point they even tried to distract us with my other son, a popsicle, to see what my husband would say... if he would tell the same story as I did... I didn’t want to get angry on top of everything, so it would look like it wasn’t a true
The bad passage that Eloïse describes between her own specificities – her degree of comfort in English, her son’s French unilingualism, her son’s injury – and the specificities of the hospital triage room – the norm of English intelligibility, the assumptions and expectations regarding mothering and families shaping the interpretation of the injury – extended beyond linguistic issues. For Éloïse, this passage entailed the loss of some of her control over how she could be recognized and act as a mother. Through the hospital staff’s gaze, shaped by their inability to communicate with her son, Eloïse felt that she was constructed as a ‘bad’ mother, and that this judgement interfered with the staff’s willingness to answer the needs that she felt were paramount: “il a mal pis il pleure.” Eloïse also felt that, through this judgement, she lost some of her power to intervene and felt the need to police her own reactions. Thus, this bad passage was not limited to Éloïse’s movement, but also undermined her subjectivity: her image and who she could be as a mother in this place.

Passages exist on a grey scale between easy and difficult, with unexpected and apparently trifling elements tipping the balance between the doable and the highly impossible. A mother’s capacity to ‘make do’ and ‘make with’, in Certeau’s sense (see chapter 6), with a place’s specificities and its materialities is what defines how she will experience this place as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ passage. Like the tactics discussed in chapter 6, passages are radically anchored in the present time and the social and material conditions at a specific temporal moment. It is a particular – and often punctual – alignment of circumstances that will do or undo a passage, by providing fleeting opportunities to be seized, or by undermining to the last a mothers’ capacity to continue in a place. As Moser and Law note, “[d]is/ability is about specific passages between equally specific arrays

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story, but I wanted to tell them “can you just take care of him, he’s hurting?? And he’s crying??” ... At that time there was nobody in triage who spoke French.

11 He’s hurting and he’s crying
of heterogeneous materials. It is about the character of the materials which en/able those passages. And it is about the arrays which secure or don’t secure them – like absent lifts.” (1999, 201). The example of Chloé’s seemingly trivial use of her son’s school bus schedule related in chapter 6 illustrates that small things can ‘do’ a passage or, in other words, can allow the movement and continuity of particular forms of life. Importantly, these small things do not necessarily define passages as clearly ‘good’ or ‘bad’, but locate them on a murkier spectrum between ‘better’ and ‘worse’. Moser and Law stress this point as they describe the possibilities presented by a new computer offered to the woman whose story they are telling: “She can write letters and sentences when no-one else is around. She can spend a weekend writing a letter to one of her friends. The passages it affords, they are not that wonderful. But they are a great deal better than what was there before. They are a great deal better than nothing.” (1999, 206) Similarly, in Francophone mothers’ experiences relatively small things will make passages not necessarily good, but possible at least, and better then they were. Maude, whom I quoted above expressing her worry about not being able to communicate in English with health care professionals, recalls two such ‘better’ passages:

C’est arrivé que mon chum parte [en déploiement] pis j’ai eu à aller à l’hôpital avec les enfants, pis l’hôpital me donnait un… un interprète. Ça c’était bon parce que j’étais comme… je vais tu être capable de… de me débrouiller avec qu’est-ce que je savais là… Ouais, l’hôpital te donne ça…. C’est aussi arrivé que le docteur comprenait le français…. Il le parlait pas, mais il … il comprenait. Faque comme ça il pouvait… moi je pouvais lui parler en français et il comprenait assez pour répondre. 12

Clearly, the communication that Maude described between herself and the health care professionals – via an interpreter, or through a combination of two languages poorly mastered by

12 Once my partner left [on deployment] and I had to go to the hospital with the children, and the hospital provided a… an interpreter. That was good because I was like… am I gonna be able to… to make do with what I knew now… Yeah, the hospital provides that... Once also the doctor understood French... He didn’t speak it, but he... he understood. So that way he could... me I could talk to him in French and he understood well enough to answer.
one party or the other – was not optimal to obtain quality and reliable health care. However, these makeshift arrangements were good enough at the time to for Maude to meet the complexity of her needs (of mothering, of communication, of health care) in a manner that allowed some continuity. Conversely, small things, in a similar register to those that afforded Maude better passages, can also constrain passages to the extent that they become impracticable and that movement stops. This is the breaking point, where one or several element of a mothers’ complex specificities is unrecognized and blocked, where the place bars her form of being and where the passage is undone. Mathilde is a mother of two boys, aged eleven and nine at the time of our interview. She experienced such a passage-made-impossible when trying to access mental health services for her eldest son, whom she suspected of having some kind of attention disorder. In her case, the small thing that lead to the breaking point was the attitude of the social worker assigned to her case, who would not recognize that the family’s Francophone culture and identity was fundamental to who they were. Mathilde narrates:

On a été très critiqués par la famille pour les choix qu’on avait fait, pour la langue…. Et même par des professionnels… Mon frère et ma sœur ont des problèmes d’attention, et j’ai toujours soupçonné pour mon fils que c’était pareil. Faire j’ai fait des suivis avec Pathways for Children and Youth, pis la travailleuse sociale que j’avais c’était quelqu’un d’anglophone, pis tout de suite elle m’a rencontrée, une heure, pis elle a dit « have you thought about forgetting the French? » Pis j’étais comme… C’était comme un couteau dans mon cœur. Faque j’ai quitté parce que j’étais tellement angoissée de ça. Une semaine après je l’ai rappelée pis je lui ai dit « faut que je t’explique quelque chose. I could never forget that I’m French. C’est qui je suis. C’est comme de dire à une personne autochtone ‘oublie ça être autochtone’, c’est qui tu es. » Et mon fils a toujours eu une aptitude pour les deux langues. Il va… avoir des difficultés avec le focus, ça va être en anglais, ça va être en français, peu importe.13

13 We were criticized a lot by family members regarding our linguistic choices… And even by professionals… My brother and my sister have attention problems, and I always suspected that it was the same for my son. So I contacted Pathways for Children and Youth, and the social worker we got was Anglophone, and right away when I met her, an hour into the meeting, she said “have you thought about forgetting the French?” And I was like… It was like a blade in my heart. So I left because I was so anxious about it. A week later I called her back and I told her “I have to explain something to you. I could never forget that I’m French. It’s who I am. It’s like telling an Aboriginal
Feminist theorists of intersectionality have demonstrated that individuals experience multiple identities organically and all at once (see chapter 3 on methods). However, they have also argued that individuals orient themselves and identify differently within different spatial and temporal moments, based on the specific configurations of social positions, affiliation, possibilities, and impossibilities in presence. At no single moment can we be – and be recognized for – all that we are (Code 1991; Valentine 2007). The breaking point that Mathilde described is one in which the possible sites of identification (as a mother of a child with suspected special needs) required the exclusion of another identification (as Francophone) that was equally fundamental for this particular passage to be possible – i.e. for Mathilde to access the services she needed for her son. In this impossible passage, Mathilde’s exclusion as a Francophone blocked both meanings of ‘passing’: movement and recognition.

**Passages, maternal thinking, and Francophone mothers’ temporal projects**

Intersecting temporal projects about their children’s lives and about linguistic practices shape Francophone mothers’ experiences of passages in Kingston. Who mothers understand themselves and their children to be in the world, including their relationships to French language, define their temporal projects. In that sense, mothers experience passages in terms of how they allow for the pursuit of their specific temporal projects, themselves aiming for the continuity of the particular complexities of their children’s beings. Seen in this light, mothers’ passages are imbued with what Sara Ruddick theorizes as the project of fostering growth, one of the ethical imperatives she associates with maternal thinking (Ruddick 1995, see also Theoretical Context).

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person “forget it being Aboriginal”. It’s who you are.” And my son always had the two languages. He will... have troubles focusing, in English, in French, it doesn’t matter.
To foster growth is to nurture a child’s developing [material] spirit – whatever in a child is lively, purposive, and responsive. … To develop is to ‘unfold more completely’, ‘to unfold gradually as a flower from a bud’, to free from that which enfolds or envelops, to form or expand by a process of growth, to evolve the possibilities or power, to make active (something latent). (Ruddick 1995, 82)

From Ruddick’s perspective, fostering growth is about allowing the “enspirited body” (or the combined mind and body) of a child to expand and thrive in its specific form and orientation. To foster growth, mothers adopt an epistemological posture that recognizes each of their children as inhabited with a coherence of being, although this being may change and express itself in ambiguous ways. Fostering growth entails “a holistic appreciation of the separate personhood of the child, making her or his own sense of the world, rather than consisting of piecemeal responses to specific changes as if they were episodic or fragmented” (Bowden 1997, 28). Ruddick’s ontology of mothering and growth draws on Spinoza’s ideas of individuality and knowledge. In Deleuze’s reading, Spinoza understands individuality as consisting of a multiplicity of entities that are oriented following certain specific rapports. It is these rapports, which orchestrate the multiple encounters that take place within a being and between that being and the world, that define what that particular being is. In that sense, a child (as any other individual) exists as her own living being when the multiple entities that compose her (e.g. the bacterial fauna of her guts, the nutrients extracted from the food she is digesting, the osmotic movement of water in her cells, the microwars waged by the defenses of her skin, etc.) are oriented in a way that promotes her existence. Once this specific orientation is undone, these entities rearrange themselves following new rapports, that promote different forms of existence, and the child as a living being is no more (Deleuze 1978, 2003). Spinoza further argues that a desire or an appetite to preserve the rapports that orient its being, and to continue existing, expanding, and thriving in its particular form of life, animates every being. In The Ethics, he notes: « Chaque chose, autant qu'il est en elle, s'efforce
de persévérer dans son être. … L'effort par lequel toute chose tend à persévérer dans son être n'est rien de plus que l'essence actuelle de cette chose.14 » (Spinoza 1993, propositions VI and VII) Spinoza uses the term conatus to refer to a being’s appetite and power to persevere in its being, and to conserve and augment its power to be and to act – or its potentia. In Spinoza’s theorization, a being augments its power to be and to act when it makes encounters that are favourable to its conatus, that is, to the continuity of its form of being. These, for Spinoza, are “joyful” encounters, as opposed to “sad” encounters, which impair a being’s pursuit of the internal coherence of its being, and which thus reduce its power to act. Spinoza’s concept of “joy”, notes Ahmed, was elaborated well before the dissemination of the neoliberal rationale and its imperatives for self-fulfilment through individual apolitical happiness (Ahmed 2010). Spinoza suggests that through knowledge an individual can orient themselves toward “joyful” encounters that promote his or her conatus. Doing so requires an individual to acquire specific understandings that go beyond observing the effects that particular encounters have on them, and to gain a grasp of the rapports orienting those encounters. When an individual understands how certain encounters affect his or her being, and the rapports that orient such encounters, then this knowledge can enhance this person’s potential of action. This understanding provides the individual with a ‘common notion’: he or she understands both the coherence of her or his being, and how encounters affect this coherence. Deleuze notes that, to Spinoza, « être raisonnable, ou être sage, c'est un problème de devenir, ce qui change singulièrement le contenu du concept de raison. Il faut savoir faire les rencontres qui vous conviennent 15 » (Deleuze 1978). Sara Ruddick anchors maternal thinking, and particularly the ethical imperative of fostering growth, in this sort of Spinozist understanding,

14 Every thing, as much as it is in it, strives to persevere in its being. ... The effort by which every thing tends to persevere in its being is nothing more than the present essence of this thing.
15 To be reasonable, or to be wise, is an issue of becoming, which decidedly changes the content of the concept of reason. You must know to make encounters that are appropriate for you.
through which a mother can recognize her children’s conatus and promote “joyful” encounters that will foster their continuity of being. To do so, a mother must recognize that her children have a “material spirit” that orients their external expressions when they encounter the world: be it delight, fear, anger, or unbearable tantrums. Nurturing growth implies that mothers recognize particular forms of life in their children that define who and how they are in the world.

To understand her child, a mother needs to assume the existence of a partly conscious, continuous mind. This mind is not a substance separate from the body and interacting with it. The mental expresses itself physically; the physical is mentally interpreted. Nor is the ‘mind’ separate from feelings – children’s thoughts and perceptions are infused with feelings, their worlds are revealed to them through their own and others’ fears and desires. …. I suggest that a mother striving to understand a child cannot assume that his experience is irreducibly episodic, disconnected, and fragmented. She assumes that he is moved by interdependent perceptions, feelings and fantasies and by multiple, potentially unifying acts of responding and interpreting…. Such scenarios structure a child’s behaviour, and a mother assuming their existence is positing for her child a coherent experience. (Sara Ruddick 1995, 91–92)

Mothers’ preoccupations and efforts towards fostering growth, that is towards promoting encounters that foster the continuity of their children’s coherence of being, strongly qualify their experiences of passages, as is clear in Mathilde’s account. The bad passage that she experienced at the agency Pathways for Children and Youth, where the social worker nullified her son’s Francophone identity, was for her a “sad” encounter, that could have altered her child’s coherence of being and diminished his power to be and to act. It was one of the many passages in mothers’ lives made bad by institutional structures, which work against mothers’ better understandings of their children and against their efforts to foster growth (Sara Ruddick 1995; see also Wells 2011).

Fostering growth brings a juxtaposition of different temporalities and temporal projects into mothers’ passages. Embedded in temporal projects, fostering growth is oriented towards future objectives: the continued unfolding of children’s coherence of being, hopefully leading to their
happiness and well-being. Such objectives are never fully attained: growth is never accomplished, and sons and daughters are never well and happy, once and for all. For Francophone mothers, temporal projects of fostering growth are juxtaposed to other projects around minority linguistic practices and identities – which are also never finally achieved or secured. These temporal projects are articulated towards what Elizabeth Povinelli (2011b) refers to as the future perfect: the unattainable future when all of present experiences and efforts will come to fruition and ‘it will have been worth it’. However, these projects are always played out in the inescapability of the present – the durative present (Povinelli 2011b). It is in the durative present that mothers encounter passages that are possible or impossible, that are ‘joyful’ or ‘sad’, and that allow or bar the continuity and the projection into the future of their children’s coherence of being.

As mentioned in the theoretical context (chapter 2), Sara Ruddick’s rather systematic theorization paid little attention to the various challenges that mothers face in different situations of social minority and oppression (Bowden 1997; Collins 1994; Glenn 1994). Francophone mothers’ accounts tell of passages encumbered by added complexities and difficulties in fostering their children’s growth, depending on their material conditions, as well as on their understandings of who their children are and how they are positioned vis-à-vis French as a subjugated language and form of being in Kingston. Agnes, for example, tells of the complicated multiplicity of contingencies she had to juggle as a Francophone single mother working outside the home in the evenings:

J’avais beaucoup de réunions en soirée faque… je devais la faire garder souvent en soirée. C’était des réunions de 7 à 9… c’est la mauvaise heure si tu veux, parce que le… le souper, pis tsé si tu fais les devoirs… tsé la routine du bain, du coucher… tsé je ne peux pas tout faire. Je maquais de temps, sinon elle se serait couchée très très très tôt *rires* elle aurait pas voulu dormir… mais de toute façon, ça me prenait quelqu’un pour la surveiller… pis je pouvais pas la traîner aux réunions non plus. C’était exclu de mon esprit, ça ne se faisait juste pas, c’était du travail. … J’avais demandé à la
secrétaire d’école s’il y avait une liste de gardiens, de gardiennes… pis qui restaient proche de chez nous, parce que l’autre chose c’est que étant monoparentale, c’est beau que j’aille à une réunion, tsé je pouvais aller chercher la gardienne avant, mais qu’est-ce que tu fais à la fin de la réunion là tsé, fallait que je réveille [ma fille], que je la mette dans la voiture, qu’on aille reporter la petite fille… Pis finalement y’avait quelqu’un qui habitait pas trop loin dans le quartier. Pis qui marchait… qui était à distance de marche. Donc j’allais la chercher, pis elle retournait chez elle par ses propres moyens, ou des fois ses parents venaient la chercher. Elle était francophone parce que l’école me l’avait référée. En fait [ma fille] aurait pu se débrouiller autant avec une gardienne anglophone, sauf que quand… la première année c’était pas trop grave, parce qu’elle avait pas de devoirs, mais quand elle a commencé à avoir des devoirs, ben je voulais quelqu’un qui puisse l’aider pour la lecture, pis tsé… Je voulais que ça se fasse quand même. Et ça devenait important dans le suivi.16

Agnes’s account describes her form of being as diverging from dominant norms and structures of time, place, and subjectivity in Kingston in multiple intersecting ways. She was a single mother, whose competing imperatives of care and waged employment were complicated by non-conducive working hours, and whose linguistic practices were marginal to the unquestioned Anglophone majority in Kingston. As she attempted to foster growth, and to promote the expansion and thriving of her daughter’s coherence of being, Agnes faced various overlapping temporal projects. These included the continuity of French-language minority practices, the pursuit of her daughter’s academic achievements, as well as the normative understanding of a child’s

16 I had many meetings in the evenings so… I often had to get her babysat in the evenings. I had meetings from 7 to 9... it’s the bad hour, if you like, because the… dinner, and you know if you do homework… you know the bath routine, bed time… you know I can’t do everything. I lacked time, otherwise she would have gone to bed very very very early *laugh*. She wouldn’t have wanted to sleep… but anyway, I had to get someone to look after her… and I couldn’t take her to my meetings either. It was out of the question, it was just not something I would do, it was work… I had asked the school secretary if there was a list of babysitters… who lived close to our house, because the other thing was that as I was a single mother, it’s very well that I go to a meeting, you know I could come get the babysitter beforehand, but what do you do after the meeting now, you know, I had to wake [my daughter], put her in the car, to drive the young girl home… So finally there was someone who lived not too far in our neighbourhood. And who walked… who was at walking distance. So I would go pick her up, and she would go back home on her own, or sometimes her parents would come and pick her up. She was Francophone, as it was the school that had referred her. In fact [my daughter] would have been ok with an Anglophone babysitter, except that when… grade one it didn’t matter much, because she didn’t have homework, but when she started having homework I wanted someone who could help her with her reading, and you know… I wanted the homework to get done. And it became important to be consistent about it.
needs within Western middle-class ideological context – to be fed, bathed, and put to bed following a more or less set routine each night. To these core projects, Agnes’ arrangements of care added the tangential project of preserving the safety of the babysitter. As well, all of these projects, core and tangential, were underlined by Agnes’ project of carrying a subjectivity of normative independence of body and mind suitable for the liberal world of salaried economy. In a liberal economy, and particularly in a neoliberal moment, the continuity of the coherence of being of both Agnes and her daughter depended upon the success of this last project. Agnes’ babysitting arrangements for her evening work meetings represented precarious passages, where multiple temporal projects intersected, bringing in many needs and leaving very little leeway for errors or the unexpected. The specificities of these projects combined in a fragile edifice, with their many elements complicating passages and threatening to obstruct the possibility of movement every time. In Agnes’ situation, a catastrophe was always impending, as the slightest breach in her careful arrangements would have blocked movement, identification, or both: e.g. by forcing her to find an alternative non-Francophone caregiver, or by preventing her attendance at meetings.

Francophone mothers in Kingston pursue complex temporal projects of fostering growth in a social context imbued with moral imperatives around the preservation and transmission of French as a minority language. These moral imperatives emerge from fear of linguistic and identity loss anchored in the lived experiences of many who have grown up in minority context. Chloé, for example, tells how French was lost within her mothers’ family in Markstay-Warren, close to Sudbury, in the span of one generation:

[Markstay] c’était vraiment une communauté très francophone au départ. Mais comme toutes les communautés en Ontario c’est de plus en plus anglicisé… Même ma mère sa famille était francophone. Des Bélanger, des Leblanc… Ma mère, sa mère parlait français, son père parlait français, mais aucun de ses frères et sœurs parlent français. Ils ont perdu leur francophonie… dans une génération c’était gone. … C’était un peu
à cause de leur situation parce que … ils étaient pauvres, pis ils allaient à l’école anglophone catholique qui était tout proche pis… dans le temps, à Markstay, y’avait pas d’école francophone. Alors t’allais à l’école en anglais. Y’avait une école francophone je pense… primaire. Mais passé primaire c’était tout en anglais. Mon père lui sa famille était francophone mais lui… il a pu aller à Sudbury. Il a pu aller à une école francophone secondaire. Par ce temps-là la communauté francophone de Markstay se sont arrangés pour avoir un autobus pour transporter les étudiants à Sudbury qui voulaient suivre les cours en français. Mais avant ça il y en avait pas, et c’était plutôt les familles plus… plus riches qui pouvaient se permettre de mettre leurs enfants sur l’autobus pour les envoyer à l’école en français à Sudbury. Mais ma mère sa famille sont tous allés à l’école en anglais. Alors c’est un peu la raison pourquoi y’a beaucoup de francophonie qui s’est perdue. A la maison, quand j’ai été élevée, nous on parlait anglais à la maison surtout parce que c’était ma mère qui était à la maison avec nous, et puis… malgré qu’elle comprenait très bien le français… pis elle pouvait parler mais… avec difficultés disons. Elle pouvait se faire comprendre mais elle aimait pas ça.17

Stories such as this, commonly shared between Francophones and within Francophone institutions, create and promote a collective awareness of the fragility and subjugation of French as an alternative form of being in contexts of Anglophone majority (see Theoretical Context). They instill in Francophone individuals a sense of siege-like urgency and of ethical responsibility to persevere in performing French linguistic practices on a regular basis, lest some non-recoverable ground of Francophone resistance and survival be lost (see Huot 2013). Jeannette expresses this:

Il y a toujours un élément de bataille tout le temps. Si on reprend pas le flambeau, qui va le prendre? Ça peut pas toujours être des héros, ça peut pas toujours être des Madeleine

17 [Markstay] really was a very Francophone community at first. But like all communities in Ontario it’s getting more and more anglicized… Even my mother, her family was Francophone. Bélangers, and Leblancs… My mother, her mother spoke French, her father spoke French, but none of her brothers and sisters speak French. They lost their Francophonie… In one generation it was gone. …It was a bit due to their situation because… they were poor, and they went to the Anglophone Catholic school nearby and… at the time, in Markstay, there was no Francophone school. So you went to school in English. There was one Francophone school I think… elementary. But after elementary school it was all in English. My father his family was Francophone but he… he was able to go to Sudbury. He was able to go to a Francophone high school. By that time the Francophone community in Markstay had arranged to have a bus to carry students who wanted to go to school in French to Sudbury. But before that they didn’t have that, and it was the families who were… richer who could afford to get their children on the bus to go to school in French in Sudbury. But my mother her family all went to school in English. So it’s the reason why a lot of the Francophonie was lost. At home, when I was a child, we spoke English at home mostly because it was my mom who was home with us and… even though she understood French very well… and she could speak but… with difficulties let’s say. She could make herself understood but she didn’t like it.
Meilleur, pour l’hôpital Montfort… En tant que francophone t’es un poisson dans une rivière. Si tu lâches t’es un poisson mort, pis tu descends le courant, pis t’es pris dans le courant.  

Jeannette’s words illustrate a consciousness shared by many Francophones, and promoted by Francophone institutions, that French language in Ontario, and particularly in Kingston, has survived only through the unrelenting effort of generations past. Reiterated testimonies of older Francophone men and women nourish this consciousness and keep institutional and collective memory alive. Madeleine is a woman in her late 70s, who has lived in Kingston for the last forty years or so. She is involved in many groups and activities around the Centre culturel Frontenac and the Senior Centre. In accepting my invitation to talk about her life as a Francophone mother in Kingston, Madeleine mostly wanted to share with me her experience of oppression as a Francophone working as a telephone clerk at the Canadian Forces Base in the early 1980’s.

Là t’as l’histoire d’une grand-maman, qu’est-ce qu’elle a passé à travers. Aujourd’hui les francophones sont mieux regardés que dans mon temps. On a eu de la misère. Je sais que les gens qui demeuraient sur l’île Wolfe là, ils ont tous changés leurs noms eux autres, pour des anglais. Ils étaient Greenwood, des Boisvert. Ils étaient Leblanc, pour des White. C’est épouvantable eux autres comment qu’ils ont été martyrisés. C’était tout francophone ça avant. Y’avait pas de travail, y’avait pas ci, y’avait pas ça… en changeant leurs noms pour anglais, ils ont commencé à avoir… la vie était plus facile. … [Moi quand j’ai commencé à travaillé] j’étais vraiment comme… pas martyrisée, mais c’était effrayant, j’en revenais pas! Surtout la superviseure. [Ma collègue] me disait «Madeleine, c’est épouvantable comment elle traite les francophones ici, y’en a quatre avant toi là, elles ont pas été capable. Une qui a fait une dépression, une qui a fait ci, une qui a fait ça.. »… J’ai fini par prendre un rendez-vous avec le surintendant du personnel de la base… Il faut que tu te défendes, han, quand t’es française… C’était dur pour moi, ça m’a pris beaucoup de courage, mais avec ce courage-là… Je me suis dit j’ai donc bien fait d’avoir fait ça parce que ça a ouvert la porte de d’autres, pis ils étaient à l’aise après ça de travailler, pis [ma superviseure] a pas travaillé longtemps, ils l’ont remplacée…. Mais si on dit rien, on se serait fait écraser… C’est ma plus belle victoire de francophone ici à Kingston. Ma…

There is always an element of struggle, all the time. If we don’t pick up the torch, who will carry it? It cannot always be heroes, it cannot always be Madeleine Meilleur, for the Montfort Hospital… As a Francophone you are a fish in a river. If you let go you are a dead fish, and you go downstream, and you get taken by the current.
By telling her story, Madeleine was passing on the historical consciousness of the unrelenting battles and victory that the survival of French in Kingston represents. Madeleine expressed a clear sense of how her individual experiences were inserted in the wider oppression suffered collectively by Francophones at the time. As well, she insisted on framing her individual victory at her workplace as a collective victory. Crucially, Madeleine wanted me, as a researcher interested in the experiences of Francophones, to have a sense of the past struggles and hardships that paved the way for Francophone life as it is now possible in Kingston. « Je t'ai tu bien dit », she asked me at the end of our interview, « à quel point c'était difficile pour nous? »

Testimonies such as Madeleine’s feed moral imperatives for Francophones in present day Kingston to honour past battles by preserving French language rights and heritage. These imperatives encompass a sense of debt towards individuals who struggled to gain French-language institutions and services, as well as a preoccupation to keep the possibilities of French-language as an alternative form of being alive for future generations. Although they are articulated as temporal projects – anchored in consciousness of the past, and oriented towards the future –, these

19 Now you have the story of a grand-mother, of what she went through. Today Francophones are better regarded then in my days. We had it hard. I know that people who lived on Wolfe Island, they all changed their names, for English. The Greenwoods, they were Boisverts. They were Leblancs, they became Whites. It’s appalling how they were made to be martyred. They were all Francophone before that. They couldn’t get work, they couldn’t get this, they couldn’t get that... by changing their names to English, they started to get... life got easier. ... [Me when I started working at the base] I was really like... not made to be martyred, but it was appalling, I couldn’t get over it! Especially the supervisor. [My colleague] told me “Madeleine, it’s horrible how she treats Francophones here, there were four others before you, they couldn’t stand it. One suffered depression, one suffered this, one suffered that...”... I ended up taking an appointment with the human resources superintendent... You have to defend yourself, right, when you’re French... It was hard for me, it took a lot of courage, but with that courage... I told myself it was so good I did that, because it opened the door for others, and afterwards they were comfortable working there, and [my supervisor] she didn’t stay long, they replaced her... But if we say nothing, we get crushed... This is my greatest victory as a Francophone here in Kingston. My victory – and that all three of my children speak French.
20 Did I make it clear to you how hard it was for us?
imperatives translate into obligations of reiterated practices in the durative present, namely of asking for French-language services in institutional encounters. Jeannette explains:

J’ai l’impression que la plupart des Franco-ontarien on le sait qu’il faut le demander [les services en français], me semble c’est quelque chose qu’on apprend… C’est peut-être les gens de ma génération. Je dois dire que souvent il faut que je le rappelle à mes enfants…. Moi je le fais de façon automatique. Pis parce que je suis pas à l’aise en anglais, je pourrais très bien le faire en anglais, mais je me dis c’est important de montrer on est là, on les exige ces services-là. Si on le fait pas… c’est pour l’avenir. Parce que ces services là… je peux juste voir une coupure de budget, très facile… mais ça demande un effort supplémentaire. Les jeunes, quand ils voient que pour eux c’est aussi facile un que l’autre, est-ce qu’ils vont faire l’effort? Moi je les encourage à le faire, moi je le fais pour moi parce que j’y crois… On est consciens de ça, les Francophones. Parce qu’il y en avait pas de services en français avant. On les a obtenus, je suis assez vieille que je l’ai vu qu’est-ce que c’était avant, puis depuis qu’on les a.

For Francophone individuals who are bilingual, or at least very comfortable in English, the temporal project of maintaining Francophone institutions and services, and demanding and using French-language services, entails extra effort. This is because, despite Kingston’s bilingual designation and the ensuing obligation of provincial government agencies to provide services in French, French-language services are inconsistent and, when available, often delivered with delay or complications (Huot 2013).

Francophone mothers who grew up in a context of English majority – and thus are fluent in English – frequently become drastically more sensitive to the moral imperatives of maintaining

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21 I feel that most Franco-Ontarians, we know that we need to ask [for services in French], I feel it’s something we learn… Maybe it’s people from my generation. I must say often I have to remind my children… For me I do it automatically. And not because I’m not comfortable in English, I could very well do it all in English, but I feel it’s important to show we’re here, we want these services. If we don’t do it… it’s for the future. Because these services… I can see a budget cut, very easily… but it demands an extra effort. Young people, when they see that for them it’s as easy to go either way, are the gonna make the effort? Me I encourage them to do so, I do it myself because I believe in it… We are aware of it, we Francophones. Because beforehand we didn’t have services in French. We obtained them, and I’m old enough to have seen what it was before, and what it is since we have them.
French-language services when they have children. These mothers are most often the ones who also feel an impetus to switch linguistic practices within their families to promote French language around the birth of their first-born child, as discussed in chapter 5. Both commitments, to speak French and to demand services in French, aim at shaping through sedimentation the places in which they want their children’s future to unfold. Here Agathe illustrates this project:

J’aimerais vraiment ça que les enfants puissent avoir un médecin en français, parce que surtout quand ils grandissent… je veux qu’ils soient capables de bien expliquer qu’est-ce qu’il y a si jamais il y a un problème, quelque chose qu’ils veulent expliquer, ou… souvent si t’es nerveux pour quelque chose, si t’as en plus le degré de nervosité, que tu sais pas trop comment l’expliquer, je veux pas qu’ils aillent en plus cette barrière-là. … Même s’ils deviennent bilingues, si on utilise pas les services on les aura pas éventuellement… C’est juste que tous les Francophones sont tellement parfaitement bilingues qu’on peut être deux Francophones à se parler pis on le sait pas. Parce qu’on parle trop parfaitement l’anglais. … C’est pour ça que je trouve que c’est encore plus important de faire l’effort, parce que c’est comme trop facile de faire « ah, je vais juste pas le demander. » … Avant d’avoir mes enfants j’étais pas trop sensibilisée à ça. Mes parents en parlaient beaucoup. Mais maintenant que j’ai des enfants je le réalise – je veux que ces services-là soient disponibles, mais pour ça faut qu’il y aille des Francophones qui les demandent.22

Through her reiterated practices of asking for French-language services, Agathe wanted to contribute to shaping places where her children were likely to experience good passages, that is, smooth movement and identification of their particular forms of being. Agathe’s desire to keep open the possibilities of accessing health care services in French, even though she anticipated her children would be bilingual, is particularly telling. This preoccupation suggests her sensitivity to

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22 I would really like the children to have access to a French doctor, because especially when they grow up... I want them to be able to freely express what’s going on if ever there is a problem, something they want to explain, or... often if you’re nervous for something, if on top of everything you have a degree of nervousness, that you don’t really know how to explain, I don’t want them to have this barrier on top of everything... Even if they become bilingual, if we don’t use these services eventually we won’t have them anymore... It’s just that all Francophones are so perfectly bilingual that we can be two Francophones talking together and we won’t know it. Because we speak English too perfectly.... That’s why I find it’s even more important to make the effort, because it’s like too easy to say “ah, I just won’t ask.”... Before I had my children, I wasn’t to alert to it. My parents talked about it a lot. But now that I have children I understand it – I want these services to be available, but for that to happen there need to be Francophones who ask for them.
the complexity of her children’s lives, and how this complexity might clash at certain critical moments with dominant norms of subjectivity and functionality. This preoccupation also reveals her understanding of French-language as fundamental to her children’s coherence of being and to their experiences of places as passages.

**Mothering Francophone children, moral imperatives, and the French-language schools**

Children of Francophone mothers occupy a critical location within temporal projects of minority language survival, as they represent vectors of continuity at different scales: the individual, the family, and the collective. Agathe’s account illustrates that Francophone mothers understand their children as beings whose future passages need to be protected and smoothed. Seen in that lens, mothers’ efforts to solidify their children’s relationships to French answers the needs of fostering growth, as mothers perceive these relationships as fundamental to the expansion and thriving of their children’s being. Simone, for example, says of her daughter: « [Le français] c’est une chose qui fait partie de qui elle est.» 23 Efforts towards preserving children’s French identification and linguistic skills also aim to nurture collective projects of keeping family and community relationships alive, as well as to maintain shared meanings and identity in existence.

Madeleine notes:

Moi je trouve c’est un péché… je connais des gens, français, qui n’ont jamais parlé français à leurs enfants. … J’en rencontre, des jeunes que leurs parents leur ont jamais parlé français, ils disent « c’est d’valeur, parce que quand on va visiter nos oncles pis nos tantes on peut pas communiquer, on reste dans un coin pis on parle pas. » … Moi ce que j’ai été plus fière c’est que quand mon fils s’est marié, tous leurs cousins et leurs cousines de la Beauce pis du Québec sont venus à leur mariage. Si mon fils avait pas parlé français, avait pas communiqué avec eux, penses-tu qu’ils seraient venus? Ils

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23 [French] is one thing that is a part of who she is
parlent pas un mot d’anglais eux.\textsuperscript{24}

Madeleine’s words illustrate the importance of children and their relationships to French in collective projects of family, kin, and cultural identity. These projects feature French-language as their cementing tie, to be preserved through ceaseless effort. Unsurprisingly, mothers perform a great part of these cultural efforts through their relentless care and reproductive labour (see Rose 2003, 2004, 2005 and Theoretical Context). Claire, for example, notes with amusement: « Quand j’étais petite, j’invitais mes ami.es à jouer, et ma mère nous criait « en français! » Maintenant c’est moi qui fais ça, avec mes enfants \textit{*rires*}.\textsuperscript{25} »

Importantly, Francophone mothers’ children’s continued relationships to French represent a crucial site of struggle for the political project of maintaining French as a minority language in Kingston. As the story of Chloé’s mother’s family illustrates, linguistic and cultural losses are very rapid and stark once children stop speaking the language. For many Francophones in Kingston, and particularly those who have lived in linguistic minority contexts for a long time, the relationships to French-language of all Francophone children is a political issue, often contentious. Simone, who grew up in Timmins, expresses this contention, centered in her view on the differences between the experiences of Kingston Québécois.es, who have lived most of their lives in context of Francophone majority, and other Francophones: « les parents québécois ils savent pas c’est quoi être minoritaire. Moi je comprends ce que c’est d’être minoritaire. … Les enfants…

\textsuperscript{24} I think it’s a sin... I know people, French, they never spoke French to their children. … I meet some, youths whose parents never spoke to them in French, they say “it’s a shame, because when we go visit our aunts and uncles we can’t communicate, we stay in the corner and we don’t speak.”… For me what I was most proud of was when my son got married, all their cousins from Beauce and all over Québec came to their marriage. If my son hadn’t spoken French, hadn’t communicate with them, do you think they would have come? They don’t speak a word of English.  
\textsuperscript{25} When I was a child I would have my friends over to play and my mom would yell at us “in French!” Now it’s I who do that with my children *laughs*
Parents from Québec, they don’t know what it is to be a linguistic minority. Me, I know what it is to be a linguistic minority… Children in an Anglophone environment, I say they’re bilingual, but children will always speak in English.

For me it was paramount [that my children] go to school in French. … Now I see it. Because I look at my friends… There are some, and it’s not to blame them, they say “Oh my God, they won’t speak English if I don’t send them to English school…” The problem is, if you do that, they won’t learn French. Because, anyway, if they don’t learn it at school, where are they going to practice it? At home? And even so, I meet many parents who speak English with their children… … I will fight all my life for French language education outside Québec. If we don’t have that, forget it. For sure we will loose a ton.

26 Parents from Québec, they don’t know what it is to be a linguistic minority. Me, I know what it is to be a linguistic minority… Children in an Anglophone environment, I say they’re bilingual, but children will always speak in English.

27 For me it was paramount [that my children] go to school in French. … Now I see it. Because I look at my friends… There are some, and it’s not to blame them, they say “Oh my God, they won’t speak English if I don’t send them to English school…” The problem is, if you do that, they won’t learn French. Because, anyway, if they don’t learn it at school, where are they going to practice it? At home? And even so, I meet many parents who speak English with their children… … I will fight all my life for French language education outside Québec. If we don’t have that, forget it. For sure we will loose a ton.
The geography of Francophone institutions in Kingston reinforces the importance of French-language schools as neuralgic centres of the political project of French-language survival and continuity. As discussed in the introduction, Francophone presence in Kingston, once congregating around the French-language Catholic parish Saint-François d’Assise, revolves now importantly around the Francophone school-community hub at 711 Dalton Avenue. The proximity between the (by very far) largest French-language high school in Kingston and an important number of Francophone social services and community organizations acts to integrate a network of Francophone places, institutions, and services in Kingston. Francophone schools, and particularly Catholic, are both an entry point and a retention site of Francophone families within this network (Huot and Veronis 2017; Veronis and Huot 2017). Rima’s experience illustrates this dynamic. Although she moved to Kingston as a teenager, and she herself attended Marie-Rivier for her last year of high school, Rima describes having always felt peripheral to the Francophone community. She attributes this feeling to her late arrival within a tightly knit community, as well as to her early pregnancy and marriage to an Anglophone man, whose family quickly became her principal network in Kingston. Rima’s nuclear family life unfolds mostly in English, and she works for a financial institution in English. Her only experiences of French language in Kingston nowadays occur through her children, who attend both Rémi-Gaulin and Marie-Rivier Catholic schools. Thus, it is only through interactions triggered through her children’s education, e.g. communications from the schools, school outings, religious ceremonies, etc., that Rima is aware of the ongoing activities and projects of a Francophone collectivity. She notes: « Les francophones à Kingston c’est comme une communauté à eux tout autour de l’école… L’école crée une communauté francophone. Ils restent toujours ensembles…. À cause des enfants je suis au courant
des choses. Comme ce qui se passe au centre Frontenac.28» French-language schools are complicated places, where multiple experiences and meanings converge and where temporal projects, at the individual, family and community scale, intersect. For many Francophone mothers they are necessary places (in the sense of locations and in the sense of relationships): for their children to continue growing in a way that nourishes their relationships to French, and thus promotes their coherence of being and allows them to thrive, and for the Francophone community as a collective cultural and political project to remain alive.

The temporal projects that Francophone mothers commit to when they decide to send their children to French-language schools, whether they be personal, familial, and/or collective, often entail complication and obstruction of routine passages for them and their children. This is because, just as places often fail to accommodate the complexities of Francophone mothers’ and their children’s forms of being (as illustrated by Mathilde’s account above), places are often structured following the single logic of one normative temporal project (see Buitelaar 2006). In Mathilde’s account, the social services agency’s incapacity to recognize the complexity of her child’s needs also translated in an incapacity to foster the multiplicity of Mathilde’s temporal projects, which include both caring for her son’s special needs and pursuing their French-centered practices and identities. Similarly, French-language schools, due to their small sizes and the lack of French-language resources in the Kingston region, often cannot accommodate complexities and intersecting projects in their students satisfactorily, such as esoteric interests and aptitudes, but also learning difficulties and disabilities. This was Brigitte’s distressing experience, when she found very little support to help her and her son grapple with his reading difficulties:

28 Francophones in Kingston it’s like their own community is all around the school... The school creates a Francophone community. They always stay together.... Through my children I have information. Like what’s happening at the Frontenac center.
Brigitte describes her experience of this difficult time, where the school proved unable to provide her son with the extra support he needed, as one of double abandonment. By failing to address needs beyond its normative temporal project to promote French-language survival and continuity, the school abandoned Brigitte’s child to a ‘sad’ encounter, or a difficult passage, in which he had to grapple alone with his difficulty reading. The school also abandoned Brigitte to face the abandonment of her child. As the school would/could not support this extra project of supporting her child’s learning needs, Brigitte realized that the full responsibility for this project rested on her: whether it was taken up or not, how and how effectively it was pursued, etc. Beyond the extra day-to-day unwaged care labour of Brigitte and her mother-in-law as they attempted to tutor her son, the school abandonment entailed an increase in the needs she felt responsible for as

29 I had difficulty with my little one last year at school, and I was disappointed... He had a lot of trouble with his reading, his skills, they weren’t what they should have been. Now he’s gotten a lot better, but... You know, even if we practiced at home, you know it was just difficult. I said “are there tutors? Whom I could hire?” “No. No.” I found that really weird... It disappointed me. Just that, within the school system, I was surprised that Rémi Gaulin didn’t have a list of tutors yet. You know, right away. Because I’m sure he’s not the first, and he won’t be the last to have difficulties, reading, or with maths, or whatever... So now my mother-in-law and I we planned this out, that when she would have him... she would get him to practice, and I would get him to practice the remainder of the time.... It’s frustrating, you can’t... the parent can’t do everything. And I felt like, ok, ah... all the children who have difficulties, they have tutors, and us, what do we have?
mother, needs which would be otherwise unmet. These added responsibilities increased the burden of social reproduction she carried as a mother.

Attending French-language schools also brings elements of exception and isolation to the geographies of Francophone children and their families in wider Kingston. The geographies of children, in terms of both the variety of places and the spatial realm accessible to them, tend to be limited in contemporary Western society (Valentine 1997). Beyond the institutional settings they frequent (i.e. their schools and out-of-school activities) and their homes, young children’s geographies are often confined to their immediate neighbourhoods. In Kingston, English-centered normality and relationships most often predominate in Francophone children’s geographies outside of school and home. Importantly, most of the children in their streets and neighbourhoods are Anglophones. These Anglophone children navigate relatively seamless geographies between home, neighbourhood, and their English-language school, in that these places are usually close to one another and they are not circumscribed or divided by language. However, Francophone children who attend French-language schools experience a duality in their configurations of possible affiliation and inclusion defined along linguistic lines. The imposition of French-language in their schools, and in many cases in their homes, clashes with the imperatives of speaking English outside of these two settings. That the French-language school is frequently located much further than the distance they can or are allowed to travel on their own, as the catchment areas of French-language institutions span across the entire city and beyond, reinforces this linguistic spatial duality (see Chloé’s account in chapter 6). Unlike many Anglophone children, the majority of children in French-language school experience archipelago-like geographies with important distances between known places of school and of home and neighbourhood. The experience of spatial divide between French and English, paralleled in the break between school and
neighbourhood, means that Francophone children’s forms of being and relationships to place are always marginal in the dominant spaces of Kingston, which do not recognize this divide. Some families attempt to mitigate this marginality by moving near their chosen French-language school. Doing this, parents hope to counter the spatial linguistic divide in their children’s geographies and to foster smoother passages between home, school, and neighbourhood. Claire, for example, explains their decision to live close to Madeleine-de-Roybon, where their children attended school:

On voulait que les enfants soient dans le même quartier que l’école pour pouvoir y aller à pied et pour avoir un sens de communauté. C’est tout à fait comme ça parce que l’école dessert toute la communauté, donc il y a des gens de partout mais… quand même il y a des familles qui sont proches… On veut être capables de voir nos enfants dans une communauté qui… qui vit ensemble, qui va à l’école ensemble. Donc on fait de notre mieux. Mais c’est pas vraiment… comme ça que ça se passe. Parce que c’est la seule école publique francophone, donc y’a des familles qui sont un peu partout, je sais qu’il y en a plusieurs qui viennent de l’est, y’en a plusieurs qui viennent de l’ouest, donc…

As Claire’s words illustrate, this strategy is at the best of times only partially successful. This is because Francophone families are so scattered throughout the city that it is unlikely that school friends will find one another living in close proximity – and thus expand their geographies of shared language, relationships, and places outside of school. As well, the concentration of Francophone families in one neighbourhood is never high enough to dilute the English dominant structures of space – even close to the French-language schools or in Greenwood, a neighbourhood in which many Francophone military families live.

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30 We wanted the children to stay in the same neighbourhood as the school, to be able to go by foot and to have a sense of community. It’s not quite like that because the school serves the entire community, so there are people from everywhere but... even so there are some families who live nearby... We want to be able to see our children within a community that... that lives together, that goes to school together. So we do our best. But it’s not... it’s not really how it happens. Since it’s the only French-language public school, so there are families who live all over the place, I know many live in the East, many live in the West, so...
The affiliation of French-language schools to schoolboards that span throughout central and eastern Ontario exacerbates the marginality of Francophone children who attend French-language schools in Kingston. These schoolboards are organized along different institutional lines than the English-language schoolboards, which operate locally and govern the Catholic and public neighbourhood schools. These different systems of governance translate into diverging practices at the day-to-day scale between French-language and English-language schools. Significantly, for mothers and their children, this means that the schedules are dissimilar. Chloé, for example, laments:

Les anglophones et francophones c’est d’autres journées pédagogiques complètement. … Des fois c’est décevant un peu parce que ses amis anglophones de l’autre bord de la rue ont un congé pis il en n’a pas, ou alors il est en congé pis eux autres sont pas là… Il a quelques amis qu’il a connu à travers l’autobus qui sont juste l’autre rue, mais les amis l’autre bord de la rue eux sont… sont anglophones alors…

The fact that children attending French-language school do not have the same days off as most children in their neighbourhood, who attend local English-language school, may appear trivial. However, it is the accumulation of such trivialities that result in children feeling ostracized in the spaces outside their homes and schools, however they may feel within these places. French-language schools are designed to foster a particular temporal project of Francophone minority, anchored in the recognition that the continuity of French-language in the children’s lives is necessary for the continuity of their coherence of being. However, this close relationship established between the French-language schools and the continuity of Francophone children’s individualities implies that the marginality of these schools within the spaces of Kingston is

31 Anglophones and Francophones they have completely different professional development days. ... Sometimes it’s a little disappointing because his Anglophone friends that live on the street they have a PD day and he doesn’t, or else he’s having a day off and they’re not around... He has a couple of friends that he met on the bus and who live next street, but his friends on our street they’re... they’re Anglophone so...
projected onto the children. Francophone mothers are aware of, and often distraught over, this marginality, and the difficult passages that Francophone minority temporal project entails for their children. Simone, for example, lamented the linguistic isolation of her daughter who, having been raised in an entirely Francophone environment and attending French-language junior kindergarten, did not possess enough English yet to communicate with other children in the neighbourhood:

Elle est consciente qu’elle parle français, qu’elle parle pas la langue de la majorité. Comme au parc, elle ira pas vers les autres enfant. Parce qu’elle a aucune confiance que le français va être compris. Qu’est-ce qui fait qu’elle est consciente de ça?... Pour l’instant elle ne montre pas de signe qu’elle est fâchée de ne pas parler anglais. Mais je veux pas qu’elle se sente seule, isolée… Je veux pas qu’elle réalise à quel point elle comprend pas.32

Simone’s words illustrate Francophone mothers’ feeling of often distressing tensions between their commitment to temporal projects of French-language continuity and their awareness of the hardships, obstacles, and loneliness these projects bring to their children’s day-to-day passages. Such tensions and difficulties are exacerbated during children’s preschool years in Francophone families who, like Simone’s, decide to limit their children’s encounters with English to a minimum. The rationale of this decision is to build a strong foundation of French-language early on, recognizing that children will learn English at school anyway as it remains an important language of communication even in French-language institutions. One corollary result of this decision is that, until these children attend school, they are nearly unilingually Francophone. Preschool aged children’s passages, even in the best scenarios, tend to be very obstructed and characterized by dependency on adults. They have few rights and limited social power, and their possible places tend to be very narrow. Not possessing basic skills in the majority language in

32 She’s aware that she speaks French, that she doesn’t speak the majority language. Like at the park, she won’t go towards the other kids. Because she has zero confidence that she will be understood in French. How is it that she is aware of this? ... For now she doesn’t show signs of being angry not to speak English. But I don’t want her to feel alone, isolated... I don’t want her to realize how much she doesn’t understand.
Kingston implies that Francophone almost unilingual children are all the more vulnerable, and their geographies reduced. Their mothers worry about the catastrophic passages that this powerlessness may cause, for example in times of emergencies where movement – and communication – is imperative. Agnes, after having lived in Kingston for a few years, married a Francophone man with whom she had three sons, who were nearly unilingually Francophone before entering school. She recalls feeling anxious about their safety in the wider Anglophone context of Kingston:

On s’inquiétait pas pour leur apprentissage de l’anglais parce qu’on savait qu’on était ici… de façon permanente…. Mais c’est juste, si on avait eu un accident, ou… tsé comment des secours auraient su? Que… qu’ils étaient francophones, qu’ils comprenaient pas l’anglais, parce qu’ils se seraient fait parlé en anglais là, tsé. L’interaction aurait été en anglais, l’enfant aurait pas réagi là. Faque ça c’était une inquiétude, ça c’est quelque chose que… quand ils ont commencé à parler en anglais, tout ça là, c’est…[soupir] On a arrêté de stresser si tu veux avec ça, on se disait ben là au moins ils vont être capables de dire ce qui va pas pis de répondre. Mais on faisait rien pour corriger la situation, dans le sens qu’on précipitait pas l’apprentissage de l’anglais pour autant.33

Francophone mothers who, like Agnes and Simone, choose to limit their children’s encounters with English to a minimum until school, do plan to have their children learn English eventually. Keeping English out of their children’s lives is a temporary strategy that feeds the project of French-language preservation and continuity. However, as every temporal project is inescapably articulated in the conditions of the durative present, this temporary strategy means

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33 We weren’t worried about them learning English because we knew we were here… permanently… But it’s just, if we had had an accident, or… you know, how would have the rescue team known? That… that they were Francophone, that they didn’t understand English, because they would have been addressed in English, you know. The interaction would have been in English, and the child wouldn’t have reacted. So that was a worry, that was something that… when they started speaking English, all of this, it’s… *sigh* We stopped being stressed about this, we thought well at least they will be able to say what is wrong and to answer. But we didn’t do anything to mend the situation, in that we didn’t hurry their learning English for all that.
that there is a period when children cannot communicate in English. As long as this period lasts, this linguistic incapability is an irremediable condition of an inescapable present.

The linguistic isolation of (then) unilingual Francophone pre-school aged children frequently translates into difficult or impossible passages for Francophone mothers as they attempt to access services for health and developmental needs. Eloise’s account above illustrated this in a case of complicated access to acute health care. Moreover, in cases of developmental needs, access to services is often further obstructed by the necessity of direct communication between children and professionals, e.g. speech therapists, psychologists, social workers, etc. In Kingston, there is no institutional provision to offer early childhood developmental services in French. Unless they are lucky enough to find Francophone professionals on their own, mothers of unilingual Francophone children who need these services must wait for children to commence school. At that point service provision is assumed by the schoolboard (at least to an extent), and professionals come from Ottawa to attend to children in the Kingston schools (Veronis and Huot 2017). Francophone mothers frequently express anxiety at the impact that such delays in accessing services may have on their children’s future development. Their sense of urgency is fanned by public health discourses positing that the pre-school years are the most important in children’s brain development (McCain and Mustard 1999; Vosko 2006). Agnes, for example, recalls:

Mon fils avait un retard de langage, et puis nous autres on était vraiment inquiets, puis on a voulu une évaluation en orthophonie, ben évidemment y’en avait pas d’orthophoniste bilingue, on en a pas trouvé. … Finalement on a attendu… parce que là il était rendu à trois ans et demi, pis là il rentrait à l’école à quatre ans. En maternelle. Faque là à l’école, y’ont fait venir… avec l’école y’avait une orthophoniste du conseil scolaire, qui vient de Ottawa. Mais c’est juste que nous autres on trouvait qu’on perdait un temps peut-être précieux, au niveau… parce que là on se disait si il a un retard de langage, que là on travaille pas là-dessus maintenant, ben là après ça ça va être… quel
Agnes’ account exposes the difficult snags in the juxtaposition of temporal projects for Francophone mothers. For Agnes, this juxtaposition provoked stressful and intractable tensions in her efforts to foster her son’s growth. As much as she understood French-language as a necessary element of the continuity of his being, she was deeply concerned that his difficulty in accessing services, due to his linguistic isolation and the inadequate structure of French services and French-language school boards, might impair the unfolding of his being and his potential to act.

Complicated projects, complicated passages

How mothers experience temporal projects around minority French-language survival and continuity, and more particularly around the moral imperatives of sending children to French-language schools, depends on how they understand French as intertwined in their subjectivities, their past experiences, and their future projects. In this last section I have drawn on Simone’s, Claire’s, Agnes’, and Brigitte’s accounts to reveal difficult moments of tension in mothers’ durative present when they experience conflicting imperatives between the temporal projects of the French-language schools and fostering their children’s coherence of being. They spoke of difficulties accessing special needs services, of isolation and marginality, and of fear for children’s safety. However, they did not apparently experience irreconcilable contradiction between the schools’ temporal projects around French-language and their own senses of self. Many other

34 My son had a delay in his language, and we were really worried, and we wanted him to be evaluated in speech therapy, but of course there wasn’t any bilingual speech therapist, we didn’t find any... Finally we waited... because now he was three and a half, and he was going to start school at four. In junior kindergarten. So then at school, they got... at school they had a speech therapist from the school board, who came from Ottawa. But it’s just that we felt we were losing time that was perhaps precious, in terms... Because we thought if he has language delay, that we don’t work on it now, well afterwards it will... what other types of delay will we have?
mothers felt the school’s narrative and projects to be incongruent with their and their children’s beings: their understandings of their relationships to French, their identities as Francophone, and their own linguistic temporal projects. Many military spouses, for example, did not adhere to the analysis of French-language fragility that underlies the discourses of Francophone institutions and their moral imperatives. Due to the reality of military life, most military spouses knew that the length of their stay in Kingston, although unpredictable, was unlikely to be longer than five to ten years. Many of them nurtured the plan (or hope) of moving back to the province of Québec once their partner was posted out of Kingston. Their linguistic temporal projections differed widely from that of French-language schools: they were not overly worried about their children losing their French, and they often did not believe that they would be in an Anglophone majority context long enough for their children to pick up English through the vines. Consequently, they were not as concerned about their children losing their French as they were about their not learning English, and thereby not ‘profiting’ from their time in Kingston. As well, many of these mothers wanted to maintain the possibility of English-language schooling when they returned to the province of Québec. However, due to the Québec’s provincial legislation, this is only possible if a child, their siblings, or their parents have received most of their education in English in Canada (Éducation et Enseignement Supérieur Québec 2018). Thus, military spouses often nurtured very different relationships to languages and linguistic projects than the ones animating French-language schools, and their choice of schools for their children involved a careful negotiation between these conflicting relationships and projects. Eloise, for example, explains her choice to keep her son in the neighbourhood English-language school for his year of grade one:

[À l’école] il a des amis, il est capable de discuter [en anglais], il joue, il a du fun avec eux autres, c’est juste que ça lui vient pas encore naturellement. J’ai peur que si on retourne au Québec il perde toutte. J’aimerais ça lui donner une vraie bonne base, pis je me dis… Parce que je me disais en première année faut pas qu’il manque la
conjugaison des verbes [en français], tout ça, mais je pense pas qu’ils font vraiment de ça en première année [à l’école française]. J’ai fouillé dans les programmes… tsé ils commencent à apprendre à écrire, les syllabes pis tout ça, mais ça je pense que je vais être capable d’y faire l’équivalent chez nous. Y’aura pas la grosse conjugaison pis tous les temps de verbe en première année…. Vu que c’est plus difficile, ça je voudrais qu’il prenne ça en français. Mais dans les écoles en français ils commencent pas l’anglais avant quatrième année. Parce qu’ils se disent « ben non, l’anglais ça s’attrape! » Ça s’attrape, mais tsé on est tu obligés d’attendre si tard que ça pour l’attraper?35

Eloise’s choice to keep her son in English-language school stemmed from her careful consideration of his current linguistic reality, which she examined at the light of her own relationships to languages and her own temporal projections. Eloise had suffered from her lack of English, which, as discussed above, complicated and sometimes entirely blocked her passages in Kingston. In response to these experiences, she wished her children to acquire fluency in English, the majority language in most of North America, so that their future passages were smoother then hers had been, and so that the unfolding of their lives would be less likely to be impaired by linguistic barriers. With this project in mind, Eloise evaluated her son’s current English skills, which she worried were insufficient at that point to ensure his future fluency. Eloise’s choice did not reflect a lack of interest or care for the continuity of her son’s relationships to the French-language. Furthermore, she was aware of the particular difficulties of learning some aspects of French, such as verb tenses and conjugation. However, Eloise’s preoccupations for her son’s learning French were much more nuanced and contextualized than the French-language school’s

35 [At school] he has friends, he can discuss [in English], he plays, he has fun with them, it’s just it still doesn’t come naturally. I’m afraid that if we go back to Québec he will loose it all. I would like to give him a really good base, and I think... Because I thought in grade one, it’s important he doesn’t miss verb conjugation [in French], all that, but I don’t think they really do that in grade one [in French-language school]. I looked through the programs... you know they start to learn writing, syllables and all that, but for that I think I can teach him at home. There won’t be big conjugation and verb tenses in grade one... Because it’s more difficult, I want him to learn that in French. But in French-language schools they don’t start English until grade four. Because they say “no no, they will just pick up English!” They will pick it up, but you know, do we have to wait so long for them to pick it up?
institutional discourses of linguistic fragility and moral imperatives of linguistic preservation. Through a fine analysis of her priorities, her son’s current linguistic circumstances, and the knowledge she purposefully acquired of the school curricula, Eloise negotiated the precise and time sensitive articulations of diverging temporal projects in her own and in her son’s life, including the language in which he would be schooled at specific moments.

Other mothers see their relationships to French, and their experiences of Francophone practices and identities, as made strange by the collective identity underlying French-language schools’ projects of minority language survival and continuity. As discussed in the theoretical context (chapter 2), and with Maryam’s testimony in chapter 4, Francophone institutions in Ontario are anchored in a narrative that ties minority French-language to particular history and identity markers, emphasizing Whiteness, European descent, rurality, and Catholicism. In the experiences of Simone, Claire, Brigitte, and Agnes, as in the experiences of most Francophone mothers in Kingston who migrated from Québec, the association between French as a minority language and Catholicism does not inhibit their access and identification with Francophone institutions, even though they are not necessarily practicing themselves. This is not the case for all mothers (Heller 1999; Berger and Heller 2001; Gérin-Lajoie 2004; Pilote and Magnan 2008, see Theoretical Context). For Mathilde, who grew up in a Francophone family in Elliot Lake, a small community between Sudbury and Sault-Saint-Mary, the ties between French language and Catholicism led to strong and painful dissonance in her Francophone identity and practices after she converted to Pentecostalism. From that moment, she suffered French and Francophone places as obstructed passages:

Ce qui s’est passé dans ma vie c’est qu’on était élevées dans une église catholique, pis à un moment donné ma mère, avec l’influence de sa sœur, a commencé à aller à une église protestante, pis moi … j’ai été parce qu’elle m’a demandé, et j’ai beaucoup aimé
l’église et j’ai fait un engagement de foi… et… disons pour une période, on dirait que pour moi la francophonie était très associée à l’église catholique. … Je sais pas si tu comprends qu’est-ce que je veux dire. Parce que pour moi, la francophonie pis… l’église catholique c’était un. … Y’a des gens … qui quand qu’ils ont appris que j’étais protestante, même ma grand-mère du côté maternel, c’était comme… être francophone est catholique. … Pis parce que j’avais fait un choix d’assister à une différente église protestante, j’avais comme repoussé…. ça de ma vie, pendant quelques années, même que j’allais à une école secondaire… mon primaire était francophone, mon secondaire était bilingue. Alors j’avais comme repoussé ça d’une façon.36

In Mathilde’s childhood and youth, spent in a context of small Francophone minority population, French was interwoven with very few and specific places: her relationships with her family members, their homes, the Catholic church they attended, the French-language school. For Mathilde, French at the time was those places, “c’était un”, which were anchored into the Catholic Church, in which Mathilde did not belong anymore and where she experienced direct ostracism. French itself became a series of bad passages where the complexity of Mathilde’s life was blocked and unrecognized. As she removed herself from those places and passages, so she removed herself from French.

However, when Mathilde moved from Elliot Lake to attend a Pentecostal college in Toronto, she encountered other possible sites of affiliation and identification to French-language:

Quand je suis venue à ce collège pour étudier il y avait … des petits groupes de mission, de voyages missionnaires à travers le monde … pis quand ils ont vu mon nom ils ont dit « ben ça nous prend quelqu’un pour… le Canada français, parce que t’es francophone on va te mettre là ». Pis j’étais comme *laugh* « Je veux pas aller là! »

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36 What happened in my life is that we were raised in a Catholic church, and at one point my mother, influenced by her sister, started to go to a Protestant church, and I… I went because she asked me, and I liked the church very much and I committed to my faith... and... for a time, it felt for me that French-language was very much associated to the Catholic Church. ... I don’t know if you understand what I’m trying to say. Because for me, French-language and... Catholic Church, they were one. ... There are people... who when they leaned that I was Protestant, even my grand-mother on my mother’s side, it was like... to be Francophone is to be Catholic. ... And since I had made a choice to go to a different Protestant church, it’s liked I had pushed away... this from my life, for a few years, I even went to a high school... my elementary was Francophone, my high school was bilingual. So I had pushed that away, in a way.

37 They were one
J’aurais choisi quelque chose d’exotique… la Chine ou quelque chose… Mais j’avais pas le choix, y’avait pas de place, pis… c’est là où ils m’ont mis, pis j’ai rencontré beaucoup d’autres francophones… Je pense que c’est là que j’ai réalisé, j’ai pas besoin de renier… ma culture, je peux retenir ma culture, ma langue, et aussi vivre ma foi en français… C’est une bonne chose pour moi dans le fond. Parce que j’ai comme… recommencé à être intéressée à ma langue et à ma culture. … Pis c’est là que j’ai commencé à dire « non, je suis 100% francophone, pis ma culture j’y tiens, j’honore mon historique… » Ça m’a pris longtemps pour pouvoir voir ce qui était bien de mon historique, pis de l’honorer mais… je veux pas me sentir « moins [francophone] que [les catholiques]»38

In college, Mathilde learned that although her experience of French thus far had been one of obstructed passages, dis-identification, and painful ostracism from part of her family and community, other affiliations and belongings to French were possible, even in places of Francophone Ontario, which she thought were already known to her. In other words, other passages became possible around the obstructed passages of French as she knew it in Elliot Lake. Moreover, these new passages were particularly good as they allowed her to reconnect with an important part of herself and of her relationships to places, family, culture, and history. These passages represented particularly ‘joyful’ encounters as they allowed for a more complete unfolding of her coherence of being, which she had felt stunted by the denial of her relationships to French within her life.

Having reconnected with French as an inherent part of her coherence of being (“je suis 100% francophone, pis ma culture j’y tiens”), French became an important element of her temporal

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38 When I went to that college there were… small mission groups, of missionary travels throughout the world … and when they saw my name the said “well we need someone for… French Canada, as you’re Francophone we’re going to put you there”. And I was like *laughing* “I don’t want to go there!” I would have chosen something exotic… China or something… But I didn’t have a choice, there were no places left, and… that’s where they put me, and I met many other Francophones … I think that’s when I realised, I don’t have to deny… my culture, I can keep my culture, my language, and live my faith in French… It’s a good thing for me in the end. Because it’s as if I… started to be interested in my language and my culture again. … And that’s when I started saying “no, I am 100% Francophone, and my culture is important for me, I honor my history…” It took me a long time to be able to see what was good in my history, and to honor it but… I don’t want to feel “less [Francophone] than the [Catholics]”
projects of fostering growth when she had her children. Married to an Anglophone man, and living at that time in the Anglophone context of London, Ontario, she determined on a course of reiterated practices in the durative present that would promote French-language transmission and continuity:

Même que mon mari est pas tout à fait à l’aise en français on partageait quand même le but que nos enfants soient bilingues … par contre j’avais quand même marié un anglophone. *rires* Faque on avait entendu parlé de ‘un parent une langue’, faque on s’est dit c’est comme ça que on va… approcher cela. Faque moi je parlais à nos fils en français, pis mon mari en anglais, mais on se comprenait tous. Quand je suis retournée au travail mes enfants sont allés à la garderie de langue française… Quand tu vis en situation minoritaire faut que tu mettes l’emphase sur la langue minoritaire parce que… la langue majoritaire c’est partout partout.  

Mathilde’s words reveal that, although she did not partake in the identity narrative of institutionalised Francophone minority projects in Ontario, she was aware of the fragility of French-language in contexts of English majority, and she wanted to protect this inherent part of her and her children’s coherence of being. In her perspective, French-language schools represented a necessary bulwark for children to preserve minority language from the overwhelming dominance of English in all other aspects of their lives.

Parce que parfois les gens disent « pourquoi tu les as pas mis en immersion », je dis… parce que… pour être 50/50, tu cherches davantage toutes les possibilités en français… sinon ça serait jamais 50/50, c’est impossible. Parce que si tu fais juste égal à l’école, et à la maison, ben y’a tout ce côté de ton monde qui est plutôt anglophone.

Mathilde carried her preoccupations for French-language transmission and preservation, and her ensuing resolution of sending her children to elementary French-language schools, when her

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39 Even if my husband is not completely comfortable in French we shared the goal that our children be bilingual ... but still, I had married an Anglophone *laughing*. So we had heard of the ‘one parent, one language’, so we thought that’s how we will… approach this. So me I spoke to our sons in French, and my husband in English, but we all understood one another. When I went back to work my children went to the French-language daycare … When you live in a minority situation you have to put emphasis on the minority language because… majority language is everywhere, everywhere.

40 Because sometimes people say « why didn’t you put them in immersion”, I say... because... to be 50/50, you look more for all the possibilities in French... otherwise it would never be 50/50, that’s impossible. Because if you just do equally [both languages] at school, and at home, well there’s all the aspects of your world that are Anglophone.
and her husband decided to accept job offers in governmental services in Kingston. The option of choosing Rémi Gaulin was not available to her, as the policy of the Conseil Catholique des Écoles du Centre Est is to admit only students who can produce proof of baptism within denominations recognized by the Rome Apostolic See until grade seven, where admission becomes more open (Conseil des Écoles Catholique du Centre Est 2018a). As children of a Francophone estranged from Catholic identification and practices, Mathilde’s children were barred from one of the two French-language options of elementary schools in Kingston:

Ils sont allés à Madeleine-de-Roybon. On est protestants, eux ils sont pas baptisés… Le baptême c’est pour les adultes, chez les pentecôtistes, et le directeur [de Rémi Gaulin] dans le temps, je le connaissais à cause de mon travail, pis… il disait « tu vas les envoyer à Rémi Gaulin? » Pis je disais « ben ils ont pas été baptisés », pis il dit « ben faudrait qu’ils soient baptisés. » J’ai dit « ok, ben on est mieux de les mettre au public debord.»

Francophone parents in Kingston who are not Catholic, and who do not want to or cannot pass as Catholic (i.e. who do not have proofs of sacrament), and still want to send their children to French-language school, have only one option for elementary school: the French-language public school of Madeleine-de-Roybon. As the default option for all Francophone families actively or indirectly barred from Rémi-Gaulin, Madeleine-de-Roybon caters for a very diverse body of students. The sites of dis-identification and exclusion from the Catholic narrative and norms of subjectivity of Rémi Gaulin are multiple and not necessarily congruent with one another. They include sexual diversity, apostasy, political orientation, and religious faiths unrecognized by the Catholic See of Rome. As a result, there is not one coherent cultural narrative or identity among the families of Madeleine-de-Roybon beside their shared desire to preserve and foster their

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41 They went to Madeleine-de-Roybon. We are Protestants, they’re not baptised… Baptism is for adults, in Pentecostal faith, and the principal [of Rémi Gaulin] at the time, I knew him because of my work, and… he said “you will send them to Rémi-Gaulin?” And I said “well they haven’t been baptised”, and he said “well they would have to be baptised.’ I said “ok, well we had better put them to public school then.”
children’s relationships to the French-language. Madeleine-de-Roybon deals with this diversity by promoting openness and inclusivity, as illustrated by its mission statement, which includes to provide “a learning environment in which diversity is recognized, appreciated and desired” (École élémentaire publique Madeleine-de-Roybon 2018).

The Catholic school Rémi-Gaulin presents itself as a ‘home’, a place where families adhering to one specific norm of subjectivity and historicity as Francophone can find the comfort of feeling unity and sameness in the face of overwhelming Anglophone majority. These feelings, argues Mohanty, are always based on obfuscation of the repression of differences and power imbalances:

“Being home” refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; “not being home” is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself.

The assumption of, or desire for, another safe place like ‘home’ is challenged by the realization that ‘unity’ – the interpersonal as well as political – is itself necessarily fragmentary, itself that which is struggled for, chosen, and hence unstable by definition; it is not based on “sameness”, and there is no perfect fit. (Mohanty 2003, 90 & 103)

The Public school Madeleine-de-Roybon, with its population of multiplicity congregating around their non-Catholicism, cannot provide the same (illusory) comfort of sameness and unity. It is a place of compromise, where families like Mathilde’s can find passages that are at least possible, if not perfect – as illustrated in chapter 4 with Maryam’s account of her feelings of anguish at how Muslim religious symbols would be perceived there. Maryam’s account also reveals the contradictory location of Madeleine-de-Roybon as a place that, despite its endeavour to promote inclusivity, remains anchored in the Christian underlying narrative of both French as a minority language in Ontario and of Canada as a Nation (Lee and Cardinal 1998; Galabuzi 2011;
Mathilde’s accounts of the cultural discourse of the school illustrates this contradiction:

Je pense que [l’équipe de Madeleine de Roybon] tente d’être ouvert à toutes les idées, et c’est pas qu’ils rejettent des expressions de foi, mais… qu’ils accueillent toutes les expressions de foi. Parce que dans leurs spectacles on voit souvent des éléments… d’historique chrétienne, mais on voit aussi d’autres expressions aussi… Pis même à l’école ils ont eu un petit spectacle pour le Jour du Souvenir, pis il y avait différents rôles, pis un des rôles c’était quand un soldat tombait, comme, mort, c’était que quelqu’un avançait avec une croix, près du soldat. Faque ça c’était un des rôles. Pis mon plus vieux est revenu à la maison pis il a dit « moi j’ai choisi le rôle de porter la croix, parce que on le sait que la croix c’est mon symbole à moi ». Ok c’est bien. Mais il dit « veux-tu savoir de quoi de très curieux que je ne comprends pas maman?... Ben mon ami juif pis mon ami musulman, après que j’ai décidé de porter la croix, ils ont décidé eux aussi de porter les deux autres. Pis je trouve curieux parce que c’est pas leur symbole! » *rires* ... J’ai été impressionnée par le spectacle du souvenir. De tout ce qu’ils ont mis dedans. Je pense que c’est à cause de nos associations avec la communauté militaire…

Mathilde’s account reveals that inclusivity and openness “à toutes les idées” at Madeleine de Roybon unfolds upon an unquestioned backdrop of Christian normativity. The celebration of Remembrance Day, for example, mobilizes a narrative where nation building and collective identity is intertwined in Christian subjectivity that, as Mathilde notes, is congruent with the version of citizenship promoted by the military. Although this narrative is not exclusively Catholic, it is anchored in Christian ontology, exemplified by the association of the Christian cross and the

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42 I think [the team at Madeleine-de-Roybon] attempt to be open to all ideas, and it’s not like they reject expressions of faith, but... they welcome all expressions of faith. Because in their performances we often see elements... of Christian history, but we also see other expressions as well... And even at school they had a little play for Remembrance Day, and there were different roles, and one of the roles was when a soldier fell, like, dead, someone came forward with a cross, near the soldier. So that was one of the roles. So my eldest came home and he said “me I chose to carry the cross, because we know that the cross is my symbol”. Ok, that’s good. But he said “do you want to know something really strange that I don’t understand?... Well my Jewish friend and my Muslim friend, after I had decided to carry the cross, they decided to carry the two others. And I find that strange because that’s not their symbol!” *laughing*... I was impressed by the Remembrance Day performance. All they put into it. I think it’s because of our associations with the military community...

43 To all ideas
dead. In that context, even expressions of religiosity from children of other faiths – in this case Muslim and Jewish – are tightly structured along this Christian framework.

As well, Madeleine-de-Roybon’s promotion of inclusivity as a core value plays out in a fine and often uncertain balance between welcoming a diversity of identity markers and maintaining a pretence of neutrality (as illusory as this pretence may be). This creates awkward passages, where individuals – both staff and students – negotiate the makers of difference allowed and welcome in the school. Mathilde recalls one such awkward passage:

Je crois que mes enfants s’identifient très fortement avec leur foi. Ils en parlent beaucoup, ils ont quand même leurs idées à eux… A un moment donné le projet [dans la classe de mon plus jeune] c’était de présenter sur ton chanteur francophone préféré. Mais pour lui, c’est juste de la musique chrétienne que nous on écoute, faque c’était quelqu’un qu’on est ami avec au Québec, il est chanteur, pis on a ses disques, alors il voulait présenter celui-là… Pis il est allé à l’école pour dire ça à son prof pis son prof a dit non, tu peux pas. Parce que c’est chrétien. Mais là il trouvait rien d’autre. … Finalement j’ai écrit une petite note à l’enseignante pis j’ai dit « écoute donne lui un autre projet ». Pis le directeur adjoint a su, pis c’est lui qui a parlé à l’enseignante, « si c’est ça son choix, tu lui as demandé c’est qui son chanteur francophone préféré, si c’est sa réponse c’est un chanteur chrétien, laisse le, pourquoi tu l’empêches? » Faque finalement elle est revenue pis elle a dit non c’est correct, il peut… Faque c’est pour ça pour moi, la culture de l’école c’est pas… mais elle était nouvelle, faque je pense qu’elle a peut-être saisi que, on essaie d’être inclusifs…

This awkward passage of Mathilde and her son, where she had to advocate for the continuity of his movements and recognition in the place of his classroom, illustrates that Madeleine-de-Roybon does not provide Mathilde with this (artificial) comfort of unity and sameness that

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44 I think my children identify strongly with their faith. They talk about it a lot, they have their own ideas... At one point the project [in my youngest’s class] was to present on your favorite francophone signer. But for him, all we listen to is Christian music, so it was someone we’re friends with in Québec, he’s a singer, and we have his albums, so he wanted to present on him... And he went to school and told his teacher and his teacher said no, you can’t. Because it’s Christian. But then he couldn’t find anything else... Finally I wrote a little note to the teacher and I told her “listen, give him another project”. And the assistant principal heard about it, and it’s he who spoke to the teacher, “if that’s his choice, you asked him who was his favorite Francophone singer, if his answer is a Christian singer, let him, why do you stop him?” So finally she came back and she said it’s ok, he can... So that’s why for me, school culture is not... but she was new, so I think maybe she didn’t get that, we try to be inclusive...
Mohanty associates with the yearning for home (Mohanty 2003). The school, in other words, does not always nurture the unfolding of Mathilde’s children’s coherence of being. However, and in contrast to Rémi-Gaulin, Madeleine-de-Roybon does not actively block this unfolding.

Mathilde’s precise negotiation of smooth, difficult, and awkward passages at Madeleine-de-Roybon, between temporal projects of French-language continuity and Pentecostal faith, encountered a major disruption when it became time for her oldest child to move on to secondary school. Changing school implied shifting the configuration of possible affiliations and passages, contingent on the specific circumstances of each possible school. Importantly, Mathilde felt that, given the loosening of the religious requirements between Rémi-Gaulin and the Catholic high school Marie-Rivier, the school’s identification with the Catholic faith might not present as insurmountable and as painful an obstruction for her son as it would have been in the elementary school. As well, she felt that the concentration of Francophone resources within the school-community hub around Marie-Rivier might provide opportunities for her child’s being to expand. Conversely, she feared that the very small size of the French-language public school Mille-Iles, and its focus on academic achievement, would lead to ‘sad’ encounters that would limit the unfolding of his capacities, his tastes, and his confidence.

J’ai toujours pensé en arrière de ma tête que l’école catholique c’était mieux pour lui parce que c’est le centre culturel, y’a l’art dramatique, des bons profs de musique, mon mari est musicien, il joue à peu près douze instruments, faque c’est une grande partie de notre famille. Et c’est plus grand l’école, faque ils ont des programmes sportifs… Mon fils, je trouve qu’il a un penchant artistique, et sportif, plus que académique… Il se réjouit pas d’étudier. Pis Mille-Iles, y’ont leur bacc international, pis c’est très académique, il y a plus de devoirs… Faque j’ai toujours en arrière de la tête… Marie-Rivier serait mieux pour lui, ça serait… Pis finalement il dit cette année… que plusieurs de ses amis changent à Marie-Rivier pis lui veut aller à Marie-Rivier. … Mais il avait quand même quelques angoisses… Pis avant ça il me disait « je peux pas aller là, je suis pas catholique ». Pis je lui dis « ben… c’est Chrétien… à la base, c’est les mêmes croyances… » Pis il dit « ah, je pense que ça va être trop confusant
maman». Je lui dis « ok c’est correct. Tu penses ça. Par contre j’ai été à des écoles catholiques, faque je pourrais t’aider à démêler, entre ce que nous on croit… » Pis il était « toi t’as été? Ok, peut-être je vais être correct… »

Interestingly, the compromise that Mathilde contemplates of sending her son to the Catholic school Marie-Rivier in order to access better French-language resources evokes her own painful experience as a child and youth of having Catholicism imposed as synonymous with French. However, having journeyed through these contradictory moments of identification and dis-identification, she felt equipped to help her son find encounters that would most foster the continuity of his own coherence of being. Importantly, Mathilde’s story reveals the impacts of the differences in resources available at the Catholic school Marie-Rivier as compared to the public school Milles-Illes, which overcame even her reticence towards Catholic institutions.

Mathilde’s story, and Eloise’ story above, illustrate the complicated passages of Francophone mothers whose senses of self and temporal projections sharply differ from the norms and narratives of minority French-language institutions in Kingston. These mothers make choices anchored in precise and time-sensitive evaluations of their present-day circumstances and the opportunities available to them, which they analyse following their own experiences and relationships with French, their understandings of their children’s coherence of being, and their own temporal projects. In so doing, they compromise and ‘make do’ with unilateral temporal

45 I always thought at the back of my head that the Catholic school was better for him because it’s the cultural center, there’s drama classes, good music teachers, my husband is musician, he plays about twelve instruments, so it’s a big part of our family. And the school is bigger, so they have sports programs... My son, I find he has an artistic side, and sporty, more than academic... He doesn’t enjoy studying. And Milles-Illes, they have their international baccalaureate, and it’s very academic, there’s more homework... So I always have at the back of my mind... Marie-Rivier would be better for him, it would... And finally this year he said... that many of his friends were going to Marie-Rivier and that he wants to go to Marie-Rivier. ... But he still had a few anxieties... And before he would say "I can’t go there, I’m not Catholic". And I told him "well... it’s Christian... at the roots, it’s the same beliefs..." And he said “ah, I think it will be too confusing mom." I told him “ok, that’s fine. You think that. But I went to Catholic schools, so I could help you sort it out, between what we believe...” And he was “you went? Ok, maybe I’ll be ok...”
projects of institutions. As much as is in their power, these mothers attempt to shape places where passages will be as smooth as possible for them and their children, in terms of movement, identification, and future possibilities.

Passages, temporal projects, and Francophone mothers’ subjectivities

Francophone mothers’ passages in Kingston, especially within French-language institutions, are moments of identification or dis-identification, where who they are feels, and is constructed as, functional or dysfunctional, normal or alien, welcomed or estranged. Furthermore, in each of their passages it is only parts of the vast complexity of their being that are mobilized (or scrutinized) in processes of identification and dis-identification. The entirety of who these women are is never expressed in once single spatial and temporal moment. As I argued in chapter 5, Francophone mothers’ life circumstances, and how they are positioned within constellations of relationships, power, and powerlessness, channel their sense of self and their identity, which is in “constant and unpredictable process of becoming” (Valentine 2007; 18).

The importance of French in mothers’ experiences of smooth and difficult passages in Kingston, and the efforts they engage in to shape passages that will allow for the smooth movement and identification of their children as Francophones in a context of Anglophone majority, enhance their relationships to French as crucial sites of identification and dis-identification – and thus as crucial identity markers. As Mohanty notes:

It is often moments of crisis that make us pay careful attention to questions of identity. Sharp polarizations force one to make choices … and to clarify one’s own analytic, political, and emotional topographies.

The genealogy I have created for myself here is partial and deliberate. It is a genealogy that I find emotionally and politically enabling … Of course, my history and
experiences are in fact messier and not at all as linear as this narrative makes them sound. But the very process of constructing a narrative for oneself – of telling a story – imposes a certain linearity and coherence that is never entirely there. (Mohanty 2003, 132 & 136)

In that sense, mothers’ efforts of transmitting and preserving French-language in their children, however they are articulated and to whichever temporal projects they are attached, is making them Francophone, even though by so doing they might impose a linearity and a coherence of subjectivity and practices that are never entirely there. Being Francophone in turn brings other sets of norms of subjectivity and practices in these mothers’ lives, shaped both by Francophone institutions and by dominant Anglophone society, and that include their own sites of divergence and exclusion. Mathilde remarks, « Parfois je me demande si j’ai juste une perception de minorité. Parce qu’on essaie de voir, pis de créer des… normes, pour ce qui est différent de nous-même, pis de faire, en créant ces normes, quand on trouve quelqu’un qui est hors de ce qu’on est, on questionne ça. 46 »

In many mothers’ lives, Francophone norms of subjectivities and practices in Kingston bring yet more tensions between the competing imperatives of their juxtaposed temporal projects of fostering their children’s growth. Jeannette, for example, speaks of the judgement she faced from her Francophone friends and acquaintances in Kingston when she removed her daughter from Marie-Rivier in grade eight to send her to English-language school:

Elle avait trop d’intérêts précis et éclectiques. Elle était très intelligente et ne trouvait pas de communauté d’enfants qui partageaient ses intérêts. Alors elle était mise à l’écart. À l’école francophone tout le monde se suit d’année en année, et elle était casée à l’extérieur du groupe… Ça m’a fait de quoi de la retirer. Puis on a été jugés. Mais il y avait beaucoup plus de choix du côté anglophone. Pour elle c’était la meilleure

46 Sometimes I wonder if it’s just that I think as a person in a minority context. Because we try to see and then to create... norms, for what is different from us, and to do, when we create those norms, when we find someone who is outside of what we are, we question that.
In addition to her own grief at removing her daughter from French-language school, stemming from her attachment and commitment to the institution, Jeannette faced the sanction of departing from normative practices of ‘good’ Francophones in the minority context of Kingston. Removing her child from French-language school entailed the sacrifice of her subjectivity of ‘good’ Francophone to follow what she identified as being most important to the nurturing of her child’s power to be and to act. Similarly, when thinking of sending her son to Marie-Rivier instead of Milles-Iles for high school, Mathilde felt the forlornness of abandoning the temporal project of an alternative to the Catholic identity and practices that dominate the Francophone world in Kingston.

 Ça me fait de la peine parce que quand même je suis très dévouée à [Madeleine-de-Roybon], pis l’administration, les profs qui a là … Parce que tu sais que Milles-Iles c’est juste une petite aile dans le même bâtiment [que Madeleine-de-Roybon]. C’est tout ensemble. Faque j’ai un petit peu… Je me sens mal mais en même temps… J’ai voulu lui donner ce choix, alors je vais certainement respecter…

In addition to the weight on their subjectivities, Francophone mothers’ efforts to of shape places of good passage that recognize and promote the continuity of French as an inherent part of their children’s coherence of being increase and complicate their burden of reproductive labour. As cultural transmission and continuity is constructed socially as feminized care and reproductive work, the responsibility of French-language preservation lands on mothers (Heller and Lévy 1994; 47

47 She had interests that were too precise and eclectic. She was very smart and didn’t find a community of children who shared her interests. So she was cast aside. In French-language school everyone follows everyone from year to year, and she was excluded from the group… It grieved me to take her out. And we were judged. But there were many more choices on the Anglophone side. For her it was the best decision. … But I really believe in French-language school. But there is a point where we have to focus on what our child needs.

48 It saddens me because I’m very committed to [Madeleine-de-Roybon], and the administration, the teachers there… Because you know Milles-Iles it’s just a little wing in the same building [as Madeleine-de-Roybon]. It’s all together. So I feel a little… I feel bad but at the same time… I wanted to give him the choice, so I will certainly respect it…
Yax-Fraser 2011; but see also introduction and chapter 6). In November 2017, Lily Crist, President of the Alliance des Femmes de la Francophonie Canadienne, noted: « Les femmes francophones en situation minoritaire … sont le frein à l’assimilation et les gardiennes de l’héritage linguistique. Leur travail de transmission de la culture et d’acculturation des enfants au sein des familles est un pilier des milieux minoritaires francophones⁴⁹ » (AFFC 2017).

The education and socialization of children in French demand extra cultural work in the durative present: Brigitte tutoring her son, Eloise catching up on French-language curriculum at home so that her son doesn’t miss out by staying in English-language school, extra worries and anxiety about children’s safety and isolation. It involves daily battles to police children’s (and sometimes partner’s) linguistic practices, to switch back to French when English slippages occur, to monitor the language of television shows, to incessantly look for French services, and to travel inconvenient distances to access them. « C’est toujours à recommencer » notes Claire. « Ce serait donc beau si on avait pas toujours à chercher.⁵⁰ » In spending so much time and energy negotiating passages for their children’s continuity of being, Francophone mothers reinforce gendered care-centered subjectivity of mothering.

Mothers’ work of linguistic and cultural transmission and preservation of French as minority language is political, in that it is necessary to the collective project of keeping alternative identities and presences alive. French-language institutions celebrate this political dimension of Francophone mothers’ care and reproductive work, although in no way that would counter the patriarchal dynamic at the roots of the marginalization of this work (see chapter 8). This

⁴⁹ Francophone women in minority contexts ... are the brake on assimilation and the guardians of the linguistic heritage. Their work of transmitting culture and acculturation of children within families is a pillar of Francophone minority communities
⁵⁰ It always has to be started all over again. It would be so nice if we didn’t always have to look.
celebration doesn’t change the fact that this work, and the individuals performing this work, remain socially, culturally, and politically devalued. Darning socks so the feet of revolutionaries and their children stay warm doesn’t exalt the work of darning socks. So Jenny Marx, wife of Karl Marx, remarked to Lizzie Burns, partner of Friedrich Engels:

In all the battle, we women have to bear the hardest, i.e. pettiest, part. In the battle with the world the man gets stronger, stronger too in the face of enemies, even if their number is legion; we sit at home and darn socks. That does not banish the worries, and little daily cares slowly gnaw away the courage to face life. (Holmes 2014, 138)

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored Francophone mothers’ experiences of places in Kingston in terms of how they allow or impair their movements, identification, and temporal projects of fostering their children’s growth. I refined my theoretical approach to place in a way that emphasizes situated relationality, and that frames places as passages that facilitate or hinder Francophone mothers’ purposes and coherence of being, including their relationships to French language. I argued that mothers’ passages interweave juxtaposed temporal projects that emerge from their understandings of who their children are, including in relation to the French-language, and from their efforts to foster their growth. These temporal projects unfold in the present time, in a social context imbued with moral imperatives of preserving French as a minority language in Kingston by promoting French-language services, institutions, and particularly by registering children in French-language schools. I revealed that mothers’ commitment to projects of French-language preservation, and particularly their use of French-language schools, brings elements of complexity and hardship to their present lives. Finally, I argued that Francophone mothers’ project of maintaining their children’s relationships to French, as a necessary element of fostering their
coherence of being, entails important daily cultural work that adds to their burden of social reproduction. Cultural work of minority linguistic transmission, and the social discourses around it, contributes to the gendering of Francophone mothers’ subjectivity by interweaving meanings of French-language continuity to unchallenged associations between femininity and motherhood.
Chapter 8 – Gendering Francophone mothers in French-language institutions

One of the central arguments of this dissertation is that Francophone mothers experience a gendering of their subjectivities and social roles through the combination of events in their life stories and of daily encounters with(in) the places of Kingston. In chapters 4 and 5, I described how intersecting events of mothering, migration, and linguistic minority combine in each Francophone mother’s life to shape configurations of possibilities and impossibilities, but also to channel their subjectivity and experiences into gendered grooves. In chapters 6 and 7, I argue that Francophone mothers’ daily experiences of places in Kingston are encumbered, confined, or obstructed to different degrees by the juxtaposed complexities and needs of mothering Francophone children in Kingston. I showed that these daily experiences reinforce heteronormative expectations of femininity and motherhood by adding cultural work to mothers’ labour of care and reproduction, and by reiterating mothers’ social responsibility for this labour. In this final chapter, I want to highlight how Francophone institutions contribute to this gendering of subjectivities and social roles. I explore how Francophone mothers’ experiences of the French-language programs of Kingston’s Early Years Centres, and of waged employment in Francophone institutions in Kingston, reinforce associations between minority culture and language transmission, femininity, motherhood, and social reproduction.

Creating mothers at the French-language programs of the Kingston Early Years Centres

French-language playgroups of the Early Years Centres (hereafter EYC) present Francophone mothers with ambiguous passages, in which they pursue various temporal projects of fostering their children’s growth and attempt to address their own needs in an alienating time
of mothering (see chapter 7), all the while negotiating the institutional objectives and orientations underlying the programs. Jupp (2013) argues that such playgroups (in her case in the UK, under the Sure Start program) are hybrid places, where neoliberal government policies, individual agency, and dynamics of empowerment and exclusion are played out in complex ways. Kingston EYC French-language playgroups are also hybrid places. There, Francophone mothers find support for their complex needs of mothering Francophone children, but they also encounter institutionalized efforts to foster particular gendered scripts of mothering, families, social reproduction, and cultural transmission (Simard-Gagnon forthcoming).

The French-language playgroups of the Kingston EYC emerged at the crossroads of two different sets of policies, objectives, and efforts. Francophone mobilization to establish places of French-language transmission and of daily living in French (see Thériault 2014) fueled the development of French-language playgroups, and advocates took advantage of institutional opportunities to operate them. The first French-language drop-ins for preschool aged children took place at the Kingston Military Family Resource Centre (KMFRC), which already offered such programs in English, before the playgroups moved to the EYC. The EYC were created during the Harris conservative provincial government’s ‘Common Sense Revolution’, in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. They were meant to be “one-stop shop[s]” (Vosko 2006) for caregivers of children under six to access public support and resources (Ontario Early Years Centers 2015). Their programs include community services, information, and direct services such as “expert advice on parenting, information on developmental milestones, and organized programs and activities for parents and children” (Government of Ontario 2002, 4). The EYC were a cornerstone component of Ontario Early Years Plan, the overarching policy guideline for early years services established under the conservatives, and which objective was to address children’s needs to be “physically and
emotionally healthy, safe, secure and ready to learn” and to “become responsible and contributing citizens” (Government of Ontario 2002, 1–2; see also Vosko 2006). The dominant neoliberal ideology of the provincial government at the time, emphasizing self-sufficiency and independence through waged work and conservative patriarchal and heteronormative family values, strongly structured the Early Years Plan (Vosko 2002, 2006). In Vosko’s words, the plan “symbolized a shift away from a model of policy design and delivery … that recognized community responsibility for children (albeit limited) toward a more individualized and privatized model” (Vosko 2006, 145-146). The Early Years Plan underpinned programs development and delivery – including the EYCs – with normative values of individualization, wherein responsibility for social and economic wellbeing is placed upon individuals, and ‘familialization’, through which family is constructed as the ‘natural’ location of public services and, more broadly, of social reproduction (Vosko 2006, see also Theoretical Context). A striking example of this ideological shift was the evacuation of publicly funded and universally accessible daycare provision from the Plan, which instead emphasized parental training and supervision (Vosko 2006; but see also McDowell 2004; Braedley 2006; Jupp 2012, 2013). Meanwhile, funding agreements between the provincial and federal governments, as well as Ontario’s legal commitment to promote and improve services in French for Francophone children, created opportunities to develop and obtain resources for French-language programs through the Early Years Plan (Vosko 2006). As Francophone interest and mobilization for French-language programs kept increasing during the early 2000s, advocates successfully secured a French Educator position at Kingston EYC and increased offerings of French-language playgroups. During my fieldwork, such playgroups occurred at least four mornings a week at different locations in the city, including at the French-language Catholic elementary school Rémi-Gaulin.
All Francophone mothers I met, but two, frequented the French-language playgroups of the EYC (or, for older mothers, similar playgroups at other locations such as the KMFRC). Although the groups are open to all caregivers, in my time at the Kingston EYC only mothers were present. During the playgroups, children play and/or take part in educational activities lead by the group facilitator, an early childhood educator, or by a guest. For example, I lead music sessions where I played Francophone nursery songs on my accordion with mothers and children singing along (see chapter 3 on methods). When there are no organised collective activities, mothers can chat informally and share tea or coffee while supervising their children. There are regular conferences or workshops on topics related to parenting and early childhood development that actively promote parental responsibility and individualized care by parents or caregivers (Vosko 2006).

The EYC playgroups help mothers address needs that emerge from the liberal alienation of mothering, of the mothering subject as inherently unbounded, of mothering temporality as cyclical, unpredictable, and ever interrupted, and of mothering modes of sociality anchored in care and interrelationships (see Theoretical Context and chapters 5 and 7). Many Francophone mothers note how important the groups were in combatting isolation after the birth of their child(ren), and in mitigating symptoms of post-partum depression, especially after they migrated away from their former groups of support (see chapters 4 and 5). Mathilde, for example, recalls:

J’ai aimé ça être en congé, mais c’était difficile pas avoir ma famille avec moi. Ma mère était là les deux premières semaines, pis après qu’elle ait quitté c’est là que… j’ai trouvé ça difficile… Il était né au mois de février, faque c’était encore un petit peu l’hiver, faque je me sentais un petit peu isolée, mais ce qui a vraiment fait la différence, y’a des centres de la petite enfance, pis…. Je visitais avec mon enfant, j’ai rencontré d’autres mamans… qui habitaient à un coin de rue de chez moi… les centres de la
petite enfance et la bibliothèque m’ont apporté beaucoup, pour ma santé mentale… *rires*¹

In chapter 5, my comparison of the experiences of Alma, Agathe, and Marilou as they cared for their babies highlighted the importance of relationships of solidarity among women who share the marginal temporality and subjectivity of mothering, and particularly of early mothering. Marilou’s account, as well as military spouses’ accounts of their friendships, reveal how these relationships open potentials of sociability and place making that are parallel (and subjugated) to dominant liberal order and its normative individuated subjectivity (see also chapter 6). By opening up places that foster care-based subjectivities, centered on children, the needs of children, and mothers’ imperatives to address these needs (Rullo and Musatti 2005), the playgroups allow mothers to develop relationships based on shared encumbered subjectivities (Chandler 2007), and to adopt norms of sociability that accommodate unbounded beings and the relentlessness of needs. The playgroups follow the repetitive cyclicity of mothering time and of Western motherhood norms: they invariably start between 9 and 10, at a time when children are expected to be most energetic, and last until 11:30 or 12, when mothers are expected to take children home to lunch and rest. Offered frequently, the playgroups also afford a regularity and repetition of contacts between mothers, which allows the weaving of relationships based on the mundane stuff of daily life and care. Maude notes:

La fréquence des activités, c’est l’fun aussi là… Tsé y’était un boutte je pouvais aller trois fois par semaine aux activités. Autant pour moi que pour la petite…. Elle le matin ça la fait jouer avec des amies, moi ça me fait prendre un café avec des mamans, jaser

¹ I liked being on leave, but it was hard not to have my family with me. My mother was there for the first two weeks, and after she left that’s when… I found it difficult… He was born in February, so it was still winter, so I felt a little isolated, but what really made the difference, there were Early Years Centers and…. I would go there with my child, I met other moms…. Who lived one block away from my house… The Early Years Centers and the library brought me a lot, for my mental health… *laughing*
The repetitive and predictable temporality of the playgroups allowed mothers to develop relationships in a way that punctual extraordinary events, such as Francophone celebrations or welcoming parties, could not (a point also suggested by Veronis and Huot 2017).

Although all mothers who frequented the French-language playgroups appreciated the type of sociality it allowed, anchored in care-centered subjectivities that are marginal in other places of liberal socialization, the nature of the needs that the playgroups addressed in their lives varied. As discussed in chapter 5, mothers who followed their partners to Kingston often had trouble integrating into its social and economic life. The French-language programs at the EYC were crucial for these stay-at-home mothers, as it most often represented the only form of regular public support they could access in French. The need for these programs was greater for mothers who did not have enough English to access Anglophone services, or who had experienced exclusion in Anglophone places, as exemplified by Marianne’s account of the English-language playgroups in chapter 5. Conversely, for mothers who came to Kingston as primary migrants, their time as full-time mothers – and of frequenting the playgroups – was most often limited to their one year of maternity leave. Aside from mitigating experiences of alienation arising from mothering in a liberal social world, the playgroups allowed these mothers to integrate into French-language networks of services, institutions, and people they often hadn’t been part of before the coming of

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2 The frequency of activities, that’s good too... You know there was a time I could go three times a week to the activities. As much for me as for my girl... For her it allowed her to play with friends in the morning, for me I could have a coffee with other moms, chat and... It was thanks to that [that I met people] because otherwise .... it’s not, let’s say... at first there was a welcoming activity at the family center [KMFRC], but you don’t create relationships just once like that. You don’t see a family, you don’t jump at them and say “I’m new!”
their children (as discussed in chapter 5). The concentration of the French-language places and services in the community hub on the premises of the Marie-Rivier school, and more generally around the institutions of the French-language schools (see Introduction and chapter 7), as well as the relatively few French-language programs and services offered to adults without children, means that Francophone women are often unaware of the existence of French-language networks before they have children (a phenomenon also highlighted by Huot 2013; Huot et al. 2013; Huot, Dodson, and Rudman 2014). Marilou notes: «C’est quand t’as des enfants que tu vois les services en français. Les groupes de jeux, l’école… Avant ça quand t’arrives de même, toute seule, il n’y a pas grand-chose pis c’est pas très visible.» As illustrated with the account of Claire in chapter 5, it is very common for women who were raised themselves in a context of French linguistic minority to have spent an important period of their lives almost exclusively in English – through years of college, university, and/or early career. When reflecting on these periods, several mothers express the feeling that they ‘weren’t Francophone’ at that time. Simone recalls: «Quand j’ai rencontré mon mari je parlais tout le temps en anglais. Il s’est rendu compte que je parlais français après quelques dates, quand il a fait une joke sur les Francophones. J’ai eu honte. Qu’il s’en soit pas rendu compte avant.» The renewed commitment to French subjectivity and linguistic practices of these women (as described in chapter 5), as well as to Francophone place-making and the easing of future Francophone passages (as described in chapter 7), created a need for ‘Francophoning’ places and relationships: that is, for places and relationships that would foster their becoming Francophone again, and their children becoming Francophone (see Iqbal 2005). The French-language programs of the EYC provided such places and relationships. They were one

3 It’s when you have children that you see French services. The playgroups, the school... Before that, when you show up like that, on your own, there’s not much and it isn’t very visible.)

4 When I met my husband I was always speaking English. He realized I spoke French after a couple of dates, when he made a joke about Francophones. I felt ashamed. That he didn’t realize before.
of the first ‘Francophoning’ places women frequented as Francophone mothers of Francophone children in Kingston. An important part of the ‘Francophoning’ action of these places was to remind mothers of elements of their own childhood that they might have forgotten during their Anglophone ‘eclipse’, such as songs. Marilou recalls:

Les groupes de jeux, y’en avait aussi des francophones. Ça c’était vraiment… j’ai rencontré du monde le fun là, pis c’était vraiment bien. Parce que avant… même avant d’aller à la garderie en français, au moins j’avais… tsé, une couple de petites chansons pis… Parce que sans ça t’es oubliés les chansons, tsé… surtout en français… faque ça j’avais vraiment aimé ça, ça me les avait remis dans la tête. Ça valait vraiment la peine, de paqueter tout le monde pis d’y aller *rires*.

Through the French-language playgroups, Francophone mothers find the tools of ensuring cultural and linguistic transmission to the next generation of Francophones. Frequenting these ‘Francophoning’ places helps mothers in exogamous relationships (i.e. with a non-Francophone partner) and in more Anglophone households to develop their young children’s relationships to French. These mothers encounter particularly high expectations of minority cultural labour that stem from discourses emphasizing the importance of the early years in children’s development, including cultural and linguistic (see chapter 7). For example, Pilote and Magnan declare unambiguously that «[la petite enfance est] encore plus importante pour les enfants de communautés francophones minoritaires car elle se veut déterminante dans le développement de l’identité culturelle, dans la maîtrise du français et, enfin, dans l’intégration dans [la communauté minoritaire].» (Pilote and Magnan 2008, 289) French-language learning in early childhood is also understood as a significant element in children’s future academic success and cultural integration.

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5 The playgroups, there were some in French. That was really... I met fun people there, and it was really good. Because before... even before going to the French-language daycare, at least I had... you know, a couple little songs and... Because otherwise you forget them, the songs, you know.... especially in French... so that I really liked, it put them back into my head. It was really worth while, to get everyone ready and to go there *laughing*.

6 [early childhood] is all the more important for children in Francophone minority communities because it is a determining period for cultural identity development, for French-language mastery and, finally, for minority community integration.
in French-language schools (Gilbert and Thériault 2004; Pilote and Magnan 2008). For Francophone mothers in exogamous relationships, French-language playgroups present Francophone socializing places for their children that can ease their path towards French-language institutions – schools or daycares. Sophie, for example, wanted her daughter to encounter as much French as possible before entering a French-language daycare: « Faque oui je recherchais des groupes francophones parce que je savais que j’avais déjà ma place en garderie [francophone] pour quand je retournerais au travail, faque je voulais réintégrer ma fille au français avant d’aller en garderie. »

While the French-language programs of the EYC provide much needed support and networks to Francophone mothers, they do so in ways that promote the gendered version of mothering, of families, and of social reproduction championed by the Ontario conservative government of the late 1990’s - early 2000s, and more generally by neoliberal governments (Vosko 2002, 2006; McDowell 2004; Jupp 2012, 2013). EYC programs function under the assumption that pre-school-aged children are raised within standardized nuclear households, that rest on strict distribution of labour along gender lines - the male breadwinner-female caregiver model - and a sharp division between public and private space (Vosko 2006). That the playgroups are held on weekday mornings illustrates this assumption, as it presumes that children are cared for at home at that time, by (female) caregivers who are not otherwise occupied – through paid employment, for example. For Vosko (2006) the offering of ‘special programs’ in some EYC directed towards multiple earners households suggests that these households deviate from an established norm of family. Unsurprisingly, ‘special’ programs outside the standard workday include those specifically

7 So yes I was looking for Francophone playgroups because I knew that I had a place at the French-language daycare for when I would go back to work, so I wanted to reintegrate my daughter to French before she had to go to daycare.
designed for fathers, which emphasize play and literacy rather than the health and nutrition of ‘regular’ weekday programs (Vosko 2006). As Vosko notes, the programs of the EYC foster particular normative expectations of mothers, families, and childcare, namely

that most children aged zero to six live in nuclear families where only one parent is engaged in paid employment and where the other parent cares for the children at home and, second, that the role of the parent in the labour force is to assist with early learning, parenting, and care, while the primary (read female) caregiver is responsible for early childhood development. (2006, 158)

Coherent with this conservative, patriarchal, and heteronormative vision of families and childrearing, the neoliberal ideology underlying the design of the EYC reinforces the ‘familialization’ and individualization of social reproduction by focusing on educating parents and caregivers rather than on delivering direct services to children and families, such as childcare (Vosko 2006; but see also Braedley 2006). Many mothers, when reflecting on their experiences at the playgroups, consider they gain helpful information at the EYC to assist them in their new role as a mother (or as a mother in Kingston). Marilou, for example, recalls: “Les groupes c’était bon aussi pour trouver des affaires… Quand t’es nouvelle maman aussi, peu importe t’es où, tsé savoir où ce qu’elles sont les choses, tsé où est-ce que tu vas à l’urgence, pis où est-ce que tu vas… y’en a tellement là…”

However, the type and content of the information shared at the EYC tended to reinforce the ideology of intensive mothering, emphasizing the importance of mothers’ presence in children’s development and portraying upper-middle class circumstances and practices as desirable and healthier (see Theoretical Context). Mathilde, for example, says:

Ma mère pouvait pas m’aider beaucoup avec l’allaitement, parce que dans son temps c’est pas ça que tu faisais, tu donnais la bouteille, mais… Mais si j’avais besoin de

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8 The groups were good to find things... When you’re a new mom as well, no matter where you are, you know, finding out where things are, you know, where you go to the emergency room, and where do you go... There are so many things...
Mathilde’s spontaneous examples of breastfeeding advice and of homemade natural baby food illustrate the ideological orientation of the programs in terms of mothering and child rearing. They reveal the norms and types of parenting skills promoted at the EYC, which suggest expectations of childcare as resting primarily on one caregiver (mothers), and of mothering as emotionally absorbing and time consuming (O’Reilly 2004b; Fox 2006; Christopher 2012, 2013). As they educate mothers in these ideologically laden parenting skills – implying, for example, that ‘good mothering’ means spending significant amounts of time preparing home-made purée - the EYC are instrumental in guiding participants through a new phase of their lives that would (should) be centered on mothering.

Francophone mothers experience the EYC playgroups – and their underlying ideology – in varied and ambiguous ways. The French-language programs answer intersecting needs for mitigating alienation and for French-language relationships, whether this latter need emerges from a lack of English, a desire to reconnect to French, or both. Moreover, for many mothers, the playgroups are the only places in Kingston where they can address both these needs. Thus, regardless of their own personal understanding of ‘good mothering’, or their choices (or lack of choices) in terms of mothering practices – for example, to stay at home with their children or to delegate a more or less important part of their carework to others –, Francophone mothers have to make do with the gendering, individualization, and familialization of social reproduction that is actively promoted at the EYC. Here the story of Marianne presents a telling example of such

9 My mother couldn’t help me much with breastfeeding, because in her time that’s not how you did things, you gave bottles, but… But if I needed something the Early Years Center had many resources, they taught me how do make natural food, for babies...
ambiguous and forced compromise. In chapter 5, I described Marianne’s grief at the gendered reorientation of her life following her migration to Kingston, itself motivated by her partner’s military posting. Marianne particularly lamented the loss of her social and economic independence, of her sense of individuality – outside of mothering and of her partnership –, and of her subjectivity as a paid worker. Marianne did not adhere to an intensive motherhood ideology. As discussed further in chapter 7, she considered that the normal (and optimal) experience for preschool aged children was to start attending daycare at around one year of age, at the end of their mothers’ maternity leave. Thus, aside from her frustration at staying at home, Marianne was very concerned about her daughter’s opportunities for socializing with other young children, which she perceived as an important developmental need. “Je me disais si elle voit pas d’autres enfants, pis qu’elle reste juste à la maison avec moi, est-ce qu’elle va être assez stimulée… C’est pour ça que même en étant à la maison j’ai fait beaucoup de groupes de jeux.”10 » Marianne looked to the playgroups of the EYC as an imperfect substitute for a childcare environment. Ironically, the name Early Years Center was translated into French by the Ontario Government as “Centres de la Petite Enfance” (CPE), the same name as Québec’s provincially funded daycares. Thus, many mothers arriving in Kingston from Québec go to the EYC for childcare services – and are disappointed. In any case, Marianne looked to the French-language playgroups of the EYC as a place where she could at least fulfill her child’s need to socialize, and where she could herself feel comfortable in the language.

Tout ce que je veux c’est qu’elle soit en sécurité, pis qu’elle se fasse des ami.es… Le but [d’aller aux groupes de jeux] c’était pour elle à la base. Pour la changer d’air, pis qu’elle voit d’autre chose que la maison… Mais c’est sûr qu’en français c’est

---

10 I thought if she doesn’t see other children, and she just stays at home with me, will she be stimulated enough... This is why even while at home I took her to playgroups a lot.
plus facile, pour avoir des conversations… Les Anglais des fois ils comprennent pas qu’on a besoin de communiquer.\textsuperscript{11}

Going to the playgroups exposes Marianne to normative ethical values around parental skills and child development. Aside from the information and discourses discussed above, Marianne experienced the EYC as places where mothers are disciplined through reiterated advices, expressions of concern, or full-on judgement over their mothering practices and their children’s development (see Marotta 2005). As Marianne recalls, « Tsé c’est une enfant aussi qui a marché tard, à 17 mois et demi, faque tout le monde me disait ‘iiiishh…’ Tsé comment que c’est, les enfants faut toujours comparer. Mais tsé elle a parlé super tôt… Elle a fait autre chose là, sa marche ça a été en dernier…\textsuperscript{12} »

Marianne’s story is a telling vignette of the ambiguity of many Francophone mothers’ experiences of the French-language playgroups at the EYC. Although the playgroups provide a rare opportunity to address intersecting needs as a mother and as a Francophone, it also entails making do with the dominant ideology around social reproduction in a neoliberal moment. The EYC provide no direct services of care, but rather care management through which unpaid caregivers (mothers) are subject to moralizing discourses and disciplining around mothering (Braedley 2006). While accessing services at the EYC, Marianne was still solely responsible for the reproductive work of raising her daughter, and she was accountable for performing this work in a way that was ethically appropriate according to neoliberal tenets of intensive motherhood (Fox 2006). She also had to reconcile the tensions between the heteronormative, patriarchal

\textsuperscript{11} All I want is for her to be safe, and make friends… The point [of going to playgroups] was first of for her. To give her a change of scene, that she gets out of the house… But of course it’s easier in French, to have conversations… English people sometimes don’t understand that we need to communicate.

\textsuperscript{12} You know she was a child who walked late, at 17 and a half months, so everyone would say ‘iiiishh…’ You know how it is, with children, people always feel they have to compare them. But you know she talked really early… She did other things, her walking just came in last…
conservative ideology of the EYC and her own knowledge and lived experience, which normalized mothers’ presence in the labour force and household models that departed from the male breadwinner-female caregiver norm.

The ambiguity of Francophone mothers’ experiences of the EYC was greater for mothers who departed more drastically from the intensive mothering paradigm. Mothers intent on pursuing engrossing professional paths, for example, still valued the French-language EYC for facilitating their cultural work of minority language transmission. They found ways to access these ‘Francophoning’ places even though their mothering subjectivities and lifestyles didn’t correspond to those prescribed and accommodated by the EYC. Claire put her daughter in a home daycare when she was a few months old to continue work on her PhD. However, she arranged to be free on some of the playgroup mornings and took her daughter out of her daycare to attend. Jeanette ensured that she worked only in the afternoons so that she could attend the playgroups with her children. Brigitte, although she could not get away from work herself, ensured that her son could attend the playgroups with her mother-in-law. For these women, the cultural significance of the French-language playgroups was such that they juggled logistics and adapted their mothering subjectivity to more constraining gender scripts.

The gendering of Francophone mothers along neoliberal lines of individualization and familialization at the EYC requires that individual staff members, themselves Francophone women, also engage in the devalued labour of social reproduction and in feminized forms of citizen engagement and community building (see Lister 1998; Herd and Meyer 2002; Marston 2004). The EYC were meant to be run through gendered economically devalued reproductive paid work and volunteerism, as is made apparent by their design and by the underlying ideology of the Early Years Plan (Vosko 2006, but see also K. England and Lawson 2005; P. England 2010). The
Francophone context exacerbates this dynamic, as front line staff in community centers and non-profit organizations (mostly women) display a particularly high degree of devotion and commitment in delivering French-language services (Huot and Veronis 2017; Veronis and Huot 2017). It is no surprise then that the always fragile existence of the French-language programs at the Kingston EYC, at the crossroad of the neoliberal gender regime of the Early Year Plan and of the (gendered) impetus for French-language services delivery, rests on the contributions and ongoing commitment of individual Francophone women.

The success of the KMFRC, and later on EYC French-language playgroups, was at least partially due to the leadership and charisma of Linda, the staff early childhood educator who was running it. Linda ran the KMFRC playgroups as they grew in popularity. She was also the first French-language educator hired at the EYC, to which she brought mothers who were regulars at her KMFRC playgroups. This woman, and her personal relationships with the mothers and their children, was crucial in shaping mothers’ experiences of the program. Mothering is made of experiences and practices that are inherently partial and contextual, and this fact enhances the significance of Linda’s personality, and of her particular relationships with individual mothers, in making the programs successful. As suggested in chapter 7, mothering exacerbates the impacts of the particularities of encounters in shaping good or bad passages. Maude, for example, recalls good passages stemming from her encounters with Linda:

Je suis allée là, j’ai connu Linda en premier. C’est sûr Linda est super accueillante, et avec les enfants… Parce que quand j’ai commencé à aller au groupe de jeux j’avais les trois, ma plus vieille allait pas à l’école encore faque… Tsé, aussi tu sentais que… des fois c’est arrivé que bon… Elle faisait des crises, je comprenais pas, pis ben je parle avec Linda, pis elle me donnait des piste… « ah, je vais t’emmener… » À un moment donné elle m’avait emmenée un petit tableau, pour lui faire faire des p’tites
tâches, des choses de même, faque c’était très… très bien encadré, très soutenu…

The importance of individual women in the establishment and continuity of French-language playgroups also derives from the very small size of these programs, which operate with few resources and staff (Huot 2013; Veronis and Huot 2017). To my knowledge, there has never been more than one early childhood educator running French-language playgroup programs in Kingston – whether at the KMFRC or at the EYC. During my fieldwork, Linda, who was regarded by mothers with much fondness and trust, left Kingston and was replaced by a recent college graduate whose placement Linda had supervised at the EYC. Two years later, this person left the EYC for the KMFRC, where she took on a bilingual educator position. At the time of writing, the EYC has not hired another Francophone educator, partially due to a lack of qualified persons (Allain 2006). Should the Francophone educator position at the EYC remain vacant, it may be the end of the French-language programs. While in theory the groups are opened to all at KMFRC, they may not feel as accessible to non-military mothers. Also, as the position at KMFRC is bilingual rather than Francophone, the groups themselves may switch from French-language to bilingual. As Jessica notes: « quand on est en contexte bilingue c’est sûr qu’on va parler anglais. Qu’est-ce tu veux, faut ben que tout le monde comprenne. »

In this context of English hegemony, bilingual often means English (Laponce 2007).

The French-language playgroups at the Kingston EYC embody the complex dovetailing in place of the feminization and individualization of social reproduction in neoliberal times, the
heteronormative ideological associations between motherhood and femininity, and the gendering of cultural labour of minority language transmission (Cardinal 1994; Heller and Lévy 1994; see also Yax-Fraser 2011). I have argued that the playgroups present ambiguous passages for mothers, where they can address their particular needs but must ‘make do’ with ideological orientations that are not necessarily congruent to their own experiences and knowledge. The history of the French-language playgroups in Kingston also points to the crucial importance of feminized work of social reproduction accomplished by Francophone women (often mothers) within French-language institutions. As I discuss below, it is this work, although economically and socially devalued (K. England and Lawson 2005; P. England 2010), that allows the continued existence of these institutions.

**Gendering Francophone mothers through employment in French-language institutions**

For Francophone mothers, being in Kingston presents employment opportunities linked to their Francophone identities and language in a minority context. These opportunities emerge from governmental obligations to offer services in French, institutional efforts to improve their response to Francophone needs (e.g. hospitals), the establishment and development of French-language institutions, and the multiplication of French-language programs in English-language schools (Pilote and Magnan 2008; Cardinal and González Hidalgo 2012; Thériault 2014; Huot and Veronis 2017). The presence of these institutions, services, and programs creates sites in which French linguistic practices extend beyond the reach of private households, individual identities, and subjectivities to become collective cultural markers and marketable skills (Cardinal and González Hidalgo 2012; but see also Heller 2010; Heller and Duchêne 2012). The existence and operation of Francophone institutions also requires a relatively important labour force, thus creating
Eight out of fourteen Francophone primary migrant mothers came to Kingston for educational or employment opportunities that required French-language skills. Many of these women are teachers in one of the French-language institutions, or they are French teachers in English-language schools. Québec teachers experienced vastly superior working conditions in Kingston than they did back home. Teaching French in Kingston protected them from the environment prevailing in Québec and Ontario in which starting a teaching career is difficult and precarious, with teachers remaining on-call or on contract for years before securing a regular position (Gingras and Mukamurera 2008; Mindzak 2016). Carmen is an example of a Francophone teacher from Québec who moved to Kingston to improve her career prospects. She recalls:

Au Québec on avait pas grand-chose. On est déménagé.es en Ontario pour trouver de la job. En dedans d’un an j’avais un contrat à temps plein … Quand je faisais de la suppléance [au Québec] j’étais appelée peut-être une fois ou deux fois par mois… pis quand je suis arrivée ici, il fallait que mes papiers soient transférés pour l’Ontario,
une fois que ça ça été fait… je suis arrivée en décembre, pis en septembre j’avais une position à 86%, pis l’année d’après 100%.

In the cases of secondary migrants, their French-language skills proved even more precious to secure employment. Of the twelve employed at the time of our interview, only one did not owe her job or a promotion to French-language (see Table 2).

Although most Francophone mothers encountered economic opportunities based on their French-language skills in Kingston, the scope of their occupations was limited (see Huot and Veronis 2017). As Table 3 demonstrates, for both primary and secondary migrants the employment found in Kingston was concentrated in feminized domains of social reproduction – teaching, working in health care, or working for community or non-profit organizations (K. England and Lawson 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waged work</th>
<th>Primary migrants</th>
<th>Secondary migrants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reproduction - Job</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requiring French-language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Job requiring</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French-language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reproduction - Job</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not requiring French-language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Job not requiring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French-language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Waged work, domains of employment, and French-language skills

---

15 In Québec we didn’t have much. We moved to Ontario to find work. Within a year I had a full-time contract... When I did replacements [in Québec] I was called maybe once or twice a month ... and when I got here, I had to have my papers transferred for Ontario, and once that was done ... I arrived in December, and in September I had a 86% position, and the year after that 100%
Social reproduction labour is divided between high-skilled, high-paid, socially and culturally recognized positions where there are possibilities for promotion, and low-skilled, underpaid, unrecognized positions that most often lead to a professional dead-end (Duffy 2005). Primary migrants employed in domains of social reproduction mostly occupied relatively well paid and highly regarded professionalized positions. They were teachers, social workers, health care professionals, or senior staff in community organizations (mostly Francophone). They came to Kingston already trained for employment in high valued care work, or they came for training as high valued care workers. As discussed in chapter 5, Kingston brought a step up in their careers and, as Table 4 reveals, they did not experience deskilling following migration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waged work</th>
<th>With deskilling</th>
<th>Without deskilling</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social reproduction - Job requiring French-language</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Job requiring French-language</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reproduction - Job not necessitating French-language</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Job not necessitating French-language</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - Primary migrants waged work: domains of employment, French-language skills, and deskilling

* international migration

Tables 2 and 3 show that speaking French also brought important socio-economic opportunities for secondary migrants. However, many were critical of the types of opportunities that these skills offered. As discussed in chapter 5, finding employment presented much greater challenges for mothers who followed their partners to Kingston. A third (six) of them remained unemployed at the time of our interview. As shown in Table 5, of the twelve employed, six
experienced important deskilling, mostly in front line feminized service provision in education, health, and social services within Francophone institutions. The secondary migrants who found skilled employment in Kingston were educated and engaged in career paths of high-value and high-skilled carework, such as teaching and social work, before migrating, except for one woman who obtained a transfer to the Kingston branch of her company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waged work</th>
<th>With deskilling</th>
<th>Without deskilling</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reproduction - Job necessitating French-language</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Job necessitating French-language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reproduction - Job not necessitating French-language</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Job not necessitating French-language</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*includes remote work from Québec

Deskillings (including remaining unemployed) occurred for secondary migrants who had not worked in social reproduction before coming to Kingston, or who lacked formal skills and education to hold skilled positions in these domains. For them, the employment opportunities in Kingston where they could market their language skills consisted of socially and economically devalued work, mostly in Francophone daycares or in French-language schools. Mylène summarizes these women’s employment possibilities: « quand t’es francophone et que t’arrives
ici, tu peux te faire coiffeuse, t’ouvrir une garderie ou faire aide-éducatrice dans les écoles francophones.16 »

Mylène’s words point to Francophone institutions as ambiguous sites of opportunity and constraint in Francophone mothers’ experiences of employment in Kingston, which hints at their broader social and economic integration (see Veronis and Huot 2017). Table 6 illustrates this ambiguity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waged work</th>
<th>Primary migrants</th>
<th>Secondary migrants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francophone institutions</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with deskilling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francophone institutions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without deskilling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other with deskilling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other without deskilling</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4**</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 - Waged work, Francophone institutions and deskilling between primary, and secondary migrants

1*international migration

** includes distance work from Québec

Francophone institutions, services and networks in Kingston present Francophone mothers with employment opportunities unavailable elsewhere, whether they are primary migrant looking to secure permanent teaching jobs or to get promoted, or whether they are secondary migrants looking for recognizable or marketable skills they could capitalize on in Kingston (see Heller 2010; Heller and Duchêne 2012). For secondary migrants, working in Francophone institutions is often important in reshaping their subjectivities following the drastic changes provoked by their

16 when you are Francophone and you arrive here, you can become a hairdresser, open a home daycare or become educational assistant in the French-language schools.
combined experiences of mothering, migration and minority language (see chapters 4 and 5). Francophone institutions can provide new possibilities of affiliations and belonging. Huot and Veronis, looking at experiences of Francophone immigrants in the city of London, Ontario, note that “many participants described how the presence of a French-speaking community within the city provided opportunities to “find oneself” in a larger majority context that exerts an ongoing pressure.” (Huot and Veronis 2017, 6). Huot and Veronis’ use of the idiom ‘to find oneself’ is not incidental. Francophone places and Francophone institutions present French-speaking migrants with sites of identification and dis-identification, where they can re-configure “who they are” (Valentine 2007, see also chapter 4). Francophone institutions helped Caroline (introduced in chapter 5) forge a new sense of self after leaving Québec. Her discovery of the realities and struggles of Francophones in minority environments, followed by her reformulation of her political, cultural, and social identity as Francophone in the face of English-language majority, and by her commitment towards French-language continuity, led to the development of a new subjectivity as Francophone within Francophone institutions. Caroline first moved from Québec to Ottawa to follow her partner’s military posting. She had worked as an accounting assistant in Québec. However, unused to working in English, and uncertain of her English-language skills, she did not look for employment in her domain immediately upon arriving in Ottawa. « Je sentais qu’il y avait une barrière avec l’anglais … Je me suis dit ‘Oh my God, je vais tu aller travailler dans un milieu anglophone??’ » Caroline had her two children while in Ottawa. She stayed home with them and did not return to the job market. When her youngest child was approaching her first year, her partner was posted to the air forces base in Greenwood, Nova Scotia, an Anglophone

17 I felt that English was a barrier ... I told myself “Oh my God, am I gonna go work in an Anglophone environment??”
village of around 5,000. Due to its small size, there were no opportunities for Caroline to work in accounting, and certainly not in French. Intent on finding a new occupation, she undertook replacements at the local French-language school. « Mais là je voulais faire quelque chose de moi-même… Y’a toujours un grand besoin de francophones pour la suppléance vu qu'on est en milieu minoritaire. Faque c'est là que ma carrière en éducation a commencé.¹⁸ »

Caroline’s strategy to reorient herself socially and economically, following the loss of her former milieus (in Francophone Québec, and in Ottawa) and subjectivity as a paid accountant, was to mobilize her new subjectivity, which had been drastically reoriented towards social reproduction and linguistic minority, as a site of possible affiliation and belonging. Her circumstances of mothering, migration, and minority language had led her to think of herself and to spend her daily life primarily as a mother, and as a Francophone in an English majority context. The French-language school gave her the opportunity to project this new – and more or less forced – identity at the scale of the institution, where she continued performing reproductive labour but in economically, socially, and culturally recognized (although devalued) forms (a point suggested by Marston 2004). Crucially, Caroline’s opportunities to transform her Francophone cultural reproductive labour into paid and socially recognized work depended on the legal status of French as an official language in Canada, the protected rights associated with this recognition, and its relationship to national identity projects (Sharma 2011). Lee and Cardinal remark:

Occupational distinctions of ‘mother’, ‘community volunteer’, and ‘teacher’ – normally taken as given – are, in fact, socially constructed through state boundary regulating processes that employ language, culture, ethnicity, race, and national origin as markers of difference. … Certain world or trade languages, regardless of their minority status, are deemed to be in the national interest and, therefore, worthy of

¹⁸ But then I wanted to do something with myself... There is always a great need for Francophones for replacement in minority environments. So that’s when my education career started.
increased government support and a place in the formal education system. … However, very few languages, no more than five or six, fall into this category. The majority of languages are left to the ethnic groups themselves to support, primarily through women’s cultural labour in the ‘private sphere’. (Lee and Cardinal 1998, 230)

When Caroline moved to Kingston, following her partner’s posting, she continued to pursue her career as an educator. She did replacements at Madeleine-de-Roybon, where she had enrolled her children, and where she eventually secured a position as a cultural counselor. She was involved on the school committee, as well as on the board of the Centre culturel Frontenac. She developed a strong commitment to French-language education beyond Québec (see chapter 7), and at the time of our conversation she considered herself an advocate for French-language minority rights.

Caroline’s story reveals that Francophone institutions, and the particular minority identity attached to them (see Thériault 2014), can provide mothers with new meanings and senses of self, in addition to economic opportunities. These new purposes and subjectivities, although they can help mothers make sense of the abrupt changes in their life trajectories brought about by mothering, migration, and minority experiences, are ambiguous in the face of what was or what might have been. Caroline reflects:

Peut-être que si j’avais été plus à l’aise en anglais j’aurais exploré d’autres jobs. Peut-être que c’est plus facile pour moi dans une école francophone parce que je suis en français. Pis y’a pas grand-chose qui s’offre juste en français. C’est sûr qu’au point de vue carrière pour moi, honnêtement oui, ça a mis une petite pédale. Y’a fallu je me démène plus.19

Caroline’s story also illustrates that employment opportunities for Francophone mothers in minority contexts are enhanced when demands for labour in French-language institutions are

19 Maybe if I had been more comfortable in English I would have explored other jobs. Maybe it was easier for me in a French-language school because it is in French. And there’s not much available that is just in French. Of course, career wise, for me, honestly yes, it put on a little break. I had to scramble more.
greater than the number of qualified individuals with adequate linguistic skills. In contexts like Kingston, where the proportion of French-speaking individuals is low, Francophone institutions will frequently hire staff based on language skills rather than on qualification. This means that many Francophone women find themselves in work for which they were completely untrained and unprepared. This was the case for Simone, who started her teaching career in London, Ontario, with only a bachelor’s degree in biology. Indignant, she declares: « Moi mon expérience dans l’enseignement c’était que ma mère avait déjà enseigné…. Faut t’écrives ça là, dans ta thèse là: le seul qualificatif que t’avais besoin [pour enseigner dans une école de langue française] c’était de parler français. 20 »

Francophone institutions’ needs for French-speaking employees are even direr when it comes to lower-skilled and lower-valued positions, such as teacher’s assistants and daycare workers. This labour, although socially and economically devalued, is essential to these institutions. That unskilled, underpaid, and under-recognized women accomplish it often undermines the quality of the services provided. Jessica works as an educator at one of the two French-language daycares in Kingston. She was hired because the daycare urgently needed a French speaker to fill the position. She had not trained as an early childhood educator and had never worked with children before. When describing the environment of the daycare at the time, and particularly of the summer camp program, she commented: « J’ai envoyé mon fils [au camp d’été francophone] parce que j’avais pas le choix mais je l’aurais pas recommandé à personne 21». (However, it is important to mention that the quality of the daycare has significantly improved

20 Me my experience in teaching was that my mother had been a teacher. ... You have to write this now, in your dissertation: the only qualification you needed [to teach in a French-language school] was to speak French.

21 I sent my son [to the French-language summer camp] because I didn’t have a choice, but I wouldn’t have recommended it to anyone.
Francophone institutions, like most public services in neoliberal times, depend on devalued labour of social reproduction to maintain their existence and their services. Francophone mothers who come to Kingston as secondary migrants often end up performing this labour. Working in French-language schools or daycares allows mothers to follow the daily schedule, school holidays, and vacations of their children, which means that their employment does not upset the gendered social and economic regimes of their household. They can continue carrying the bulk of the family’s reproductive labour and, importantly, remain primarily responsible for it. This way mothers’ subjectivity as workers is re-inscribed as secondary both to their male partner’s subjectivity as worker and to their own subjectivity as mothers (Dyck 1996; Sophie Bowlby, Gregory, and McKie 1997; K. England 1996; K. England and Lawson 2005; McDowell 1999, 2008a; P. England 2010; Barker 2011). The unskilled, underpaid, and socially devalued labour that Francophone mothers accomplish within Francophone institutions, while keeping these institutions alive and operating, reiterates the gendered imbalance of reproductive labour both at the social scale and at the scale of the households.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that Francophone institutions in Kingston are ambiguous places that present Francophone mothers with opportunities, but at the same time channel and limit their experiences to gendered subjectivities and social roles of social reproduction. First, I discussed the places of the French-language playgroups within the Early Years Center as they operated during the time of my fieldwork. I argued that the playgroups provide mothers with good passages, in that
they allow them to address needs emerging both from the alienation of (new) mothering in a liberal social world, and from their linguistic circumstances – i.e. their lack of English or their desire to reconnect to French-language and Francophone networks. However, I also uncover ambiguity in these passages, as they unfold against the backdrop of the neoliberal objective of individualizing and familializing social reproduction, in this case by the promotion of intensive mothering norms and practices. Secondly, I turned to the employment opportunities afforded to Francophone mothers within Francophone institutions in Kingston. The vast majority of Francophone mothers’ employment in Kingston is within domains of social reproduction. Aside from those who pursue careers in high-skilled and high-valued carework positions, most of the mothers working in Francophone institutions occupy socially and economically devalued positions. I argued that, by relying on this labour to maintain their existence and operations, Francophone institutions feed a gender regime that funnels women towards feminized reproductive labour, both in their salaried positions and in their non-salaried lives. Importantly, in all Francophone institutions, including the French-language playgroups, we find Francophone mothers who accomplish reproductive labour of cultural transmission. As Lee and Cardinal note, women, as teachers, volunteers, or mothers, overwhelmingly accomplish cultural minority work (Lee and Cardinal 1998). Francophone institutions reinforce the association between femininity and social reproduction, not only because the cultural work Francophone mothers perform there adds to their burden of reproductive labour, but also because these places reiterate the naturalization and normalization of heteronormative and patriarchal versions of mothering and social reproduction.
Chapter 9 - Conclusion

This dissertation started, unfolded, and now ends with stories of Francophone mothers in Kingston. Like all life stories, Francophone mothers’ are replete with unexpected twist and turns (Miller 2005). Migration and mothering, as experiences, are characterized by the unexpected. None of the mothers I met expected the relationships, affiliations, identifications, and differences that would come to shape what Kingston is for them. As life trajectories unfold, unforeseen events and places wax and sometimes wane. What remains, then, of that intention, expressed by my friend in the foreword, of “être soi-même”1? Mothers produced and performed a coherence of trajectory and subjectivity in their conversations with me that was not necessarily evident at different spatial and temporal moments of their lives (see Chapter 3 on methods). The same observation could be made of this dissertation. Articulations of ideas and analyses emerged in eclectic, multilinear, and unexpected ways as I talked to mothers, listened to their words, read other writers, and wrote, and it was no small effort on my part to shepherd them into a robust enough narrative thread. As my grandmother used to say, “la seule chose dont tu peux être certaine c’est que les choses arriveront pas comme tu le penses.”

A cornerstone of this dissertation, anchoring all of the unexpected in mothers’ stories and in my thinking, is an attention to how gender asserts itself through time, as a social force moulding Francophone mothers’ material circumstances and subjectivities. Life trajectories, and particularly events of mothering, migration, and minority language, interact with places in Kingston to gender Francophone mothers’ lives, albeit in multiple and various ways. These events and places activate

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1 To be oneself
2 The only thing you can be sure about is that things won’t happen the way you think
social relationships that reiterate patriarchal and heteronormative power regimes, including the normalized attribution of care and reproductive labour to women, and the widespread and largely unchallenged devaluation of this labour in all spheres of social life. This central argument underlies and orients all of my analytical chapters. In chapter 4, I set the bases to an understanding of the combined role of migration, mothering, and minority language in channeling Francophone mothers’ life trajectories. I advocate an intersectional approach grounded in three theoretical and analytical assumptions: that identities are intersectional, spatially and temporally contingent experiences; that space is plural and multilinear; and that places and identities are relational and co-constituted processes. In chapter 5, I build on this intersectional approach to illustrate how mothering, migration, and minority language conjointly shape different constellations of affiliations, exclusions, possibilities, impossibilities, power, and powerlessness in the lives of Francophone mothers. Paying attention to these constellations exposes significant axes of differences between mothers, namely around experiences of primary or secondary migration, and the hold of the military institution in some mothers’ lives. Changing focus from life stories to places, in chapter 6 I explore how mothers manage and cope with the encumberment and confinement of the everyday geographies that emerge from mothering and linguistic minorities, and the treatments of these experiences in the English-centered liberal capitalist ‘dominant spatial orderings’ (Valentine 2007) of Kingston. I point to the creative and subversive negotiation of knowledges and relationships among Francophone mothers and more generally within Francophone communities and places, through which mothers insert elements of alterity into the daily fabric of their lives. I argue that these alternative knowledges and relationships are anchored in and reiterate normative gendered stories that interlock mothering, femininity, care, and minority cultural transmission. In chapter 7, I use a relational approach to discuss how each mother’s places in Kingston is made of the
intersections of her life story and of the particular articulations of sedimented power regimes that she encounters. These encounters translate into good or bad passages that facilitate and hinder the continuation of her and her children’s beings, as well as the pursuit of her temporal projects. Just as place is the product of sedimented relationships, negotiating passages oriented in terms of care and cultural reproduction sediment mothers’ subjectivities around feminized social roles and labours of mothering. Finally, in chapter 8 I describe the actions of Francophone institutions in reinforcing patriarchal and heteronormative assumptions, welding femininity to care and reproductive labour. Institutional assumptions are projected onto Francophone mothers as they frequent French-language playgroups, particularly at the Ontario Early Years Center, which attach a neoliberal ideology of intensive mothering to the feminized cultural labour of minority language transmission. Furthermore, Francophone women’s experiences of employment in Francophone institutions tend to reinforce the feminized and devalued nature of cultural transmission as labour of social reproduction.

As a whole, these chapters demonstrate that gender (still) matters as a social category. They demonstrate that mothering also matters, as a social experience of difference through which intersecting relationships of power and oppression articulate in particular ways. Significantly, this dissertation also reveals that experiences of ‘differences’ amplify the buttressing action of gender towards subjectivities, circumstances, labours, and future possibilities defined by reproductive work of mothering. Differences that “made a difference” (Tomlinson 2013; see also Cho, Williams Crenshaw, and McCall 2013) in the lives of Francophone mothers were multiple: race, generations, children’s health and dis/abilities, but also experiences of secondary migration, fluency in English, lack of personal income, military life, violence, and strict gendered attitudes and expectations in their interpersonal relationships. Francophone mothers’ stories told of how these intersecting
differences limited their possibilities of being, and ultimately eroded their control over their own lives. Differences, then, implied a diminishing of options. And so, this dissertation reveals that in these women's lives, being and doing outside of mothering and reproductive work demanded options - it was, in that sense, ‘optional’. Options are the first thing that disappear when circumstances grow barer and differences make ‘more of a difference’. For these mothers, the default (‘option-less’) path remained to have their actions and subjectivity firmly anchored in care and reproduction.

Delving closely into individual mothers’ life-stories, this dissertation exposes how gendered differences emerge through time – both events and continuity – and through places, in ways that are nuanced, specific to personal trajectories and encounters with particular power regimes, and thus resist general theorization and narrative. What, then, could be the collective resonances, and the political implications of this? How can such intimate narratives be projected into anything else than what they are? Can they do anything, aside from pointing to patriarchy, capitalism, liberalism, neoliberalism, and heteronormativity as vague and looming culprits? As McDowell asks, “are detailed case studies of this type, however much they challenge traditional categorization and name hidden groups and practices in the interstices of these categories, sufficient?” (McDowell 2008b, 502). And how can we combine these narratives, as vivid and deep, with the same degree of respect for complexity, nuances, and ambiguity? “If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.” (Eliot 2009, 162)

Perhaps I do not need to answer all of these questions for this work to be significant. Perhaps telling the stories is already inherently valuable. And perhaps some meaningful political truths emerge from commonalities between mothers’ stories as they unfold in Kingston. Kingston, through these stories, develops as the site of various states of exception (in the sense of Delphy (1995), see
The strong presence of public-sector institutions produces a migratory flow of professionals to the city (Donald and Hall 2016, see also Introduction). This implies a concentration of migrating households, with particular gendered regimes that often reinforce models of patriarchal nuclear family and the associated socio-economic marginalization of women. Kingston’s polarized economy between good public-sector jobs and low-paid and precarious private-sector jobs enhances this marginalization by further limiting secondary migrant mothers’ prospects. As well, the presence of the Canadian Forces Base strongly shapes social, economic, and cultural life in Kingston, particularly for Francophones. The military is a totalizing institution where heteronormative and patriarchal expectations are heightened, both in terms of gendered subjectivities and performances, and in terms of the association between mothering and social reproduction labour. The multiple migrations associated with military life further normalize ‘states of exception’ where military spouses’ citizenships are mediated through their partner.

Another politically meaningful commonality in mothers’ stories is the significance of Kingston Francophone institutions in their lives. This observation may seem ironic given the critical portrait I sketch of these institutions in chapter 8. Francophone institutions are ambiguous places in the lives of Francophone mothers because of the gendered stories they convey and reproduce. However, they are also – and, in most mothers’ appreciations, more importantly – sources of opportunities and support. Francophone institutions, like all public and community institutions, are deeply undermined by neoliberal rationality and its ensuing policies and practices. The example of the EYC French-language playgroups in chapter 8 reveals how neoliberal logic translates into programs and discourses that reinforce social narratives depicting care and reproductive labour, including minority cultural and linguistic transmission, as natural responsibilities of femininity and mothering (Lee and Cardinal 1998; Fox 2006; Vosko 2006). Francophone institutions are currently
directly under attack by Ford’s neoliberal populist Conservative provincial government (Simard 2018). If this government follows its present agenda of eroding Francophone rights, services, and legitimacy in Ontario, it will tragically limit Francophone institutions’ capacity to support Francophone mothers, and may heighten the oppressive gendered implications exposed in chapter 8, such as relying on socially and economically devalued feminized labour.

Francophone mothers in Kingston, and indeed all women, always benefit from well-funded health and social services that are flexible, accessible, and that answer more completely to the complexity and multifaceted nature of their needs. Towards the end of each interview, I asked “qu’est-ce qui rendrait ta vie plus facile?3” Despite the multiplicity and multilinearity of mothers stories, and despite the various and nuanced experiences of differences, the answers to that question were remarkably similar. More French-language resources – more programs for children, for adults, more books at the libraries. More French-language services – affordable and high-quality daycare, after-school programs, tutoring, help with homework, health services actually in French. More autonomy – improved recognition of their experiences and credentials, fewer barriers to employment, adapted and flexible English-language courses. All things that have the potential to alleviate their reproductive imperatives and their preoccupation for the continuity of their temporal projects, whatever the multiple cultural implications of these projects might be. All things that have the potential to afford them more control over their own lives. Mothers wished for security, social, economic, and cultural well-being as well as freedom.

In chapters 6 and 7, I argue that small things matter, as it is with small things that women can or cannot ‘make do’. The things mothers wished for to make their lives easier would increase their

3 What would make your life easier?
room for manoeuvre, so that their opportunities to ‘make do’ would be multiplied and solidified, and so that the compromises they make would entail less hardship and loss (see chapter 5). These are very modest hopes. Improved access to Francophone daycare, for example, will not bring the Grand Soir⁴ that will mark the end of capitalism, patriarchy, and other violence. However, it might allow particular passages, so that some Francophone mothers might get to a point where “everyone is fed, bathed, asleep, and [they] have made it through another day” (Simard-Gagnon 2016), and so that some possibilities for alternative forms of being remain open (Povinelli 2011b).

These projections, how neoliberalism is likely to affect Francophone institutions, or conversely what improved support could be, and what Francophone mothers wished for, all overflow beyond the actual stories they told me. At the heart of this dissertation, there is an odd contradiction between the passing of time that moves life stories in their various trajectories, and the fact that these stories were produced each at one particular moment. What this dissertation presents is a collection of snapshots. What other narratives would these mothers tell in ten years’ time? I also delineated the snapshots, to follow that metaphor, in ways to include and exclude particular mothers. My definition of Francophone is less encompassing than the inclusive definition of Francophone (Office of the French Language Services Commissioner 2016), which includes Francophiles (i.e. people who learned French later in life). Defining Francophone more broadly might have allowed me to encounter very different realities and family models. For example, in chapter 6, Carmen recounts teaching children of queer parents, or parents sending their children to French-language schools to follow values of openness and social justice. A more inclusive delineation of ‘Francophone mothers’ might have included these mothers. However, I suspect that

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⁴ The ‘Great Night’ – a metaphor for the moment of radical uprooting of systems of oppression rooted in French 19th Century anarchism. I use it in a tongue and cheek (and maybe too jaded and cynical) way.
it would have also drowned the significance of migration and hid the commonality of this experience for Francophone mothers raised in a French-language background. This, in turn, would have obfuscated important sites of unfreedom and powerlessness revealed in this dissertation.

This dissertation now ends as it started, in ambivalence. I approached this dissertation with feelings of hope, shared by many ethics of care theorists, that an ontology of relationalities carries its own redemption. In Sara Ruddick’s Spinozist perspective, a mother’s appetite to maintain life and to foster growth, through reiterated commitment to a child or children, is a ‘joyful’ thing: it nourishes the continuity and unfolding of her child’s or children’s being(s), and thus their power to act and to be (Sara Ruddick 1995). For most of the mothers I met, and for me, there is much happiness and wonder in that. However, this dissertation also reveals that the performance of an ontology of relationalities through reiterated practices of care canalizes a mother’s subjectivity towards a particular (gendered) personae. And nobody can be all that they are at once (Code 1991; Valentine 2007). The idea of a mother’s appetite for the continuation of her being hits the very pragmatic question of which part of her being, at what moment and in what space, a mother is and is led towards. While mothers may find fulfilment in mothering their children, and in embracing an intensive motherhood ideology, mothering remains, in our social, political, and economic context, an exploited labour. As well, the resistance that is enacted by mothers to protect the well being of their child(ren) in the face of adversity is coopted by the fact that capitalist democracy relies explicitly on such resistance. It is in part the capacity of mothers to mother that keeps the wheels of our economic and political systems turning, however destructive they are to mothers (see Katz 2001).
For a mother to nourish the continuity of her being, however she considers her being to be, requires that she can “faire les rencontres qui [lui] conviennent”\(^5\) (Deleuze 1978). For this to be possible, mothers need to have options, security, support, and a degree of control over their lives. This is my wish for Francophone mothers in Kingston, and for all mothers.

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\(^5\) make encounters that are appropriate for [her]
References


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Appendix A – General Research Ethics Board Approval

March 28, 2018

Ms. Laurence Simard-Gagnon
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Geography and Planning
Queen’s University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

Dear Ms. Simard-Gagnon:

GREB TRAQ #: 6018097
Title: "GEOEPL-200-16 Of tightropes and boundaries: a feminist phenomenological study of motherwork, minority language and culture"

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB) has reviewed and cleared your request for renewal of ethics clearance for the above-named study. This renewal is valid for one year from April 11, 2018. Prior to the next renewal date you will be sent a reminder memo and the link to ROMEO to renew for another year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on “Events”; under “Create New Event” click on “General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies”). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Completed Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is ‘completed’ so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period. An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours. To submit an adverse event report, access the application at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on “Events”; under “Create New Event” click on “General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form”.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes in study procedures or implementation of new aspects into the study procedures. Your request for protocol changes will be forwarded to the appropriate GREB reviewers and/or the GREB Chair. To submit an amendment form, access the application at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on “Events”; under “Create New Event” click on “General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies”.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Interim Chair, General Research Ethics Board

c.: Dr. Anne Godlewka, Supervisor
Dr. Heather Castleden, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Joan Knox, Dept. Admin.