The genesis of vitality theory: historical patterns and discoursal dimensions[1]

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The notion of "vitality" was introduced into the ethnolinguistic arena in the late 1970s. Fifteen years on, a growing body of research has adopted differing features of the group vitality framework to address a broad range of issues related to language, ethnicity, bilingualism, and intergroup communication. The first part of this paper provides a brief overview of the origin and development of the group vitality concept and its measurement. The second part presents a first attempt at a transactive model not only useful as a conceptual framework for synthesizing extant research but also as a heuristic for guiding future directions. This approach extends traditional work by focusing in part upon the nature of discourse concerning vitality issues in everyday life. It is proposed that discoursal analyses of vitality beliefs as manifest during interpersonal conversations and within the mass media can constitute a useful complement to current quantitative research. During the unfolding of this framework, a series of research propositions will be presented as an agenda for future work.

The origin of the ethnolinguistic vitality concept

The notion of objective group vitality

Relations between groups do not occur in a vacuum but rather are influenced by a range of sociostructural and situational factors that can fundamentally affect the nature and quality of intergroup contact between speakers of contrasting ethnolinguistic groups. The notion of "ethnolinguistic vitality" was first introduced by Giles et al. (1977) and provided a conceptual tool to analyze the sociostructural variables affecting the strength of ethnolinguistic communities within intergroup settings. The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group was defined as "that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity within the intergroup setting" (Giles et al. 1977: 308). It was proposed that the

more vitality an ethnolinguistic group has, the more likely that it will survive and thrive as a collective entity in the intergroup context. Conversely, it was suggested that ethnolinguistic groups that have little or no vitality would eventually cease to exist as distinctive linguistic groups within the intergroup setting. As can be seen in Figure 1, three broad dimensions of structural variables were proposed as most likely to influence the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups: these were demographic, institutional support, and status factors.

Demographic variables are those related to the sheer number of members composing the ethnolinguistic group and their distribution throughout a particular urban, regional, or national territory. Distribution factors refer to the numeric concentration of group members in various parts of the "territory," their proportion relative to outgroup members, and whether or not the group still occupies its "traditional" or "national" territory. Number factors refer to the community's absolute group numbers, their birth rate, exogamy/endogamy, and their patterns of immigration and emigration. The above demolinguistic trends are the object of close scrutiny especially in multilingual settings where demographic trends are unstable and perceived to have an impact on the relative political strength of the various ethnolinguistic groups competing for ascendancy in the intergroup structure. Demographic factors may constitute the most fundamental asset of ethnolinguistic groups since "strength in numbers" can sometimes be used as a legitimizing tool to "empower" groups with the "institutional control" they need to shape their own collective destiny within the intergroup structure (Bourhis 1984a; Wardhaugh 1987).

Institutional control factors refer to the extent to which an ethnolinguistic group has gained formal and informal representation in the various institutions of a community, region, state, or nation. Informal support refers to the degree to which an ethnolinguistic group has organized itself as a "pressure group" to represent and safeguard its own ethnolinguistic interests in various state and private activities including education, mass media, government services, business, finance, etc. Formal support refers to the degree to which members of an ethnolinguistic group have gained positions of control at decision-making levels of the government apparatus, in business, industry, mass media, and religious and cultural domains. Ethnolinguistic groups who enjoy strong institutional control within state and private institutions are in a better position to safeguard and enhance their vitality as a distinctive collective entity than ethnolinguistic groups that lack institutional control in these different domains of activity.

To the degree that institutional control can be defined as the "degree of control one group has over its own fate and that of outgroups" (Sachdev and Bourhis 1985), this dimension of ethnolinguistic vitality
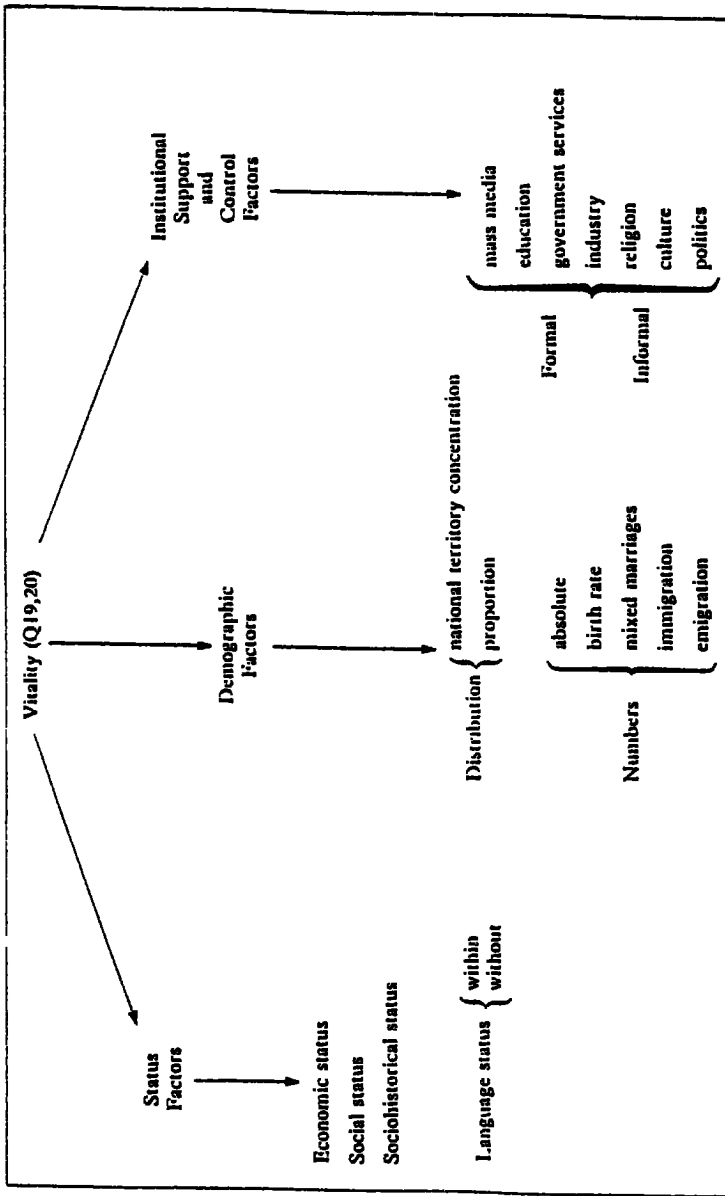
Figure 1. *Factor structure of the vitality construct*

can be considered as the degree of social power enjoyed by one ethnolinguistic group relative to salient outgroups (Sachdev and Bourhis 1990a). To the extent that dominant group members can use their power to establish their advantage relative to outgroup members (Sachdev and Bourhis 1991), it is clear that "institutional control" is the dimension of vitality *par excellence* available for ethnolinguistic groups to maintain and assert their ascendancy vis-à-vis competing ethnolinguistic outgroups. Conversely, it is clear that subordinate ethnolinguistic outgroups need to achieve and maintain a favorable position on the "institutional control" front if they wish to survive as distinctive collective entities within the intergroup structure (e.g. Herberg 1989; Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins 1988).

An important feature of institutional control not originally included in the vitality framework is the presence and quality of leaders who can head the formal and informal institutions representing the ethnolinguistic group (Wardhaugh 1987). Gains in institutional control often depend on the emergence of activists and protoelites who succeed in mobilizing ethnolinguistic groups in favor of their own language, culture, and ethnic survival in the intergroup setting (Fishman 1972). The absence of quality leadership can undermine gains achieved by previous generations of group members on the institutional control front and can mortgage future gains needed for the survival of the next generation of ethnolinguistic group members.

Ethnolinguistic groups that have gained a measure of ascendancy on institutional support factors are also likely to enjoy considerable social status relative to less dominant groups within the social structure. The *status* variables are those related to a speech community's social prestige, its sociohistorical status, and the prestige of its language and culture — not only within the immediate confines of its territory, but internationally as well. It was proposed that the more status a linguistic community is ascribed to have on these items, the more vitality it could be said to possess as a collectivity. Though not as readily quantifiable as demographic and institutional support factors, a great deal of social psychological evidence shows that a high-status group position can contribute to a more positive social identity for group members than low-status group membership (Sachdev and Bourhis 1987; Tajfel & Turner 1979). Being a member of a disparaged low-status linguistic group can take its toll on the collective will of members to survive or maintain themselves as a distinctive linguistic community in the intergroup structure (e.g. Fishman 1989; de Vries 1986). The reality of a high- or low-status group position is more vivid to the degree that status differentials between ethnolinguistic groups are represented through stereotyping (Genesee and Bourhis 1988;

Ryan et al. 1982) and/or enshrined through the promulgation of language laws that legislate the relative status of high- and low-status language groups within the intergroup structure (Bourhis and Lepicq 1993; Cobarrubias and Fishman 1983; Eastman 1983).

It was proposed that the above three dimensions combine to affect in one direction or the other the overall strength or vitality of ethnolinguistic groups (Bourhis 1979; Giles et al. 1977). Demolinguistic and sociographic data can be used to assess as objectively as possible the relative vitality of ethnolinguistic groups within a particular intergroup setting. For instance, an ethnolinguistic group may be weak on demographic variables but strong on institutional support and status factors. In such a case one could say that overall, this dominant high-status minority has medium vitality relative to another minority group that happens to be weak on all the vitality factors, demography, institutional control, and status. The general point is that ethnolinguistic groups whose overall vitality is strong are more likely to survive as distinctive collective entities than groups whose vitality is weak within the intergroup setting.

Why did the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality emerge as a tool of social analysis in sociolinguistics and the social psychology of language? Following a resurgence of research interest in phenomena related to ethnicity and intergroup relations during the 1970s (e.g. Fishman 1977; Schermerhorn 1970; Tajfel 1978), it became necessary to analyze more systematically the relative sociostructural positions of ethnic groups being examined in the growing range of intergroup studies worldwide. The vitality concept provided such a framework while providing possible explanations for the range of phenomena being observed (Bourhis 1979; Giles and Johnson 1981). It became clear that processes such as language shift, language attitudes, interethnic communication, and ethnic conflict could no longer be studied in a sociostructural vacuum (Tajfel 1972). As pointed out by Johnson et al. (1983), the concept of vitality emerged out of the critical need for situating the sociolinguistic and social psychological processes underlying interethnic behavior within their proper sociostructural contexts. To this day, objective assessments of vitality do serve the descriptive and analytic functions needed to more rigorously compare and contrast the ethnolinguistic groups one is dealing with in sociolinguistic and sociopsychological research (e.g. see most of the contributions to this issue).

Subjective perceptions of group vitality

In a subsequent development, Bourhis et al. (1981) underscored the notion of *subjective vitality perceptions* by raising the issue of whether

groups members perceive "subjectively" their sociostructural position in much the same way as suggested by "objective" accounts. The subjective vitality questionnaire (SVQ) was proposed as a way of measuring group members' assessments of in/outgroup vitality on each of the items constituting the demographic, institutional support, and status dimensions of the objective vitality framework. A number of studies conducted with the SVQ showed that, in certain contexts, ethnolinguistic group members did indeed perceive their vitality position relative to outgroups along the lines suggested by so-called "objective" assessments. Such "realistic" patterns of vitality perceptions were obtained with majority English Canadians and second-generation Italian Canadians in Hamilton, Canada (Bourhis and Sachdev 1984), Anglo-Australian and second-generation Greek Australians (Giles et al. 1985), Welsh bilinguals living in Wales (Giles and Johnson 1987), first- and second-generation Chinese Canadians in Toronto (Sachdev et al. 1987); Arabs and Jews in Israel (Kraemer and Olshtain 1989); English British and first/second-generation British Chinese respondents in London, England (Sachdev et al. 1990), and francophone minorities across Anglo-Canada (Allard and Landry, this issue).

It is crucial to acknowledge, consensi above notwithstanding, that many vitality studies show ethnolinguistic group members being biased in their assessments of specific features of their owngroup and outgroup vitalities. Such biases usually do not emerge on more obvious differentials between ingroup and outgroup vitality items, but rather manifest themselves on items in which the degree of difference between ingroup and outgroup vitality is objectively marginal. Recently, Sachdev and Bourhis (1993) have shown how both cognitive and motivational factors can help account for this accentuation or attenuation of ingroup and outgroup vitality differentials in multilingual settings.

The current analysis is derived from a comprehensive tabulation of vitality studies that revealed three different types of intergroup vitality profile. The intergroup contexts in which these types were embedded provided some clues as to the important factors that determine the emergent vitality profile, as well as indicating the ways in which vitality assessment might differ across situations. The three different types of profile are schematized in Figures 2, 3, and 4.

Figure 2 represents a profile that we broadly label "perceptual distortions in favor of ingroup vitality." This profile is characterized by an ingroup bias in vitality assessment by both groups in purportedly the same intercultural situation, such that dominant group members will accentuate certain differences in vitality between themselves and the subordinate group, while members of the latter will attenuate such differ-
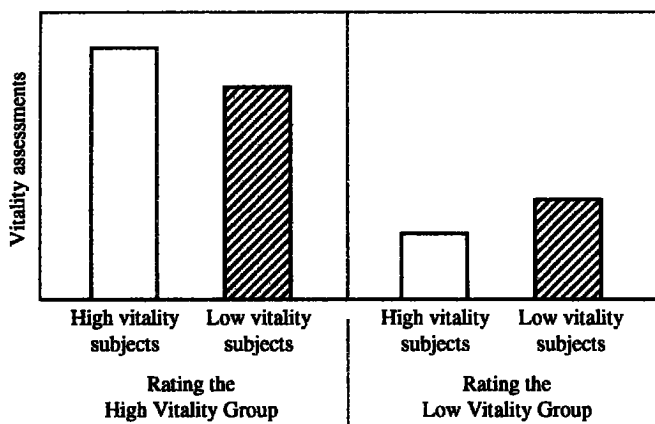
Figure 2. *Sample vitality profile as obtained in SVQ research: perceptual distortions in favor of ingroup vitality*
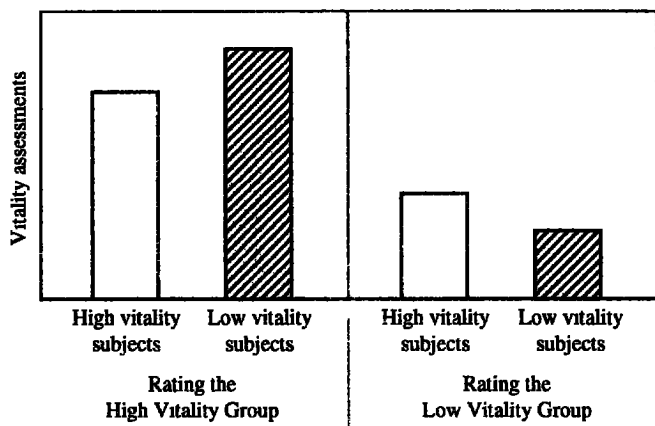

Figure 3. *Sample vitality profile as obtained in SVQ research: perceptual distortions in favor of outgroup vitality*

ences. Such a pattern has been found among Greek- and Anglo-Australians, Italian- and English-Canadians, and Arab and Jewish Israelis (see Giles et al. 1985; Bourhis and Sachdev 1984; Kraemer and Olshtain 1989, respectively). The "perceptual distortions in favor of outgroup vitality" profile (see Figure 3) are of course the converse of the above, with the dominant group attenuating between-group differences in vitality, while the subordinate group accentuates them. This pattern has been shown with first-generation Chinese immigrants to London and Toronto,
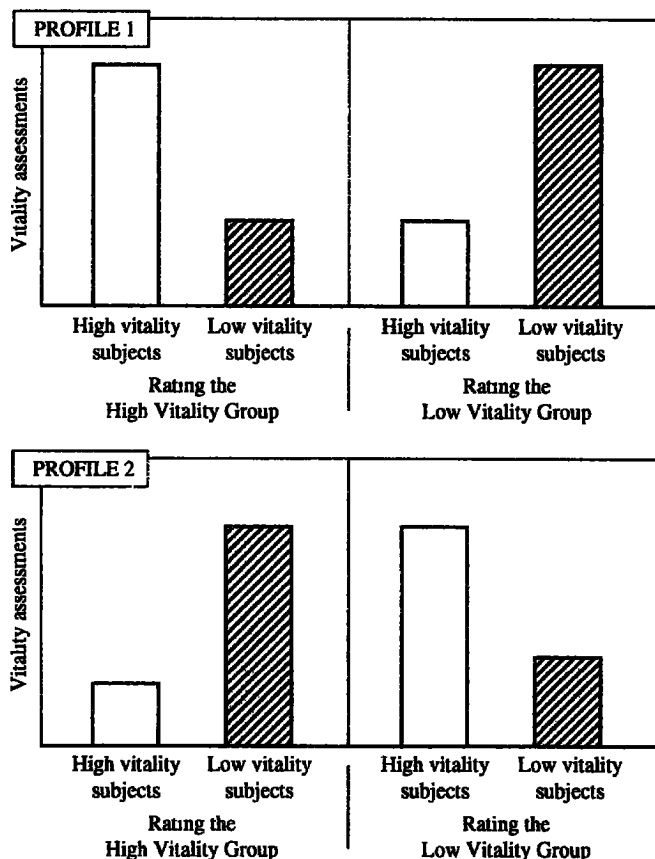
Figure 4.   *Sample vitality profiles as obtained in SVQ research. nonconsensual vitality perceptions*

and germanophone students in francophone Switzerland (see Sachdev et al. 1987, 1990; Young et al. 1988, respectively). The final profile (see Figure 4) lends itself less to schematic representation and is distinct from the previous two in that it reflects a situation in which consensual representations of the intergroup vitality context appear to be largely nonexistent. Across vitality factors, social groups may disagree not only on the *degree* of difference between groups, but also on the *direction* of such difference. Hence on some items (herein called profile 1) two groups in contact may exaggerate their owngroup vitality merits, whereas on other items (profile 2) they will both concede to each other's superiorities. As such, the degree of the intergroup distinctiveness is more acute and

complex, and we label this profile, "nonconsensual vitality perceptions"; indeed it could be regarded as the paradigm example of a breakdown in cross-group consensus. The profile has been illustrated by Pierson et al.'s (1987) study in Hong Kong wherein Westerners and Chinese students were asked on the SVQ to rate their own and the other group's vitalities during a period of political negotiations concerning that territory's future.

Doubtless future work will need to refine, and certainly extend, this typology, and this especially so as they attend to issues of intragroup variability (e.g. in gender, education; see Gallois and Pittam 1991) as well as exploring and transforming the SVQ in intergroup settings other than interethnic ones (as we are currently doing in the age domain). It is also clear that both motivational (e.g. ingroup bias) and cognitive factors (e.g. availability and vividness heuristics) can help account for these perceptual distortions of group vitality (Sachdev and Bourhis 1993).

Subjective vitality as a predictor of ethnolinguistic behavior

Another basic premise of the subjective vitality framework was that group members' subjective assessment of ingroup/outgroup vitality may be as important in determining sociolinguistic and interethnic behaviour as the group's objective vitality. Thus a combination of both objective and subjective vitality information was proposed as a more sensitive method of predicting the ethnolinguistic behavior of group members than simply relying on objective assessments of group vitality (Giles and Johnson 1981). This approach was based on the notion that intergroup behavior is mediated by individuals' cognitive representations of the intergroup situation they find themselves in (Moscovici 1981). In some cases, it was suggested that subjective vitality perceptions could perhaps emerge as better predictors of ethnolinguistic behaviors than only objective assessments of group vitality (cf. Giles et al. 1990). For instance, Bourhis et al. (1981) proposed that subjective vitality perceptions could provide advance indications that a particular ethnic group was assimilating linguistically or conversely was about to mobilize in an ethnic revival phase not otherwise foreseeable solely on the basis of objective vitality information (see also Gallois and Pittam 1991 for an examination of the role of projected vitality in a Vietnamese-Australian context).

The concept of ethnolinguistic vitality has provoked debates, some of which have been addressed conceptually and empirically in the literature (Harwood and Giles 1991; Husband and Khan 1982; Hamers and Blanc 1989; Johnson et al. 1983). It remains that since its introduction the combined notions of objective and subjective vitality have proven useful

as conceptual tools for discussing a broad range of applied and theoretical issues within the language and ethnicity literature. The notions of objective and subjective vitality have been most fruitfully applied to issues related to cross-cultural communication (Bourhis 1984b; Gudykunst 1986; Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1990; Sachdev and Bourhis 1990a, 1990b), language attitudes (Genesee and Bourhis 1988; Ryan et al. 1982), and ethnolinguistic behaviors (Giles and Johnson 1981; Yaeger-Dror 1988; van den Berg 1988), as well as language acquisition and bilingualism (Clément 1980; Giles and Byrne 1982; Garrett et al. 1989; Landry and Allard 1990) and language maintenance and loss (Giles and Johnson 1987; Giles et al. 1990).

However, by the early 1980s, few empirical attempts had been made to test directly how subjective vitality perceptions could predict the language behavior of ethnolinguistic groups. In one of the first such attempts, Bourhis and Sachdev (1984) administered the SVQ to high-vitality English Canadians and low-vitality Italian Canadians in Hamilton along with a sociolinguistic questionnaire dealing with evaluations and self-reports of English and Italian language use in different speech domains. Generally, results supported the hypothesis that group members who perceive they have high vitality (English Canadians) are likely to use their own language more frequently in a wider range of settings than group members who perceive they have low vitality (Italian-Canadians). But even in this study, no direct statistical test was conducted to verify the utility of the SVQ as an actual predictor of respondents' language usage and evaluations. A more direct test of the role of subjective vitality perceptions as a predictor of language usage was conducted by Giles and Johnson (1987) in Wales, who, in their study of language attitudes among Welsh bilinguals, found that subjective vitality perceptions were not predictive of self-reports of Welsh language maintenance and social norms about Welsh/English usage in Wales. Instead, it was found that perceptions of the stability of the Welsh/English intergroup structure along with degree of identification to Welsh group membership were the more predictive factors in accounting for Welsh language maintenance and language norms in their study. Nonetheless, vitality perceptions did interact with Welshpersons' levels of ingroup identification to the extent that anticipated divergence from an outgroup speaker was a function of high vitality among those who only moderately identified with their Welsh group membership but a function of (an unpredicted) *low* vitality among those who very strongly identified with their cultural category.

In the field of language acquisition, Labrie and Clément (1986) conducted a study to directly assess the effect of ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions on attitudes and motivations toward second-language learn-

ing. Grade nine Francophones in Moncton, New Brunswick, completed a battery of tests dealing with attitudes, motivation, self-confidence, and indices of second-language competence and usage in English, which were then linked to their subjective perceptions (SVQ) of the relative vitality of the francophone minority and anglophone majority in Moncton. Results showed no statistical relationship between subjective vitality perceptions as measured on the SVQ and francophone affective predispositions toward the second-language group and motivations for second-language learning and usage. In accounting for these results, Labrie and Clément (1986) proposed that subjective vitality perceptions should be considered as part of a more socioaffective process reflecting more private predispositions and orientations. It is in line with this more individual socioaffective definition of perceived vitality that Allard and Landry (1986) proposed their model of subjective vitality as a belief system.

Subjective vitality as a belief system

Allard and Landry (1986) proposed that subjective vitality perceptions could be more predictive of ethnolinguistic behavior by taking in consideration not only (1) "general beliefs" about what exists presently as regards the relative vitality of ethnolinguistic groups (the SVQ), but also (2) "normative beliefs" pertaining to what *should* exist as regards the vitality situation; (3) "self-beliefs" about respondents' present behavior or situation; and (4) "goal beliefs" about respondents' own desires to behave in certain ways regarding key aspects of vitality. Using cognitive orientation theory (Kreitler and Kreitler 1976), Allard and Landry (1986) argued that the SVQ adequately sampled only one of the four beliefs needed for a more successful prediction of ethnolinguistic behaviors. And since the SVQ sampled only the "general" component of a person's belief, it could not be expected to be a reliable predictor of actual communicative behaviors (see also Ajzen 1988). According to cognitive orientation theory, "goal beliefs" need to be activated in order for behavioral intentions to be triggered.

In a study designed as a first test of their model, Allard and Landry (1986) developed an ethnolinguistic vitality beliefs questionnaire consisting of four subscales incorporating a subset of the EV structural variables identified by Giles et al. (1977). Two small groups of francophone parents in Moncton, New Brunswick, completed the beliefs about ethnolinguistic vitality questionnaire (BEVQ): one group made up of parents who made the decision to send their children to the French school system; the other group made up of francophone parents who decided

to send their children to the English-medium school system. As predicted, results showed that francophone parents who sent their children to French schools scored higher on the BEVQ for francophone vitality than did parents who sent their children to English schools. While this pattern of results held for the "norm belief," "goal belief", and "self-belief" subscales of the BEVQ, no difference emerged between the two groups on the "general belief" subscale. It should be acknowledged that the BEVQ's four beliefs subscales did not include all of the Giles et al. EV structural variables, but rather two variables only from each of the three EV factors.

Allard and Landry (1986) also expected that parents who held strong beliefs about the vitality of francophones on the BEVQ would be less likely to report using English in various language-use situations than would parents who had weak vitality perceptions regarding francophones. Results confirmed the expected negative correlation between strong BEVQ scores for francophone vitality and degree of English usage. This pattern held on each subscale of the BEVQ except the "general belief" one, which also accounted for the least amount of variance on the language-use measures. "Self-belief," "goal belief," and "normative belief" subscales of the BEVQ accounted for the greatest amount of variance when it came time to predict the degree of English language assimilation among the francophone parents. In subsequent factor-analytic studies, Allard and Landry (1992) showed that "self-beliefs" and "goal beliefs" could be subsumed under a common set of "ego-centric" beliefs that are more predictive of ethnolinguistic behavior than more factual "exocentric" beliefs made up of the "general beliefs" and "normative beliefs" subscales of the BEVQ (see also Landry and Allard 1991a). However, Allard and Landry (this issue) recently compared the predictive value of their BEVQ with the SVQ, which they had also administered to their sample of francophone minorities across Canada. Though their results showed that the BEVQ was the more powerful predictor of ethnolinguistic behavior (accounting for 70% of the variance), support in favor of the SVQ as a predictive measure was also obtained, with the SVQ accounting for 44 percent of the variance observed in francophone linguistic behavior across Canada. Sachdev (1991) has also found in a study of so-called "visible" (i.e. Tamil) and "invisible" (i.e. Polish) emigres to Britain that both the SVQ and his much-extended version of the BEVQ predict self-reported sociolinguistic behaviors but only for the latter community.

In this section, we have shown that the combined notions of objective and subjective vitality can contribute as invaluable tools of social analysis for addressing a broad range of theoretical issues related to language, ethnicity, and intergroup communication. To the degree that ethnolinguis-

tic group members accurately perceive the vitality of their own group and that of salient outgroups, the SVQ can be used as a descriptive measure that can help validate the choice of ethnolinguistic groups used by researchers to conduct their sociolinguistic and social psychological studies. The program of research undertaken by Landry and Allard (this issue) with francophones across Canada has shown that the BEVQ can serve as a reliable predictor of a broad range of ethnolinguistic behaviors including language attitudes, language use, and additive and subtractive bilingualism. And they, along with Itesh Sachdev, have further shown that the SVQ can also serve as a predictor of ethnolinguistic behavior. However, Allard and Landry (1987, this issue) point out that both the BEVQ- and SVQ-related vitality beliefs do not emerge in a social vacuum but are developed and shaped through each individuals' network of linguistic contacts (cf. Milroy 1980), an issue we will take up in the next section. The density and multiplex nature of these everyday contacts provide the dynamic link between the objective vitality of the groups and the perceptual and behavioral developments that shape relations between ethnolinguistic group members. It is important to advocate that future work using the SVQ and BEVQ (or variants of them) will not profit from research directed at pitting, simplistically, one questionnaire against the other. Different dimensions and facets of each will likely yield differentially useful descriptive, explanatory, and predictive tools for different kinds of cultural settings, groups within them, and sociolinguistic behaviors observed. Modeling the complexity of this is an exciting prospect for the future.

Towards a vitality theory

In part as an attempt to account for the diversity inherent in our three vitality profiles above (Figures 2, 3, and 4), we have been engaged in constructing a heuristic framework that articulates some of the important determinants and consequences of vitality assessment (see Figure 5). The model's genesis also arose out of a concern that the time had come to move beyond the mere accumulation of descriptive studies of intergroup vitality climates around the world towards a more theory-driven approach. This model focuses upon the *process* of vitality assessment and derives from two very distinct resources: on the one hand, from a consideration of the political and sociopsychological conditions supposedly underpinning the different intergroup vitality profiles found in the quantitative research outlined above; and, on the other, from discourse data
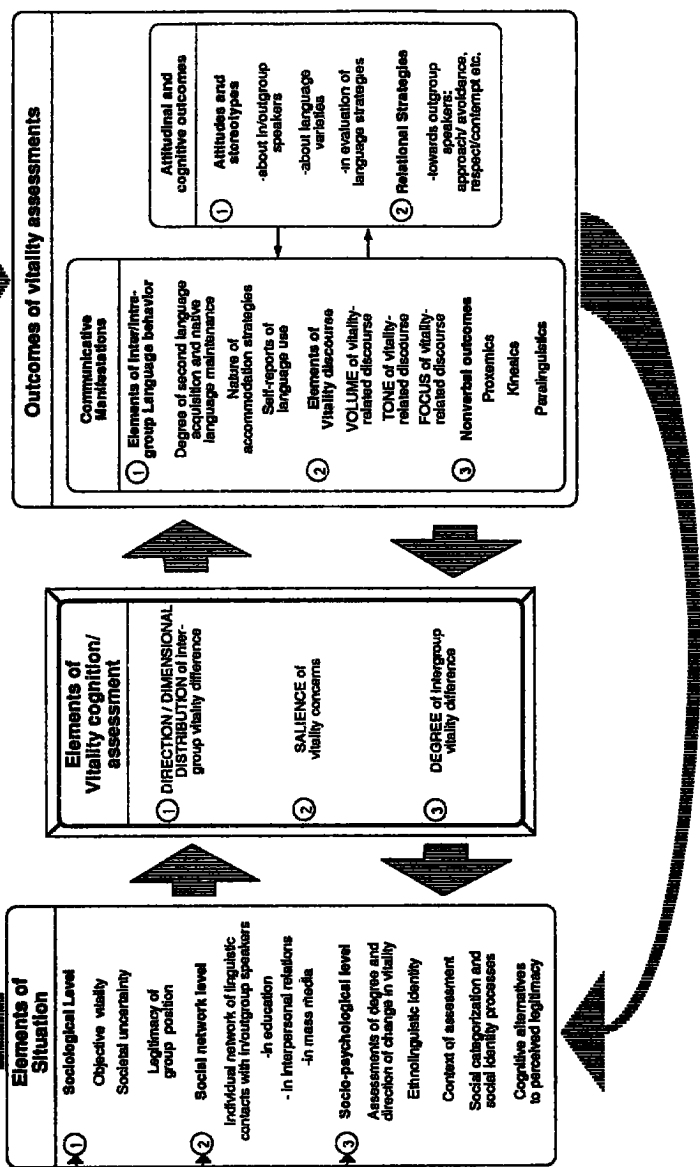
Figure 5   *Precursors, dimensions, and communicative manifestations of vitality assessment*

we have collected, which has informed our understanding of the construction and expression of groups' vitalities in everyday talk.

In brief overview, our model articulates the kinds of situational elements at a number of levels (see Figure 5) that impact upon individual's *assessments* of in- and outgroup vitalities. Vitality assessment itself is divided into three components that appear important from the profiles and discourse data collected, viz., degree of cross-group consensus, salience of vitality concerns, and degree of accentuation/attenuation of between-group differences. Finally, manifestations of this process of assessment appear, we argue, in communicative behaviors (e.g. language learning/language maintenance tendencies, interpersonal accommodative strategies, and discourse volume, tone, and focus) and intergroup cognitions in terms of social attitudes, attributions, and relational strategies in intra- and intergroup encounters.

The constituents highlighted herein are not intended as exhaustive of their particular categories, rather they provide a preliminary indication of important factors. It is our hope that they will be subject to expansion and refinement in the light of future empirical and theoretical work. While we are reticent about formulating concrete propositions in an axiomatic form, we feel that presenting a series of research propositions may provide some useful hypotheses that future research could test. Again, Figure 5 is intended to highlight the *processual* nature of vitality assessment, and hence it incorporates the inevitability that communicative and cognitive features will transact and will feed back into determining new situations in which vitality negotiation can occur — as the schematic arrows are intended to indicate. Our approach to vitality, then, is a complex and nonlinear one, and this will be reflected in our discussion below.

Elements of situation and their influence on dimensions of assessment

The left-hand column in Figure 5 catalogues the situational elements identified as being important to vitality assessment. These are arranged into three broad sections, viz., the sociological, social network, and sociopsychological elements, respectively, that we contend interact and conjointly influence vitality assessment. In the discussion below, the impact that some of these may have regarding the dimensions of vitality assessment in the second column of Figure 5 will be discussed.

Initially, it is important to recall that objective vitality plays a large part in many assessments of subjective vitality (see Landry and Allard 1992). As above, studies have demonstrated that people's subjective

perceptions are fairly accurate when compared to more objective assessments of the vitality context (Bourhis and Sachdev 1984; Giles et al. 1985; Ytsma et al., this issue). This indicates that there is a fair degree of consensus across groups on their vitality positions relative to each other. Such a finding reflects an awareness of the vitality situation among those living within it, an awareness that is underlined by our first research proposition.

Research proposition 1:

In the absence of marked sociopolitical/economic instability, subjective vitality assessments will broadly reflect the objective vitality of social groups.

The majority of vitality research has, however, looked at (relatively) stable situations in terms of intergroup power differentials. The sociopolitical context examined by Pierson et al. (1987; see also Pierson, this issue), namely Hong Kong, is markedly different, with imminent changes in political and economic control within the region leading to a high degree of uncertainty about the future. These authors found highly unusual vitality profiles to complement the setting (schematized in Figure 4 above), leading them to the conclusion that societal uncertainty levels may be an important determinant of vitality profiles.

We argue that societal uncertainty (cf. Gudykunst 1988) and perceptions of instability (see below) will tend to make individuals' social identities salient to them. Since most instances of social change have differential implications for different groups within society, such change may well lead to an increasing *intra*group focus in vitality assessment. Group members will seek information within their group circles and dissociate themselves from other groups to a greater extent than during more stable times. Hence vitality assessment in different groups will come to be based on different sources of information (i.e. groups' respective intragroup sources — interpersonal or mass media) and therefore on different dimensions of assessment (those salient to the intragroup representation of the vitality context). As a result, between-group variation in vitality assessment is expected to be greater in situations of societal uncertainty and instability. Such variation would be further exacerbated by differentiation processes stemming from explicit intergroup hostility in such a situation (see Reicher 1984). Naturally, further work is required in similar kinds of contexts to provide a fuller understanding of what may be underlying these findings. Nonetheless, societal uncertainty is seen as a primary factor influencing the *degree of cross-group consensus*

of individuals' vitality assessments (see Figure 5). This aspect of the theory is summarized in research proposition 2.

Research proposition 2:

The presence of societal instability will lead to marked intergroup differences in the degree of cross-group consensus of intergroup vitalities.

The next group of elements to be considered are those at the social network level. These influences have been conceptualized within the field as the individual's network of linguistic contacts (INLC). An INLC is described by Landry and Allard (1992), given the population of interest and the context of their research, in terms of the linguistic nature of an individual's contacts in education, in interpersonal relations (including the family), and in the mass media. They posit that the degree of linguistic support for language learning in each of these will contribute to the degree of additive/subtractive bilingualism that an individual attains (Lambert 1975). The support received by individuals for speaking their language, and the rewards available to fluent speakers, are incentives for maintaining that tongue. These rewards may be informational (Rubin 1986), cultural, or relational. On multiple dimensions, speaking a language with high objective vitality in one's network will be profitable. As rewards for speaking a language increase, so perceptions of that language's strength and utility are likely to be enhanced. Landry and Allard (e.g. 1990, 1991b) have found support for the notion that the strength of an INLC will influence ratings of subjective ingroup vitality. This is acknowledged in research proposition 3 and expanded upon in the section concerning bilingualism, below.

Research proposition 3:

An individual's INLC will be directly related to the objective and subjective vitality of their group. An increase in the use of a particular language within the INLC will lead to more positive appraisals of its vitality, while a decrease in the use of a language in the INLC will lead to more negative appraisals of its vitality.

Following the social network level, it is necessary to consider elements at the sociopsychological level, although, as mentioned above, all three broad situational elements are interdependent. The *perceived* degree and direction of change in objective vitality within a given situation is seen as being important here. A great deal of work in cognitive and social psychology has indicated that "moving" cues are salient. Storms (1973) and Taylor et al. (1978) have demonstrated the importance of perceptual

salience in the processing of social cues. Once an individual perceives a change in his/her vitality, it will become a salient cue, and hence something that receives attention, both cognitively and probably discursively. It is not suggested here that salience per se will affect vitality assessment in either a positive or a negative direction. However, the salience of a construct is an important factor to consider when discussing the cognitive and discoursal processes surrounding it. Linville (1982), for instance, indicates that more extreme levels of affect are associated with salient aspects of the self concept. If ingroup or outgroup vitality is made salient, then that may have immediate implications for a person's affective state regarding his/her group memberships.

On a broader level, salience is important to assess as it may directly impact the level of discourse concerning vitality, and hence the level of discussion, protest, and conflict regarding these issues. (To this extent, it may be useful to treat level of discourse as an indicator of level of salience, although ultimately this may lead to some circularity in the argument). Evidence for salience leading to an increase in vitality-related discourse is provided later. In addition to degree of change, level of salience may be influenced by other situational elements described herein. For instance, in the absence of change, a situation of low perceived legitimacy, or high uncertainty (and hence *potential* change), may well lead to a high salience level for vitality. However, the perceived degree of change is seen as the primary "cause" of the *salience* of vitality concerns to a given group of individuals. The relationship between salience and change is outlined in research proposition 4.

Research proposition 4:

The salience of vitality concerns will increase as a function of the degree of perceived change in ingroup and outgroup vitality.

The perceived direction of change in vitality will be important to individuals' assessments of vitality, and most importantly, to their assessment of the *degree of difference* between in- and outgroup vitality. Sachdev et al. (1987, 1990) invoke the notion of "contrast accentuation" to account for their findings concerning first-generation Chinese immigrants in Toronto and London. They show that first-generation immigrants (who have undergone a decrease in vitality) perceive their group's vitality as lower than other more established immigrant communities or the native population. They argue that the direction of a change in vitality will influence how positively/negatively the new situation is perceived,

since the new situation will be perceived in comparison to the old one in their homeland (cf. also Gallois and Pittam 1991).

Sachdev et al's (1987, 1990) analysis builds upon the basic tenets of social comparison theory (Festinger 1954). Those undergoing a decrease in vitality will perceive their vitality as lower than those in the same situation not having undergone the decrease (i.e. second-generation immigrants), due to an immediate and salient intrapersonal comparison. Support for this analysis is found in the results of Young et al. (1988). They found the "perceptual distortions in favor of outgroup vitality" profile (see Figure 3) in a group of germanophone students studying in a francophone area of Switzerland. The students had recently moved to the area, and hence their low assessments of germanophone vitality (relative to the assessments of the vitality of the local francophone population) are explicable in terms of a contrast accentuation with their previous strongly germanophone context. This explanation will also have implications for those going through an increase in vitality, which should receive empirical attention. Do first-generation Jews in Israel, for instance, perceive Jewish vitality there as higher than second-generation immigrants? (Cf. Kraemer and Olshtain 1989; Kraemer et al., this issue.) Research propositions 5a and 5b both derive from the above discussion.

Research proposition 5a:

A perceived decrease in vitality for the ingroup will lead to an attenuation of intergroup vitality difference by the dominant group and to an accentuation of intergroup vitality difference by the subordinate group.

Research proposition 5b:

A perceived increase in vitality for the ingroup will lead to an accentuation of intergroup vitality difference by the dominant group and to an attentuation of intergroup vitality difference by the subordinate group.

Next, the first column of Figure 5 introduces the importance of levels of ethnolinguistic identification. The notion of identity has been invoked in a number of studies in the area, with a variety of findings. Gao et al. (1990) demonstrated that for Mexican Americans, ethnolinguistic identity was positively correlated with their perceived vitality. Those who identified highly with their ethnic group perceived the vitality of that group to be relatively high. In a large-scale study of francophone groups across Canada, Landry and Allard (1991b, 1994) have found similar results. However, Giles and Johnson's (1981) group of Welsh students showed

a contrasting pattern. Those identifying highly with their Welsh ethnicity and the Welsh language perceived Welsh vitality to be lower than those identifying less strongly. Similar results have been shown by Ytsma et al. (this issue) for Frisians in the Dutch context.

Such contrasting results may well originate in interactions between ethnolinguistic identification and other elements of the situation, such as concomitant changes in *objective* vitality. We can assume that those who identified strongly with the Welsh language would be more aware of the decline in Welsh vitality over recent years. Such awareness might well lead to lower ratings than those of peers less attached to the language, and hence less impacted by its decline. Among the Mexican group, those identifying highly might well be aware of the growing strength (at least demographically) of their group in the USA, hence the alternative pattern. Ytsma et al. (this issue) support this contention by stating that identity and vitality may be inversely related in low-vitality groups, but positively related in higher-vitality groups. The effects of ethnolinguistic vitality are hence partly a function of different levels of awareness (and concern) regarding an intergroup dynamic across different levels of identifiers — a fact that is underlined in research proposition 6 below. These conclusions highlight the importance of salience and social comparison, as discussed above. The contrasting results obtained indicate that this may be an area of further interest to those in the field. More generally, they indicate that any specific hypotheses regarding any of the factors under discussion should probably be tempered by reference to interactions that will occur between many of them.

Research proposition 6:

High levels of ethnolinguistic identification will "enhance/accentuate" the processes outlined in other research propositions — especially those in research propositions 4 and 5.

As has been shown by Hogg et al. (1989), and more recently by Kristiansen et al. (1991), it is important to note that the context of comparison is crucial to an understanding of the formation of intergroup vitality profiles. The latter study showed that assessments of vitality by Danes and Anglos in a community in Southern California were affected by whether individuals were simultaneously asked to assess Mexican vitality or not. This simultaneous assessment led to higher assessments of Danish and Anglo vitality across Danish and Anglo respondents. Similarly, Ros et al. (1987, this issue) point to the necessity of examining the relative vitalities of a number of groups in a given situation, rather

than the comparative work that is generally done on two groups. In addition, it should be noted that the process of asking someone to complete rating scales regarding their group's vitality actively constructs that group's, and the intergroup situation's, reality for that participant (Reicher 1986). This is important both in terms of making the group comparison possibly more salient than normal, and also in constructing for that individual a world in which such boundaries are significant and where membership is expected and normative. Research proposition 7 reflects our concern with contextual issues.

Research proposition 7:

All processes described above will be mediated by the immediate context of assessment, including language of questionnaire, comparisons invoked, etc.

As above, the vitality profiles identified thus far in Figures 2, 3, and 4 have, of course, multiple determinants. Those identified in the previous paragraphs are those that have been identified as important to date. However, one of the main intentions of this paper is to draw attention to the diversity of forces influencing vitality assessment, and hence to stimulate research on these and to identify further variables that may be of importance. Such research will enable more sophisticated analyses of intergroup vitality assessment than that presented here. Further factors from the intergroup literature are certainly important to this analysis, and constructs such as the legitimacy–illegitimacy of a group's status and power (see Sachdev and Bourhis 1991 and proposition 8b below) and perceived strength and hardness of boundaries (Giles and Johnson 1987) may have potential here. A more complete analysis of all of these would be valuable, not only for the vitality literature, but thereafter for the intergroup area as a whole.

To summarize, it seems important to refer now explicitly to the second column of Figure 5. Throughout this discussion, reference has been made to the various dimensions of vitality assessment that the situational factors described appear to be influencing. These relate to the profiles initially presented (Figures 2, 3, and 4) and appear to fall into three important dimensions. First, we are concerned with the *direction of vitality differences* in the assessments. Relating to the notion of societal uncertainty, this dimension concerns itself with whether different groups maintain a broadly similar view of their relative vitalities or not. Second, we are concerned with the *salience of vitality issues* for individuals. This is broadly seen to be influenced by the level of change occurring for an individual as regards their perceived vitality and will be important, as we

shall argue shortly, with respect to the volume of discourse and level of affect regarding vitality and group concerns. Finally, we are concerned with the *degree of vitality differences* displayed by different groups in their assessment of their relative vitalities. Groups are likely to differ according to whether they display perceptual distortions in favor of the ingroup or the outgroup in their vitality assessments (i.e. whether they accentuate or attentuate the differences between the groups).

Outcomes of vitality assessments

The variations in vitality assessment described above are seen as bearing upon a number of communicative functions. Later, some issues surrounding a potential study of the "discourse" of vitality will be discussed. First, however, we shall mention the role that perceived vitality may have to play in two other aspects of an individual's language behavior: an individual's proficiency in a given language, and accommodation strategies in intergroup encounters.

Effects relating to inter- and intragroup language behavior

Bilingualism.   Giles and Byrne's (1982) intergroup model of second-language acquisition was among the initial attempts to explicate the conditions under which vitality might have a role to play in determining second-language acquisition (see also Clément, 1980). They indicated that an individual identifying weakly with their group, and perceiving its vitality to be low, would be likely to learn a second language in a "subtractive" fashion, i.e. to acquire nativelike proficiency in the dominant tongue (Lambert 1975). Such learners would often lose proficiency in their first language. Individuals with higher vitality and/or identity were seen as more likely to learn a second language in an "additive" fashion — the intent would not be to acquire nativelike proficiency. It is interesting here to note the findings of Hogg et al (1989) regarding betrayal. They found that subordinate group members proficient in the dominant tongue are denigrated by individuals identifying strongly with the subordinate group (see also Segalowtiz and Gratbonton 1977).

Landry, Allard, and coworkers have developed a model of additive/subtractive bilingualism, based in the Canadian context (Landry 1982; Landry and Allard 1991b, 1992, 1994; Landry et al. 1991). Their model is centered upon a number of levels of determinants of additive and subtractive bilingualism. At the sociological level, a group's "objec-

tive vitality" is important in influencing the sociopsychological level. At the latter level the authors focus on an individual's network of linguistic contacts (INLC) within the family, educational circles, and the mass media. At the psychological level, two interacting factors are important. First, an individual's competence in a given language, and second, their cognitive affective disposition toward learning a language. "Cognitive-affective disposition" is conceptualized in terms of people's beliefs about their group's vitality — what has previously been referred to as subjective vitality. Most important to the model are a series of findings (Landry and Allard 1991b, 1992; Landry et al. 1991) indicating that subjective impressions of both vitality and proficiency in the minority mother tongue (French in this case) are related to the strength of the INLC. It should be recalled that Landry and Allard conceive of vitality in terms of a belief system, and that their questionnaire (the BEVQ) builds upon this perspective. Allard and Landry (this issue) present a first attempt at comparing the BEVQ with the SVQ. Previous research has indicated that the BEVQ may be more powerful at predicting within-group differences in language behavior, while the SVQ is adequate for examining between-group differences. Recently, Kraemer et al. (this issue) have found support for the validity of the SVQ for intragroup as well as for intergroup differences (see also Sachdev 1991). Certainly research concerning different measurement tools for assessing vitality needs to be extended cross-culturally.

The program of research carried out by Landry and colleagues (Landry and Allard, this issue; Landry et al. 1991) has demonstrated the importance of both objective and subjective vitality within the province of bilingualism. Such success contributes to a sense that vitality may well contribute to an understanding of many features of language use.

Vitality and accommodation. Given that interlocutors share a language (be it a first or second language for them), Giles and coworkers (e.g. Giles et al. 1977, 1987) have developed a theory (communication accommodation theory — CAT) to account for the various ways in which individuals may modify their speech in relation to an interlocutor. Different levels of such "accommodation" have a strong influence on interpersonal relationships in terms of power, liking and social evaluation. Generally a set toward convergence of speech styles has been identified (Giles and Powesland 1975), and this is normally found to evoke a positive evaluation in the hearer (Simard et al. 1976).

However, accommodation is also seen to have implications for identity management in intergroup relations. Accommodative strategies in such contexts will be profoundly influenced by underlying sociostructural and

intergroup factors, as well as by the person's levels of identification with their various group memberships (Bourhis and Giles 1977; Giles and Johnson 1987). As such, speech accommodation is argued to be influenced by subjective assessments of ethnolinguistic vitality. The strength of a group, and particularly an individual's assessments of the strength of that group, will be powerful forces in determining the degree of accommodative behavior that the individual engages in an intergroup encounter.

Research is underway on the interaction of vitality and accommodation variables (see e.g. Giles and Johnson 1981, 1987; Yaeger-Dror 1988; Ytsma et al., this issue). Most simply, Bourhis (1979) proposed that the language of high-vitality speakers is likely to be dominant in cross-cultural encounters (and therefore the likely target of communicative convergence) involving members of high- and low-vitality groups. In a series of studies conducted in Montreal and Quebec City, Genesee and Bourhis (1982, 1988) showed that different accommodation strategies were perceived as more or less normative depending on the relative vitality of the francophone and anglophone communities sampled in these cities. As regards studies of actual language behaviors, a series of field studies conducted with Montreal pedestrians showed that francophones were more likely to converge to English with Quebec anglophones than the latter were likely to converge to French with francophones (Bourhis 1984b). These patterns in favor of English usage were obtained in the French majority setting of Montreal, despite recent efforts by the Quebec government to increase the status of French relative to English through the passage of Law 101 in 1977 (Bourhis 1984a). Despite these objective changes in favor of francophone vitality, the results reflected older patterns of vitality perceptions in which Quebec anglophones were perceived as the dominant high-status minority relative to the lower-status francophone majority. Arguably, such results attest to the necessity of considering both objective and subjective vitality when seeking to account for accommodative strategies in cross-cultural encounters. Note that Sachdev and Bourhis (1990b) discuss in some detail the role that *self*-stereotyping has to play in these processes. In addition, Bourhis (1979) describes the relationship between different (evolving) vitality profiles, and the types of diglossia that may emerge within such contexts. His framing of diglossia within an accommodative framework is useful in that it strengthens the argument concerning a vitality–accommodation link (see also Landry and Allard, this issue).

As illustrated in Figure 5, any link between vitality assessment and accommodative behavior will be mediated by the initial situational elements described above. First, it is thought that subjective vitality and

identity might interact in determining accommodation. There seems to be little incentive for a dominant (high-vitality) group member to converge toward a subordinate group member, and hence we would predict patterns of maintenance or divergence across the board (see Bourhis 1979, 1994). However, for a subordinate group member the degree of divergence may be more affected by identity. Hence a subordinate group member who identifies only weakly with his/her group is quite likely to converge toward the dominant group for instrumental purposes (e.g. "passing" for white in certain interracial settings). High identifiers in the subordinate group seem very unlikely to do this. Following on from Giles and Johnson (1987), we submit the following research proposition:

Research proposition 8a:

Group members who perceive their ingroup to have high vitality will tend to converge little towards outgroup members, whereas group members who perceive their ingroup to have low vitality will tend to converge toward the outgroup, and especially so if their identification with their own group is low. As identification with the ingroup increases, members of low-vitality groups will become less likely to converge toward the outgroup.

Beyond this, we would expect the perceived legitimacy–illegitimacy of the relative status of ingroup–outgroup relations to be relevant here (see Turner and Brown 1978) such that perceiving one's group's position to be unfair and illegitimate would increase the likelihood of communicative divergence (Giles and Johnson 1987). For the dominant group, an awareness of low legitimacy will imply a threat to their vitality, which we expect to be countered through divergent behavior (cf. Essed 1990; Louw et al. 1990). This is especially likely if the dominant group is a minority (Sachdev and Bourhis 1991). For the subordinate group, perceptions of high legitimacy may well lead to resignation, and a decline in activism and the like. This may well lead to an increase in "assimilative"-type behaviors, and hence convergent language use. An attempt to summarize these points is made in the following:

Research proposition 8b·

Group members who perceive their ingroup's societal position as illegitimate and unjust will be inclined toward divergent intergroup behavior (irrespective of whether they have high or low perceived ingroup vitality). Under conditions of higher perceived legitimacy, low subjective vitality groups will be likely in intergroup contexts to converge or to diverge depending upon the individual's

level of identification (i.e. low or high, respectively), whereas higher vitality groups will not converge (irrespective of their levels of ingroup identification).

It may be useful to attempt to combine our analysis of the profiles with this language behavior section. For the "nonconsensual vitality perceptions" profile (Figure 4), it seems sensible to predict a divergent tone to accommodation behaviors. It is thought that these situations will be characterized by a degree of intragroup focus. The "perceptual distortions in favor of ingroup vitality" profile (Figure 2) seems also to lend itself to a divergent stance. However, we suspect that such situations, when relatively stable, reflect both groups' awareness and respect for the other's position and are likely to include a fair degree of intergroup contact and cooperation. In such situations convergence will prevail, with maintenance and divergence only being present in situations where interpersonal conflict occurs and group membership is salient. The "perceptual distortions in favor of outgroup vitality" profile (Figure 3) is likely to manifest itself in a high degree of intergroup convergence among the subordinate group. According to Giles (1978; Giles et al. 1977), members of a subordinate group in such a situation are likely to engage in a number of strategies. One of these may be to leave their group and try to assimilate into the dominant outgroup. To achieve this, convergence will be used. The dominant group members are more likely to maintain their speech style, with there being few incentives to converge to a fractured and subordinate outgroup. In the case where the "perceptual distortions in favor of outgroup vitality" profile is associated with a more hostile environment, then, we might expect a higher degree of divergence on both parts. The above complexity may be summarized as in research proposition 9 (see Bourhis 1979 for a detailed review of related concerns).

Research proposition 9:

The "*perceptual distortions in favor of ingroup vitality*" profile will lead to predominantly convergent behavior, except in a situation of interpersonal conflict with intergroup salience. The "*perceptual distortions in favor of outgroup vitality*" profile will lead to convergence in low vitality groups, and divergence/maintenance in high vitality groups. The "*non-consensual vitality perceptions*" profile will likely lead to a divergent tone from all groups.

The discourse of vitality

We see it as important to look at the nature of discourse concerning vitality affairs. The communication of intergroup perceptions and beliefs

is important to study, since it is through such communication that people become aware of their own status as group members, and of the implications of that group membership. The communication of vitality beliefs will be important in determining people's attitudes toward speaking their language, and actively supporting it within a community and a society (Allard and Landry 1986). In addition, talk about vitality will influence the construction of group representations of relative intergroup vitality, which influence the visibility and activity of groups within their respective cultures (cf. Farr and Moscovici 1984). Pierson (this issue) makes a similar point concerning the detail that is lost in traditional vitality research, and the value of more qualitative anthropological and ethnographic work in understanding the complexities of multilingual/multicultural situations (see also Louw-Potgieter 1991).

Discourse data has been collected from 45 students engaging in small group discussions concerning the strengths and weaknesses of various ethnolinguistic groups in California. In addition, a corpus of newspaper articles pertaining to the same theme in California and Quebec has been collected as examples of "naturally occurring" vitality discourse. Examples will be provided from these data sets.

As regards the ethnolinguistic situation in Quebec, the francophone majority (82% of the 7 million population) has long been the economic underdog relative to the anglophone minority (10% of the population). Consequently, the English language has dominated the French language in status value and as the primary language of business and economic advancement in Quebec (Bourhis 1984b). However, discontent among majority-group francophones led to forceful demands for linguistic and political changes in Quebec. This led to the election of the pro-sovereignty Parti-Quebecois in 1976 and the passage of Law 101 in 1977 making French the only official language of Quebec (Bourhis 1984a). Anglophone opposition to Law 101 was influential in changing aspects of the law, but continuing tension resulted in the emigration of 120,000 anglophones from Quebec to Anglo-Canada. By the 1990s, the considerable institutional support enjoyed by Quebec anglophones was not enough to compensate for the drop in status and demography experienced by an anglophone minority feeling increasingly threatened by political events in Quebec (Bourhis and Lepicq 1993). Conversely, Quebec francophones have felt increasingly aware of their minority status in Canada, following the rejection by Anglo-Canada of a constitutional amendment that would have recognized Quebec as a distinct francophone society within the Canadian constitution. Taken together, recent linguistic and political tensions have combined to make both francophones and anglophones

feel insecure about their respective vitalities within the Quebec intergroup setting.

This situation of "mutual perceived threat" is somewhat parallel to the experience of Anglo and Hispanic groups in California. According to the Center for the Continuing Study of the Californian Economy projections (CCSCE 1985), the Hispanic population of California currently stands at 24.2 percent of the 29 million people in the state, compared to non-Hispanic whites who make up 59.8 percent of the population. CCSCE (1985) also indicate that by the year 2000 the Hispanic proportion will have grown to 29.2 percent. By that time, Hispanics will account for 36 percent of the age group under age 17, making them the ethnic group with the lowest median age. Hispanics will account for 64.4 percent of the population growth, and 46.8 percent of the growth in number of households. Some Anglos in California have a tendency to view this Hispanic demographic strength as threatening and somewhat out of control. However, the Hispanic group in general has low status, largely filling the lower strata of employment. Much political debate in recent years has concerned institutional support for the Hispanic group, and specifically whether the government should lend its support to the maintenance of the Spanish language. Many Hispanics tend to view the Anglo system as being unsupportive of their language, and at times explicitly discriminatory, whereas a large sector of the Anglo population see it as the Hispanic responsibility to learn the language of their new environs. The conflict between these groups culminated in the democratic adoption of English as the sole official language of the State in the late 1980s. California is one of 18 states to have adopted such amendments to date (San Miguel 1986; see also Padilla et al. 1991; Bourhis and Lepicq 1993, for more detail on the Southern California and Quebec contexts, respectively.) In examining the discourse of vitality in the above contexts, three dimensions have been identified as important.

Volume of vitality discourse.   First, as hinted above, the amount, or as we prefer to call it, the volume of discourse concerning vitality is clearly an important dimension. Contexts in which vitality is salient, and a frequent topic of discussion, are likely to differ fundamentally from those in which it is less of an issue. It is argued that situations in which vitality is a prominent topic are likely to be characterized by a fair degree of societal instability or uncertainty. In the group discussions to which we have just referred, explicit or implicit references to vitality were rare, and many of the participants obviously found it hard to conceive of language groups as "having strength" or "being weak." In addition most, when asked, indicated that they rarely talked about such issues in their everyday

lives. The contexts in which they said they did talk about vitality, and the contexts in which it appeared spontaneously, appeared to be indicative of when vitality becomes salient (see extracts I-III). (Transcription conventions are derived from those presented by Potter and Wetherell [1988]: I = interviewer in the text; A, B, C, etc., are participants in the study.)

Extract I

I: First maybe you could give me your opinions on minority languages and whether you think they're a good thing or a bad thing in society, whether you would support those who encourage minority languages or whether you think it's better if everybody speaks the same language and that makes it sort of easier (.) maybe you have some opinions on that.

B: I think people should learn both from my experience cos when I lived in Texas I was surrounded by the majority of the people were all English speaking, in fact everyone around me and in fact that's when I found my language died out for me then when I moved to California, more of my native tongue came around me and that's when it flourished again and I think it helps to have both and I think people should I mean not focus on just one and focus on both instead cos I find that a lot more helpful and I've learnt to appreciate my native tongue now more than I did before but I've also I haven't like lost less respect or my attainment for English either.

Extract II

I: Right (......) okay (.) I was wondering umm with these sort of issues about minority languages (.) about different groups speaking different languages in this society (.) uhh how much for instance you think you talk about them say with your family or your friends.

C: Wasn't there like if like five years ago a big deal about (.) I remember trying to do a paper on it five years ago

I: (laughter)

C: about umm (.) the Hispanics wanting to speak Spanish and people wanting to make it like all English and then they brought in Canada as an example and them umm (..) I remember they then gave all these statistics like fifty percent of them of the of California alone speaks Spanish and then like (.) thirty or something like that of the

I: right

C: the United States (.) so it's it's like (.) there (..) it's still confronting you

Extract III

"Immigration called suicidal for francophone Quebec" (headline, *The Gazette,* Montreal, March 21, 1991).

In Extract I, the topic is an example of an individual change regarding community support for speaking a language. The speaker describes moving from an area of low (in this case Vietnamese) vitality to an area of higher vitality. The change was salient enough to inspire spontaneous talk about it, and also apparently to change the speaker's language behavior at the time. Note the relevance of this to the discussion above of vitality's influence upon varying types of bilingualism. Extract II is concerned with a more societally based change in vitality — the reference is to a statewide California ballot, concerning the use of Spanish in government services and publications (Proposition 63: the "English Only" Amendment). This event was salient in terms of the individual's memory and also inspired discussion at the time. Such discussion comes in contrast to the general dearth of such references in the student interviews. Extract III indicates that the volume of *public* discourse on such issues will also fluctuate in the face of a perceived change in vitality. The article is one of a number that appeared debating a remark made by a radio talk-show host. The individual concerned indicated that an influx of nonfrancophone immigrants to Quebec was diluting the dominant French-speaking culture. The comment inspired a number of phone calls to the radio station, and further debate in the news media.

Tone of vitality discourse.   Second, what will be generally referred to as the "tone" of vitality discourse is important. Different groups within a context are liable to differ in terms of whether they view their vitality as high or low relative to some intragroup/intrapersonal comparison point, or whether they see the future as bringing them closer to, or further from, that ideal. It is argued that these groups will vary in the affective tone of their talk about vitality. The tone will also vary as a function of how they see other groups within the context comparing to them, and how they conceive of intergroup competition in vitality. Such tone (positive or negative) may be expressed in different ways, as is illustrated below (extracts IV and V).

Extract IV

I: any other comments or questions about it?
    A: I think it's kind of funny that we're becoming a minority now — Caucasians in California (.) especially me — blond hair blue eyes (laugh) I've discussed that actually with a lot of my friends. It's
    kind of funny I think it'll be interesting the future's gonna be really interesting there'll be a lot of stuff happening in California

Extract V

"We need to work together in the future for our children," said Jesus Saucedo, director of the Guadalupe Community Center. "We are going to have stronger children in the future because they are going to know their culture," he said. Rogelio Flores, commissioner of the Santa Maria Municipal Court, told the delegation that Mexicans and Mexican Americans need to work together to encourage the community's children to go to college and become doctors, lawyers and judges. "I can count on one hand the number of Mexican attorneys in this valley," Flores said (*Santa Barbara News Press*, May 3, 1989).

Extract IV is presented in an informal interpersonal context, and the speaker provides a semihumorous analysis of the growth in Hispanic vitality and the implicit correspondent decline in his own vitality. The representation of the future as being "funny" and "interesting" perhaps reflects the approach to a loss of vitality by someone from a group not accustomed to dealing with such factors. Extract V falls into the area of more public discourse concerning vitality issues and contrasts with extract IV in a number of ways. First, it is from a member of a low-vitality group, but a group that is on the increase. The future is viewed in a positive fashion, and the overall tone is hopeful and active. It is also interesting to note that here, and generally, the two extracts conceptualize vitality in different ways. The individual in extract IV focuses on Hispanic strength in the demographic area, while the Hispanic speakers focus more on Hispanic weaknesses with regard to representation in high-status professions, and the importance of culture for personal strength (see also below).

Through further data collection and analysis it might be profitable to begin to identify different elements of this general tone category. For instance, with respect to the above, it might be useful to discern whether an individual discusses vitality in terms of their own group or the out-group. The trend in the Californian context appears to be for both groups to focus on the lower-vitality (Hispanic) group, even when Anglos are relating to their own vitality (as in extract IV). However, the Quebec data indicate that much discourse revolves around the francophone population, which has recently undergone an increase in vitality.

Focus on vitality discourse. Third, individuals or groups are likely to differ in the dimensional "focus" of their talk concerning vitality. Different dimensions of vitality will be salient to different individuals or groups in different contexts, and the salience of these dimensions will lead to differing representations of the intergroup situation. If this focus is largely based on an intragroup perspective, then the intergroup repre-

sentations emerging may well differ significantly from group to group. In extreme cases, such differences may be related to such results as found by Pierson et al. (1987; see above). This factor is illustrated in extracts IV and V, and also below (extracts VI and VII).

Extract VI

"In one recent year in Quebec, 209 anglophones applied for civil service jobs; only 9 were hired. Because they didn't want to live in Quebec City? Hardly. Of the 10,000 Quebec civil servants in Montreal, only 87 are anglophones" (*The Gazette,* Montreal, March 17, 1991).

Extract VII

I: How how do you think the (.) the minority group should go about (.) sort of making sure they keep their language?
   A: I think they need to keep a happy medium I mean (.) they can't all take off and live in one area and (.) you know (.) totally congregate in one space and take over a city.
I: Right =
A: = But I mean they should have like (.) meetings and groups and social events and stuff like that
I: Right
A: Like our multicultural center that's going to go in I mean that's that's fantastic I think it's really great
I: right
A: and I'm glad that most of the new stuff is going to be from multiculture

Extract VI indicates the bitter, disenfranchized tone with which a minority group may express their dissatisfaction with the perceived illegitimacy of their position and may be paralleled with extract V above. The extract provides an example of how discourse on perceived discrimination and vitality are at times inextricably bound together. In extract VII the individual is implicitly recognizing the dimensional differences that exist and is suggesting some form of "compromise." Language maintenance in the minority group is obviously helped by the group living together, but this is not seen as acceptable and is possibly seen as a threat by the majority group member. Rather, it is suggested that the assimilation implied by population diffusion should be ameliorated within the minority group by less threatening activities such as meetings and multicultural activities. Both extracts illustrate a similar pattern, whereby representation of a group and its language in public life is lagging behind the group's demographic standing.

Much more empirical work is required concerning talk about vitality

in order that we be in a better position to proffer testable research propositions about it. Our analysis also hopefully implies that some attention should be paid to the motivational and rhetorical issues underlying people's communicated assessments of their group's vitalities. This point is made by Hogg et al. (1989; Currie and Hogg, this issue) in an Australian-Italian context, and more generally — albeit in another sphere — by Billig (1987). The people partaking in vitality surveys, and the scales themselves, are part of an ongoing intergroup process, and the action of filling out the scales may be an attempt to "make a point" of some sort (e.g. highlighting deprived resources), as well as "objectively" assessing a group's position. In other words, while it is conceptually convenient to schematically separate elements of the situation from elements of the assessment and from assessment outcomes, in reality it is difficult, if not utterly impossible, to separate them theoretically.

The three discourse categories described above result from a preliminary and fairly global analysis. Their theoretical underpinnings lie mostly in the original work on vitality factors (Bourhis et al. 1981; Giles et al. 1977), and in Sachdev et al.'s (1987, 1990) work on contrast accentuation. Links are apparent to recent developments in the discourse field (see Coupland et al. 1988; Potter and Wetherell 1988), although these would require more systematic analysis to do justice to them. The current perspective is useful in that the salience, focus, and tone of vitality discourse will be important in determining individual and group-based beliefs concerning subjective vitality (Allard and Landry 1986) and will have direct implications for the vitality profiles described above. An understanding of the construction and transmission of vitality representations and beliefs can only help in our understanding of intergroup factors affecting language use. Such study will also have direct implications for the study of language attitudes (Bourhis and Sachdev 1984), second-language learning (Giles and Byrne 1982), and prejudice and stereotyping (van Dijk 1987). The present authors also agree that there is useful work to be done concerning the links between vitality assessments and intergroup nonverbal behavior outcomes as indicated in Figure 5; at present we are unaware of any work concerning this.

Cognitive and relational outcomes

Further to the strictly communicative manifestations, there will be attitudinal and relational outcomes of vitality assessment. In terms of attitudes, the implications of vitality for stereotyping are huge and may well be uncovered, at least partly, in the examination of newspaper articles

concerning, for instance, immigrant groups represented as migrating, fast-breeding hordes (Husband 1977). Kraemer et al. (this issue) address the relationship between vitality and attitudes in more detail. They find links between scores on the SVQ and attitudes of Israeli Arabs to both Arab- and Jewish-Israeli groups and languages. Similarly, Bourhis and Sachdev (1984) found that the immediate vitality setting and the ensuing subjective ratings of vitality impact the language attitudes of Anglo- and Italo-Canadians to the use of their English and Italian. Ros et al. (this issue) report interesting findings concerning the relationship between atributional processes and ethnolinguistic vitality. Indeed, how people publicly (as well as privately) *account* (cf. Cody and McLaughlin 1990; Schonbach 1990) for their particular intergroup vitality profile, let alone rhetorically reject or devalue the accounts of relevant others (a form of "meta-accounting"), is a fascinating cognitive as well as communicative issue that could ultimately influence the very elements of the situation within which Figure 5 was introduced (see again extract VI).

Regarding the relational outcomes, the work concerning interindividual accommodation should start to make some powerful predictions concerning approach–avoidance, respect–contempt and other similar patterns. In addition, Currie and Hogg (this issue; Hogg et al. 1989) have examined the influence of vitality assessments on the adjustment of Vietamese immigrants to Australia. They found that vitality assessments of the immigrants served as good predictors of immigrant adjustment. To this extent, there is evidence that vitality scores will predict the successful adjustment of newcomers to a culture, and the degree to which such newcomers forge successful and profitable bonds with the new "native" culture. The work of Landry and Allard (1992, 1993, this issue) and Kraemer et al. (this issue) contributes to our understanding of relational outcomes of vitality assessment through their work on networks of linguistic contact.

Concluding remarks

The multidimensional dynamics of vitality discourse can be identified as a priority for future research. In addition, it seems important to return to our initial situational elements and begin testing these to examine their influence and interactions in determining emergent vitality profiles around the world. The recent work of Sachdev and Bourhis (1991) also implies the value of accompanying survey research with experimental manipulations of "objective" vitality. As a whole our analysis attempts to describe the different levels on which vitality exists and has an impact. It makes

explicit the links between vitality and language use, as well as attempting to indicate the factors underlying and influencing vitality assessment. It is argued that vitality research to date has focused almost exclusively, and quantitatively, on people's cognitive assessments of in- and outgroup vitality, with only a small amount of work examining the determinants and consequences of these assessments.

It is time to examine the complexities of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality in a more holistic fashion, and to look at the multiple determinants of vitality assessment, as well as the linguistic and discoursal manifestations of it. Such work will then enable us to examine how representations of vitality within public and private discourse go about influencing the profiles that are observed. Once these processes are more fully understood, ethnolinguistic vitality may claim a central role in theories of intergroup communication and conflict. We feel that the research propositions outlined above present a coherent outline for future research in the area aimed at a contextually sensitive and ultimately informative body of literature for vitality scholars to work from.

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Note

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