

**The Sri Lankan Tamils -
A Comparative Analysis of the Experiences of
the Second Generation in the UK and Sri Lanka**

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Timely Enumerations Concerning Sri Lanka

Oliver Rice

Those are the central mountains,
the surrounding plains,
the coasts of mangrove, lagoon, river delta.

This is the temple compound
where the rite will begin this morning
exactly at the hour of Buddha's enlightenment.

A muttering rises from the roadway
where already, the curfew lifted,
the prawn sellers are out.

That is a tea estate,
a rubber,
a coconut,
where coolies live and die.
There is a graphite mine
where they dig on their knees.

This is the assistant in the ceremony arriving,
who otherwise drives a three wheel taxi,
and these are the brushes, the paints,
the ritual mirror he bears.

The koha birds begin their proclamations
to the boutiques in the new town,
the tenements in the old town,
to the enclaves of the Tamil Hindu minority,
the Sinhalese Buddhist majority.

Those are the relics of the Portuguese occupation,
the Dutch,
the British,
of the struggle for independence.

Here is the ladder propped before the sculpture,
and this is the artist, regally attired,
climbing meticulously, rung by rung,
his back to the carving,
who otherwise keeps records for the tax collector.

The sun rises again on the headlines,
the beggars at the railroad station,
the fish drying on the beach.

Those are the sites of bloodshed
between the government and the insurgents,
villages where massacres have occurred,

rooms where captives were tortured,
grounds where they were surreptitiously buried.

This is the assistant holding the mirror
for the artist to view the stone face,
and here is the artist painting, over his shoulder,
the eyes of the statue,
whereupon it is transformed into the god.

Someone wails behind the rusty bars of a window.

That is a convoy of tanks,
an elder fixing his shoes under an umbrella,
a boy in a bullock cart with a rag around his head,
a film of smog on the palm leaves,
debris from the bombing of a casino.

This is the artist being led away blindfolded.

A dog fight breaks out in the schoolyard.

That is a souvenir shop,
attended by a girl in a white sarong.

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ABSTRACT

There are many studies that focus upon the lives and experiences of the children of migrants born in the settlement country, the group known as the second generation. Yet, there are few, if any that explore the experiences of the middle class Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK. This study looks to remedy this by comparing the experiences of the educated middle class second generation in the UK with their contemporaries in Sri Lanka. By focusing on two complimentary research sites the study provides an insight into how the experiences of the first generation in Sri Lanka may have influenced responses and reactions to their children born and brought up in the UK. This empirical research is therefore unique in that it focuses on the Sri Lankan Tamil middle class second generation and presents a comparison of both ends of the migratory journey.

This study is a qualitative piece of research involving two periods of fieldwork in Sri Lanka and the UK. 3-months were spent in Colombo, Sri Lanka from June 2005 to September 2005 and in the UK, London and Leeds were the fieldwork sites, with interviewing from January 2006 to April 2006. Both in Sri Lanka and the UK, through a process of strategic sampling as a result of snowballing, the participants were educated, middle class Sri Lankan Tamils of both genders and between the ages of 14-34.

The thesis focuses upon three main themes, pre-marital relationships and marriage, traditional practices and migration. Firstly, there has been a clear shift away from the traditional model of arranged marriage both in Sri Lanka and the UK, however there still remains the expectation to marry within caste, class, religious and most importantly ethnic boundaries. The number of individuals choosing to marry out is increasing, yet this appears to be more accepted in Sri Lanka than the UK. Both in Sri Lanka and the UK cultural traits like the coming of age ceremony are gradually declining, however the main concern in the UK amongst the second generation is that the Tamil language is disappearing. For many this has a direct link to ethnic identity and there is a worry that this will continue to erode. Directly related to this is the weakening of practical and emotional ties between the second generation in the UK and Sri Lanka. The tsunami in 2004 encouraged many young Sri Lankan Tamils to fund raise and send financial remittances to family, friends and charities in Sri Lanka. However, four years on there is increasing transnational redundancy and severing of ties with Sri Lanka evident in the responses and experiences of the second generation in the UK.

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ABBREVIATIONS

LTTE – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

SLMC – Sri Lankan Muslim Congress

GLOSSARY

SARI/SAREE – Traditional dress for women worn mainly on the Indian Sub continent. Made up of the sari blouse (choli), petticoat and a long piece of unstitched material, which is wrapped around the body.

THALI KODI – Necklace and pendant given by the groom to the bride during the wedding ceremony. It is a symbol of union, similar to that of the wedding ring or band. Both Hindu and Christian women wear the thali, however the image on the pendant differs. For Hindu women it is usually an image of a Hindu God, like Lakshmi, while Christian women have an image of a dove, cross or Bible.

VESHTI – Traditional dress for Sri Lankan Tamil men consisting of a long piece of unstitched material worn like a sarong. Normally worn with a cotton shirt.

SAMATHIYA VEEDU – ‘Coming of Age’ ceremony for young Sri Lankan Tamil girls when they begin menstruating.

VELLALA/VELLALAR – The largest and most dominant Sri Lankan Tamil caste, a group who were originally farmers and landowners.

SHALWAR KAMEEZ – Traditional South Asian trouser suit worn by both men and women consisting of a loose tunic (kameez) and trousers (shalwar). Worn throughout the Indian sub continent, the outfit is most commonly associated with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

SHERWANI – National dress for men in Pakistan, the sherwani is a doublet-like coat worn with shalwar trousers. Many Sri Lankan men are adopting the dress for wedding ceremonies.

ARANGATREM – Organised formal graduation of Sri Lankan Tamil dancers, musicians and singers. Often attended by over one hundred people, the arangetram is the official showcase of an individual or groups expertise in the Sri Lankan Tamil arts.

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction to the Sri Lankan Tamil Second Generation

‘He told the boy how the Tamils had lived in the North and the East of Sri Lanka for hundreds of years before Sri Lanka became independent and how, after independence, the Sinhala government refused to recognise their aspirations, to give them autonomy, or the right to self-determination. Tamil people were not asking for anybody else’s country, he said. They only wanted to live in peace in their own country where they have lived for centuries to carve out their own destiny. Rajan’s parents who fled after the riots in 1983 were living proof of why Tamils couldn’t live in dignity under the Sinhalese’.

‘That’s it?’ asked Rajan. ‘That’s what the struggle is about?’

The priest looked at the boy with undisguised annoyance. Are you plain stupid or simply insensitive? He wanted to ask. ‘Is that not enough for you?’ Do you want them to want more?’

‘That’s not what I meant,’ Rajan said. ‘It’s a good thing to want to be free. To be able to do what you want without anybody telling you what to do or think. To have self-determination’. He looked at the priest squarely for the first time since getting in the car. ‘But is self-determination only for your people in Sri Lanka? Do I have no freedom to choose my destiny? Even when I could do so, by living here, in Melbourne!’ (Wickremesekera, 2005: 90-91¹)

Many authors have reflected upon the experiences of the second generation, born and raised in the settlement country of their parents, considering how the generation born to migrant parents organise and balance the often competing norms and values of the country of origin with those of the settlement society (Anwar, 1998; Shaw, 2000; 2001; Ballard, 1977; 1990; 1994; 2003; Hussain, 2005; Hall, 2002; Eade, 1992; 1997). This thesis focuses on the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the UK, analysing how and why the second generation, born and raised in Britain, experience their lives. However, this study is not simply a narrative of the second generation in the UK. The work is more importantly a comparison of the middle class Tamil second generation in the UK to those of the same age in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

In the extract above, the interplay between the priest, of the first generation, and the young Sri Lankan Tamil man of the second generation in Australia, highlights the complexities of the relations between older and younger people in the aftermath of migration, settlement and integration. The priest’s shock and frustration at the young man’s limited knowledge of the

¹ Extract from the novel ‘Distant Warriors’, a story detailing the experiences of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Australia, the lives of the second generation growing up in Melbourne and the complexities these individuals face in balancing the expectations and values of the Tamil community with the norms of their everyday Australian lives.

Sri Lankan conflict and the teenager's need for freedom and independence in the settlement country, are reoccurring ideas throughout this thesis and although the novel is set in Australia, the themes and ideas presented clearly resonate with the UK.

My interest in the British Sri Lankan Tamil community began with the completion of my undergraduate dissertation that analysed the political links between the 'home' country Sri Lanka and diaspora networks in Europe, more specifically the UK (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2002). During this research I began socialising with younger Sri Lankan Tamils and was naturally drawn to their thoughts, opinions and experiences. The desire to understand how the experiences of the first generation migrants have affected their children born and raised in the UK motivated me to produce a comparative study of the first and second generation for my MA thesis. This formed the pilot study of the PhD research that followed (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2004).

1.1 Contributions of the Research

This study explores the lives of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK through a comparison with those of a similar age and socio-economic position in the country of origin, Sri Lanka. The main research questions guiding this study focus upon –

- How has the migratory journey of the second wave of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to the UK had an effect upon the rituals and traditional practices of the diaspora community and their children, the second generation?
- How do the lives of the second generation in the UK compare to those of their peers in Colombo, Sri Lanka? Do these groups construct their identities differently? Are there specific practices and rituals that remain similar?
- How have transnational exchanges altered with the second generation? Are transnational links weakening or simply changing shape?

There are numerous studies that focus upon the lives and experiences of the children of migrants, known as the second generation². However, to my knowledge, at present there are no empirical studies that explore the experiences of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK or any other diaspora settlement country. Any work that has been completed tends to focus upon the children of the more recent migrants of refugee status³. There are a number

² See chapter four for definitions of the 'second generation' and discussion of existing work.

³ For example Maja Jacobsson's unpublished MA thesis that explores contact between young Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK and Sri Lanka. However, most of the participant's parents came

of works of fiction that highlight the issues facing the younger generation of Sri Lankan Tamils in settlement countries like Australia⁴, yet literary work and research on the group in Britain remains limited.

Also few, if any, studies of the second generation in the UK highlight the differences and similarities of the lives of those in both the country of origin and the settlement country. By focusing on both research sites the study also provides an insight into how the experiences of the first generation in Sri Lanka may have influenced how they respond and react to their children born and brought up in the UK. Therefore, this empirical research study is unique on three interwoven levels, firstly by exploring the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation, secondly by focusing upon the middle class children of the second wave of migrants (Daniel, 1995; 1996; 1997) and thirdly by presenting a comparison of both ends of the migratory journey as a means by which to understand the lives of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK in a more detailed and inclusive manner.

To gather the data for this study I conducted 57 in-depth, semi-structured interviews in total, 37 in Sri Lanka and 20 in the UK with both men and women aged between 14-34 years old. To do this I completed a 3-month period of fieldwork in Sri Lanka from June 2005 to September 2005. In the UK the fieldwork also lasted 3 months from January 2006 to April 2006⁵.

1.2 Outline of Chapters

This thesis has nine chapters, of which Chapter Two and Three provide the theoretical background and literary review. These chapters place the study within wider cross-disciplinary theoretical debates, current literature and contemporary research studies. Chapter Four introduces the reader to the second generation. Chapter Five outlines the methodological framework of this thesis and Chapters Six to Nine present and discuss the data analysis of this empirical, experience-based research study.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature concerning South Asian migration to Britain and the differing experiences of journey, arrival and settlement (Ballard, 1994; Brah, 1996; Modood et al, 1997; Parekh, 1997; 2000; Peach, 2006). The chapter then considers the main reasons for Sri Lankan Tamil migration to the UK and the social and political factors that

to the UK in the third wave of migration (Daniel, 1996: 1997) or the individuals themselves hold or have held refugee status.

⁴ See 'Walls' and 'Distant Warriors' by Channa Wickremesekera for examples of fictional literature exploring themes of 'belonging', 'identity' and the second generation in Australia.

⁵ See Section 5.5, Appendix B and Appendix C for further detailing of the research sample.

encouraged and later forced migration. The different waves of migrants that left Sri Lanka from the 1950's through to the present time are also highlighted (Daniel, 1996; 1997). The third wave of migrants, the affluent, high caste students are then focused on as the parents of the second generation this study is primarily concerned with. The arrival and settlement pattern of the Sri Lankan Tamil migrants is then presented. Finally, a review of the literature on the integration of ethnic minority migrants (Parekh, 1998; 2002; Wieviorka, 1995; 1998; Alleyne, 2002; Faist, 2000; Martinello, 1998; Spivak, 1990; Said, 1993) is considered in relation to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora experience.

The chapter then becomes more specifically concerned with some of the elements of migration that are directly applicable to the Sri Lankan Tamil community. The idea of forced migration and displacement is considered, transnationalism in relation to the second generation and the preservation of links between Sri Lanka and the UK (Van Hear, 1998; 2006). The chapter ends with an overview of remittances and the financial exchanges between country of origin and settlement country. Each of these final themes are explored in more detail in chapter nine, with specific reference to the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK and the second generation in particular.

Chapter Three presents an overview of the Sri Lankan context to this study, introducing the reader to the social and political demographics of the island and the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the country of origin (De Silva, 1998; Daniel, 1996; 1997, Fuglerud, 1999; 2001; Gunaratna, 2001; Guneratne, 2004; Hettige, 2004; Hoole et al, 1990; Richardson, 2005). Sri Lanka's colonial legacy in terms of ethnicity and language and the differences between the Tamil communities in Sri Lanka, the Jaffna, east coast, Moor and Indian Tamils are highlighted. The more affluent Colombo Tamils that reside in the Colombo Seven postcode area are also discussed. The reader is introduced to the unique Sri Lankan Tamil caste system and the religious demographic of Sri Lanka.

Chapter Four leads on from chapter three, introducing the reader both to the British context of this study, while also outlining theoretically, some of the main themes analysed in the chapters, six, seven and eight. To begin with the chapter attempts to define the term 'second generation', highlighting current literature and research studies. The second generation, as understood in this study, are the children of the Sri Lankan Tamil migrants who came to the UK for education, employment and to escape the conflict as refugees. This research focuses upon the middle class second generation however, and therefore, none of the parents of the British participants came to the UK classified as refugees. Yet, most came as a result of discriminatory educational policies resulting from the emerging political strife. To explore the

idea of ‘second generation’ both British and North American authors are drawn upon (Werbner et al, 1997; 2004; Hutnyk, 2005; Shaw, 1988; 1994; 2000; 2001; Ballard, 1994; 2003; Gardner, 1994; Rumbaut, 1994; Modood, 1997; Portes, 1997; 1999; 2001; Gap Min et al, 2000; Jones-Correa, 2001; Hall, 2002).

Following this the discussion then outlines the main research themes of the study, as applied in chapters six, seven and eight. These explore the topics of marriage, religious practice, language, British identity and transnationalism. Each of these themes is considered in relation to both the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK and their comparative peers in Sri Lanka. Lastly, Levitt’s (2001; 2002; 2003; 2004) notion of a ‘new second generation’ is presented and the application of the idea to the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK and also the younger generation in Sri Lanka.

Chapter Five discusses the methodological considerations, data collection methods and the epistemological stance of this thesis. The chapter defends the application of the qualitative research model and the importance of interpretivist, empirical research. The selection of grounded theory as the means by which to generate data is outlined and the chapter pays particular attention to the complexities of cross-cultural research at home and abroad.

Chapter Six looks in more detail at the marriage practices of the Sri Lankan Tamil community and specifically focuses on the experiences of the second generation in the UK and the younger generation in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The chapter begins by discussing the differences in the traditional construction of ‘love’ in Sri Lanka and the UK, arguing that this had an important effect upon how the older and younger generation understand and negotiate relationship and marriage. Directly related to this is the increase in pre-marital relationships, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, with mixed reactions from parents and the wider Tamil community. The Sri Lankan Tamil model of marriage is then outlined and parental involvement in the choices of marriage partner for the younger generation. Religious belief and the impact of Hinduism and Christianity on marital practices are then considered. The section argues that as Sri Lankan Tamils become increasingly concerned with losing their ethnic identity, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, Christian Tamils are adopting Hindu marriage traditions and rituals as a way of preserving their cultural identity.

The chapter then moves on to discuss the persistence of both the dowry system and caste in the UK and Sri Lanka, arguing that although these social traditions are now less rigid, they are still important in terms of marriage. The chapter then presents the experiences and opinions of both sets of participants to mixed ethnicity marriage, arguing how the stigma

directly relates to the loss of ethnic identity. Gender and experiences of marriage is then considered and the section outlines why the study looks at the experiences of both men and women. Many men feel a similar pressure to conform and struggle with the expectations of parents and the community in terms of marriage. In many communities migration for marriage is common and in the next section examples in the Sri Lankan Tamil community are discussed. The impact of first generation marital experience on the second generation is then explored, followed by reflections on divorce in the community both in the UK and Sri Lanka. Finally, the chapter looks to the future, considering the expectations the younger generation may have of their own children with regards to marriage and the future of traditional Sri Lankan Tamil marriage practices both within the diaspora in the UK and the culturally modernising Sri Lanka.

Chapter Seven explores the traditional practice, culture and identity of young Sri Lankan Tamil adults. The first section builds upon chapter six, by arguing that Christian Tamils are adopting many of the rituals of Hindu Tamils as a way of preserving identity, under conditions of minority status both in Sri Lanka and the UK. The wearing of the pottu and the thali kodi are two clear examples of cultural merging occurring in both research sites. The section also considers religion and schooling in Sri Lanka, with a particular focus on the international schools many of the participants in Colombo attend or attended. The following section looks in more detail at the cultural life of young Sri Lankan Tamils, in comparison to their parents and how cultural expression is changing. The ‘coming of age’ ritual, samathiya veedu is then explored in detail and highlights how a number of cultural practices, many of which are Hindu and practised in the UK, are no longer common in Sri Lanka among the middle classes. Once again, the desire to preserve ethnic identity encourages the adoption and continuance of rituals in the UK that have become a thing of memory in Colombo. This clearly links to the section on the passing down of traditions to subsequent generations and the possible loss of identity.

The next section of chapter seven explores Tamil identity and its many forms. Related to the definitions in chapter three, this chapter considers the participants’ experiences and opinions of what it means to be Sri Lankan Tamil both in Sri Lanka and the UK, including reflections on the impact of the conflict, friends and identity and the differences between Tamil groups in Sri Lanka. This section also pays more attention to the second generation in the UK, considering the complexities of British identity and for some, dual nationality. Class and the second generation are also discussed, with particular relevance to this study that focuses upon young middle class Sri Lankan Tamils. Another important feature of cultural identity is the issue of language and preservation of the mother tongue. This section argues that even though

the older generation would like subsequent generations to speak and understand Tamil, unfortunately due to various reasons, the Tamil language may in fact be lost for the middle class Tamils both in the UK and Sri Lanka. A number of Tamil schools have been set up in the UK to address the problem, however many of the British participants in this research did not take their Tamil studies seriously and now they lack the necessary language skills to pass on to their children. The chapter also provides a comparison of Sri Lanka and the UK in terms of social and cultural pressures and finally, explores the loss of identity and the second generation.

Chapter Eight focuses on the second generation and migration in terms of both the experiences of their parents and also the participants' own reflections on migratory movement and transnational links. The beginning section details the reasons why the first generation left Sri Lanka and the impact the conflict has had on Sri Lankan Tamil migration. The second generation in the UK, and even the young adults in Sri Lanka, have a limited historical and political understanding of the conflict. They know friends, relatives and parents fled the island due to discrimination, unrest and violence, however they have limited, if any detailed knowledge of the causes and consequences of the problems and many are unaware of the 'waves of migration' that occurred and why (Daniel, 1996; 1997; Fuglerud, 1999; 2001).

The following discussion explores the importance of Jaffna as a symbol of Tamil pride and the devastating effect the conflict has had on the Jaffna peninsula and region. The loss of land and property of Tamils in the northern region, especially those that migrated, has been shocking. However, once again, the second generation in the UK and even Colombo know little about the family homes and land once owned, vastly different to other minority migrant groups who are able to revisit their parents' countries and village of origin.

The chapter then reflects upon the idea of the 'myth of return' (Anwar, 1979) arguing that although many of the older generation hope to return to Sri Lanka permanently, this is unlikely to happen due to the ongoing political volatility. The second generation in the UK were very clear about their reluctance to settle and live in Sri Lanka, even Colombo. The possible persistence of transnational links is then considered, specifically remittances, financial support for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) (Fuglerud, 1999; 2001) and the response following the tsunami in 2004. The chapter then presents the reactions of the participants to the possibility of their own migration abroad for both work and study.

Finally, the chapter argues that practical links between the second generation in the UK and Sri Lanka are loosening. Therefore, the notion of the transnational in terms of remittances

may begin to weaken and become more of emotional rather practical ties. The second generation in the UK clearly feel affection for Sri Lanka, however they are successfully moulding their lives and identities in Britain and as the older generation pass away, notions of what it means to be Sri Lankan, Tamil and British may change accordingly.

Lastly *Chapter Nine* draws together the main themes of the thesis, outlining the findings of chapters six, seven and eight considering the possible implications for future research of this nature. This thesis has illustrated that the exploration of identity of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK must not simply view these individuals in isolation. They all function within wider cross-national networks, whereby the choices and experiences of the first generation, still have clear influences upon the younger generation born and raised in the UK.

CHAPTER TWO

The Sri Lankan Context - Society, Ethnicity and Identity

2.1 Introduction

Sri Lanka has been subjected to many colonial influences in the last few centuries, as highlighted by the extract above. Sri Lanka's colonial legacy continues to impact upon the everyday lives of its people and historically, the introduction of Christianity and the English medium to the island has had a profound effect on the country's social and political environment. Most of Sri Lanka's current political unrest stems from colonial policies and the hasty return of power in 1948. Tamils and Sinhalese struggle to claim back a nationalist pride and 'parity of representation' based on language, territory and religion, in an environment of competing ethnic identities. Many of the events that have driven migration from Sri Lanka to the UK and other diaspora locations have had a profound effect upon the migrants and their experiences have affected the second generation born and raised in the settlement country.

The following chapter provides an overview of the social and political environment of Sri Lanka and highlights the importance of understanding the cultural dynamics, political history and social context of the 'home' country in an analysis of a migratory community in the settlement country. Sri Lanka's colonial legacy in relation to ethnicity, language and the conflict is reflected upon in this chapter, setting the Sri Lankan context for the analysis in chapters six to eight. The differences between the Tamil groups of Sri Lanka are detailed and the caste system of the Jaffna Tamils is outlined. Lastly, the religious landscape of Sri Lanka is explored and the relations between Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim communities considered.

2.2 Sri Lanka's Colonial Legacy - Ethnicity and Language

Sri Lanka's experience of British governance proved less traumatic than India's. However, in 1948 when the island gained independence, political tensions began to surface. British rule dominated the social and political relations of the differing ethnicities of Sri Lanka and governance influenced religious belief, cultural tradition and education. This control shaped the political climate of the island along with role the Sri Lankan nation would play on the international stage in recent times. A detailed assessment of the role of the British in Sri Lankan social and political affairs is beyond the scope of this chapter. One's opinion of British intervention on the island depends on ethnic, religious and class background. Many of the middle class Tamils from the north of the island who benefited from the introduction of the English

medium, would argue that British involvement was helpful, while the lower class Sinhalese of the south would be strongly opposed. Thus, this section simply outlines some of the important British policies that have affected the lives of those living in Sri Lanka today.

Both the Portuguese and the Dutch settled in Sri Lanka, however it is the final period of British rule that proved to be most influential socially, economically and politically. The last decade of the 18th century marked the end of Dutch rule and arrival of the British (De Silva, 1998; Wilson, 2000). The harbour on the north east coast, Trincomalee, was highly attractive to British strategists. In 1796 all of the remaining Dutch provinces were taken under British control and in 1815 the country was ceded to British rule (Hettige in Winslow et al, 2004). This period marked a highly significant time in Sri Lankan history and would lay the foundations for the turbulent time that would follow independence. The British created lasting divisions between the Sri Lanka's varying ethnic groups (Ghosh, 2003).

The British created 13 provinces in Sri Lanka, although over the years these have been re-demarcated and new administrative regions have emerged. Today Sri Lanka is divided into 9 provinces and 25 districts –

- The Northern Province (Jaffna- Known as the 'Tamil homeland' or 'Eelam')
- The Eastern Province (Batticaloa, Trincomalee- Also predominantly Tamil)
- The Western Province (Colombo- The Capital)
- The Southern Province (Galle)
- The North-Western Province (Kurenegala)
- The North-Central Province (Anuradhapura)
- The Uva Province (Badulla)
- The Sabaragamuwa Province (Ratnapura)
- Central (Kandy)

A directly elected provincial council administers each of these provinces and all are unique ethnically and socially. Yet, the British gave little consideration to a 'specific political identity' for each province and allowed no procedures for central authority (Rogers, 1994; De Silva, 1998, Ghosh 2003). The British categorisation of differing ethnic groups left the provinces with no individual ethno-cultural names and therefore, they were denied the expression of ethnic identity (Winslow and Woost, 2004).

The British saw three distinct groups of people in Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. Religion was the main differential between the groups and little thought was given to the complexities of traditional culture and ethnic identity (De Silva, 1998). The British also failed to recognise the differences that existed within each particular ethnic group. The Indian Tamils and Jaffna Tamils are culturally and ethnically unique, while the Kandyan Sinhalese are distinct from the low-country Sinhalese.

The first modern Ceylon (Sri Lankan) Census was carried out in 1871. The study included categories of race and nationality, identifying 78 nationalities and 24 races in Sri Lanka. However, the categories are somewhat ambiguous and vague (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2002; 2003). Successive Censuses did little to solve the categorising problems of the first and overcoming the discrepancies caused by internal and external displacement of the war and more recently the Tsunami, causes the census to be unreliable even today. Administrative control in certain areas of the island by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has also made any legitimate attempts at calculating population figures exceptionally difficult.

Table 1. Sri Lanka's Population by Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamil	Indian Tamil	Moor	Burgher	Malay	Chetty	Bharatha	Other
Estimated Population Total (%)	13,810,664 85%	736,484 5%	855,88 0.53%	1,349,845 8.38%	34,616 0.21%	47,558 0.29%	8838 0.054%	1773 0.01%	18,878 0.12%

(Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka)

The basic categories that the British imposed are still evident in Sri Lankan society today and there is little consideration for the clear differences that exist between and within ethnic groups. Around 5.5% of Sri Lanka's population is Tamil, although this figure includes Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils, two ethnically and culturally distinct groups (Daniel, 1996). The way in which the British understood and categorised Sri Lanka's ethnic groups has had a lasting impact upon the political and social climate of the country. The majority Sinhalese government continue to view Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils as one ethnic group and category, however this is detrimental socially and politically (De Silva, 1998).

There are three main factors that have contributed to the deterioration in Tamil- Sinhala relations, exacerbated by British rule. Historically, the Sinhalese majority has followed the Buddhist faith, while the Tamil minority are Hindu. Within both groups there are Christian communities of varying denominations. Dominant Buddhist social and political rhetoric is of concern to the Tamil minority and continues to cause tension. The militant Buddhists monks have worsened relations and continue to aggravate the current political situation. The availability of educational resources has also proved to be a key factor in the difficulties between the ethnic groups and finally the concern over 'representation in the legislature'. Each of the elements has led to a departure in common interest and the growth in the nationalist consciousness of both communities (Ghosh, 2003; Winslow and Woost, 2004).

For many hundreds of years the teachings of Buddhism and Buddha were entrenched in the social and political lives of the indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese kings that battled the Tamil invaders from as early as 250BC did so under the Buddhist banner and leaders gave patronage to their religious mentors as a means of seeking spiritual approval and support. The arrival of the Portuguese, Dutch and finally the British, meant that the influence of the Buddhist faith waned, particularly under British rule (De Silva, 1998). Buddhism was seen as a primitive and 'heathen' belief system. Christian teachings were prioritised and the English medium encouraged. The Sinhala majority were aware that if the destruction of Buddhism continued then the foundations of Sinhalese culture and symbolism would be irretrievably lost (Rogers, 1994; De Silva, 1998). So, by the end of the 19th century nationalist Buddhist sentiment was being organised into an emerging and challenging political force.

One of the main concerns of the Sinhalese Buddhists centred upon the distribution and fairness of the growth of the educational system and English language, which, had been introduced and promoted by the Christian missionaries. The Buddhists, and also many Hindus, were unable to take advantage of the educational benefits provided by the Christians. This caused further resentment between the Tamil and Sinhalese communities, as those in the northern province¹ were able to access Christian missionary schools as the educational reforms of the rest of the island had little affect upon the north. The Tamil children became highly proficient in the English language and were easily able to compete for public and civil service positions in the rest of the country (De Silva, 1998; Ghosh, 2003; Winslow and Woost, 2004). From this grew a sense of anger and resentment within the Sinhalese community and this was played out at all levels of

¹ Known as 'Jaffna' Tamils due to the northern region of Sri Lanka where the group originates.

political activity. The educational benefits that the Tamils gained during this time gave them an advantageous socio-economic position (Ghosh, 2003).

Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948 and proved to be a problem-free and relatively straightforward affair. Power was directly transferred to the already dominant elites, with little complaint from other groups. However, these elites were reluctant to share their governmental powers with local authorities. Unlike India, where local and national politics were entwined following independence, the two entities remained largely divided in Sri Lanka (De Silva, 1998). The political elites from both the Sinhalese and Tamil communities continued to enjoy the privileges of colonial rule well into the post-independence period (Ghosh, 2003).

Sri Lanka's stable and idyllic political situation was not to last and both political and social difficulties began in earnest in the 1950's (De Silva, 1998). The Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956, more commonly known as the 'Sinhala Only Act', marked the serious deterioration of Tamil and Sinhalese relations in the post-colonial period. (Jayawardena, 2003). The act abolished English as the official language, replacing it with Sinhala in the hope of achieving 'parity of status' (De Silva, 1998). Sinhala would be the main language used in the education system and also the business and political environment (Winslow, et al 2004). The act was to be implemented over five years and Bandaranaike hoped this would give enough time to modify and alter the law to make it more acceptable for the Tamil community. However, the Sinhala government were unprepared for the resistance of the Tamils (De Silva, 1998).

The Sinhala-Tamil problem escalated from this point onwards. The Federal Party were actively opposed to the language policy and in 1957 the Prime Minister was forced to propose a pact that would allow Tamil to be recognised as a minority language and administrative language of the northern and eastern provinces (De Silva, 1998; Orjuela, 2003). The United National Party (UNP) saw these allowances as a betrayal of Sinhalese interests and with the support of the militant Buddhist faction, forced Bandaranaike to abandon the pact (Jayawardena, 2003). This led to the first spate of serious rioting in Sri Lanka in 1958, with shops looted and destroyed and Tamils attacked and even killed. 12,000 Tamils were forced to flee their homes in Colombo and the south, quickly returning to Jaffna.

Legislation was later introduced to allow for the use of Tamil in an official capacity in the Tamil dominated areas, yet the resentment, bitterness and betrayal felt by the Tamil community in the aftermath of this period remains (Winslow et al, 2004). The policy of standardisation in higher education, once again discriminated against the Tamil minority in the 1970's, forcing many

hundreds of young Tamils to find university education abroad, producing the second wave of migrants to the UK (Daniel, 1996; 1997). Educational ability remains a central feature of Tamil life both in Sri Lanka and abroad. This has a direct and influential affect upon the lives of second generation Tamils who are expected to follow highly professional careers, and can clearly be traced back to the days of colonialism and its aftermath.

The creation of Tamil nationalist consciousness differs from that of the Sinhalese. As compared to Buddhism, Hinduism had a limited role to play in what Ghosh (2003) terms 'Tamil Chauvinism'. This sentiment stemmed from the rigidity of the Tamil caste system that has remained strong. The vellalas formed one of the highest and largest caste groups, with nearly 50% of Tamils (Pfaffenberger, 1982).

Therefore, the Tamil nationalist consciousness is understood less as an ethnic identity and more as a caste identity. The caste identity of vellala's is also closely linked to ideas of territory, dynasty and language, and these markers became increasingly rigid as years went by (Indrapala, 2005). A 'mythology of 'the other' was created, separating the Tamils from the Sinhalese majority (Ghosh, 2003).

2.3 The Tamils of Sri Lanka - The 'Jaffna' Tamils



Plate 1. Fishing Rafts at Point Pedro – The Jaffna Peninsula²

The largest majority of Sri Lankan Tamils live in the northern province of the country and are most commonly referred to as the 'Jaffna Tamils'. Fuglerud (1999) argues that a more common term for this group of Tamils is the 'Eelam Tamils'; but my own research suggests that the name

² Personal photograph taken August 2005 by a close personal contact in the north of the island.

'Jaffna Tamil' is far more popular among the younger sector of Tamil society, especially in Colombo, who associates this group with the main town of the northern province. The onset of war has meant that thousands of Tamils from Jaffna and surrounding villages have been forced to flee. The town remains a prominent feature in the Tamil memory of home and helps preserve the Tamil ethnic consciousness (Cheran, 2001). Jaffna town functioned as the administrative heart of the Sri Lankan Tamil population, but the area suffered huge devastation during the conflict and remains far from its former glory.

The older generation of Jaffna Tamils, who lived through the worst of the conflict and were forced to migrate abroad, still hold onto the notion of Jaffna as the capital of Tamil Eelam. To cope with the trauma of their loss they have carried 'Jaffna' to their diasporic settings. Tamil settlement areas in Toronto and London are nicknamed 'mini Jaffna' among the community (Cheran, 2001). The middle class, younger generation of Tamils in Sri Lanka who have limited experience of the war, many of whom have not even travelled to the north, place little importance on Jaffna as the cultural capital of the Tamil people. They are keen to look towards a more united, cosmopolitan Sri Lanka that represents all ethnicities.

Education and the preservation of cultural life are extremely important to Jaffna Tamils and this is reproduced by the worldwide Tamil diaspora and experienced by the second generation (Sivathamby, 2005) and the deliberate burning and destruction of the Jaffna library in 1981 by an organised mob dealt a severe blow to Tamil nationalism. At the time the library was one of the largest in South Asia and a symbol of Tamil intellectualism and pride (Sivathamby, 2005). Eyewitnesses claim that it was policemen and government-sponsored thugs who were the attackers. By destroying the library and the thousands of books contained within it (over 97,000 volumes), those involved had deliberately targeted and irretrievably devastated a central feature of Tamil ethnicity and life. The library has been recently rebuilt and opened in 2003. The building remains empty though as the ruined books are yet to be replaced and ongoing political difficulties mean the complete restoration of the library is problematic (Sivathamby, 2005). The library is something of a metaphor for the state of the northern province in general. New shops, houses and buildings are beginning to spring up in and around Jaffna, but the conflict has removed the Tamil heart from the area and even though the Tamil diaspora think of their place of birth fondly, it is no longer the Jaffna they want to remember.

2.3.1 The Tamils of the East Coast

The east coast has a population of Tamils who originated from the northern province of Sri Lanka and settled near Batticaloa and the surrounding villages (Fuglerud, 1999). The caste system has

been historically less rigid in the east, while the community itself has retained many of the cultural traditions associated with Hinduism that the northern Tamils lost due to British colonialism and the introduction of Christianity. The Tamils from the east coast are seen as less academically driven and there is a definite resentment between the two groups concerning socio-economic positions (Jeyaratnam-Wilson, 2000). Both the Tamils from the north and the east believe that they are the true Sri Lankan Tamils. Yet, the war has forced both groups to unite under the banner of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) against the Sinhalese majority government (Jeyaratnam-Wilson, 2000).

2.3.2 The Indian Tamil Plantation Workers

The central area of Sri Lanka (Kandy and the hill country) is dominated by the descendents of the Indian Tamils, who were brought to Sri Lanka from South India by the British to work on the tea plantations. This group make up roughly 0.53% of the overall population and rivalry between the Indian Tamils and Sri Lanka Tamils is subtle, yet evident in everyday community life (Sinnathamby in Hasbullah et al, 2004). Between 1820 and 1880 the British colonisers encouraged South Indian Tamil workers to move to Sri Lanka to work on the coffee plantations, but in 1880 these were largely destroyed by disease (Jeyaratnam Wilson, 2000). An alternative emerged in the form of tea gardens and large scale tea leaf production led to an increase in demand for South Indian labour and required permanent rather than temporary migrants (Ghosh, 2003). Communities were created around the plantations, with children taking on the responsibilities of plantation work at an early age. The indigenous Sri Lankan Tamils were reluctant to conform to the rigours of plantation labour and the majority of workers continued to originate from South India.

The debate concerning Indian citizenship raged in Sri Lanka for many years and it was only the general election of 1977 that marked a turning point in Indian integration into the Sri Lankan political system, sending an Indian politician to parliament through the democratic vote (De Silva 1998). Yet even though the Indian Tamils gained equality politically, attitudes of the Sri Lankan Tamils towards the Indians did not change and today in Colombo the communities remain relatively distant from one another. Some Indian Tamils have settled in Colombo and the surrounding urban areas as traders and their descendents live and work in the capital today (De Silva, 1998: 273).

Most belonged to the lower Indian castes and their distance from the Sri Lankan Tamil community meant that the two groups remained largely separate from one another. This created suspicion, resentment and jealousy on both sides. The Sri Lankan Tamils viewed the Indian

Tamils as competitors for the scarce jobs available in Colombo at the time. The uneasiness between the indigenous Tamil population and the ancestors of the Indian migrants is clear and it is in rare circumstances that a Sri Lankan Tamil from a traditional family would be allowed to marry an Indian Tamil even today.

2.3.3 The Tamil Moors – Islam in Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan Moors of Islamic descent make up just over 8% of the country's population³. The Moors speak Tamil but see themselves as a distinct ethnic group (Richardson, 2005). There has been violent and brutal treatment of Muslim communities by both the Sinhala government and the LTTE (De Silva, 1998). The reluctance of the Muslim population to be culturally associated with the Sri Lankan Tamils of both the north and the east coast has led to the discrimination and violent reaction of the LTTE. In 1990 the LTTE ordered all Muslims living in the northern province to leave their homes or face death. Many of the people forced to leave were internally displaced and continue to live in refugee camps or Muslim villages further south (Fuglerud, 1999; Richardson, 2005).

2.3.4 Colombo Seven - The Colombo Tamil Bourgeoisie

The capital of Sri Lanka, Colombo, has attracted differing groups of Sri Lankan people in search of employment and safety. Colombo has always had a minority Tamil population, known as the Colombo Tamil bourgeoisie who came to the capital as businessmen, traders and highly educated professionals. This group are extremely affluent, occupying many of the administrative positions in government. It is the Colombo Tamils who were most affected by the 1983 riots (Daniel, 1997; 1996; Van Hear, 2006). This group of Tamils originated from the northern province and trace their roots back to Jaffna. However, they have lived in the capital long enough to consider themselves as socially and culturally different to the Jaffna Tamils of the north and are widely now called the 'Colombo Tamils' (De Silva, 1998).

This group consider themselves more cosmopolitan and westernised than their northern relatives and this is evident in the lifestyles of the younger generation. It is the young, rich, middle class Colombo Tamils that visit the nightclubs, have mixed ethnicity friendship groups and travel abroad for university. This group are well educated and more relaxed in their attitudes to the political situation. They are comfortable interacting with differing ethnicities, and marriages between this Tamil group and Sinhalese is steadily increasing. Jaffna Tamils are seen as being conservative and arrogant about their ethnic heritage. This emerging group of internationally

³ See section 2.5.2

educated Tamils will have an important role to play in the future governance of Sri Lanka. During the colonial period it was made far easier for educated Tamils from Jaffna to move south to the administrative capital Colombo (Jayawardena 2000: 204). The missionaries instilled into the Tamil youth of the north that education was the key to advancement and a new drive to achieve both socially and economically encouraged many to move to Colombo. These individuals took professional positions, settled in Colombo and created the affluent, high status Colombo Tamil bourgeoisie (Jeyaratnam Wilson, 2000). The 'Colombo Tamils' referred to in this study are the descendants of those who originally came to Colombo for education and employment. The group still has a clear and unique identity separate from that of all the other Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The area known as Cinnamon Gardens (it lies on an old Cinnamon plantation) or Colombo Seven, due to the post coding system, bears all the features of Sri Lanka's colonial past, with large sprawling houses and tree lined avenues (Jeyaratnam-Wilson, 2000). It is mostly Colombo Tamils who live in this area. Unfortunately due to the security risk and high crime rates, many of the houses cannot be seen from the street. However, from wandering around the area and staying in one of the local guesthouses one can get a sense of the affluence. Embassies and High Commissions rent many of the properties due to their relatively safe and convenient positions (Aves, 2003).

Some of the interviewees in this study live in this affluent area or have links to it through friends and family. The international schools that also feature in the experiences of young Tamils in this study are also primarily located in the Colombo Seven area.



Plate 2. A typical street in the Colombo Seven area⁴

⁴ Sadly the beautiful colonial houses and gardens of Colombo Seven (also known as Cinnamon Gardens as the residential area was built on the cinnamon plantation) are now hidden away behind tall walls and gates due to security concerns. The area was once known for its ornate

Selvadurai's novel 'Cinnamon Gardens' provides a sensitive account of the experiences of the affluent upper classes in 1920s Colombo and gives an insight into how these individuals lived:

Cinnamon Gardens is laid out around Victoria Park, a pleasure ground with meandering walkways, shaded by fig trees and palms, with benches under clumps of graceful bamboo and araliya trees... These streets contained within them many grand mansions, situated well away from the road, some barely visible for the greenery that surrounded them. They were the homes of the best of Ceylonese society, whose members thrived under the British Empire and colonial economy (1998: 11).

For all their financial and educational achievements the Colombo Tamils find themselves in a difficult social and political position. They are, of course, of Tamil ethnic background, however their location in Colombo means that they must have close and frequent contact with the Sinhalese population. This causes mistrust on the part of Jaffna and Batticaloa (Eastern) Tamils who worry that the Colombo Tamils are showing signs of disloyalty (Jeyaratnam-Wilson, 2000). The Sinhalese also question the true loyalties of this group should conflict erupt. Therefore, in Colombo there is an uneasy peace that rests between the three groups, two of which are Tamil (Hellmann-Rajanayagam, 2004:107).

There also exists a section of Tamil society that fled the conflict in the north more recently who does not enjoy the economic and social benefits of the Colombo Tamil elite (Jeyaratnam-Wilson, 2000). They remain comparatively better off than many of the Sinhalese majority in the city due to their educational advantage and command of the English language. Their socio-economic status is also improving as financial exchanges and money from the diaspora abroad increase steadily. However, there remain tensions between the established Colombo Tamils and those more recently internally migrated from the north.

2.4 The Sri Lankan Tamil Caste System

The South Asian caste system is a highly complex structure, which for many years scholars have attempted to analyse and detail. The earliest observers of the caste system in South India believed that the differing power relations evident in the social organisation of the village were based upon religious divisions and sub-divisions (Seenarine, 2006). Although, from analysis of caste in India, one can see that religion has little to do with caste differences, especially in the case of the Jaffna Tamils (Fuglerud, 1999).

landscaped gardens and opulent colonial houses. The area remains affluent, yet concealed. Personal photograph taken in July 2005.

Bandyopadhyay (2004) argues that the simplistic notion of the caste system as based solely on religion has continued to influence how we view and study caste today. Authors have attempted to categorise and label caste but the system is highly fluid, as argued by Srinivas (1962) and continues to change in Sri Lanka as society progresses economically, politically and socially (De Silva, 1998).

Srinivas' seminal work in the 1950s and 1960s on India, illustrates that a thorough understanding and analysis of the system is extremely challenging. Srinivas introduced an important concept in the comprehension of caste structure and behaviour, sankritisation. Sankritisation is a many sided cultural process whereby; 'A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sankritising its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs, of the Brahmins...' (1965: 30). One must not assume that the dominance of the vellala caste in Sri Lanka was born from a form of sankritisation, however it is clear the group grew and thrived, particularly under colonial rule. It is suggested that sankritisation and westernisation are processes in conflict although for the vellala in Sri Lanka one could see the two processes working together to ensure the increased status and growth of the vellala caste.

As a social process, caste is a culturally constructed means by which to maintain social order and political stability. The system persists today, even if it is far subtler. Rajasingham-Senanayake (2002) and other authors argue that the system has become 'hidden and repressed' in the post-colonial era, but still functions at the underlying social level, continuing to influence social relations and marriage practices both in Sri Lanka and the UK.

The first generation in the Tamil diaspora has tended to repress rather than lose their caste identity and for the second generation caste can still play an important role at the social and ritual level, for example in the choice of marriage partner. As Jayawardena (2000) argues, caste has shifted from the public sphere to the private domain of the home and family, where it dictates certain familial-based practices like caste-governed marriage. This appears to be the case for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka and the diaspora as it is only in the search for a marriage partner that caste becomes important, even for the Christian Tamils. The conflict has also led to caste being sidelined for a stronger sense of ethnic identity, nationalism and class (Fuglerud, 1999).

Sri Lankan Tamil caste in the diaspora has become a 'silent topic' with all sectors of the Tamil community reluctant to discuss social organisation (Cheran, 2001). Even the LTTE claim that

they are an anti-caste organisation (Sumathy, 2004; Swamy, 2004). The tendency is to see caste as a historical feature of Tamil life that has more recently been broken down. The ‘Tamil homeland or Eelam’ that is being fought for is believed to one day be caste free. Conversely, western academics are criticised for seeing Tamil nationalism as a highly caste based phenomenon. Both of these views are misleading as the Tamil caste system is highly complex and in constant flux. It is wrong to suggest it no longer exists and it is unhelpful to blame the rise of Tamil nationalism primarily on issues of caste as this is just one of many facets explaining the ‘Tamil struggle’.

There is no agreement on the exact number of Jaffna Tamil castes. Arasaratnam (1981) suggests eighteen, David (2000) twenty-four and Banks (2000) that there are over forty-eight (cited in Jeyaratnam-Wilson, 2000). However, most authors accept that there are ten or eleven that have most prominence and feature most commonly in Jaffna villages. These main eleven caste categories are outlined below.

Table 2. Sri Lankan Tamil Caste

Type of Caste	Traditional Occupation	Jaffna Tamil Population (%)
Ampattar	Barber	0.9 %
Brahman	Temple Priest	0.7 %
Karaiyar	Deep-sea fisher	10.0 %
Koviar	Domestic servant	7.0 %
Nalavar	Labour	9.0 %
Paraiyar	Drummer	2.7 %
Pallar	Labour	9.0 %
Taccar	Carpenter	2.0 %
Tattar	Goldsmith	0.6 %
Vannar	Washer	1.5 %
Vellala	Farmer	50.0 %

(Source: Jayawardena, 2000: 165)

The vellala (farmer) caste has dominated Jaffna society. This group consists of the primary landowners, controlling most of the northern province agriculture and trade. The vellala caste is itself separated into different sub-groups dependent on the type of farming undertaken

(Arasaratnam, 1981). The other castes, apart from the religious Brahman, were considered to be socially inferior and were treated as lower status citizens of the village (Raheja, 1988).

Traditionally, Jaffna has been extremely conservative and this continues to be reflected in the opinions and experiences of people who visit the region today (Pfaffenberger, 1982). The treatment of lower caste members has been equated to that of Indian villages, with women forbidden to cover their breasts and wear gold earrings, while men were not allowed to cut their hair, wear shirts or ride bicycles. All 'untouchables' were prevented from buying land, entering temples and high caste homes, walking on pavements and marrying without permission (Jeyaratnam Wilson, 2000). The younger generation in Sri Lanka and the UK still talk with disbelief at how the lower castes were prevented from eating and drinking from the same cups and plates as the vellala caste. The second generation are embarrassed at the way the lower castes are treated and are reluctant to discuss caste and its persistence in the north. However, for most and particularly in Colombo, caste is limited to the consideration of marriage partner and within the marriage process.

Hellmann-Rajanayagam (2004) argues that the vellala caste saw themselves as not only the dominant caste, but also as the pre-ordained group that must ensure Tamil identity be preserved and passed onto future generations. Only the vellala Tamil is seen as ethnically pure. Jaffna had been populated by other castes but it was not until the arrival of the vellala's from South India, on the command of the King, that the region was considered civilised. The arrival of the vellala caste to Sri Lanka marked the beginning of Tamil culture and this caste was considered the unique carrier of Tamil ethnic identity (Arasaratnam, 1981). The first generation that came to the UK from Sri Lanka in the late 1960s and 1970s came predominantly from the vellala caste and the second generation in this study are mostly descendants of this particular caste group.

Clearly there has been a shift, both within the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Colombo and in the UK from caste based societal differentials to those based on class differences. Beteille (1965) provides a detailed comparison of the differentials and similarities between caste and class arguing that:

' In the sum, the processes of economic change and political modernisation have led the productive system and the organisation of power to acquire an increasing degree of autonomy. In the concrete, the overlap between the hierarchies of caste, class and power has been progressively reduced. A new economic order is emerging in the towns and cities

which is not based upon caste in the same way in which the traditional order was' (1965: 225).

This change appears to be the case both in the city of Colombo and within the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the UK, whereby caste concerns tend to dominate in terms of social norms and ritual, rather than within political and economic structures and decision-making.

Particularly in the UK, caste differences are less obvious than with some other South Asian communities. For the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora socio-economic status and position is more important, with movement between, and within, caste groupings. Migration has not appeared to strengthen caste divisions within the Sri Lankan Tamil community and the economic success of the community in the UK has led to a breakdown in caste allegiances. But, in terms of traditional ritual and social norms, consideration of caste in the choice of marriage partner remains important.

2.5 Sri Lankan Faith - Buddhism in Sri Lanka

The Sinhalese comprise 85% of the overall Sri Lankan population and 70% are Theravada Buddhists. The remainder are mostly Christian (Matthews in Hasbullah et al, 2004). Mahendra, son of King Ashok, an Indian Buddhist emperor, led the mission to Sri Lanka in 3rd century BC where he converted the king of Sri Lanka to Buddhism (Turner, 2000; Aves, 2003). From then on, the royal families encouraged the spread of Buddhism, aiding Buddhist missionaries and the building of Temples. Sanghamitta, daughter of King Ashoka, brought a shoot of the Bodhi tree (under which Buddha gained enlightenment) from Buddh Gaya to Sri Lanka around 240 BC (De Silva, 1998; Turner, 2000; Aves, 2003).

Buddhism quickly replaced Hinduism as the national religion. Later on Hindu and European colonial influences contributed to the decline of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. When the British arrived in the 1790s the religion had declined (Sivathamby, 2005). This led to a revival in in the late 19th century, where Buddhism was linked to Sinhalese independence (Matthews in Hasbullah et al, 2004). More recently, religious leaders have involved themselves in secular political affairs of Sri Lanka and the militant acts of violence by many monks during the recent problems questions the general understanding of Buddhists as peaceful and gentle people:

...the faith, so often militant and even bellicose in the name of a culture, appears wildly at odds with the humane, logical teaching of Gotama Sakyamuni, or with the gentle version of Buddhism expressed in textbooks on world religions (Matthews in Hasbullah et al, 2004: 58).

2.5.1 The Hindu Tamils

Hinduism was introduced to the north of Sri Lanka during successive South Indian invasions and is currently dominant in the northern province, among the Tamils (Hellmann-Rajanayagam in Hasbullah et al, 2004). The Hindu community makes up 15% of Sri Lanka's overall population, although Christian conversions have caused the decline of Hinduism in Sri Lanka (Aves, 2003). It was the activities from the Palk Strait (such as the South India and Orissan rulers) that aided the survival of Hinduism in Sri Lanka (Richardson, 2005: 27).

The Sri Lankan Tamils of the northern province are the descendants of the Tamil Kings who invaded north Sri Lanka. However, the arrival of the Portuguese, Dutch and British colonialists led to the introduction of Christianity to the island and eventually the renewed revival of Buddhism. Currently, the Hindu population is a minority in Sri Lanka, and this has been worsened by the conflict and the outpouring of Hindu Tamil migrants to countries worldwide (Fuglerud, 1999). The type of Hinduism followed by most Sri Lankan Tamils is that of Saiva Siddhanta, originating from the belief in the God Siva (Aves, 2003). The Sri Lankan Tamils from Jaffna see this type of Hinduism as the purest form of this belief (Daniel, 1996). Hinduism is continuing to flourish among the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, with many temples and religious establishments being built by the community (Van Hear, 1998; 2006).

2.5.2 The Muslims of Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan Muslims or Moors as they are more commonly known, are descended from the Arab traders of the 9th century, many of which settled on the island. These traders controlled much of the trade on the Indian Ocean, including that of Sri Lankas. The settlers encouraged the spread of Islam on the island (De Silva, 1998). Other Muslims from India migrated during British colonial times (Richardson, 2005). When the Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka during the 16th century, many Muslims were persecuted, forcing them to relocate from the west coast to the central highlands and east coast. Muslim migrants from the South Pacific, the Malays, speak their own language and live mostly in the south of the island.

In modern times around 8% of Sri Lankans adhere to Islam, mostly from the Moor and Malay ethnic communities on the island. Today the political and social affairs of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka are handled by the Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs Department, established in the 1980s to help prevent the continual isolation of the Muslim community from the rest of Sri Lanka. Over 75,000 Muslim Tamils could be found in the northern province until the recent political troubles and in 1990, all were forcefully evicted by the LTTE (De Silva, 1998). The Muslim population speak Tamil, but they see themselves as ethnically different from the Sri

Lankan Tamils of the north and east coast (Fuglerud, 1999). Historically, the Muslim community has been politically under represented in Sri Lanka, although they now have a communal party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), and continue to lobby the government for communal goals (De Silva, 1998; Richardson, 2004).

2.5.3 The Introduction of Christianity to Sri Lanka

According to Christian traditions, Thomas the Apostle first arrived in Sri Lanka during the 1st century and small Christian settlements were recorded to have been established on Sri Lanka's coastline. The early church left little impression though and it was not until the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries during the 16th century that the population of Christians, particularly Roman Catholic, dramatically rose (De Silva, 1998; Jayawardena, 2000; Hellmann-Rajanayagam in Hasbullah et al, 2004). The expulsion of the Portuguese by the Dutch in the 17th century saw the introduction of the Dutch Reformed Church to Sri Lanka. The arrival of the British in the 19th century allowed for the establishment of many more types of Protestant denominations. Anglican and Protestant missionaries brought with them the religious ideals of the Church of England, Baptists and Methodists, but through most of the 19th and 20th century, Roman Catholics dominated the Christian community of Sri Lanka (Jayawardena, 2000). During British control the Christian community enjoyed a privileged position, particularly the Sinhala elite and the Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo and the north of the island (Wilson 1974).

Overall, Christianity has heavily declined in Sri Lanka since the end of colonial rule, although there has, been a number of charismatic churches emerging in recent times. Today 90% of the islands Christians are Roman Catholic, with services held in Sinhala, Tamil and English (Aves, 2003). The movement for all Protestant churches to join together in a united Church of Sri Lanka has made significant steps since 1947. However, this has been strongly opposed by the majority Sinhalese people who feel Buddhism would be threatened (Aves, 2003). Their reluctance is also clearly linked to the volatile political situation in Sri Lanka. Most Protestant Sri Lankans are Tamil and it would be seen as sacrificing political leverage and highly threatening to the Sinhala Buddhist majority to allow the joining of one powerful, predominantly Tamil Protestant organisation/church.

In the UK there are many thousands of Christian Tamils in the diasporic community including those that were born into the Christian faith in Sri Lanka, those born Hindu who converted to Christianity in Sri Lanka, and those that converted from Hinduism to Christianity in Britain. Jebanesan (2003) provides an insightful account of the conversion of Hindu Tamils to Christianity in the UK.

2.6 Conclusion

To understand the lives and experiences of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK and the younger generation in Sri Lanka it is important to highlight the social and political climate of the home country and how Sri Lanka's turbulent past continues to impact upon the lives of the younger generation at home and abroad. Reference to Sri Lanka's colonial past is pivotal to any full explanation of the state of the country today. The settlement of the Dutch, Portuguese and finally the British on the island laid the seeds for the many years of political tension and Sri Lanka's colonial legacy continues to impact on Sri Lankan Tamils at home and in the diaspora abroad. The ethnic categories imposed by the British took little account of caste and location, creating unnatural divisions that persist today (De Silva, 1998; Jeyaratnam Wilson, 2000).

The introduction of Christianity and the use of the English language in the administrative system, had a huge effect upon the majority Sinhalese community, many of whom did not have the necessary English language skills to obtain employment. The favoured, English educated Tamil minority fared well at this time, however following the British withdrawal in 1948 tensions between the ethnic groups escalated. The Sinhala Only Act of 1956 created further tension, dividing the Tamil and Sinhala communities into separate, nationalist bodies.

Sri Lankan Tamil identity is extremely complex, made up of distinct groups defined by location, place of origin and religion.

The Jaffna Tamils of the northern province consider themselves closest ethnically to the original Tamils, who came to the north of the island from India and speak what they believe is the purest form of Tamil. The Tamils from the eastern province, known as Batticaloa Tamils, also see themselves as distinct from the Jaffna Tamils, speaking with a different accent and often of a different caste to the vellalas of the north. The Colombo Tamils are of the opinion that they are more liberal and cosmopolitan than their counterparts in Jaffna, having experienced life in the capital city. The Tamil moors, who speak the Tamil language, see themselves completely distinct due to their Islamic faith.

The chapter also examined the Tamil caste system within the community and the vellala (farming) caste in particular. Most Tamil migrants to the UK belong to this particular group. In the diaspora and Colombo, however, caste is beginning to feature only in marriage proposals and introductions, rather than the everyday structure of social life. Differing castes interact with each other on a daily basis in Colombo and the UK and in some instances individuals of differing castes are permitted to marry.

Finally, the chapter detailed the main religious groups of Sri Lanka, the Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The ethnic and political relations of Sri Lanka are inextricably linked to the religious belief of these differing communities. The Sinhalese majority are predominantly Buddhist, and Sri Lanka's calendar i.e national holidays etc reflect the Buddhist year, rituals and events. Although there are some Christian Sinhala converts, many of whom are of the Catholic denomination. Most Jaffna, Colombo, Indian and east coast Tamils follow the Hindu faith and there are many Hindu temples across the island. Tamil heritage and culture is deeply rooted in the Hindu belief system although as is highlighted in later chapters, the line between religion and culture blurs with many Christian Tamils partaking in traditionally Hindu rituals and practices. The Tamil Moors of Sri Lanka, descendants of Arab traders to the Island, still follow the Islamic faith. This group has faced persecution by both the Sinhala and Tamil communities of Sri Lanka and continue to be discriminated against in political rhetoric and policy.

The influence of the colonisers persists with many Tamil and Sinhalese Christian converts. There are many Churches on the island representing the different denominations including, Methodist, Catholic, Anglican and Charismatic. In the UK there are also a number of Sri Lankan Tamil Churches and Temples, as both Hindu and Christian migrants transfer their faith to the settlement country. Many hundreds of Jaffna Tamils converted to Christianity when the British settled in the north of the island and today many of the migrants to the UK are Christian rather than Hindu, as this study goes on to illustrate.

Sri Lanka's political, ethnic and religious landscape is highly complex and in order to understand the behaviours and attitudes of the Tamil migrants in the UK and their children it is necessary to be aware of the political situation these individuals fled from. Now that the Sri Lankan context has been detailed, chapter three considers the UK context and Sri Lankan Tamil migration to Britain.

CHAPTER THREE

Sri Lankan Tamil Migration and Settlement in the UK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks in more detail at the migratory journey of South Asians to Britain and specifically the journey, arrival and settlement of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. The discussion begins by considering the migration of people from South Asian countries to the UK. The colonial legacy of these countries is unique and has clearly influenced migratory patterns, the number of migrants entering the UK and their occupational and class status upon arrival.

Post-war unemployment encouraged migration from South Asia to the UK and migrants were placed into various industries nationwide. Thus, from the 1950's, the South Asian presence in the UK became increasingly visible. The migratory experience of each community is extremely varied, dependent upon country of origin, area of settlement and the journey experience. These complexities must be taken into account in any detailed analysis and as will become evident through the thesis, the experiences of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants and their children born in the UK are unique.

Many of Sri Lanka's current political problems stem from British colonial rule and the way in which Ceylon, as it was then known, was governed and left after withdrawal in 1948. The infamous political tool of 'divide and rule' may not have been so violently enforced in Sri Lanka as in India, but they did succeed in creating a social and intellectual split between the countries ethnic groups, particularly the majority Sinhalese, and the minority Tamils. The political difficulties and resulting ethnic conflict, have created and prolonged migration to many other country's since the 1950s and three main waves of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants have arrived and settled in the UK (Daniel, 1995; 1996). In order to understand the lives and experiences of the children of the second wave, the central theme of this study, an overview of Sri Lankan Tamil migration to the UK and the issues of arrival, settlement and integration needs to be considered. This chapter provides this introduction, setting the British context for the analysis in chapters six to eight.

3.2 South Asian Migration to Britain - Journey, Arrival and Settlement

Britain has had influxes of Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Normans, and in more recent times Irish, Jewish and Eastern European communities for many hundreds of years (Shaw, 2000). Ballard (1994) likens the impact of immigration from South Asia and the Caribbean to that of the Norman invasion in 1066, as the arrival and settlement of these communities has been just as influential upon the British social, political and economic order.

The UK has one of the largest populations of South Asians living outside the Indian sub-continent and the community has attracted a large amount of sociological interest (Castles, 1984; Werbner, 1990; 2002; Burghart, 1987; Eade et al, 2005; Hesse, 2000). Yet, there are certain ethnic groups within the South Asian context who attract more attention than others (Bates, 2001; King, 2002). The Tamils from Sri Lanka have been largely overlooked in contemporary research, even though there are over 100,000 living and working in Britain today (Daniel, 1995; 1996; 1997).

Large scale South Asian migration to the UK has been a predominantly post war phenomenon, beginning as a response to severe labour shortages in the 1950s through to the 1970s (Khan, 1979; Miles, 1993; Brah, 1996; Modood, 1997; Shaw, 2000; Burholt, 2004, Alibhai-Brown, 1999; 2001). The earliest reports of movement date back to the seventeenth century however, Indian seamen became more visible in British ports with the growth of the East India Companies shipping. Post war unemployment in the 1950s through to the 1970s and the lack of Irish and European workers escalated immigration from the Indian sub-continent (Brah, 1996).

Ballard (2003) considers 1947 as the turning point in relations between Britain and the Indian subcontinent. Firstly, it marked the end of the British Raj and the colonial dominance of the South Asian area. Secondly, the area split into two and more recently three unique social and political areas comprising India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Finally, the year marked the beginning of Britain's post-war economic boom and the onset of mass immigration from South Asia to meet the emerging labour shortages. The 2001 UK Census states that there are around 2 million South Asians living in Britain, roughly half are Indian (Hindu and Sikh) and the other half Muslim (Werbner, 2004).

The tightening of immigration policy in the 1960's calmed immigration rates, but South Asians continued to enter and settle in Britain for a variety of reasons (Gidoomal, 1993; Ballard, 1994; Shaw, 2000; Parekh, 2000). Even today communities are mostly concentrated in the areas that experienced severe labour shortages in the post war period (Mason, 1995).

The Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims, the Mirpuri from Pakistan and the Sylhetis from Eastern Bangladesh make up the largest migrant communities that have settled in the UK and, therefore, most of the current literature focuses upon these particular ethnic groups (Modood, 1997; Shaw, 2000; Khan et al, 2000; Ballard, 2003). However, there are clearly other large and influential migratory communities from South Asia that are overlooked and the Tamils from Sri Lanka are among these groups. In 1998 Sri Lanka was in third place position behind the former Yugoslavia

and Somalia for asylum applications to the UK (Home Office, 1999), yet it is a highly under researched community in Britain (Shaw, 2002).

The 2001 British Census states there are 4.6 million ethnic minority individuals living in the UK, a rise from 3 million in 1991¹. Most ethnic minorities live in the South East and more specifically the Greater London Area. Almost half of the total ethnic minority population originate from South Asia and their areas of settlement clearly reflect their migratory patterns. The Indian community is relatively widespread, but concentrated in the South East and the Midlands. The Bangladeshi community inhabit Greater London, the Midlands and Greater Manchester, while the Pakistani community is concentrated in Yorkshire and the North West (Jones, 1993; Miles, 1995; Modood, 1997; Anwar, 1998; Shaw, 2000).

However, there exists little information on the areas of settlement and population demographics of the Sri Lankan Tamil population in the UK. There still exists a pattern of chain migration in all three of the above South Asian groups, with families in the UK often living in the extended and joint family systems (Ballard, 1979; Anwar, 1998). Yet, there is little evidence or even speculation about the way in which Sri Lankan Tamil households are constructed in the UK and how this impacts upon the lives of the family members².

At this point one must also raise the main difficulty in researching the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK. The lack of recent comprehensive work, particularly, on the middle class group makes this thesis unique, however it also creates complex problems when attempting to make comparisons with other communities. My work on the community began in 2001 and still in 2008 there is little, if any, detailed, published research completed on this group. The primary reason for this gap lies with the unique socio-economic positioning and status of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK. The middle class demographic of the Sri Lankan Tamil community means that they remain a largely 'hidden' group, attracting little attention from South Asian scholars. This 'hidden' status is mainly due to their highly successful economic positioning. The community is well educated when compared to some other ethnic minority groups in the UK and placed within highly professional occupations like medicine and law. Only recently with the growing problems associated with gang culture and the arrival of the refugee group has the Tamil community attracted widespread negative press and even now the group is rarely discussed by the British media in a negative light.

¹ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=273> (Accessed 12/12/07)

² See 3.4 below

King argues that the historical and traditional nature of migration studies: 'have led to the assumption, or at least the inference, that all migrants are poor or uneducated. This assumption, when applied to European (and other) migrations today, leads to false characterisations' (2002: 89). This is clearly a problem for the study of particular migratory groups to the UK who have remained relatively ignored and the Sri Lankan Tamil community fall within this. Only a re-conceptualisation of the main questions directing the study of migration and migratory patterns would re-align theoretical frameworks to take further account of middle class, skilled migrants (King, 2002).

3.3 Sri Lankan Tamil Migration – The Catalysts

The Portuguese, Dutch and British successively colonialised the island and Sri Lanka finally gained complete independence in 1948 (Goonetilleke, 1994; Sriskandarajah, 2002; Richards, 2005). In 1995 the Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga, announced that 400,000 out of a pre-war population of 950,000 individuals from the Northern Province had migrated and settled in other countries. The official nature of this claim suggests that the number has been underestimated and a more realistic figure is around 700,000 displaced Tamil refugees worldwide (Fuglerud, 1999; Richardson, 2005). This figure is one-third of the entire pre-war Tamil population (Steen, 1993).

Over time a Tamil national consciousness evolved that was committed to preserving and protecting Tamil interests against the majority. Initially this took a politically legitimate direction in the form of Tamil lobbying and calls for fairer representation in parliament. By the 1970s many young Tamils had become disillusioned by the apparently failing attempts to gain equality and a number of militant breakaway groups formed (Richardson 2005). The most vehement and dangerous of these being the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), led by Prabhakaran, which all but destroyed the other separatist groups. Their objective has been to see a Tamil separate state (Eelam) with a majority of Tamil speakers.

The Sinhalese are clearly reluctant to grant this and as Jeyaratnam (2000) suggests it would be like 'committing political suicide'. The Tamils are angered by the blatant discrimination that occurs politically and socially in Sri Lanka, while the Sinhalese argue they, are in fact, the minority as they add the 50 million Tamils of southern India³ to the Tamils in Sri Lanka. This minority fear drives forward nationalistic feelings and tendencies on both sides and has led to one of the world's most violent and protracted civil conflicts (Jayawardena, 2003; Morrison, 2004; Richardson, 2005).

³ The region known as Tamil Nadu.

The most contentious policy implemented by the Sinhalese government was that of 'standardisation' within higher education. Introduced in the 1970s, the policy sought to standardise the examination scores for admission to Sri Lankan universities. What the policy realistically meant was that Tamil students had to achieve higher scores than their Sinhalese counterparts (De Silva, 1998). The relations between Tamils and Sinhalese quickly deteriorated in the 1970s and the now infamous political opponents the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam⁴ formed in 1972 (Taraki cited in Fuglerud, 1999; Hennayake, 2005). The 1970s marked a period of Tamil militant and often violent behaviour with the targeting of Sinhalese police. The anti-Tamil riots of 1977 claimed 128 lives and the killing of four police officers in 1978 led to the 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act. The bill allowed for arrest without warrant and the use of admission under duress as legal evidence (Fuglerud, 1999).

The events of the 1970s reached a climax in 1983, a period that remains painful for Tamils today (Wayland, 2003). On the 23rd July an attack on an army convoy by Tamil militants killed 13 soldiers. The next day in Jaffna the army killed 41 civilians and in the capital Colombo groups of Sinhalese initiated the systematic burning of Tamil property and shops (Coomaraswamy in Ratcliffe, 1994; Bremner in Winslow et al, 2003). It is estimated that between two and three thousand Tamils were killed in the massacre. Many more thousands found themselves homeless. Relations since this point have continued to deteriorate and there is much anger between the Tamil and Sinhalese community and a distinct lack of trust (Richardson, 2005).

There is also an important gendered element to the appeal of the LTTE. The organisation rejects the traditional image of the Sri Lankan woman as submissive, shy and passive, a legacy of social and moral conduct left by the colonialists (Schrijvers, 1999). In the LTTE, women are viewed and treated as equals, even in the more unsavoury activities of the organisation (Sumathy in Hasbullah et al, 2004). The LTTE are one of the first terrorist groups to engage women in suicide bombing, with a separate section, the Women's Front of the Liberation Tigers, working since 1983. The goals of this section are to abolish the dowry system, eliminate all sexual discrimination, and to ensure Tamil women have control over their own lives' (Schalk, 1992).

In the 1983 anti-Tamil riots in Colombo, the Tamil minority expected help and support from the police and Government forces. Shockingly many of these individuals simply encouraged the rioters or in some cases even joined in with the persecution. In the direct aftermath of the riots both the President and the National Security Minister of Sri Lanka sided with the Sinhalese (Richardson, 2005). This serious breach of trust led the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, and

⁴ The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam also commonly known as the Tamil Tigers.

particularly Colombo, to conceal their true ethnic identity, explored in chapter seven (Jebanesan, 2003; Daniel et al, 1995).

The riots in 1983 and the Sinhalese Government reaction had a deep and profound impact upon the Tamils and the already large diaspora group abroad. The trust that had been built up around Sri Lanka's differing ethnic groups had been all but destroyed and today the older generation continue to talk of their betrayal by the Sinhalese majority (Somasundaram, 1998). The psychological effect has been profound and the 'trauma' caused by these events is evident in many everyday conversations about the conflict (Daniel, 1996; 1997). The continuing problems in the East and North of Sri Lanka simply reinforce the feelings of resentment and the relationship between Tamils and Sinhalese remains uneasy (Daniel et al, 1995).

3.4 The Arrival and Settlement of Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK

Members of the Sri Lankan Tamil population have been displaced worldwide and can be found on every continent. In 2001 the United Nations Human Rights Commission estimated that 817,000 Tamils were internationally displaced. Canada is the main host with 400,000, Europe 200,000, the United States 40,000, Australia 30,000 and the remaining 80,000 in various other countries. In 2000 Sri Lanka ranked in the top ten of asylum seeking nations (Fuglerud, 1999). However, these figures are nearly ten years old and it is now estimated over 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils have settled in the United Kingdom, mainly concentrated in 'pocket' communities in London. There is evidence that the Tamil community is dispersing and this is becoming increasingly apparent with the emergence of the second generation. Yet, the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK has limited representation in the academic literature. In 1993 Daniel (1995; 1996; 1997) conducted one of the few research projects on Sri Lankan Tamils in London who have settled in the United Kingdom.

The first phase of 'Ceylonese' immigrants was a mix of Sinhalas, Tamils and Burghers from upper class or upper middle class backgrounds that had decided to leave Sri Lanka following the independence of 1948 (Jayawardena 2000). These individuals were educated in the most elite and prestigious schools in Ceylon, fluent English speakers and adapted and integrated into western culture well. They came to Britain to study medicine, law and engineering and were identifiable in privileged socio-economic positions (Sriskandarajah, 2002). Most striking is that this group shared a common Ceylonese heritage and emphasised the importance of a 'Ceylonese' nationality that included all ethnicities (Daniel, 1997).

These individuals were keen to return to their privileged lifestyles in Sri Lanka, but this became increasingly difficult following the Sinhala Only Act of 1956, which prioritised Sinhala over the English medium (Jebanesan, 2004). The Sinhala Only Act of 1956 marked the first sign that Ceylonese nationalism was disintegrating. The nation that the first wave of migrants prided themselves upon started on the road to ethnic conflict and war. Through the process of 'absorbed coping' the group came to terms with the move from a national Ceylonese identity to one that separates Tamils and Sinhalese in the country of Sri Lanka (Daniel et al, 1995; Daniel, 1996; Daniel et al, 1997; Fuglerud, 1999). Many individuals of this particular group remained in the UK, setting up professional businesses and settling with their families (Daniel et al, 1995). The Tamils of this generation came from the highest caste, the vellala's, and their children were made aware of this. They were sent to the most prestigious British schools and command of the English language was prized highly amongst this community who saw themselves as superior to the 'other' Asian ethnic groups also in the UK.

The second phase of Tamils to the UK were mainly students in the 1960s and 70s who for discriminatory reasons in Sri Lanka sought their University education abroad (Daniel, 1996; 1997). The opening up of university education in Sri Lanka and the resulting competition between Tamils and Sinhalese students was further exacerbated by two specific policies. The introduction of the quota system prevented many Tamils from gaining a university place, while the closing of the civil service to Tamil individuals encouraged the population to seek education further a field and it is the children of this group of migrants that this study focuses upon (Daniel et al, 1995).

With this group the dynamics of Sri Lankan identity changed significantly. The united Ceylon of their childhood gave way to the politically divided and turbulent Sri Lanka of the 1980s. A staunchly Tamil identity replaced the united Ceylonese nationality that the first phase had clung to. Transnational links grew stronger and this generation were compelled to act by the politics of the 'home country' (Daniel, 1997). Any hope of the availability of the Ceylonese nation was now lost, heightened by the changing of Ceylon's name to Sri Lanka. The 'absorbed' coping of the previous generation shifted to a form of 'deliberate' coping in which individuals searched for a 'Tamil nationalised past' fully understanding both their actions and the consequences (Sriskandarajah, 2002).

The socio-economic advantage that higher education and professional employment gave to many of the second wave of migrants allowed for smoother integration into British life. Most of these migrants have retained their middle class status and upward mobility, remaining affluent as

compared to some other South Asian groups in the UK (Paranjape cited in Jazeel, 2006). This study is concerned with the experiences of the children of the second wave of migrants to Britain and due to their parents' privileged position and their emphasis upon education and professional employment, the second generation of this generation are also affluent and of middle class status.

The third phase of Tamil migration to the UK came just before and directly after the riots of 1983. The Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979 marked the beginning of the Sinhalese Government's excessive control of the Tamil minority. Still today Tamils in Sri Lanka are required to carry identification cards and police reports to prove they have no links with the LTTE and there is still an underlying uneasiness in Colombo that the events of only twenty years ago will be repeated. Before the 1983 riots the Tamil Tigers were a very small militant group, but the violence that left thousands of Tamils dead in the July of 1983, sparked the growth of one of the world's most notorious and dangerous terrorist groups (Daniel et al, 1995).

Inevitably many Tamils were desperate to leave the country and claim asylum in a number of countries worldwide. This refugee group lacked the educational qualifications of the first and second wave and are limited in both their social and economic mobility. Second wave Tamils have had to finance and sponsor friends and relatives of this third wave group. The increase in numbers of refugees from Sri Lanka also had an influential effect on British immigration policy. The British government, in the wake of the first waves of Tamil asylum seekers after 1983, required all Sri Lankan citizens to obtain visas before arrival in the UK. This was the first time citizens of a Commonwealth country were required to do so (Steen, 1993).

The first and second phase Tamils had used education as a tool with which to integrate and settle in the UK successfully. Yet, this was not an option for the third phase refugees. Their escape from civil war, the cost of coming to the UK and supporting family in Sri Lanka meant that immediate employment was desperately needed. Another huge financial strain for these Tamil refugees was the need to provide dowries for sisters and female relatives back in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this group were prevented from furthering their own educational interests by financial pressure. Many turned to the 'petrol station' as a means by which to make quick cash (Daniel et al, 1995).

In the early 1990s the character of Tamil migration to the UK changed again with the increase in the number of ex-Tamil militants escaping terrorist group inter-rivalry. The arrival of this group further intensified tensions between the current Tamil communities in the UK. As much as a bloody war was occurring in Sri Lanka between two distinct ethnic groups, suspicions within the Tamil community itself were beginning to surface. Refugees found themselves dislocated and

excluded from both the Sri Lankan and Tamil identity. Their status as refugees left their social space and identity in flux and the diasporic nature of these communities has broken down traditional ideas of national boundaries (Daniel, 1997).

The first phase elites witnessing the entrance of Tamil asylum seekers to countries like the UK, were concerned about the social and economic character of these individuals. People came from varying caste backgrounds, often from the lower end of the caste spectrum. The first phase Tamils expected this newest group of refugees to conform to British ideals and to grasp the English language:

Some Phase 1 immigrants saw the 'Paki phenomenon' taking shape in the Tamil community before their very eyes. The character of the Tamil immigrant community in Britain was never to be the same (Daniel, 1997).

A ceasefire agreement, initiated by the mediators Norway, was signed in February 2002 although, recently this has all but broken down. The agreement has led to demilitarisation of a number of areas and the northern and eastern provinces have opened transport routes. Talks between the warring factions have yet to agree upon complete demobilisation and human rights remain a pivotal concern for organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. A resolution to the conflict in Sri Lanka seems like a long way off and at present the numbers leaving the island are greater than those returning (Hoole et al, 1990)

Recent research on the demographics of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK is extremely limited. Identifying clear and recent settlement figures and information on class, employment, age, family size and gender differentials of this migrant group is relatively impossible. Work has been completed on the Sri Lankan Tamil communities in Canada, Norway and Switzerland, yet there is a distinct lack of research on the community in the UK (McDowell, 1996; Fuglerud, 1999; Hyndman, 2003; Cheran, 2003). Even Daniel's (1995; 1996; 1997) comprehensive and insightful research in the 1990's on the Sri Lankan community in the UK is dated.

From official British statistics it is unclear the ethnic origin of the Sri Lankans in the data set⁵, but we can assume due to the problems in Sri Lanka most of the migrants are Tamil refugees of one form or another. 90% of these Sri Lankans live in the South East with around 50,000 in London alone. London is the centre of the British Tamil community due to the settlement patterns of migrants, the availability of work and the political network that exists between Tamils in Sri Lanka and the UK (Jebanesan, 2004). Elsewhere in Britain the Sri Lankan population is evenly dispersed (Owen, 1996). There is some information concerning the religious composition of the Sri Lankan community. 12% of Hindus in the 2001 Census gave their group as 'other Asian' and most were of Sri Lankan origin. 6% of these Hindus said that their place of birth was Sri Lanka⁶.

From personal data, fieldwork records and informal resources gathered, one can infer limited information on the current residences and localities of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2002; 2004). As highlighted, the community both Christian and Hindu, remains concentrated in the Greater London area. They live predominantly in the North Western and Eastern regions of the city in localities like Wembley, Harrow, East Ham and Ilford. However, most of the UK participants in this study were attending university away from the hub of the Sri Lankan Tamil community and talked of settling in other parts of the UK upon graduation. There are also other small communities of Tamils elsewhere in the UK and some of these areas fit well with traditional patterns of settlement for South Asian groups in the UK, like West Yorkshire (Leeds and Bradford) and Lancashire. Yet, there are also concentrations of the community in Wales, Scotland and other Southern regions like Kent, which on first appearance do not fit with traditional South areas patterns of settlement in the UK.

On further exploration and discussion with the individuals involved one can clearly link employment opportunity with settlement choice and the reasoning for most of the second generation living and being raised in these localities is due to parents occupation i.e. doctors moving to take positions at varying medical practices. Movement away from the core of the Sri

⁵ The 2001 British census does not provide Sri Lankans with a specific ethnic category, as well as ignoring the ethnic differences of the community. There were 247,664 people who placed themselves in the 'other Asian' category in the 2001 Census and over 60,000 of these were probably of Sri Lankan Tamil origin, yet there is no clear way of determining this (Owen, 1996; Model, 1999). The 1996 analysis of the 1991 Census details the groups that were included in this 'other' classification and Sri Lankans form the largest group. There are around 700,000 Sri Lankan Tamils who have settled outside of Sri Lanka due to the conflict and from recent figures of Sri Lankan asylum seekers⁵ it is estimated over 100,000 now live in the UK.

⁶ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk> (Accessed 4/03/06)

Lankan Tamil community seems also to be a condition of class and social mobility. For middle class members of the community there is a definite shift towards living in more affluent suburban and even rural areas. The influx of the refugees into London, and the difficulties associated with this group (i.e. youth gang culture), is encouraging more affluent Tamils to disperse away from traditional settlement sites. There seems to be no clear difference in settlement and locality based on religious difference as both Christian and Hindu Sri Lankan Tamils live in close proximity to one another with minimal tension or conflict.

It is clear that these individuals born in Sri Lanka will maintain links with their country of origin. In Britain's current political climate and with the growing numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK, it seems unusual that more research is not currently being undertaken on the transnational, cross-border relations between Sri Lanka and the UK. Diaspora communities maintain transnational links with their home country through economic, cultural, political and familial networks that transcend two locations (Brah, 1996; Cohen, 1997; Van Hear, 1998; Portes, 1999; Cwerner, 2001; Brun, 2001; Luke, 2003; Yeoh et al, 2003; Burholt, 2004; Werbner, 2004; Haller, et al 2005). These transnational links have the ability to influence behaviour, attitudes and policy both in the settlement and home country, thus reconstructing traditional ideas of borders between nation states.

Sharma (2004) considers whether there is currently too much literature that focuses on cultural preservation and identity of South Asians abroad. I agree to the extent that a clear shift in focus is needed that considers the implications of how traditional culture of the homeland impacts upon the second generation. It is vital to recognise the influence of this growing ethnic group and the relations, behaviour and identities that inform the emerging second and third generations.

George Alagiah (2002; 2006) was born in Sri Lanka, a Tamil, coming to the UK early in his childhood. His high profile career with the BBC highlights the increasing Tamil presence in traditionally British institutions. His own upbringing in a middle class, white British boarding school meant a complete re-conceptualisation of himself as a Sri Lankan Tamil living in Britain. His discussion is relevant to the experiences of the first generation in light of how they view and understand their children. Alagiah argues that the first generation, clinging to the traditional practices of the home country, restrict and hamper the integration of second generation individuals into mainstream British life. The behaviour and experiences of the first generation in Britain remains influenced by the norms and values of their lives in Sri Lanka and can cause difficulties for the second generation balancing traditional cultural practice with their everyday lives. By maintaining traditional practices in an alien land, the first generation find it is easier to

cling to a strong cultural and ethnic identity. This mechanism can then be used to compensate for loss of status in the new society, relating to a sense of pride and self-worth.

3.5 The Sri Lankan Tamil Community and Integration

Until the 1960's little consideration was given to the integration of ethnic minorities into British society (Castles, 2004). The era marked the beginning of fierce debate concerning an appropriate model of integration applicable to the UK (Parekh, 1998). There remained conservative and nationalist politicians and spokespersons that argued against any form of multiculturalism, yet a new variety of British identity was beginning to emerge. Two models were favoured, the assimilationist by the conservatives and the bifurcationist by the liberals. After the 1970s the assimilationist model triumphed with its nationalistic undertones. Ethnic minorities had two clear choices, become fully assimilated into British life or leave the UK (Parekh, 1998).

As previously highlighted, there has been little research carried out on the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK and thus information on the integration strategies of this group is limited. This study focuses on the lives and experiences of the second generation of Sri Lankan Tamils in Britain, rather than the skill of the community as a whole to adapt to British life. However, it is helpful to give some consideration to the integration theories proposed in relation to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the UK and question their applicability to the social and cultural complexities of this particular ethnic group.

Assimilation theory argues that no community or state can be stable and secure unless the participants share common goals, values and ideals. The involvement in a common culture cultivates bonds of attachment and emotional security (Alba et al, 2005). The state monitors the behaviour and reactions of its citizens to ensure minorities assimilate into the majority way of life. Immigrants are understood to adapt, albeit gradually, to the political, social, economic and cultural environment of the 'settlement' country (Alleyne, 2002). Immigrants shed the cultural practices and social norms of the 'home' country and embrace national citizenship of the 'settlement' country openly and willingly. This singular conception of the nation state is governed by a central political nucleus that encourages all to adopt the social, political and cultural norms of the host country (Faist, 2000).

This is clearly not the case for many of the first generation Sri Lankan Tamils living in the UK, particularly those who have come more recently as refugees. They actively seek to preserve their cultural heritage through traditional practices, rituals and language. The varying waves of Sri Lankan Tamil migration to the UK Daniel (1996; 1997) considers have experienced differing

levels of what would be considered integration. Earlier migrants in the 1950s through to the 1960s were more affluent and better educated than more recent refugees and have adopted British norms and values, whatever these may be, more comfortably. This is evident when one considers the children of the earlier migrants who see themselves integrated into British life and have moved away from some of the Sri Lankan Tamil cultural traits brought with their parents. Preservation of the mother tongue is a clear indication of this.

Unlike other South Asian communities in the UK, many of the earlier migrants chose not to teach their children born in Britain the language as they thought they would find learning English alone easier. The children of the later refugee migrants who came in the 1980s through to the present time are normally more skilled at the Tamil language. Unfortunately, as is evident in later chapters, the children of the middle class Sri Lankan Tamils are unable to pass on the language to their own children.

Sri Lankan Tamil ideas of citizenship and nationality are also extremely varied, dependent on age, class, employment gender etc and therefore in terms of this particular community there is no clear homogenous nation state as the assimilationists suggest. The connection the older migrants maintain with Sri Lanka would also suggest that ideas of 'belonging' and 'citizenship' transcend borders and loyalties can be divided. Yet, Britain as a nation has never been a homogenous, unified whole. In today's world no government or political body can shield its society from the onset of globalising forces (Parekh, 2002). Even if the idea of assimilation worked, it would be ideologically unfeasible for a liberal society to adopt (Parekh et al, 1998)

Bifurcationists suggest that all citizens must adopt and adhere to a shared political culture. This involves a unified belief in common political values and a clear sense of national identity. Thus, minorities are assimilated politically, but allowed to continue an exclusively social, cultural and economic community lifestyle. The stability and cohesion of the state rests in the public domain, while diversity and difference remains in the private (Alleyne, 2002). However, this model although more attractive than the assimilationist, still invites criticism. One must not assume that a political community is unable to bend and change to the needs of a new section of society. By asking for political, cultural and social recognition minorities have the opportunity to gain true public legitimacy that has been struggled for and rightly gained (Parekh et al, 1998).

There is limited research that analyses the political engagement of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK, however it seems that political involvement varies considerably and is dependent on social and economic factors like age, class, gender, employment and time of

migration (Ray, 2003; Jacobs et al, 2004). With this group political activity is also borderless as Tamils in the UK support the illegal activities of the LTTE back in Sri Lanka through remittances (Van Hear, 1998; Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2002; 2004).

The bifurcationist approach to integration is far more open to cultural diversity and difference. The model still demands an acceptance of British norms and values, however it was more concerned with loyalty to these ideas, rather than to the nation itself, for example a belief in freedom of speech, equality of the sexes and individual choice (Kelly, 2000). Ethnic minorities are free to preserve their cultural identity through religious practice and language. This appears to be the model that most Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK follow. In reality however, there is little difference between the assimilationist and bifurcationist models of integration and both advocated the importance of British political culture, with minorities still expected to assimilate.

In more recent times, the pluralist, multicultural idea of integration has been encouraged, especially in the wake of the terrorist attacks (9/11 and 7/7) and the backlash that the British Muslim population has faced (Statham, 1999; Abbas, 2005). This theory considers the criticisms of the bifurcationist model and suggests that rather than minorities adopting the nation state's political culture, the political culture pluralises to allow for multiculturalism. The emphasis moves away from 'I' to a re-conceptualised notion of 'we', incorporating the 'other' (Kymlicka, 1995). The pluralist model is the ideal in which cultural difference is celebrated and minorities feel secure, safe and part of the national identity (Parekh, 1998).

Cultural difference and diversity is to be celebrated rather than feared and individuals should be allowed to practice the traditions that give their everyday lives meaning. The state has no place to interfere in the community relations of its citizens and should actively work to recognise and promote cultural autonomy. Many of the middle class, educated Tamil migrants in the UK still feel a great respect towards Britain, a respect that has its roots in colonial and Commonwealth ties.

The idea is problematic though because it attempts to reconcile a public monoculture with a private multicultural identity. Even though the ideal, it is far from the reality of race relations, community interplay and immigration policy evident in today's society. Reconciling the needs and demands of both the home and immigrant communities is complex and there is little evidence to suggest this has been successfully achieved (Faist, 2000).

Wieviorka (1995; 1998) and Parekh (2000) point to a number of problems with the 'multicultural' model of society and community. The interplay between the political, social and economic spheres is characterised by tension, 'disintegrated multiculturalism'. The arguments that Parekh (2000) advocates of the 'ideal' multicultural society are undermined by the disparity between multicultural political optimisms and the reality of social and economic life for many ethnic minority communities in today's society. Their concerns have clear linkages to the second and subsequent generation born and raised in the UK. The way in which cultural preservation is balanced with everyday integration is crucially important for those of different ethnic origin but the same nationality (Moodley cited in Wieviorka, 1998).

Martiniello (1998) critiques Wieviorka's arguments, while both Spivak (1990) and Said (1993) offer alternative forms of 'multiculturalism'. The pluralist model does offer hope that a culturally sensitive, integrated, multicultural society is possible, with all community members participating fully in political, economic and social discourse

Models of integration cannot and more importantly should not be considered in isolation from the ethnic communities they discuss. 'Multiculturalism' as a term must respond to the many challenges posed by increasingly diverse and unique societal structures but more importantly the idea must engage with the communities of analysis. This becomes even more complex when applied to the second generation, born to immigrant parents but raised in the UK, as they begin to form their own cultural, social and national identities. The experiences and reactions of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Britain must be understood within the context of external constraints and pressures, along with their own cultural preferences.

When an ethnic group migrates to another country it is inevitable that they will settle in communities together. It is an adjustment mechanism to deal with the alien land and culture, providing a sense of familiarity and comfort for those far from home: 'Re-formation of group structures is a necessary consequence of the gathering of people with similar cultural backgrounds' (Aurora, 2004: 69).

This reaction to the migratory process has been especially true of the Sri Lankan Tamil migrant community. The second wave of migrants who came to the UK for education settled temporarily in varying parts of the country, depending upon the location of their university or polytechnic (Daniel, 1996; 1997). However, many settled in London on completion of their studies and the large influx of Tamil refugees following the 1983 riots led to the community forming in the capital. Areas in east and north London have been most popular like Newham, East Ham,

Harrow and Wembley. This community is vibrant and active, with many Tamil schools, temples and churches (Jebanesan, 2003). Many of the first generation that migrated to the UK for education have remained and settled in the areas of their educational establishments. The high socio-economic status of this group has allowed them to be more geographically mobile and a number of the children of these migrants have been largely isolated from the main Tamil community in London. This must all be taken into account in any analysis of the perceived integration of Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK, their children and subsequent generations.

3.6 Diaspora and Transnationalism

Diasporas normally possess some or all of the following characteristics –

- A dispersal or scattering from the original homeland, often forced and traumatic. Movement also occurs in response to economic and social needs like employment.
- There exists a ‘collective memory’ about the homeland and individuals cling to the ‘myth of return’.
- A strong ‘ethnic consciousness’ persists and the relationship between home and host societies is strained, however, recognition that a fulfilling positive life in the host country is possible

(Cohen, 1997; Reis, 2004).

The relationship between the homeland and diaspora community features heavily in current migration literature. Falzon (2003) suggests this link is more tenuous than we are led to believe. The homeland exists as a fanciful memory and diaspora individuals possess ‘cultural hearts’, independent of the country of origin. The term ‘diaspora’ in the classical sense originally referred to the dispersion of the Jews from their homeland, Israel (Van Hear, 1998). The concept is now applied to groups of varying ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds that are in the process of a journey from the homeland to either settlement or onwards to numerous diasporic locations (Falzon, 2003).

There has been a recent shift in diaspora theorising and writers fall into two broad groups. The first set of theorists (Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 1997) rely on the Jewish experience of migration. They use the classical and traditional notion of diaspora as a starting point for the study of other ethnic diaspora communities. The second group of writers look to a more contemporary understanding of diaspora, challenging traditional definitions of the term. They link the concept of diaspora with the idea of transnationalism and take more account of the impact of globalisation upon the migratory process (Castles and Miller, 1998; Van Hear, 1998).

The classical definition of diaspora describes the forced mass movement of people as people in exile (Van Hear, 1998). For example, in the case of the Jewish and Armenian diaspora the migratory journey is seen as a traumatic ‘ripping apart’ of individual from home (Reis, 2004). The change in today’s diaspora is found in the effect of globalisation on communities abroad. ‘Globalisation’ is a highly contested phenomenon, however there have been clear changes in the social, political and economic world that suggest globalising forces are impacting upon relations worldwide, even if the differences between the impact on North and South remain unclear and often uneven. The clearest example of the diasporic migratory process becoming globalised is through the advances in technology and the ease with which one can contact another country through phone, email and fax.

There has now emerged a diaspora that migrates not only to escape persecution or war, but to advance his or her own economic and social situation (Smith and Eade, 2008). Processes of globalisation have made work and travel abroad easier and Reis argues that these more recent factors now motivate the diasporic journey (Reis, 2004). It is at this point that the debate emerges between the notion of diaspora and transnationalism. Is the term diaspora outdated in the study of the contemporary global system and do transnational communities now represent the nature of migration more aptly? Or, does the term diaspora persist except with a different nature that incorporates transnationalism and transnational links? As Faist suggests, diaspora form a distinct part of transnational communities (2000).

The term ‘diaspora’ is clearly applicable to the Sri Lankan Tamil migratory community in the UK, although it is far more complex than a group who have simply been forced to flee. Understanding the dynamics of the group is imperative and more recently the community have become increasingly transnational in nature. The Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK is, therefore, diasporic with clear transnational tendencies and links. Yet there are clear differences between the first and second generation in terms of how this is enacted.

3.7 Links to the Ancestral Homeland - A Tamil Eelam?

The Sri Lankan Tamils are often referred to as the ‘asylum diaspora’ due to the wide-ranging countries they have requested to stay in and the nature of their asylum claims (McDowell, 1996). One cannot deny the importance of homeland ties as is evident in the ‘myth of return’ (Anwar, 1979). Many people in diaspora groups cling to the hope of returning home at some point even if this is economically and politically impossible (Ballard, 2003). My research to date supports this idea, as first generation Tamils imagine a time when they can return to a restored and peaceful Sri Lanka, yet we know in reality this will not be possible in the foreseeable future due to numerous

social and political barriers. Therefore, many Sri Lankan Tamils abroad adopt a more general South Asian cultural identity, which is less emotionally painful. Even though this tie is particularly powerful, Falzon argues 'cultural hearts' constructed through the diasporic process are of more practical importance than the idea of a homeland return. In Falzon's (2003) work on the Hindu Sindhis, Bombay functioned as place of settlement for many individuals. More importantly, those who settled elsewhere in the world still perceive Bombay as a 'cultural centre' rather than their own homeland in the north of India.

Many diasporic communities and particularly those displaced by conflict and war, both individuals and the group as a whole maintain both practical and emotional links with the home country. A measurement of these links is extremely difficult as it varies according to the individual and their social context. Some relationships involve regular visits and contact with the home country, while for others it is simply the imagination and memory that serves as the ancestral link (Jayaram, 2004).

Even though each of the groups of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to the UK continue relationships with the home state, for many this is purely through memories. The island the first-generation remember has been ravaged by war and the discrimination felt and violently experienced by the Tamil community has made re-visiting emotionally painful and practically very difficult. Every Tamil has been personally affected by the political troubles in some way and opinions of Sri Lanka stem from both trauma and anger. The area in the North of the island which is considered the Tamil ancestral land around the Jaffna capital has been worse hit by the fighting. Houses, churches and schools have been destroyed and the emotional trauma has convinced many that returning is simply not safe or feasible. Older Tamils talk of an eventual return to Sri Lanka, but they are sadly aware that this is for many, very unlikely.

The second generation link to the homeland is often entirely imagined as individuals have limited, if any, experience at all of living in the motherland. How will the dynamics of transnational ties shift? Is London becoming the new Colombo for the Tamil youth and young adults of Britain and will the nostalgia for Sri Lanka drift away with the first generation? Will both practical and emotional 'transnational ties' become a phenomenon of the past and has the need for a 'cultural centre' diminished?

3.8 Economies of Migration – Financial Remittances

A practical feature of diaspora and homeland linkage is that of financial remittances between the 'settlement' and home countries (Vertovec, 2001). There exist large financial exchanges between

the diaspora community in the UK and Sri Lanka, with thousands of pounds making its way to the hands of the Tamil separatist group the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE). Many Tamils abroad continue their political support for the struggle through financial assistance to the separatist group on the island (Van Hear, 1999). Tracking and monitoring these types of financial exchange is extremely difficult and as a consequence makes life for the British government, wanting to eradicate world wide terrorist groups difficult!

Financial transfers between migrant and home communities are estimated to be over 75 billion dollars worldwide (Martin, 1993) and remittances between Europe and North America to Sri Lanka are vast (Sriskandarajah, 2002). These remittances are important to both the overall economic climate of the country and to individual community prosperity. There are problems with these funds in that often they fall into unlawful hands and there has been increasing criticism of Europe and Northern America that diaspora transfers have funded illegal LTTE activity (Fuglerud, 1999). The transfer of remittances between the diaspora and Sri Lanka is in itself an important area of study, yet my work is more concerned with how links and therefore, remittances will change with the second generation.

3.9 Transnationalism and the Second Generation

Some authors promote transnationalism as an alternative to diaspora, while others suggest it is part of the diaspora experience (Castles, 2000). The idea emerged when further levels of labour from developing to developed nations dramatically increased, heightened by the growth in political refugees and asylum seekers. The onset of globalisation, the reconceptualisation of citizenship, and the emergence of cross-national communities have demanded 'novel' conceptual tools to deal with new and 'unique' social phenomenon (Kivisto, 2001). However, the definition of the term 'transnationalism' involves ongoing academic debate, as people fail to take account of the competing spatial and temporal influences that influence the phenomena.

Migration theorists have always accepted that individuals who migrate maintain contact with relatives, friends, organisations etc in their home country. Yet, the focus of migration studies has been preoccupied with how effective adaptation and assimilation into settlement country society has been. Recently, writers are recognising the importance of home/settlement country links and research is emerging that focuses specifically on this area of migration. Today these linkages have changed in nature and are influenced by numerous globalising forces (Van Hear, 1998; Portes, 1999; Vertovec, 2001). The emergences of migrant groups affected by contemporary globalisation are known as 'transnational communities' (Vertovec, 2001: 574-575).

Transnationalism impacts upon every part of the migrant's life politically, culturally and economically. Financial remittances between home and host countries have significantly risen in recent years. Links to the home country affect how identities are influenced and constructed in the host society. This has particular bearing on my own work and the ways in which the second-generation negotiate 'who' they are and 'where' they belong? The flow across and between borders of social and economic commodities challenges traditional notions of the nation-state as static and rigid. Borders are crossed instantaneously through the use of technology and the state is no longer a 'container' that controls and defines citizenship and identity (Vertovec, 2001). If the state is no longer a clear container of identity and national loyalties who or what now controls this? Is it the diaspora communities themselves through cultural traditions, norms and values like caste, and marriage practices that influence and affect notions of citizenship, nationality, identity and belonging?

There exist three main understandings of transnationalism. The first use of the term was by cultural anthropologists like Basch and Schiller (Basch and Schiller, 1994). They first suggested that migrant communities maintain both social and political links across borders and that the nature of migration is fundamentally different today as compared to the late nineteenth century. Kivisto criticises this arguing that the characteristics of migration today are in fact very similar to those of the past (Kivisto, 2001). Portes (1999) then refined the term, applying it to the study of the second generation, similar to my own research. He suggests that the technological advances brought about by globalising forces, allow migrants to act upon the desire to be involved in homeland issues. Portes et al also define three distinct types of transnationalism, economic, political and socio-cultural (Portes, 1999).

Most writers view transnationalism as an alternative to assimilation. Portes views the phenomenon as a part of the assimilation process, especially for the second generation (Portes, 1999). This makes Portes' ideas ambiguous, as it is unclear whether he is suggesting an alternative to assimilation or a variant of the existing analytical framework.

As with many migration theories, transnationalism lacks a clear theoretical framework (Portes et al, 1999). Occasional trips and holidays to the country of origin and minimal contact does not constitute transnational links according to Portes et al (Portes et al, 1999) and there needs to be more work defining the characteristics and behaviour of true transnationalism. Therefore, one must bear these limitations in mind when applying the term to certain migratory phenomena.

Transnationalism is not a completely new and radical idea within the migration literature. It builds upon previous frameworks and there is ongoing debate as to where it fits with the

notion of diaspora. Is it a replacement or a subsidiary of this traditional and established concept within the field? It is also a misunderstood and therefore, overused term that is applied to a broad and unmanageable range of behaviour and activity. How influential have technological advances really been upon the linkages between home and settlement country and is transnationalism truly a challenge or defence to global capitalism? As Portes et al (1999) suggest in time transnational activity and behaviour may evolve into the 'normative' adaptation path of migrant communities or as I have found it may simply fade away.

Finally, Faist (2001) has provided one of the clearest and most systematic articulations of the concept in recent years focusing upon the transnational social field. Faist (2001) talks of transnational social spaces and the multiple actors involved in these. Diaspora communities are located in a unique transnational space that clings to the imagined homeland, as highlighted previously. The edges of these transnational communities remain blurred (Yeoh et al, 2003).

Faist (2001) attempts to answer two complex migratory questions, why do so few people migrate and why are so few people migrating out of so many different places? The transnational 'social space' paradigm originates from both the traditional push/pull notion of migration and the centre-periphery model (Kivisto, 2001). Transnational social relations are a possible outcome of the migratory and settlement process, however both assimilation and ethnic pluralism are also possibilities. The relationship between globalisation and transnationalism is considered and the phenomena are understood as distinct yet overlapping. Globalising forces influence and manipulate transnational links, while transnational processes perpetuate globalisation. The main dimension of Faist's (2001) work is his focus on 'social spaces' and the ties that sustain these transnational spaces. Kinship groups are founded on ties of reciprocity, transnational circuits on trade networks and transnational communities on collective identity.

Faist's (2001) idea of transnationalism is particularly pertinent for my own work on the identity formation of the second generation and how this compares to the home country. Transnational identities are fluid and changing, yet they remain grounded in a particular social place or location that is familiar and comforting (Yeoh et al, 2003).

Faist also suggests that for a transnational community to be fully legitimate it must sustain itself over a long period of time, with continual social, political and economic links between the home and host country. This, therefore, implies 'generational succession' and the continuation of transnational links by the second and third generations. It will be a number of years before this hypothesis can be rigorously tested, and it appears that the second generation Tamil's in Britain

are already loosening transnational ties established by their parents and as I have touched upon before, a sense of ‘transnational redundancy’ is already emerging. Links to the home country are weakening as individuals redefine their Tamil identity culturally within a British nationality framework. Sri Lanka is viewed as an ‘unknown stranger’ and individuals prefer to adopt certain Tamil cultural traits that can be inter-woven into everyday life rather, than maintaining economic, political and social links with the home country. Attitudes towards Sri Lanka range from romanticism to anger to ambivalence, yet a common feature is the widening emotional gap between the second generation and the country of origin.

Transnational ties are by their very nature ‘hybrid’, in that they traverse national borders, however diaspora communities are not themselves inherently ‘hybrid’. Some diaspora members embrace the settlement country norms and values, while others openly reject them and cling to home country traditions and practices (Werbner, 2004). First generation individuals of the Tamil diaspora ardently retain their Tamil identity, fuelled by the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. People understand that a permanent return to Sri Lanka is virtually impossible, however they are reluctant to embrace or adopt any of the host society identity. The older generation adapt to host country norms and values superficially, although emotionally and privately reject them. How valid therefore, is transnational identity within the older Tamil diaspora? The situation is far more complex for the second generation who balance the Tamil cultural expectations of their parents with the British norms and values of the society they live within.

3.10 Modernity and Young Sri Lankan Tamils

‘The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options’ (Giddens, 1991: 5)

Before moving on to consider the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK, brief reference must be made to the debate concerning modernity and the affects upon those in modernising societies (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 2000; Gilroy, 1993). The onset of globalisation and the westernisation of certain parts of South Asia have had a huge influence on lives of young people in Colombo and there has been a clear shift from life in the village to that in the city. The internal movement of affluent Sri Lankan Tamils from rural communities to urban living is clearly evident.

Relocation is as a result of the conflict and also the desire to settle in increasingly modern and technologically advanced localities. In order to pursue lucrative careers in global businesses and the private sector, young Sri Lankan Tamils are forced to move to the cities and primarily

Colombo. International communication links from Colombo are far easier and therefore movement to the city also allows for and encourages global travel and relocation. Thus, the aspirations and experiences of young Sri Lankan Tamils are hugely different to those of their parents born and raised in the northern villages. This shift can also be observed in the change from caste based societal divisions to those based more upon class and socio-economic status.

The city of Colombo is modernising at an extremely fast pace and the younger generation of affluent Tamils experience these changes simultaneously. An active social scene has emerged for the wealthier Tamils, including bars, restaurants and nightclubs. This is a cultural world their parents have little experience of and, therefore, both groups must balance parental and cultural expectations with the pressure of being a young adult in a vibrant and modernising social world. In the UK the older generation cling to traditional Sri Lankan Tamil values, while in Sri Lanka many of the older generation appear to embrace the advantages that a modernising society brings. Therefore, in a number of ways the lives of young Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo appear more modern and progressive as compared to their peers in the UK, a distinction worth bearing in mind while reading the thesis.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the migration, settlement and integration of ethnic minorities into British life, focusing specifically on the Sri Lanka Tamil community in the UK. The chapter highlights the reasons for Sri Lankan Tamil migration to Britain, looking at the three waves of movement (Daniel, 1996; 1997). There has been limited research into the demographics of the community in the UK and the 2001 Census provides little relevant information on Sri Lankan Tamils in Britain. However, outlined are a number of settlement characteristics of the diaspora group and the implications for the second and subsequent generations.

South Asians are among one of the biggest migratory groups to Britain and many of the ethnic communities from this demography have been settled in the UK for over fifty years. The larger communities, Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, attract most of the research interest and there is a vast amount of literature specifically written on these groups (Ballard, 1994; 2003; Anwar, 1998; Shaw, 2000; Werbner, 2004; Hussain et al, 2005; Peach, 2006). There are around 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils living in the UK, but this community has invited much less academic interest. Most of the academic work focusing on the Sri Lankan Tamil community centres on the conflict, issues of nationhood, exile, terrorism and the LTTE (Tambiah, 1986; Manogaran, 1987; Hoole et al, 1988; Wilson, 1988; Spencer, 1990; Ofstad 2002).

When authors look at Sri Lankan Tamils that have settled abroad, the majority of writing focuses on the more recent refugees of the 1980's and 1990's, rather than the first and second wave migrants who came in the 1950's post independence through to the late 1970s. This work also tends to prioritise the communities persisting links to Sri Lanka in light of the conflict (Van Hear, 2006). This type of research is clearly pivotal to any understanding of the migrant Sri Lankan Tamil community and one must understand and spend time with the community in the country of origin to fully analyse the dynamics of the community abroad. Although, more work needs to be completed on the earlier middle class Tamil migrants to the UK and their experiences of life in the settlement country.

This chapter provided a background to Sri Lankan Tamil migration and draws upon the work of those who detail the conflict and political unrest in Sri Lanka. The roots of the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, the emergence of the separatist group the LTTE and the ongoing difficulties in the Tamil cultural capital Jaffna are all outlined. An in-depth analysis of the Sinhalese-Tamil problem in Sri Lanka is beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis, but, it is necessary to have an understanding of the volatile political situation of Sri Lanka in order to appreciate how and why Sri Lankan Tamils of all generations experience life in the UK.

Sri Lankan Tamil migration to the UK has occurred in three distinct phases (Daniel, 1996; 1997). Firstly, the affluent Tamils who came in the immediate aftermath of independence in the 1950s. Then the much larger group of middle class student migrants who came to university in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s to escape increasingly discriminatory education policies in Sri Lanka. Finally, the main third wave of refugee migrants who arrived in the 1980's through to the present time, following the violent anti-Tamil riots of 1983 and the current worsening political situation. The focus of this study are the children of the second wave of students, although to understand their experiences one must also take account of the settlement of Sri Lankan Tamils as a whole and the current relations between these groups within the same ethnic community. As stated before, information on the demographics of the Sri Lankan Tamil community is limited and any work that has been completed tends to focus on the more recent refugees. Thus, providing a comprehensive overview of the makeup of the community in the UK is extremely difficult.

The chapter also included a discussion of integration and assimilation theory (Alba et al, 2005) and the applicability of these ideas to the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK. Assimilation theory suggests that all migrants to the UK should adopt the norms, values and identity of Britain and 'assimilate' fully into life in the UK. This idea suggests that the suppression of social and cultural heritage is most conducive to a stable society. Clearly most ethnic minority communities

in the UK do not abandon their own entire cultural heritage in favour of 'so called' British norms and values and the Sri Lankan Tamil community is an example of this. The older generation use the preservation of cultural rituals and identity not only as a way of ensuring the continuation of certain traditions, but also as a coping mechanism for living and settling in an alien country. The younger generation, most of which describe themselves as strongly British, also want to hold onto some of the cultural traits of their ethnic heritage and are proud of this.

The bifurcationist theory (Kelly, 2000; Alleyne, 2002) is more flexible towards the retention of cultural heritage, while multiculturalism advocates and celebrates the plurality of ethnic difference. Even these more favourable, liberal approaches to integration are problematic however, and there is a need for the complexities of varying ethnic communities to be taken account of in the construction of these theories, especially with the emergence of the second and subsequent generations.

Since Daniel's work on Sri Lankan Tamil migrants in 1993, a new generation of Tamils have been born and over ten years later new forms of ethnic identity are emerging. The first generation Tamil diaspora are seen as lying in wait for a time when Sri Lanka sees peace and it is possible to return to a Tamil Eelam (Fuglerud, 1999). This is not necessarily the case for the second generation who see the UK as home.

The Sri Lankan Tamils of the second wave generally settled near to where their universities were based and when finished most relocated to London. The majority of refugees to the UK also settled in north and east London where the largest communities can be found. The younger generation are beginning to leave the Sri Lankan Tamil communities in London, moving away for work and leisure reasons. The development of the community in the UK will only be observed with time, but it is interesting to speculate about the differences between the lives of the migrants and their children, grand children and following generations.

The causes and consequences of migration are unique for each diaspora group and Sri Lankan Tamil migrants have their own specific experiences. The way in which the migration has occurred is fundamental to an understanding of the second generation and how their lives have been impacted by the experiences of the first generation that moved and settled abroad. The effects of the migratory journey of the first generation on the second and subsequent generations is largely ignored by current migration literature and this study endeavours to address this in the context of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. Related to this is the need to consider both ends of

the migratory process, in the home and settlement country, exploring migration through a cross-disciplinary, international lens.

Without detailed knowledge of the country of origin and the emotional and practical links that persist, one cannot fully understand the differences between the first and second generation and the experiences of the second generation born and raised in the UK. How this generational relationship is formed and played out is directly affected by the migratory experience. The second generation in the UK face different pressures than those born and raised in Sri Lanka, however there are similarities between the two groups. By analysing the middle class, younger generation in Colombo, one can gain further insight into influences upon the second generation in the UK.

The complexities of migration including the differing types of movement, the individuals involved and their varying experiences, make attempts to construct a general, universally applicable theoretical framework extremely difficult. The experiences of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and the way in which the community behaves in the UK is unique and different in many other ways to fellow migratory groups in Britain. Yet, there is a need for the varying academic disciplines to draw together ideas, to work towards identifying and outlining similarities and differences in the hope of further understanding the causation and experiences of migration. Many of the current terms in the migration literature are fast becoming outdated in light of the second and emerging generations.

The possibility that some concepts and ideas are becoming increasingly redundant is clear as the identity of the diaspora community shifts and changes. The theory of migratory networks and the need to consider both 'ends' of the migratory journey is important and a clear understanding of the migratory process is limited by focusing solely on the receiving country. One must consider and reflect upon the political and social situation of the sending state to fully appreciate the experiences that influence and direct the behaviours of the diaspora abroad and the second generation. Thus this chapter provides an overview of migration to the UK and the following chapter outlines the specific migratory experiences of the Sri Lankan Tamil community and their settlement patterns in Britain.

The need to pay particular attention to 'forced' migration, its relevance to the Sri Lankan Tamil community abroad and the way in which globalisation is impacting migration in practice and theory is also discussed in this chapter. Directly related to globalisation and migration are the terms 'diaspora' and 'transnationalism', commonly referred to in the migration literature. How these ideas are understood and applied in this research study is also outlined in this chapter. The

meaning and applicability of the term 'diaspora' has changed, yet it remains relevant to the Sri Lankan Tamil community in this research.. The social, political and economic links between the UK and Sri Lanka are also outlined, however, the longevity of these terms and their applicability with the second and subsequent generations is questioned. In the future there will need to be a redefinition of the terms 'diaspora' and 'transnational', relational to the changes in national identity brought about by the second and following generations of British Sri Lankan Tamils and the experiences of other minority groups in the UK.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Sri Lankan Tamil Second Generation in the UK

4.1 Introduction

The following discussion of the second generation draws upon both British and American authors to theorise and conceptualise the subject of this study (Shaw, 1988; 1994; 2000; 2001; Ballard, 1994; 2003; Gardner, 1994; Rumbaut, 1994; Brah, 1996; Modood, 1997; Portes, 1997; 1999; 2001; Anwar, 1998; Gap Min et al, 2000; Jones-Correa, 2001; Hall, 2002; Levitt et al, 2002; 2003). Even though there are many differences between the second generation in the US and the UK, one can identify a number of similar traits and experiences between the two groups.

Most of the early British work on the South Asian second generation focuses on the ‘cultural clash’ between the older and younger generations (Watson, 1977; Shaw 1988; Ballard, 1994; Anwar, 1998). More recently however, there has been a shift to understand the second generation navigating identifications rather than set, rigid identities. Therefore, it is necessary to consider more contemporary research that looks to ideas of cultural hybridity (Werbner et al, 1997; 2004; Hutnyk, 2005) and the ‘third space’ (Bhabha 1990; 1996; 2004), along with emerging American writing on the second generation in the US (Portes et al, 2001; Levitt, 2002; 2003; 2004).

A significant gap in the research exists in the comparison of the lives of young adults in the country of origin and the second generation in the settlement country. Few authors have compared and contrasted the second generation born and raised in the settlement country to their peers of a similar age, economic and educational status in the migrant country (Levitt, 2002; 2003; 2004).

By considering each of these groups and thus, both ends of the migratory journey one can analyse how the experiences of parents can be emotionally and socially transferred to their children. To fully understand the experiences and dynamics of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK I found it essential to study both this group and their peers in Sri Lanka. During the course of the research it became apparent that this work is one of the first to consider the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK and even more unique in its comparison of the country of origin and host country experiences. Throughout this chapter reference is made to other ethnic minority communities in the discussion of the second generation. The limited research focusing on the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK has meant that comparisons between this ethnic group

and other minority communities is necessary in order to highlight important analytical observations.

Levitt (2002; 2003; 2004) argues that researchers need to know more about how the second generation will act as independent adults and this chapter provides an overview of the themes affecting young adult, middle class, second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK. The chapter also provides a working definition of the term second generation, outlining how it is applied in this particular piece of research. Also a number of prominent authors, both in the UK and America, writing in the area of identity and the second generation are referred to in relation to the current gaps in the literature. The organisation of this chapter into the main topics of religious practice, language, British identity, gender, transnationalism and marriage provides an introduction to the themes analysed in chapters six to eight.

4.2 Defining the Second Generation

Both Ballard (1979; 1994; 2003) and Anwar (1998) subscribe to the notion that the second generation are the children of immigrants who have been born and raised in the UK and as Song suggests, usually refers to: ‘the children of contemporary immigrants, who were born in the host society or who received some or a significant part of their schooling and socialisation there’ (2003:104). Song (2003) also highlights the fact that 90% of children aged 0-14 years old from ethnic minority backgrounds were born in Britain and Anwar (1998) citing from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1993) notes 42% of Indians, 50.5% of Pakistanis and 36.7% of Bangladeshis were born in the UK. The American definition of ‘generation’ differs to the traditional British idea as Levitt highlights:

Studies of the second generation generally focus on the children of immigrants who were born in the United States (the classic second generation) and people who came to the United States as children, usually accompanied by parents, but who grew up and attended school in this country (1.5 generation) (2002: 12).

Meanwhile, Jensen (cited in Rumbaut et al, 2001) suggests that the first generation are the children who are foreign born, the second generation those born in the States and the third generation native born children with native born parents. So as the reader can see, there exists no single, cross-national definition of what it means to be first, second or third generation. Therefore, the generational definitions as utilised in this study are outlined below –

- **First Generation-** The Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants who came to the UK in the second wave of migration in the 1960's and 1970's (Daniel 1996; 1997).
- **Second Generation-** The children of second wave migrants outlined above who may have been born abroad or in the UK. If born abroad they moved and settled in Britain at an early age (primary school) and received the majority of their schooling in the UK.
- **Third Generation-** The children of the second generation who are raised in the UK and native born (There is an emerging Sri Lankan Tamil third generation, but it is still relatively small).

Of the interviewees spoken to in the British context of this study, five were born in Sri Lanka and two in Zambia. The remaining participants were born in various parts of the UK. For those born abroad, however, their parents migrated to and settled in the UK when their children were very young and the majority of their schooling was completed in Britain. Therefore, all were largely socialised in the British context. The definitions given above are those that will be used throughout this thesis when referring to generational difference and the second generation group. A number of authors argue that there is an emerging 'new second generation' (Portes, 1998; 2001; Rumbaut, 2001), and Levitt (2002) suggests that the notion of second generation be reformulated within the transnational paradigm to include individuals of the same age and experience in both the home and host countries. Thus, the participants in Sri Lanka would also be known as second generation as well as the original second generation in the UK. This study considers the second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK as distinct from the young adults in Sri Lanka, although it is helpful to draw differences and similarities between the two groups in order to further understand the experiences of the British born individuals.

4.3 Theorising the Second Generation

Traditionally, it has been viewed that the second generation are located 'within' and 'between' two competing cultures (Watson, 1977; Ballard, 1979; 1994, Anwar, 1998) and the relationship between the older and younger generation is normally characterised by conflict and tension (Brah, 1996). More recent studies of the second generation reveal differing approaches to how these individuals experience and construct their social worlds (Modood, 1997; Anwar, 1998; Shaw, 2000; Ballard, 2003; Song, 2003). Some writers suggest that second generation individuals have integrated well and enjoy comparative success economically and socially, while others feel that the disadvantaged immigrant status of the parents is passed onto the children.

It is becoming clearer that relationships between and within the family and community are increasingly complex and cannot simply be explained away by conflict (Fuglerud, 1999; 2001). It is not helpful to blame generational differences solely on the dichotomy between the East and West. More recent research focusing on the attitudes of first generation South Asians in Britain suggests that Asian parents are increasingly understanding of the pressures and tensions their children experience (Song, 2003). However, as this thesis highlights, the way in which parents react to these difficulties is perhaps not always the most appropriate. The younger generation of South Asians born in Britain understand the social constraints and community pressures their parents face and in most cases are sympathetic. Therefore, in any analysis of the second generation one must be aware that there are complex influences and external agents interfering in the assumed 'personal and private' nature of family relations (Ballard et al, 1977).

Although, written over thirty years ago, Ballard et al's (1977) analysis of the Punjabi second generation in the UK remains relevant to the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation today. This is clearly illustrated in chapter six that focuses upon marriage and relationships. Even though many of the participants railed against the notion of 'arranged' marriage, most admitted that they were likely to abide by their family's cultural expectations and go through the process to find a suitable marriage partner. The methods by which the second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK negotiate and navigate their own identities, are, however far more complex.

Ballard's (1977; 1994; 2003) evaluation of second generation behaviour in the balancing of identities moves from a simple idea of location 'between' cultures to one that places importance on the individuals involved and their own autonomy. He proposes that the second generation partake in a form of 'code switching', 'culturally navigating' their way through the blurred cultural lines of the world they inhabit. Young people are skilled 'cultural navigators', who move between their ethnicity and the wider public space confidently. The codes, cultural markers like language and religion, are informed by certain social norms and can therefore 'switch' and change according to the context in which the second generation are moving (Ballard et al, 1994).

There exist 'English' and 'Asian' arenas that the second generation shift between. However, as Ballard et al (1994; 2003) argues, tensions arise from the perceptions of one arena to the other, causing difficulties for the second generation, balancing the norms of the community and family with their peers and wider social environment. The conflict can be successfully overcome by effective code switching on the part of the second generation and the first generation turning a

‘blind eye’ to some of their children’s behaviour. Yet, most of the participants in the UK sample lived away from home and therefore, what is it that influences their actions when geographically distanced from the family and community? More importantly these social ‘arenas’ are far more complex than suggested and the lines between increasingly blurred. The cultural worlds in which the second generation move today are not always separate and distinct (Ballard, 1994).

Second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK feel that the cultural world of their parents and the many frowned upon elements of British culture (excessive drinking, the misuse of illegal substances, promiscuity etc) are at odds, therefore, constructing complex identities of their own. Lalonde et al (2004) suggest that in psychological terms we can consider the second generation ‘bicultural individuals’ who access two differing sets of social and cultural norms and, therefore, possibly face a conflict of interests and more importantly identities. Different cultural groups share some similar traits and this ensures individuals are not constantly experiencing tension. However, Clement and Noels (1992) refer to the actions of bicultural individuals as ‘situated identity’, whereby conflict is more likely to occur when norms are in opposition and the dual identities of the individuals involved are both present.

When analysing the social worlds that the second generation move between in their everyday lives one must consider how individuals view their own actions and behaviour. In Hall’s (2002) study of second generation Sikhs in the UK, she refers to the ‘cultural fields’ in which the individuals are positioned. The second generation ‘perform’ roles that are appropriate to the ‘cultural field’ in which they are moving (Hall, 2002). Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK could be said to ‘act’ Sri Lankan, Tamil, British or even English depending upon their location and their perception of the cultural field stems from the freedoms and limitations associated with each. The idea bears some resemblance to the idea of ‘hybrid performances’ as discussed by Song: ‘Therefore, as a concept, hybridity suggests a positive outcome of mixing, which may increase people’s repertoire of identity choices, rather than diluting cultural content’ (2003: 117).

Bhabha (1990; 1994; 1996) proposes the notion of a ‘third space’: ‘whereby new hybrid cultural forms are emerging at the intersection of disparate cultures’ (cited in Song, 2003: 117). The second generation move in a cultural ‘third space’, redefining the rules that govern their social and cultural behaviour. Within this space, identity and cultural influence can never be ‘lost’ or ‘simply passed on’. The ‘third space’ allows for a melting pot of new cultural forms and identities that the second generation create and subscribe to on their own terms (Hall, 2002).

The second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in this study are clearly forming new hybrid identities and this is highlighted in chapters six to eight which detail the lived experiences of young Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo and the second generation in the UK. The 'third space' (Bhabha, 1990; 2004) can therefore be understood in a positive and empowering way. However, it would be naive to assume that all individuals inhabiting the 'third space' are free from daily cultural battles, struggling with each of the social worlds they move within.

When considering the identity construction of the second generation in the UK it is worth considering the extent to which ethnic culture from the first generation is retained within the second generation. This particular theme will be picked up in more detail in chapters six to eight, however its relevance to identity formation is apparent. As Lalonde et al (2004) found, cultural influences take place at the family level and 'heritage culture' (Rumbaut, 1994), is embodied by the family unit. Jetten et al's (2004) study considers the close relationship of the second generation with the hypotheses that:

Individuals who identify more strongly with their in-group were more likely to behave in accordance with their in-group norms. It was predicted, therefore, that second generation South Asian immigrants who identified more strongly with their heritage culture would be more likely to adopt the norms of this culture with regard to mate preferences and to prefer more traditional attributes than individuals who had a weaker cultural identification (cited in Lalonde et al, 2004: 512)

Many Sri Lankan Tamil parents have attempted to pass on cultural traditions to their children, though in many cases this has been met with resistance. Individuals often decide to rediscover their ethnic identity and cultural heritage upon reaching adulthood (Gap Min et al, 2000). This is often true of the second generation Sri Lankan Tamils who relish the opportunity to be away from their parents, allowing them to explore their identities in a unique way, through music, social events and fashion (Levitt, 2002). Therefore, adopting a more autonomous role, actively shaping and informing their own unique second generation identity. So for many 'coming to terms' with their own identity occurs later in life, late teens through the twenties and thirties: 'The process of claiming their ethnicity often unfolded over years and involved tremendous pain and inner conflict' (Gap Min et al, 2000: 750).

However, these struggles experienced by the second generation in the UK can also be applied to the same age group in Sri Lanka. Even though they have grown up in the 'home' country, the lives of the middle class Tamils living in Colombo are very similar to the lives of their peers in the UK. The onset of globalisation and the westernisation of certain parts of South Asia has had huge influence on lives of young people in Colombo. An active social scene has emerged for the wealthier Tamils, including bars, restaurants and nightclubs. This is a cultural world their parents have little experience of and, therefore, both groups in Sri Lanka and the UK must balance parental and cultural expectation with the pressures of being a young adult in a vibrant and modernising social world.

Emerging in the UK and Sri Lanka is a form of Asian identity that rests on hybridic 'Asian-ness'. Second and third generation Asians are reformulating and constructing the identities passed down to them from their parents. There is a gradual move away from an identity based on the caste, nationality, religion and traditional practice to one that incorporates a British 'way of life' (Parekh, 1997). Kibria's work on Asian-Americans (Chinese, Koreans and Vietnamese) in the US found that young, educated professionals have learnt to maintain varying forms of ethnic and cultural attachment, while also being socially integrated into a predominantly white group of colleagues and friends (cited in Song, 2003: 25). This appears to be played out by second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK as well.

More recently writers are moving away from the emphasis on difference to a detailed examination of the way ethnic minorities construct and reconcile competing identity traits in the context of personal experience. Ethnicity and identity do not exist as static fixed phenomena, they shift and change to new environments, situations and circumstances. This has clear and important implications for the belief in 'Britishness' that often dominates debate concerning ethnic identity in the United Kingdom. As Modood highlights: 'If ethnic minority identities are not simply products of cultures of extra-British origin, but owe something to the stream of British life then they too contribute to that stream' (1997: 290).

We must be careful though not to assume the extent to which ethnic identity determines social action. Therefore, if individuals adopt an ethnic identity how influential is this with regards to social interaction and behaviour? In some cases ethnic identities play a key role in the ordering of society and community, while in others ethnic identity ties are far looser (Song, 2003).

4.4 The Second Generation in the UK

The second generation often have: ‘a sense of being pulled between two ways of life- between ‘two worlds’ that are separate and mutually exclusive, and that it is hard to ‘have both worlds’ (Hall, 2002: 148). The tension between these worlds and the dichotomous nature of the conflicting social arenas in which the second generation move is explicitly illustrated in a number of particular cultural sites (Kroeber and Kluckhohn cited in Brah, 1996).

In South Asian countries, marital practice, religion and language denote differences in traditional cultural practice, however what happens when these practices are enacted in the UK (Brah, 1996). Religion can be perceived as a manifestation of cultural involvement and the two are clearly intertwined. Yet culture is far more than simply the practical expression of religious belief. Cultural ideas penetrate our everyday lives, in a subconscious manner and therefore, can, in the narrow sense, be divided and fragmented, relating to differences in language, dress and nationality (Modood, 1997). In the wider context of cultural expression this can relate to a unitary distinguishing cultural feature like religion (Conversi cited in Fenton, 2003).

The older, first generation migrants who settled in the UK hoped to ensure the survival of a number of Sri Lankan Tamil cultural traditions, and the second generation are expected to subscribe to these ideas and behave accordingly. To guarantee the continuation of certain cultural norms these activities can become exaggerated and distorted. This can affect relationships between the first and second generation, leading to the tensions highlighted in the previous section. The power of the external community to exert pressure is also evident and can be in many ways a determinant of the behaviour of the second generation (Hennink, 1999).

4.4.1 Marriage Practices of the Second Generation

The literature surrounding marriage practices in immigrant communities is vast and there are continuing attempts to further understand the differences between marriage in eastern and western countries (Ballard, 1994; Vertovec, 1997; Macey, 1991; Shaw, 2001, Berkowitz et al, 2007) The dichotomy lies in the way ‘love’ and ‘marriage’ is constructed and understood within the community. For society in the west, used to free choice and notions of romantic love, the idea of arranged marriage and marriage brokers seems alien. Yet, for a number of South Asian communities, arranged marriage practices and introductions are part of everyday life. The problems arise when considering marriage and the second generation. Most of the participants in this study, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, were of a suitable marriage age (defined by the Tamil

community) although only three in Colombo were actually married. None of the British Tamil participants were married at the time of the interviews. Therefore, the reader can see that both men and women, in order to further academic studies and to allow for careers, are delaying marriage. An important aspect of this delay also concerns the reluctance to partake in an arranged or even negotiated marriage. The traditional ideas of arranged marriage in South Asian communities have been modernised and couples are allowed to meet and get to know each other before the marriage actually takes place. Many parents in Sri Lanka and the UK are allowing individuals to meet many possible partners before deciding on a suitable match.

Within differing religions, marriage practices are also changing and there are clear differences between how Hindu and Christian Sri Lankan Tamils negotiate marriage (Jebanesan, 2003). One must not be misled by this increased autonomy since, it is clear that there still exist social restrictions on the choice of marriage partner and behaviour with and around the opposite sex, both in Sri Lanka and the UK. This is where the tensions surface and become sites of generational conflict.

The frameworks of individualism and collectivism are clear markers for differences between the east and west when one is considering conceptions of love, marriage and selection of marriage partner. South Asian cultures are predominantly collectivist in nature cemented by family and kinship ties. The good of the family and community is placed before and above the desires of the individual (Anwar, 1998). Individual romantic love must take second place to the values of respect, honour and familial obligation (Sriram et al, 2004).

Love within marriage is understood to develop and grow over time (Sriram et al, 2004). Love in the western world is firmly based in the romantic ideal of an individualistic emotional connection. The second generation, therefore, must confront the traditional first generation understandings of love with that of the western framework they have been immersed in since birth (Sriram et al, 2004). Conceptions of love and marriage in western cultures are often understood as self-deterministic, whereby individual choice takes precedence over the importance of family network and community status (Berkwitz et al, 2007). Marriage is a cultural site where these differences are clearly brought into view and has significant consequences for the second generation moving between the individual world of their white peers and the traditional world of community and family. Thus, the second generation must balance the overall needs and expectations of the family with their own personal expectations and desires (Brah, 1992; Lalonde, 2004). More recently

authors are arguing that the second generation wield increased leverage with regards to marriage choices (Anwar, 1998).

Hollinger (1996) argues that individual affiliation to an ethnic group is entirely voluntary and people should be able to ‘enter and leave communities’ as and when they deem appropriate. However, this is clearly not the case for many of the second generation who feel honoured to uphold family and community ties. Therefore, how do second generation individuals in the UK negotiate the two conflicting arenas of individualism and collectivism in which they live their everyday lives? To ensure ethnic authenticity the second generation are normally expected to marry within the same religious and ethnic group, yet, there is evidence of a move towards more love and negotiated marriages within South Asian communities (Gardner et al in Ballard, 1994).

The overarching theme of marriage has a number of sub-topics including pre-marital relations and sexuality (Hennink et al, 1999; Gap Min et al, 2000, Berkowitz, 2007, King et al, 2007), inter ethnic/mixed marriage (Modood, 1997), marriage brokers (Anwar, 1998), the influence of religious belief upon marriage practices in the UK (Ballard et al, 1977; Anwar, 1998), gender and marriage choice (Shaw, 1988; Ballard, 1994; Lalonde, 2004) and divorce (Alagiah, 2006). These themes are analysed in more detail in relation to the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in chapter six.

4.4.2 Introduction to the Religious Practices of the Second Generation

Religious affiliation is extremely important to many Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK and Sri Lanka, actively defining identity. The Sri Lankan Tamil community has two main religious belief systems, Hinduism and Christianity. Sri Lankan Tamils are predominantly Hindu, however there is a large Christian population both in Sri Lanka and the UK. The link between ethnicity and religion is apparent in many migrant communities whose traditional practices are rooted in religious belief (Raj, 2000). For Sri Lankan Tamils this becomes increasingly complex due to the subscription to differing religious doctrines. Much of Sri Lankan Tamil traditional culture is rooted in Hinduism and Christian Tamils find it increasingly difficult to maintain a cultural identity that is separate and distinct from Hinduism.

Jacobson (1997) suggests that for young British Pakistanis in the UK religion is a more prevalent ‘source of social identity’ than ethnicity. For the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation both are inextricably linked, however ethnicity seems to be the most important cultural marker over and above religion. This could be due to the complexities at work with regards to religious belief and

also the minority status of the Sri Lankan Tamils in general. This has encouraged the group to cling to ethnic rather than religious identity.

Raj (2000) argues that there has been a 'Hindu resurgence' in the UK, whereby the young second generation living in the Hindu diaspora are reconstructing and realigning themselves with the faith of their parents. However, the political situation in Sri Lanka and the persecution of Tamils on ethnic rather than religious terms has meant ethnic identity is prioritised over religious. Although central to cultural practice and Tamil traditions, Hinduism has taken a back seat to ethnicity. Some of the second generation are fascinated by their parent's religious background and do seek a religious identity. This is often due to the denial of 'Britishness' by the wider social context. Yet, they tend to pick and choose the parts of the religion they enjoy the most, while ignoring the rest.

Even though the second generation middle class Hindu Sri Lankan Tamils are intrigued by their religious background, there is no evidence of a religious resurgence. This is due to the language barrier between the second generation and the Hindu Tamil religious texts, the rejection of what is seen as restrictive Hindu traditions, the perception of Hinduism as a throwback to the 'uncivilised' and traditional world of Sri Lanka and simply a gulf of understanding between Hinduism and their social world and its relevance to everyday life. The middle class second generation's loss of language has also led to this generation feeling alienated by a religion they are unable to understand. Racism that exists in today's society also serves to dissuade the second generation, particularly Hindus, from active religious participation: 'You can't be religious and Westernised' (Hall, 2002: 148).

In contrast, many of the second generation Sri Lankan Tamil Christians are far more active in their religious affiliation and behaviour. Many, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, are regular church-goers, heavily involved in the ministry of the Church. Many of the Hindu second generation's parents still performed Hindu rituals and ceremonies, however this knowledge has not been comprehensively passed onto their children and although they would identify themselves as 'Hindu', they admitted that it was more of a symbolic association rather than an active participation in faith.

4.4.3 Language and Preservation of the Mother Tongue

This section examines the: ‘linguistic adaptation’ (Portes et al, 1996) of the second generation, bilingual skill and the continuation of the mother tongue of the children of immigrants, specifically Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK. The observations made here will be further explored in chapter seven when the experiences of the Sri Lankan second generation with language are analysed. The first generation preference for the use of the mother tongue, Tamil, has clearly been side lined by the younger middle class Sri Lankan Tamils who primarily use English in everyday conversations. Some have a limited understanding of Tamil but for the majority of second generation Tamils in the UK, English is the only language they can speak confidently.

The parental concern for children’s well-being and advancement at school meant that the English language was privileged over Tamil. In many families spoken, written and read Tamil has been virtually lost. It is only the second generation with grandparents that speak and understand Tamil that have some additional language skills. However, the middle class Tamils of the first generation are all proficient English speakers and even many of the even older generation are able to speak English to an adequate level due to Sri Lanka's colonial legacy.

Many of the second generation wish that they could speak and understand Tamil and highlight it as one of the most important cultural markers that is being lost (Ghuman, 1994). The learning and preservation of the mother tongue languages has historically been placed within the community setting and only more recently are languages like Tamil being offered within the state school system.

For the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation this is too late and even the community based ‘Tamil Schools’ set up in and around London have largely failed to pass on any adequate language skills to the younger middle class generation. Most of the interviewees in the UK had attended Tamil School, however it seems none had actually learnt any Tamil language. Unless Tamil is introduced and taught by parents at childhood it seems that the language, especially spoken, has been virtually lost with the middle class second generation in the UK. Some can understand Tamil, yet the complexities of the language maybe completely lost with the third and fourth generations. Many of the second generation who have limited Tamil language ability want to marry an individual who can speak Tamil so it will be passed on to their children.

Much of the research concerning the second generation and bilingualism is based in the US. However, we can outline some similarities and differences with regards to the Sri Lankan second generation in the UK. Portes argues that:

In the past, the typical pattern has been for the first generation to learn enough English to survive economically, the second generation continued to speak the parental tongue at home but English in school, at work, and in public life; by the third generation, the home language shifted to English, which effectively became the mother tongue for subsequent generations (1996: 11).

This observation, although true for many immigrant communities worldwide, is not evident in the case of Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK. The first generation that migrated to the UK for higher education were already proficient in English and were keen to ensure their children were also confident linguistically. The second generation speak primarily English in public and private settings, due to their limited Tamil and it can be predicted that within the third generation Tamil will take a step close to being completely lost.

Gap Min et al (2000) suggest that the second generation have more advantages than their predecessors, with technological advancements allowing for home country contact and visits. Yet, the second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK are an example of a generation which although, advantaged in many ways, still remains linguistically distant from their mother tongue and most blame the first generation for not ensuring Tamil was taught, the family being the primary site for the passing on of community languages (Anwar, 1998). Gap Min et al also (2000) point to class as a determinant of linguistic ability and mother tongue retention.

The idea, however, that middle class immigrants are better equipped and more efficient in the passing on of the mother tongue is once again questionable in the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils whose children have limited, if any Tamil language ability. It appears then that the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK will be another victim of continued 'linguistic decline' (Modood, 1997). Particularly, if there remains the reluctance to encourage the teaching of minority, mother tongue languages in primary and secondary schools in the UK.¹

¹ See Garrett, 1994; Gupta, 1997; Bourne, 2001; Ratcliffe, 2004; Dench et al, 2006 for discussions of language, education and ethnic minority children in the UK.

4.4.4 The Second Generation and British Identity

The identity construction of the second generation in the UK is extremely complex. Individuals must balance the norms and values of parental expectation with that of the country in which they are born. The idea of 'Britishness' has become increasingly complex in recent years with the spiralling debate surrounding immigration to the UK. What does it mean to 'be British', how is 'Britishness' defined and what are the implications for the second generation of varying ethnic backgrounds?

Most of the participants in this study felt they were already British citizens and even though there was a general resentment that the wider British public denied them this identity, they still felt British and even English. For some the reaction of the wider white British society in which they live has led individuals to resent and even in some cases reject the notion of being a British citizen, however overall young Sri Lankan Tamils identify with the norms and values of what it is to be 'British' in the UK. Gardner and Shukar's work on the British Bengali second generation clearly highlights the dilemma faced:

For many British Bengalis, their experience of white racism provides a central component of their self-definition. Reactions to the experience vary, but even the most cursory exploration soon reveals the extent to which the preferred cultural and political expressions of almost all young British Bengalis have been powerfully moulded by their exposure to the forces of racial exclusionism. All ultimately face the same dilemma. Deeply ambiguous though their location in British society maybe, it is Britain alone which provides them with their ultimate frame of reference (1994: 160).

Many second generation individuals may feel reluctant to use the term 'British' due to the perceptions of the white British majority (Brah, 1996; Modood, 1997). Even today appearance and skin colour marks many of the second generation as different from their white British peers and this remains an important factor in the construction of the second generation as the 'other'. Ethnic minorities are seen to suffer from a form of 'false consciousness' in which individuals behave and act in a manner that is deemed 'white', suggesting they are fooling themselves of their own identities and their location in wider British society (Song, 2003).

Yet, this is a contentious assumption to make as second generation individuals often behave and interact according to the external environment impacting upon them. Raj highlights the feelings

of a second generation South Asian speaker at University College London who attacks the way in which his British identity is denied:

He is questioning the labels of insider and outsider, and how a young British-born and, he might even argue, 'bred' is considered a perpetual foreigner because lay understandings of British citizenship remain exclusive despite multicultural Britain, and in which, British and English continue to be terms used to refer only to 'white' people (2000: 544).

Many of the participants in this study voiced their frustration at the common question 'where are you from?' They would reply England, Britain, London etc, however the enquirer would continue with asking 'no, where are you actually from'? As Raj clarifies: 'The unintended effect of cultural curiosity is the implication 'You are not from here'; 'You do not belong' (2000: 550). Yet most of the British interviewees felt emotionally attached to the UK and could identify with a sense of British identity. The terms 'British and English' remain inextricably linked to ideas of Anglo-Saxon ancestry and non-whiteness remains removed from these fixed category identifications. A couple of the interviewees considered themselves specifically English as well as British, although there is little acceptance of this affiliation both in public and private spaces. Ideas of place, nation, race and citizenship are played out in the existing identity debate, leading to a complex terrain on which to negotiate second generation identities.

In Britain, second generation South Asians are forging more general Asian commonalities to highlight their 'Asian-ness' (Parekh, 1997). This relates to the emergence of a 'romanticised' notion of one's ethnic roots, in which second generation South Asians strive for an identity, which is fundamentally different to that of their parents and grandparents (Song, 2003).

4.4.5 Gender and the Second Generation

This thesis focuses on the experiences of both men and women, as currently there is little, if any work that has been completed on the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK. Therefore, the scope for future gender specific research is clear and many of the male participants in this study felt similar frustrations and pressures as the young women of the community. Therefore, at this point I considered it necessary to include the male experience along with the female (Lalonde et al, 2004).

The behaviour of young South Asians in the UK is highly influenced by the community in which they reside and the expectations of their parents. It appears that the obligation to behave sensibly, respectfully and appropriately is placed upon female members of the community more so than the men: 'Family honour is a quality possessed collectively; it is reinforced or ruined in social transactions, most significantly by the actions of unmarried daughters (Hall, 2002: 167). Even within the Sri Lankan Tamil community, which is far more liberal than some other ethnic groups in the UK, the pressure to maintain and uphold family honour and respect lies more commonly with the younger females of the family.

As a result of community pressure many young second generation South Asians are keen to leave the parental home for university study as this brings increased freedom and mobility. This is certainly the case for second generation Sri Lankan Tamils, both men and women, who are far more comfortable to live their lives away from community 'eyes' (Hennink, 1999). Both the men and women in this study commented that moving away from home had given them greater independence and freedom in everyday life, however it does seem that women gained far more personal space than would have been allowed them in the community.

Pre-marital relations and sexual experience proved to be an area where there was a marked difference between men and women. Most of the second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the study, both men and women, had been involved in pre-marital relationships, ranging from short, brief periods of dating to longer more serious relationships. Most of these took place at university, away from the community and family. However, while many of the women denied any form of sexual relations between themselves and partners, a number of the boys suggested they were more sexually experienced. Judging the accountability of this particular topic is extremely difficult. The women may have been more modest to ensure their privacy, while the men were acting with more bravado. What is clear though is that there are differences in how men and women are treated with regards to pre-marital relations.

The notion of chastity and virginity is linked to the expectations placed upon women when entering a marriage, particularly one that has been part arranged (Lalonde et al, 2004). There is greater freedom once they move away from home, however the cultural constraints do remain. The heritage culture of the community remains located within the family and as the perceived domain of female members it is the women who are expected to continue the cultural elements once they finish their studies (Warikoo, 2005). Yet, a number of the female interviewees were

involved in long term relationships which had formed at university and were willing to fight to ensure they would continue after graduation. However, it was evident in this research that second generation Sri Lankan Tamil men in Sri Lanka and the UK were as reluctant as their female counterparts to enter into arranged or even negotiated marriage, although some would only entertain the possibility of a Sri Lankan Tamil wife.

The Sri Lankan Tamil community is a unique group to consider in relation to gender and educational success. Both men and women are actively encouraged to study and work towards higher university degrees. The stereotypical view of South Asians studying medicine, law and accountancy are applicable to the middle class Sri Lankan Tamil second generation and there are no gender differences in the expectations placed upon children. Both men and women of the second generation are encouraged to enter highly qualified employment positions and this is reflected in the numbers of the participants in this research who are studying towards or currently working in demanding and well paid professional positions like medicine and law.

Feliciano (2005) considers that the children of immigrants, and particularly women, have made great advancement in the level of education as compared to their mothers and grandmothers in the country of origin. However, the females of the first generation Sri Lankan Tamils who moved to the UK were also well educated in the home country. The prestige and importance placed upon education within the Tamil community in Sri Lanka ensured that women as well as men were encouraged to study and attend university. Education is a marker of status within the Tamil community both in the UK and Sri Lanka and there are few gender lines drawn in what is expected from men and women. There is evidence of gender inequality with regards to the motivation of female education. There is no doubting that parents want their daughters to achieve educationally, yet the level of education also reflects upon marriage prospects and dowry. An educated female Sri Lankan doctor has far more autonomy in the marriage market and can bring her human capital as a form of dowry.

Often, women who have trained as doctors, lawyers and dentists have little opportunity to actually practice their profession as once studying has finished the search for a possible husband begins. Once married and with children the females role then converts to that of the traditional home maker and the education gained is often put aside for parental, familial and community obligation (Ballard et al, 1994). This trend maybe changing though as young women choose to marry later in life and the age for second generation educated middle class Sri Lankan Tamil

women to marry is now nearer to thirty, rather than the traditional eighteen to twenty five. There is also an increased realisation that some marriages break down and although frowned upon by the Tamil community, divorces are becoming increasingly common. Women are therefore required to support themselves and children financially if divorce or separation happens. However, community pressure still controls the decisions of many young Sri Lankan Tamil men and women, with both groups experiencing similar forms of frustration (Hall, 2002).

4.4.6 The Second Generation and Transnationalism

Authors argue that the second generation born into an actively involved transnational family are themselves transnational actors. However, the findings in this study suggest that to a certain extent transnational activity is weakening with the second generation and linkages to the homeland gradually loosen, a type of 'transnational redundancy'.

The tsunami of 2004 mobilised a huge response from the Sri Lankan second generation in the UK, with vast quantities of money and aid being sent back. This type of second generation transnationalism Levitt and Waters (2002) term 'selective, periodic transnational practices'. As Jones-Correa (in Levitt et al, 2002) suggest, these may only be identified by in-depth qualitative fieldwork. The question remaining is to what extent do these examples of 'sporadic transnationalism' truly constitute second generation transnationalism? (Perlmann, 2002: 222).

The responses and experiences of the Tamil second generation interviewed in the UK do suggest that the linkages have changed in nature and naturally the emotional connections to Sri Lanka alter significantly with the second generation. The middle class generation have not been taught the mother tongue of Tamil to a sufficient level to pass it on, many occasionally reluctantly travel to Sri Lanka for holidays (Haller, et al 2005), most rely on parents to send remittances back to the family in Sri Lanka (Jones-Correa, 2002) and perhaps most importantly are emotionally and practically distanced from the Tamil conflict and political struggle in Sri Lanka (Jacobssen, 2006).

In the American context, Jones-Correa (2002) identifies five ways in which second generation transnationalism may reoccur and grow increasingly stronger –

- Although transnational actors in the second generation might be a small minority among their peers, in reality they are large in numbers and continue to have an impact upon their home country.

- The increased wealth and personal advantage of the second generation may mean that transnational activity is exaggerated.
- Transnationalism is unevenly distributed and therefore in areas of high concentration the second generation will be active.
- Transnational identities and activities can be sparked by crisis in the home country i.e. conflict and natural disaster.
- The continued influx of first generation immigrants from the home country may encourage second generation transnationalism.

Each of these elements of second generation transnationalism have been and could be applicable to the Sri Lankan Tamils in this study, although once again there are ambiguities as to how one defines transnational behaviour and whether these traits will persist.

An important issue when considering the transnational linkages is that of the 'myth of return', whereby immigrants cling to the notion that one day they will return permanently to the country of origin (Anwar, 1979). However, there are a number of arguments suggesting this romanticised idea of returning home will eventually be lost with the second and third generations (Hennink, 1999; Menjivar, 2002). The emotional links the first generation have maintained with Sri Lanka are vastly different to those of the second generation in the UK. Although they may have visited Sri Lanka, only a couple of interviewees in this study had spent any prolonged amount of time there. Those that had visited were vocal about their reluctance to spend long periods of time in their parent's country of origin.

The second generation embrace the idea of a 'Sri Lankan Tamil' identity, but the practical reality of relocating to Sri Lanka for any length of time is much less popular. Song (2003) suggests that 'the myth of return' may reappear in future generations and that this is already apparent in the resurgence in Bollywood popular culture. Yet, borrowing the fashionable and attractive elements of South Asian culture is extremely different to embracing and longing for permanent return to the home country.

Another area of interest with regards to second generation transnationalism is that of remittances, both financial (Haller, et al 2005) and social (Levitt, 2001). There is increasing literature concerning the flows of money between home and host countries (Vertovec, 1991; Van Hear, 1998). Due to the political unrest in Sri Lanka there is a considerable amount of money passing

between the diaspora communities worldwide and the LTTE (Van Hear, 1998; 2006). Also the tsunami of 2004 encouraged greater flows of remittances between Sri Lankan families in the UK and Sri Lanka, however prior to this and more recently, the second generation are not actively involved in the sending and receiving of remittances. The majority were adamant that their families were also not involved in any funding of the LTTE, categorised by the British government as a terrorist group since 2000². The conflict in Sri Lanka and the provocative nature of the LTTE has led many young 'British born' Sri Lankans to distance themselves from the struggle, even though most of their parents' suffered first hand. They are therefore extremely reluctant to link themselves with the 'struggle' in anyway, practically and emotionally.

4.5 The 'New' Second Generation

Levitt's (2001; 2002; 2003; 2004) work is particularly pertinent to my own as the concept of 'second generation' is redefined to include not only the group in the immigrant country but also their peers in the sending country. Therefore, not only are the children of Sri Lankan Tamils born in the UK categorised as second generation, also their counterparts of a similar age living in Sri Lanka. Within this framework both research groups in the UK and Sri Lanka can be defined and referred to as the 'second generation'.

In their work on Haitians in the US, Levitt et al (2002) found that in order to understand the second generation in America they must consider the transnational element and focus upon the same age group in the homeland. To fully explore the pressures and forces working with and against the second generation Sri Lankan Tamil group in the UK, it was crucial to gain an understanding of the individuals in Sri Lanka of a similar age and social positioning. Both sets of individuals are influenced by similar religious, social, political and economic forces (Levitt, 2001). The complexities and dilemmas faced in everyday life are mirrored and felt by both, although the context and location is vastly different.

Thus, in order to understand the second generation living in the settlement country, it is necessary and extremely beneficial to any empirical research to also conduct some exploration of their peers in the homeland. In this study the time spent in Sri Lanka with the second generation proved invaluable to the information gathered concerning the sample in the UK and how this has been understood and interpreted.

² <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/security/terrorism-and-the-law/terrorism-act/proscribed-groups> (Accessed 10/09/07).

Levitt (2002) points to a number of important elements that are missing from current research on the second generation -

- How the second generation will act as independent adults?
- The dilemma of language loss and the consequences for transnationalism
- More needs to be known about second generation marriage choices and the consequences
- Further investigation into religion and the second generation
- Fuller discussion of power i.e. relations between immigrants and home country, between immigrants of different generations and between male and female second generation
- Further study on second generation identities

This thesis attempts to address these oversights in relation to the British Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has looked specifically at the children of immigrants, the second generation born, raised and living in the settlement country. The reader's attention has been drawn to the varying social, political and economic influences that guide and inform the second generation in the UK today. Existing literature concerning the British and global context of the second generation is outlined and the theoretical gaps this research addresses are highlighted. The chapter provides the theoretical basis for the findings and analysis in Chapters six, seven and eight which follow.

The discussion begins by defining the term 'second generation' and the many ways in which authors explain, categorise and apply the term both in the US and the UK. Who the second generation are and why particular individuals fit into this group is clearly contestable. However there is a general understanding that the second generation are the children of migrants born in the settlement country or those brought and raised early in childhood. Levitt (2002) suggests that the notion of the second generation also be applied to those of a similar age in the country of origin, due to the emerging and developing transnational nature of generations and clearly this has some weight. The decision to compare and contrast the second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK with their peers in Sri Lanka has provided an important insight into the lives and experiences of these individuals. However, even though there are clear similarities between the two groups, the second generation in the UK face distinct pressures to those of the younger generation in Sri Lanka and therefore the groups are not yet at the point at which they can both be

considered and categorised as second generation. Levitt's (2002) ideas are extremely important in terms of how the second generation are studied and the possible emergence of a 'new second generation' in the future as outlined in this chapter.

The discussion then moves to look at the existing literature on the second generation and why individuals, from differing ethnic communities, have been theorised in the present way. The section considers the relevance of past and present empirical research on current trends and experiences of the second generation in the UK. The traditional ideas of generational conflict and culture clash between the second generation and their parents (Ballard, 1979; Watson, 1977; 1994, Anwar, 1998) have shifted to a more complex understanding of experience and identity negotiations (Modood, 1997; Anwar, 1998; Shaw, 2000; Ballard, 2003; Song, 2003). There is increasing reference to the ideas of cultural fields (Hall, 2003), hybrid performances (Song, 2003) and Bhabha's (1990; 1994; 1996) 'third space'. Yet the older studies of the second generation in the UK do still bear some relevance to the experiences of today's individuals (Ballard et al, 1977; 1979).

Then the main themes of the analysis Chapters Six, Seven and Eight are then introduced, marriage practices of the second generation, religious practices, the mother tongue and language, British identity, gender relations and transnational links. This chapter introduces the reader to these themes, providing the contextual background to the analysis in the following chapters. Firstly, the complexities of love and marriage are considered detailing the ongoing shift from traditional first generation ideas of marital practice to the more fluid experiences of their children born and raised in the UK. Community and parental pressure clearly persists, however the second generation are actively involved in their life choices and decisions as highlighted in this thesis.

Religious practices of the Sri Lankan Tamil community are then focused upon and the involvement of the second generation in both Hindu and Christian rituals and patterns of faith. The majority of participants in this study outlined affiliation to either Hinduism or Christianity, and a couple to both, however the level of participation was limited. The Hindu interviewees felt unable to fully embrace the faith as they lacked the necessary language skills to understand key texts and ceremonies, most of which are conducted in Tamil. For the Christian participants some regularly attended Church, normally those living at home and within the community. Yet most suffered from a combination of lethargy, busy social and professional lives and a lack of

understanding, particularly those at university and living away from home. Both the Hindu and Christian second generation appear to still have faith in their religious belief and upbringing, however few actively practised their religious affiliation in terms of ceremony and rituals. To almost all the second generation participants in the UK ethnicity proved to be the most important feature of their identity, rather than religion.

As touched upon above, the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK have difficulties in terms of language ability and the preservation of the mother tongue. Most of the participants in the study were unable to speak or understand Tamil fluently and many are concerned this will eventually lead to the loss of the language in settlement countries like the UK. Unable to pass the Tamil language onto their children within the third and fourth generations, Tamil in the UK maybe lost. A number of Tamil schools have been established in the UK in an attempt to encourage and teach the younger generation to learn the language, however for the participants in this study the attempts had been largely unsuccessful.

The following section highlights the complexities of Sri Lankan Tamil second generation nationality and ethnicity in the UK, particularly the idea of Britishness and British identity. Many of the participants felt perplexed by their own identities both from a personal perspective and also in reaction to the way the wider British community observes and understands ethnicity and nationality. Even though many of the interviewees felt and described themselves as British, growing up in the Sri Lankan Tamil community often meant they were prevented from fully embracing this identity. The Sri Lankan Tamil community hoped to preserve a sense of Tamilness, while the British community continues to have difficulty in separating skin colour from nationality. Therefore, many of the participants felt separated from their British nationality.

Gender relations and the differences between the expectations placed upon men and women in the Sri Lankan Tamil community is also a theme that runs throughout this thesis in terms of marriage and cultural practice. This thesis includes the experiences and reflections of both second generation men and women as many cultural pressures are felt similarly. This study is one of the first to focus on the Sri Lankan Tamil community in the UK and therefore, the sample was chosen to reflect both genders. The scope for further research and analysis is great and thus the potential for gender specific work in the future is clear. However, the community is in many ways still patriarchal and this informs and influences the experiences of women acutely as discussed in the analysis chapters.

Lastly, the chapter considers the transnational nature of the second generation, so commonly referred to in the current literature. The second generation of many other ethnic communities in the UK are maintaining both emotional and practical transnational ties with the Sri Lanka. However, the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation do not appear to be following a similar trend. The conflict has meant many of the participants have few, if any family and friends left in Sri Lanka and the villages their parents came from in the Jaffna area are inaccessible or dangerous to visit. This practically severs ties for the younger generation.

The first generation do send remittances home to family in Sri Lanka, yet this is also limited as most middle class Tamils have left the island and moved abroad and there are fewer people to help support back at home as there were at the beginning of the conflict in the 1980's and 1990's. Thus, motivation to maintain links with Sri Lanka is limited and for those that do visit the island, many are happy to return home to Britain for their comforts and home luxuries. Most are proud of their Sri Lankan heritage, however the transnationalism is mostly emotional rather than practical. The Tsunami of 2004 did see the second generation in the UK mobilise to organise fund-raising and clearly their ethnic link to the island encouraged them to support during the disaster. Four years on and although support continues, it has become limited. Therefore, I argue that for the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation a form of 'transnational redundancy' is occurring whereby links with Sri Lanka are dwindling. Whether these ties will be rejuvenated with the third and fourth generations remain to be seen.

As referred to above, the final section looks to the work of Levitt et al (2001; 2002) who suggest the emergence of a 'new second generation', whereby both those born in the homeland and settlement country involved in transnational linkages, qualify for classification as the second generation. In terms of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation and the lack of transnational ties with Sri Lanka, at present this reformulation of the term second generation is not yet readily applicable, however the group is constantly shifting and with the emergence of the second and subsequent generations there is a distinct possibility Levitt's (2002) idea could become highly relevant.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methodological Framework and Data Collection Methods

From the moment I initially arrived in Egypt, I realised that my experience there would be quite different from what I had romanticised in my mind. The passport control official, who waved all the other tourists through, stopped me and started speaking in rapid colloquial Arabic. On realising that I could barely make out what he was saying, he became quite annoyed and told me in English that I was Egyptian and that my father had ‘made a mistake’, both in leaving the country and in bringing me up without a knowledge of my own language. This theme was to come up more than 20 times in the following 20 months (Sherif, 2001:439).

5.1 Introduction

To begin a methodology chapter with a quote of a researcher’s personal experience of ‘entering of field’ may seem a little strange. However, Sherif’s experience highlights some of the difficulties I faced in Sri Lanka and the UK during the fieldwork stage of this research. Conflicting ideas of identity, heritage, nationality and ethnicity were balanced on a daily basis and the research process was shaped by the everyday encounters in the field. The methodological design often took interesting, and unexpected turns. Before ‘entering the field’ I had little idea of the importance of my own identity in the research process, to family, friends and the participants. The time spent in Sri Lanka and the UK in the Sri Lankan Tamil community and with the participants will continue to inform and influence my own identity for the rest of my life. The following sections outline the methodological considerations of this research, raising central questions of identity construction, cross cultural research and comparative study. Both personal experience and methodological literature is drawn upon to explore the many complex elements of data collection and the theory, which guides in-depth qualitative research.

Firstly, the chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology subscribed to in this study, including the application of the qualitative research model, the epistemological considerations made prior to and throughout the research process, the selection of an interpretivist approach to data collection, the complexities of standpoint and the use of grounded theory in the creation of theory from research. The many reasons behind the choice of research topic and the research design are also detailed. The discussion then moves to focus on the problematic notion of cross-cultural research and specifically study undertaken in a colonial nation, Sri Lanka, by a researcher from the main colonising country, the UK. My own mixed race ethnic background, Sri

Lankan Tamil-white British, further complicates this. Closely linked to these are insider-outsider status in the research process, the debate around ethnic matching and communication in cross-cultural research.

The research encounter and the questions arising from the choice of methods are then explored in more detail, with particular reference to trust, rapport, disclosure, sampling, access and the actual in-depth qualitative interview. The natural progression of the discussion then continues to consider the difficulties in leaving the field, the need for reflexivity, researcher identity in the field and the social and political context of fieldwork, particularly overseas. Lastly, the chapter reflects upon the problems and limitations faced in the research process, ethical considerations and the personal gains I enjoyed during the research.

5.2 The Qualitative Research Model and Epistemological Position

Bryman (2001) points to three main features of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers often adopt an ‘inductive’ position that promotes the generation of theory from research. This epistemological position places importance on the understanding of the social world through the analysis of people’s perceptions, attitudes and experiences. Ontologically qualitative researchers suggest that ‘social properties’ are outcomes of the exchanges and interactions of individuals and not simply phenomena that exist independently from those who construct them. Lofland argues that people attach meanings to their social environment and as objects of study the method should, therefore, reflect this idea. It is the perceptions of these people and how they experience the world that interests qualitative researchers (Lofland et al cited in Bryman, 2001).

Mason (2002) provides three general definitions of what qualitative research can involve. Firstly, it is primarily situated within the interpretive school of thought. These researchers centralise the importance of how the social world is created, understood, experienced and conceived. Secondly, the methods employed by qualitative research are generally malleable and sensitive to the social context of the subject being studied. And thirdly, qualitative analysis is designed to reflect the nuances and unpredictable nature of the social world, taking into account the context in a reflexive manner (Bourdieu et al, 1992; Mason, 2002).

The creation of knowledge is inextricably linked to the negotiation of power relations and in every research encounter there is an exchange of ideas, preconceptions and experiences. Knowledge is never value-free and striving for an objective knowledge base, is in most cases, misleading and invalid. Denzin (2001) points to the ‘thick’ nature of qualitative work, an idea of

particular relevance to this study. ‘Thick description’ or ‘interpretation’ is an attempt to relocate the experiences and meanings found in the field to the interpretations and analysis made in the written research. Seeking a clear understanding of how individuals constructed and made sense of the social world in which they moved was at the very heart of the methodology, methods and analytical process of this research, a ‘thick’ description of Sri Lankan Tamil social life in Sri Lanka and the UK.

5.2.1 Interpretivist Research

The qualitative model that that my own research subscribes to is that of the interpretivist school as referred to by Rubin et al (1995). Interpretivism places importance upon the meaning, experience and interpretation that emerges through a process of social interaction. Interpretivists criticise those who search for universal laws that can be applied to the social world. The social world is in constant flux and any attempt at regulation distracts from studying peoples lived experiences. Interpretivism lends itself well to the qualitative tradition and through qualitative methods one can investigate how and why the social world is constructed in the way it is.

The approach allows for theory to be generated from data in a reflexive manner (Glaser et al, 1999) and Gubrium et al highlight the importance of interpretive practice in an understanding of social life: ‘it refers to the constellation of procedures, conditions, and resources through which reality is apprehended, understood, organised and represented in the course of everyday life’ (1997: 114). This research project has many of the characteristics of ethnographic research, whereby a researcher immerses themselves in the social context and setting. However, this thesis places people and their experiences as the central epistemological core and these understandings form the ‘primary data sources’.

5.2.2 Standpoint and Power

Due to the cross-cultural, cross-national nature of this work there needs to be some consideration of ‘standpoint’ and the inextricable link between social research and power relations. Access to knowledge can increase power and this section considers how one negotiates and navigates through the difficult epistemological maze of power differentials and control in terms of ones ‘standpoint’.

Ideas of standpoint originate from feminist writers who advocated the need for the researcher to share common traits, like gender and ethnicity, with their participants (Finch, 1993). Many feminists argue that female researchers are more appropriately placed to understand the needs,

opinions and experiences of the women they are studying. The data that female researchers collect is therefore, more valid and provides a clearer understanding of their subjects' world: 'A female researcher is thus able to operate from both an oppressed position as a woman and a privileged position as a scholar' (May, 1993:22).

However, adopting this stance in its purest form would render redundant most qualitative social research to date. The idea can be taken further to apply to race, class and sexuality to name but a few sociological classifications. Standpoint clearly has serious implications for my own work and can be similarly critiqued as interviewer matching later detailed: 'If the argument is that knowing oppression firsthand helps one more fully understand (an) Other's oppression, then standpoint theory raises questions about epistemic privilege, or whether it 'takes one to know one' (Shapiro in Moore, 1988: 5).

Can a professional black woman born and raised in an affluent developed country really make a more valid analysis of a black woman living in the developing world? Possibly, but it is of course still debatable. Ethnic difference and distance proved invaluable to the fieldwork in this project due to the dynamics of the Tamil community both in Sri Lanka and the UK. A Sri Lankan Tamil researcher would have had problems establishing trust with their interviewees, as participants would have been concerned about their involvement in the community. A number of participants informed me after their interviews had been completed that if I had been fully Sri Lankan Tamil¹ and involved in the community they would have been less willing to share intimate details about family and personal relationships.

Haraway's alternative idea of standpoint that talks of the 'politics and epistemology of location' is far more applicable to my own work. By a researcher acknowledging their own position, biases etc in a reflexive manner and the possible impact of these upon their research, there is less danger of privileging one viewpoint over another, as advocated by standpoint theory (Haraway in Wolf, 1996). Through an active process of reflexivity, researchers attempt to meet their respondents on an equal and level plain, taking into account how their biographies and experiences influence and shape the research encounter. Interestingly, in many cases it is the participant that controls the research encounter by, for example, withholding important information or even lying (Gunaratnam, 2003).

¹ I am mixed race, my father is Sri Lankan Tamil (he became a British citizen in 1985) and my mother is a born British national.

5.3 Grounded Theory

This particular research project subscribes to a form of grounded theory structure as constructed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This work had an initial ‘partial framework’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 45), yet the thematic ideas and concepts discussed in the analysis sections were only deduced following both periods of fieldwork and the collection of data. Thus, theory is generated from the data gathered from the qualitative methods employed so one can ensure the theory ‘fits’ and is operational (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1997).

The grounded theory methodology proved particularly applicable to my own research project due to the unpredictable nature of work ‘in the field’. Many problems that are explored later in this chapter were only discovered during the fieldwork phases, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, and would have been impossible to predict. The impact my own identity had upon the data collection process, especially in Sri Lanka, took me by surprise and required an extremely thorough reflexive attitude throughout the fieldwork stages. To have to formulate a set of preconceived hypotheses to support or refute would have proved difficult and to make my research findings fit an existing theoretical framework would have been impossible. Therefore, employing a form of: ‘inductive reasoning’ (Mason, 2002: 180) whereby ‘theory comes last’ suited this research.

The grounded theory that this project subscribes to is not entirely pure and there are elements of ‘deductive reasoning’ present (Mason, 2002). Firstly, I recognise that in the initial stages of formulating and discovering my ‘intellectual puzzle’ (Mason, 2000: 17-18), general assumptions were made concerning the ideas and themes that would be generated from the data. However, these ideas were never finalised or presented as hypothesis to support or refute during the research stages. The ‘hypotheses’ generated prior to the data collection, were shaped, influenced and ultimately changed by the research experience (Mason, 2000).

Therefore, a combination of both allowed for a pre-planned theoretical strategy, assisting both the time and financial constraints of my fieldwork. The freedom given by the inductive grounded theory methodology allowed the theory production to take account of the data collection experiences, which could not have been predicted prior to the fieldwork stages. The researcher is able to exercise greater autonomy in the exploration of cultural difference and adopt a reflexive, inward looking approach to their work, crucial to this research projects direction.

5.4 Choosing a Research Topic

The ‘intellectual puzzle’ (Mason, 2002 17-18) in this thesis compares the experiences of young Tamils in Sri Lanka to the second generation in the UK to further understand the influences of migration and persisting diasporic networks. To ensure the reflexive nature of this work it is necessary to consider the driving forces that were present at its conception. This thesis is as much a personal voyage of discovery as it is an intellectual analysis of the Tamil community, and therefore many of the themes and ideas discussed, particularly those concerned with identity, are intimately linked to my own experiences.

My interest in the British Sri Lankan Tamil community began with the completion of my undergraduate dissertation that analysed the political links between the ‘home’ country Sri Lanka and diaspora networks in Europe, more specifically the UK (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2002). During this research I began socialising with younger Sri Lankan Tamils and was naturally drawn to their thoughts, opinions and experiences. The desire to understand how the experiences of the first generation migrants have affected their children born and raised in the UK motivated me to produce a comparative study of the first and second generation for my MA thesis. This formed the pilot study of the PhD research that followed (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2004).

During the MA research I realised that there were many phenomena I could not fully appreciate as I was positioned outside the Tamil community² and needed to gain a deeper understanding of community relations. In order to further my understanding of both the first and second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK I decided that a period of field study in Sri Lanka was required. While researching how I could incorporate a field trip to Sri Lanka into my work I realised that a comparison of the second generation in the UK to their peers in the ‘home’ country would be invaluable to a deeper understanding of the migratory journey and the dynamics of the diaspora. This has given me the opportunity to provide both the younger generation in Colombo and those in the UK a voice to express their attitudes and opinions to the wider community.

The two previous studies completed revealed the distinct lack of academic literature and research in this particular area. Much of the existing research focuses upon the political situation in Sri Lanka and the ongoing conflict. In the UK there is only a small network of scholars working on the Sri Lankan community, and no one to my knowledge researching the experiences of the middle class Tamil second generation. There is an emerging political and social rhetoric

² Even though I have a Sri Lankan Tamil father, I have had little contact with the Sri Lankan Tamil community.

surrounding the second generation Tamils in the UK, but as with most cases, it is only the negative images that are focused upon in the media. There are growing problems with Tamil gangs in London and relations between the established community and more recent immigrants (Summers, 2002).

Yet, most of children of the second wave (Daniel, 1996; 1997) of migrants to the UK are highly successful and well educated, adding to the rich cultural diversity of the UK, for example 'The Noble Sage Art Gallery' in London³ which specialised in South Asian artwork. It is clear that the emerging British Tamil second generation have interesting and highly relevant points to make about the relationship between the first and second generations, how this was informed by experiences of migration and ultimately how this shapes identity within the British context. While both in Sri Lanka and the UK there are a number of emerging writers who reflect upon their own experiences of being young Sri Lankans⁴

My time in Sri Lanka, though limited, gave me a deeper insight into the workings of the Tamil community which could be applied both in the British and Sri Lankan contexts. Phenomena I hadn't considered prior to the fieldwork became apparent in Sri Lanka, for example the power of 'trauma' as a psychological determinant of behaviour. Without spending time in Sri Lanka I would not have been as aware of the impact of 'trauma' upon the first generation migrants and how this would inadvertently affect the experiences of the second generation removed from the 'home' site. The linking of the experiences of the first generation in Sri Lanka and the attitudes of the younger generation proved invaluable to an understanding of the way in which the second generation have been raised in the UK and how their identities have been formed. This thesis is an attempt to give those individuals a voice so that they can express their frustration, while also providing a deeper analysis of the community as a whole in both settings.

When discussing the motivations behind this research project I cannot ignore my own personal and intimate interest in the subject matter. My own mixed Sri Lankan Tamil heritage and upbringing outside of the British Tamil community immediately gave me reasons to explore my own identity through the experiences of others. This personal interest led to a greater understanding of how the experiences of the second generation are inextricably linked to a web of social relationships, cultural norms and identity constructions that inform everyday life. The

³ <http://www.thenoblesage.com> (Accessed 02/02/07)

⁴ S. Perera 'Do the Right Thing' and S. Selvadurai 'Funny Boy' are just two of the many exciting new authors of Sri Lankan origin.

feeling of alienation and lack of acceptance from the Tamil community in the UK drove me to find a deeper understanding of why exactly this had been my personal experience. Interestingly, in the course of the research I found much greater acceptance in the Tamil community in Sri Lanka and also within the younger generation that previously I had little contact with.

This project is itself an engaged piece of work whereby I hope to educate both the Sri Lankan and British community about the lives of young Tamils in the UK today. The data will be disseminated in Sri Lankan Tamil magazines like ‘Serendipity’⁵ and through organisations like the Tamil Writers Guild. More importantly I hope to encourage young, educated, middle class Tamils to become more involved in their community and to establish networks between the younger generation in Sri Lanka and their peers in the UK, as a way of sharing ideas and experiences.

5.5 The Research Design

The comparative nature of this research project allowed for fieldwork in two different sites, Sri Lanka and the UK. The research in Sri Lanka was based in the capital Colombo and took place from June 2005 until September 2005. The research in the UK was conducted primarily in the West Yorkshire area and particular suburbs of London, where high concentrations of middle class Sri Lankan Tamils are known to have settled. The British fieldwork period ran from January 2005 to April 2006. 57 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were completed in total, 37 in Sri Lanka and 20 in the UK. The research questions that guided the fieldwork are outlined below –

- How has the migratory journey of the second wave of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to the UK had an effect upon the rituals and traditional practices of the diaspora community and their children, the second generation?
- How do the lives of the second generation in the UK compare to those of their peers in Colombo, Sri Lanka? Do these groups construct their identities differently? Are there specific practices and rituals that remain similar?
- How have transnational exchanges altered with the second generation? Are transnational links weakening or simply changing shape?

These questions guided the research in both fieldwork contexts and the comparison between young Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo and the UK proved invaluable to an understanding of

⁵ <http://www.serendipitymag.net> (Accessed 3/08/07)

traditional practice, cultural identity and transnational links of the younger generation in Sri Lanka and the second generation in Britain.

5.6 The Colonial Researcher

The primary aim of my research is to identify the internal and external factors that influence the lives of second generation Tamils in Britain and their counterparts in Sri Lanka, analysing the complex rules that create identity structures within both home and diasporic communities. This thesis explores the everyday minutiae of my participant's lives and tries to understand how each individual explains and defends their own personal experiences. By focusing upon traditional culture and identity structures I hope to gain a better understanding of the lives of the second generation Tamil population in Britain and Sri Lanka, by analysing their experiences as discussed in their own words. In-depth interviewing can also be directed towards further understanding events and behaviour that cannot be directly observed.

Traditionally, anthropologists have analysed human populations, focusing upon cross-cultural experiences and the research encounter. Their ethnographies, particularly in the developing world, have allowed for an insight into communities that are unique and often hidden (Ember et al, 2001). Ethical problems are common in fieldwork in the third world (Scheyven, 2003) and some authors view this type of research as 'academic tourism' (Mowforth et al cited in Scheyvens, 2003) or 'research travellers' (Clifford cited in Scheyvens, 2003). These ideas are directly related to notions of power between researcher and researched and the ethical dilemma associated with power differentials (Gunaratnam, 2003).

The colonial history of Sri Lanka has been hugely important in shaping the country's social and political makeup and this should not be ignored in the research process (Stavenhagen cited in Hammersley, 1993). Stavenhagen's observations and the acknowledgement of existing power differentials in work undertaken by western researchers in developing countries are extremely important (Obeyesekere in Srivastava, 2005) and one cannot dismiss all research of this nature as being automatically subversive. He argues that these tensions can be solved by ensuring the quality of the work is rigorous and also that the knowledge gathered is disseminated and shared with the communities being studied. The researcher must partake in a type of 'activist observation' in which action and research are joined, and thus allowing for the diffusion of research knowledge to the individuals and groups involved in the study (Stavenhagen, 1993).

The dissemination and sharing of my data with the people involved lies at the very heart of this research. I hope that this work will create awareness and understanding of generational differences both in the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Sri Lanka and the UK. It may also help to generate ideas and knowledge that will assist the second generation in their everyday struggles with cultural identity and traditional practice. For those in Sri Lanka, opening channels of communication internationally between the two groups will also encourage interaction, understanding and perhaps even generate interest in the political difficulties that could result in some form of positive outcome.

In particular reference to my own fieldwork experience I found that many of my interviewees actually wielded greater power over me. They controlled the location and time of interview, often changing it at short notice and although all my participants were extremely helpful and cooperative there were obviously instances when I was not given the complete truth in the interviews and stories were exaggerated. I had to rely on the validity of my participant's responses, and in these instances it is clear that the interviewee held power.

The participants were made aware of my own heritage and upbringing through questioning and my own disclosure. They therefore often assumed I was unfamiliar with many Tamil practices. The interviewees immediately held a dominant position with regards to knowledge and were in control of how much or how little information they were willing to provide. Luckily most of the interviewees were open and keen to educate me about the cultural roots they thought I lacked. The criticism levelled at research in the developing world is also less relevant to my own work due to the chosen sample. By comparing middle class, educated Tamils in Sri Lanka to the second generation in the UK I have attempted to limit any power differentials and to ensure the validity of the comparison. The lives of the participants in Sri Lanka are very similar to their counterparts in the UK. In a number of cases they had more privileged upbringings, attending prestigious private schools and moving in affluent and upwardly mobile social settings. Therefore, even though the context was different, the similarities between the lives of my two research groups were apparent. The main differences were with regards to the political situation in Sri Lanka and how the conflict impacts upon everyday life. Through a continuous reflexive process the differences between myself as the researcher, and the participants was identified and acknowledged, ensuring that the research process was as valid as possible.

5.6.1 Insider or Outsider?

In the practical sense, gaining or inherently possessing 'insider' status means that the researcher has the trust of the community they are studying and the participants are happy about the prospect of 'being researched' (Stebbins, 1998). There is an emotional acceptance of the researcher into the community and this is proven by acts of acceptance. For example invitations to events like weddings and the sharing of sensitive information (Stebbins, 1998).

The welcoming and in most cases encouraging and supportive attitudes of the community, the invitations to church and temple ceremonies, inclusion in everyday family life and the continued participant contact after leaving the field gave me clear evidence that I had been granted 'insider status' to the Sri Lankan Tamil community. One would assume that familial links would automatically give me 'insider' status, however my research with the older generation proved that the white British element of my identity was far more visible than my Sri Lankan Tamil (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2004). Therefore, the fieldwork was started with some trepidation as to how I might be rejected or accepted by the community both in Sri Lanka and the UK.

There are obvious advantages and disadvantages to both 'insider' and 'outsider' status (Wolf, 1996), yet I found myself in a unique 'in-between' situation. Sherif (2001) considers the balancing of both 'insider' and 'outsider' status as a 'partial insider'. Abu-Lughod's (cited in Wolf, 1996) experiences are closer still to my own. She writes about being a 'halfie' (half Palestinian, half American) who moves between worlds and identities, disrupting traditional anthropological boundaries between the 'self' and 'other'. A position that allows her writings to work: 'against the grain' of Western hegemonic discourse' (Abu-Lughod 1996: 16). Although I am uncomfortable with the term 'halfie', I can relate to the unique and similar position she must have also found herself in.

As an insider I had overwhelming acceptance by the younger generation both in Sri Lanka and the UK, which initially surprised me. The complexities of 'insider/outsider' status became truly apparent during the fieldwork period in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Tamil element of my identity meant that my participants could relate to my own experiences and mine to theirs. I was fortunate enough to have a support network of family and friends in case of emergency, yet interestingly access wasn't obtained through these contacts as will be further explained in the section on data sources (Sherif, 2001).

Yet, there proved to be numerous disadvantages to being an 'insider', particularly with the older generation. Even though this group were not part of the research sample, I often had to go through this group to gain access to important younger individuals. Assumptions were made on a daily basis about my background and identity. Many frowned upon my position as a single, unmarried woman, travelling and living alone, especially those from within the Church. I found myself constantly having to explain my identity, as I clearly did not 'look' Sri Lankan Tamil although I have a Tamil name. This, coupled with the general treatment and attitude towards women in Sri Lanka grew tiring and frustrating. Balancing family links with my work also proved complicated at times.

I made a conscious decision not to stay with family as I felt I would be constrained and miss the independence I was used to in the UK. I knew they would disapprove of me attending nightclubs and bars, yet it was within these contexts I would find most of my contacts and participants. The decision to live alone in a guesthouse initially caused some offence, but eventually they began to understand why the decision had been made. I gradually became more accustomed to separating my family, work and social life identities (de Andrade, 2000; Sherif, 2001).

The 'outsider' element of my identity, primarily that of a different physical appearance, being mixed race and my upbringing in the UK, also brought with it advantages and definite difficulties. My 'imagined' and actual distance from the Tamil community enabled participants to trust that their experiences, thoughts and attitudes wouldn't be divulged and that they had my complete confidence. An 'outsider' to the community would have found it difficult to gather open and honest responses, particularly in light of the tense and often suspicious atmosphere generated by the conflict. My Tamil links gave me an automatic allegiance to the Tamil cause and therefore an immediate trust was established. My relative 'outsider' identity also created an interest within my participants who were keen to be involved in the research. (Stebbins, 1998).

One of the main reasons for my 'outsider' status proved to be my appearance and dress. Even though I wore similar, if not the same western style clothes as my interviewees, there was still a marked difference, particularly for the male interviewees in Sri Lanka. I was careful to abide by the modest dress code, although it seemed my clothes and appearance still marked me out as different (Sherif, 2001).

By wearing the traditional sari on special occasions I gained acceptance, while for the majority of participants in the UK and Sri Lanka my appearance proved to be a point of interest and often

eased and stimulated conversation in the interview exchange rather than creating tension. Researchers move between 'insider' and 'outsider' status and as I found, the terms are not unique to one another and being an 'outsider' one day does not prevent one from being an 'insider' another (Naryan cited in Wolf, 1996).

The openness with which many of the interviewees discussed personal and often highly sensitive issues and experiences had made me aware that the subject of sexual orientation may have arisen during the interviews, even though a detailed analysis of sexuality is beyond the scope of this thesis. Surprisingly, nothing was mentioned about sexuality in both the interviews in Sri Lanka and the UK. Homosexuality is regarded as highly taboo and a clear form of sexual deviance within the Sri Lankan Tamil community, particularly for Christians. Sexuality within the community also remains bound to notions of heterosexual relations and as a 'gendered sexual practice' (Scott and Jackson, 2000; Richardson, 1996; Smart, 1996). Therefore, some of the interviewees may have purposefully avoided the subject and for the women participants, discussion of sexual behaviour could have been difficult. Yet, with the culturally and socially modernising Colombo there is the possibility that sexuality will become more open than in the UK.

5.6.2 Ethnic Matching

Traditionally interracial interviewing has been based on the assumption that the research encounter is characterised by distance and difference. Only by 'closing' this gap can a qualitative interviewer find valid knowledge concerning the society they are studying, a process called 'ethnic matching' (Gunaratnam, 2003). The debate surrounding 'ethnic matching' is important to my own interviewing experiences and particularly relevant to my personal ethnic background.

Gunaratnam (2003) is herself from a mixed identity of Sinhalese/Tamil/Indonesian/Scottish and discusses her difficulties in 'ethnically matching' her identity with that of her interviewees. This is a problem I face personally being of mixed Tamil/white English background. Some authors suggest that ethnic matching is a means of becoming ethnically sensitive. However, the emergent hybridity of identities and ethnicity makes this increasingly difficult.

It was evident that my Tamil ethnic link helped me gain access to the society I was studying yet my interviewees were fully aware of my lack of knowledge concerning Tamil and Sri Lankan culture. My ethnicity helped superficially, but once access had been gained the advantages ceased. One cannot also assume that ethnic matching removes all evident power differentials

between interviewer and interviewee. A similarity in ethnicity does not alter the positioning of researcher and participant. One individual still holds the knowledge and the other hopes to access it. The assumption that the interviewer wields power over the interviewee is somewhat misguided. The interviewee controls what they say and how it is said and this has just as much scope to alter the findings of the research.

It is argued that the similarity in language and culture of ethnically matched interviewer and interviewee helps in the understanding of subtle nuances and cultural practice. However, matching for ethnic identity alone allows other social identities like class and gender to be ignored and can alter the interpretation of meaning. For qualitative researchers wanting to learn more about all aspects of social life and experience this is simply a contradiction in terms. The project to make interracial interviewing 'pure' is misguided and undesirable. It is difference in social reality and experience that qualitative interviewers are interested in and if their work is led by a need for ethnic similarity does this not feed into notions of racial stereotyping?

For this research project ethnic matching would have proved extremely difficult due to the nature of the work, highlighting the limitations of this particular methodological technique. The ethnicity of the interviewer would become increasingly complex when studying Sri Lankan-born Tamils and the second generation born in Britain, with hybrid British-Asian identities. Each individual had complex understandings of their own identity and matching an interviewer would have proved impossible and beyond the scope of this study. The research was also closely linked to my own personal biography.

My father's rejection of an arranged marriage and my limited knowledge of Tamil and Sri Lankan culture located me within a particular context. I was interested to observe how my interviewees reacted to my own identity and whether I could identify changes in their attitude, perhaps motivated by my personal background. Practically, ethnic matching would have been extremely difficult to organise and theoretically it may have removed some of the micro nuances that were evident in the interviews I conducted.

5.6.3 Communication in Cross-Cultural Interviewing

Communication and the 'channel' of meaning between interviewer and interviewee operate on a number of differing levels. It is these levels that are thought to cause problems when communicating cross-culturally. For ethnographic research there is much emphasis placed upon learning the language of the population under analysis. However, the process of learning a new

language should not be seen as simply a tool with which to gather data. Language learning should actively influence and shape the research encounter and be reflexively considered at all stages of the study (Davies, 1999).

Learning a new and complicated language would have been extremely time consuming and simply unfeasible. All of my participants spoke fluent English and the time and resource constraints involved made learning Tamil to an adequate level in three months impossible. To attempt to interview in Tamil would have meant less quality data than I was able to gather interviewing in English. In many ways non-verbal communication was more important in my own research. Gestures, looks and body language played an important role in how I understood and read each situation. Non-verbal communication can also create barriers to cross-cultural study when the researcher is unfamiliar with the subtle nuances of body language (Walburga von Raffler-Engel, cited in Ryen 2003).

The impact of non-verbal communication in my own research was evident in the breaks and silences that characterised the interviews. From early observations in the Hindu Temple in Leeds, UK, I had identified distinct differences between language exchanges made in Tamil and those in English of a European nature. English conversation can be extremely fast and a pause or long break is awkward and uncomfortable. However, Tamil conversation is interspersed with long pauses and silences while participants ponder upon what has been said. As a naturally talkative individual I found this both frustrating and sometimes misleading. Yet, for younger Tamils both in Sri Lanka and the UK, English is the first language. It may not be considered the 'mother tongue' but the language is used commonly and in most cases interviewees felt more comfortable conversing in English rather than Tamil.

5.6.4 Trust, Rapport and Disclosure

Establishing rapport and good relations with interviewees is considered the most effective way to collect data. If the interviewees trust the integrity of the researcher then they are far more likely to discuss their private lives and experiences (May, 1993). Without forming close connections to the interviewees and particularly the gatekeepers, I would have been unable to access the Tamil community so quickly, both in the UK and Sri Lanka. Initially access was difficult and many barriers blocked contact. However, as soon as I established rapport and friendship with the gatekeepers, access and research moved quickly. Social encounters allowed me to explain my research and prove that my reasons for interviewing were genuine.

Interestingly it is the lack of trust between the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka that has exacerbated the conflict and therefore trust is extremely important to the Tamil community both practically and emotionally. By establishing rapport and trust with my interviewees they were keen to remain involved in my ongoing research process and saw themselves as central actors in the research encounter, proud to share their ideas of Sri Lankan Tamil heritage and culture.

Disclosure was also valuable in this project as it is doubtful that without it the research would have been as successful. Educational achievement is extremely important to the Tamil community and over a quarter of Sri Lankan Tamils in Britain have a first degree or higher (Owen, 1996). Educational qualification is an effective indication of status and by disclosing my own qualifications gained the respect of the participants. Disclosing my ethnicity also helped with access, trust etc. Ryen (2003) suggests establishing rapport is an ongoing process that begins on first contact and continues through until the researcher leaves the area of study.

5.7 Data Sources and Analysis - Sampling Choices and Access Strategies

The sampling stage of qualitative interviewing not only impacts upon the entire research project, affecting the data collected and the conclusions made, but is also one of the processes by which a researcher can prove the validity, reliability and rigorous nature of their work. Thus, silencing critics who accuse qualitative research for its lack of rigorous technique and interviewing the entire Tamil population in Britain and Sri Lanka is clearly unfeasible (Owen, 1996).

Therefore, I needed to identify participants who are representative of my overall universal population both in the UK and Sri Lanka (Blaikie, 2000). Sampling and access are inextricably linked and as I found in both research contexts one cannot embark upon access strategies without some idea of the chosen sample. It is difficult to decide upon an exact sample until it is clear access to the group will be possible. Therefore, the access stage is a continuous process from the initial contacts made at the beginning to the access strategies employed during the fieldwork stages.

The sampling stage of this project proved to be important in terms of the direction of the study and the chosen sample is one of the primary reasons why this work is so unique. The decision to focus on young, middle class, educated Sri Lankan Tamils both in the UK and Sri Lanka came early on in the planning stages and it became clear that this group, even though very influential, were largely under studied and under theorised. The focus upon the second generation meant that

participants would naturally be aged between and around the ages 18 to 30 years old⁶, particularly in the UK in light of the time of migration of the parents, the second wave of Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants (Daniels, 1996; 1997).

The children of this group of migrants are generally highly educated in professions like medicine and law. In Sri Lanka the professions are more varying, however the standard of education is similar due to the number of Sri Lankan parents sending their children abroad to university. Therefore, the lowest level of qualification that all the interviewees held in the UK was a first degree and in Sri Lanka those not yet attending university were studying for A Levels.

The sample, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, included both men and women as I thought it necessary to understand the experiences of both genders and the interplay between them in relation to traditional practice, identity and migration. Even though both men and women have unique experiences within their social context, there are also certain elements of social life that are similar for both. Identifying these differences and similarities adds to the complexity and quality of the research project.

Having already identified and made contact with gatekeepers (Homan, 1991; Mason, 2002) in the British context, primarily through the Sri Lankan Society at the University of Leeds, the difficulty lay with sampling strategies and access in the Sri Lankan fieldwork setting. I knew that I would have to rely heavily on a snowball sampling strategy, which I hoped would become more strategic as contacts were made (Atkinson et al 2001).

In the fieldwork planning stages I made contact with the Head of Sociology at Colombo University and through British links had the names of various people at non-governmental organisations. I made some contact with family prior to the trip and once in Colombo they were helpful in suggesting participants. However, the most effective leads and initial 'gatekeepers' (Homan, 1991) proved to be contacts made through tenuous links. A friend in the UK, who had met an individual briefly while conducting her own fieldwork in India, suggested him as a possible gatekeeper in Sri Lanka. She knew his organisation was based in Colombo and would help both with finding contacts for the research and also with easing my transition into the research site. A colleague I met at a conference had suggested the other gatekeeper. Both individuals, even though found through random links, proved to be invaluable to my research and

⁶ The actual age of the interviewees both in Sri Lanka and the UK ranged between 14-34 years old.

my well being while in Colombo. They introduced me to numerous people that fell within the sample and these people then continued the 'chain of referral' (Atkinson et al, 2001).

The Sri Lankan Tamil population in Colombo, although wealthy and influential, is relatively hidden due to the ongoing ethnic problems of the country. Many Tamils are reluctant to outwardly show their identity, for example women are fearful to wear the pottu, maintaining private and inconspicuous lives. It was necessary to earn the trust of the community and the gatekeepers were able to facilitate introductions. Due to a fear of discrimination, the Tamil community in Colombo remains closed and trust is extremely important. Once I had gained initial access and peoples trust then access became increasingly straightforward, as Whyte (1955) found in his seminal work 'Street Corner Society'. The need to identify and establish rapport with gatekeepers is central when accessing a hidden or hard to reach community. The process involved a complete social immersion in the research group, particularly in Sri Lanka, attending religious institutions and family meals. It is important to note that I also found participants through less conventional methods -

Sri Lanka (Colombo) Community Access Points -

- British High Commission
- United States of America Embassy
- British and American expatriate community
- Religious leaders such as ministers, temple priests etc
- Colombo University
- International Centre for Ethnic Studies (<http://www.icescolombo.org>)
- Centre for Policy Analysis www.cpalanka.org
- Word of mouth and distribution of business cards at nightclubs and social events
- Family networks

UK Community Access Points -

- The Sri Lankan Society, The University of Leeds
- Sri Lankan Tamil 'Second Generation' Networking Website (<http://www.secondgeneration.info>)
- Family network
- Advertisements for participants on community web sites and in publications (Tamil Times)

- Serendipity (<http://www.serendipitymag.net>)
- SL2UK (<http://www.sl2uk.com>)
- British and South Asian Society
- Family networks
- COMPAS, The University of Oxford (<http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk>)

5.7.1 The In-Depth Semi-Structured Interview (British and Sri Lankan Context)



Plate 3. Moor Road Methodist Church – The site of a number of interviews in Colombo⁷

The qualitative interviews provide a ‘window’ into the highly individual and specific social world. Each interview elicits different and unique information and is located within the particular social context of the research encounter between interviewer and interviewee. The qualitative interview should involve more than simply a record of what is said, but also a consideration of body language and linguistic symbols like silences and pauses (Mason, 2002).

Interviews take varying forms that are specific to the epistemological position of the researcher and for the purpose of this research project I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Through using qualitative interviews one looks to gain an understanding of the experiences, thoughts and feelings of those involved in the social world (Whyte, 1984;

⁷ Personal photograph taken in July 2005.

Morton-Williams; 1993, Silverman et al, 1997; Mason, 2002; Srivastava, 2005). As Rubin et al (1995) suggest, the interview is a form of extended conversation in which the participants share information and knowledge centred on the questions that the interviewer poses. The nature of qualitative interviewing is flexible and allows for the interviewee to talk in a somewhat unlimited manner about the topics concerned, with minimal guidance from the researcher. However, it is a tool of research and an intentional method by which to gain an insight into the everyday lives of the individuals involved. (Kuhn cited in Denzin, 1989). The use of interviews must be empirically informed and to ignore the methodological implications may invalidate research. The interview procedure must be a reflexive one, in which the researcher engages in a continual process of self-assessment (Dexter cited in Briggs, 1986).

The interview questions were created and piloted on volunteers before the fieldwork stage commenced in June 2005. Some of the questions for the participants in Sri Lanka and those in the UK differed due to variable themes. For example, the participants in Sri Lanka were asked about the possibility of migration, while for those in the UK this was a less important subject. The main interview topics remained the same. The first couple of interviews in Colombo also highlighted any necessary revision of the questions. All interviews were recorded on a minidisk player and ranged between 30 minutes and 3 hours. Most interviews were individual, however due to time constraints some were completed in groups of two to four individuals. Listed below are some of the various locations that the interviews took place -

Sri Lankan and British Interview Sites -

- Guesthouse (Sri Lanka)
- Participants houses
- Church
- Temple
- Cafes
- Restaurants
- University (Sri Lanka and UK)
- Hotels

During both periods of fieldwork I immersed myself in the everyday lives of my interviewees, engaging in informal periods of participant observation (Whyte, 1984). Observing the activities of the participants and engaging in social settings allowed me to further understand how they construct their lives and the differing influences upon them -

Sri Lankan and British Observation sites –

- Church
- Nightclubs
- Participants homes
- Theatre
- Restaurants
- Cinema
- Shopping malls
- Temple
- Traditional festivals and Bharanatyam performances
- Weddings

5.7.2 ‘Leaving the Field’

In the methodology literature there is great emphasis placed upon arriving into the fieldwork setting, yet a limited reflection on the processes, changes and decisions made when ‘leaving the field’ (Maines cited in Kindon, et al 2003). How we approach and negotiate ‘leaving the field’ can have an important impact upon the findings produced, the participants involved and the researcher themselves. The nature of this project and the sample of participants involved influenced the situation I faced when it came to ‘leaving the field’.

By immersing myself in the lives of young Sri Lankan Tamils I found that I formed friendships with a number of individuals. In both settings, it was inevitable that I would find things in common with some of the participants and I was aware before starting the research that friendships maybe formed. I followed the rule that as long as the interview had taken place, then I could attend social events, meals etc with the few participants who had become more than acquaintances. Therefore, it has never really felt that I have completely ‘left the field’. The relationships formed in the field will develop and some will eventually fade, yet the field has not left me and I certainly have not left the field.

Gallmeier (1991) considers the ‘disengaging’ process of social research in terms of revisiting the site and staying in touch with participants and the disadvantages and advantages of both. The process is complex and choices concerning engagement and eventual disengagement are more often than not taken out of the hands of the researcher. It is how we manage these choices, both in the field and once we have left, that is important.

In Sri Lanka 'leaving the field' after 3 months was due to time constraints and work commitments back in the UK. Of the thirty-seven interviewees, I remain in close contact with five and I know of the movements of others through word of mouth. The five I have kept in email and text contact with were the individuals that went out of their way to make me feel safe, secure and accepted. To have declined invitations to dinner, social events etc would have been rude and from a professional point of view would have ostracised me from the community I was attempting to access and study. In the UK 'leaving the field' has proved even more complex. Once again I naturally bonded with a few of the interviewees and continue to be invited to Tamil social events in London. Therefore, here in Britain, I personally feel that I have not properly left the field in the academic sense of the term. Although it is important to note that I do not maintain contact simply for personal advantage and as Wolf (1996) highlights, the forming of long-term friendships with participants is unusual, although not unheard of. I acknowledge that my fieldwork experiences, both in Sri Lanka and the UK are unique, however my research has been ethically and responsibly undertaken.

5.8 The Reflexive Voice

A reflexive piece of social research is one whereby the researcher continually reflects upon the research process at every stage, acknowledging how social phenomena, like interviewer bias, influences work. Briggs (1986) suggests that interviews are constructed through a 'meta-communicative' event and that often interviewers fail to recognise the differences that exist between the interviewee and themselves. Both parties agree to abide by 'communicative norms' and this changes the context of the interviewee's thoughts and feelings, thus altering their responses and the validity of the research process. Therefore, the knowledge gathered from participants may not reflect the social reality of their lives (Briggs, 1986).

What is needed to overcome these difficulties is the interviewer's acknowledgement that their research maybe influenced by external factors. If the researcher is actively engaged in a reflexive process, highlighting potential problems, limitations and bias, then the research can make claims of validity and quality. The researcher must be prepared to listen to their own voice and take account of how their presence within the interview context might affect the knowledge that is gathered (Goodall, 2000).

Traditionally it is thought that the interviewer should remain objective throughout the research process. More recently it has been acknowledged and understood that the researcher can both purposively and subconsciously affect the research encounter (May, 1993).

These are all factors that need to be taken into consideration and influences upon the interviewee in many cases cannot be avoided. There is clearly a responsibility for researchers to highlight the difficulties that arise in data collection and outline possible biases in the write up stage, while continually listening to the underlying reflexive voice.

5.8.1 Researcher Identity in the Field

My own identity as a mixed race interviewer proved complex in both fieldwork settings as I found myself shifting from one identity to another. I could present myself as ‘full’ Sri Lankan Tamil, white British or mixed race. This was assisted by my name Shanthini Rebecca Cowley-Sathiakumar, whereby I could use Shanthini Sathiakumar to appear distinctly Tamil and reveal my family’s caste/societal⁸ position, or Rebecca Cowley to conceal my Tamil roots. The research process as a whole became a journey of self-discovery in which I learnt more about my own identity and how I ‘fit’ into a somewhat drifting social space. Many of my own prejudices towards the Tamil community, formed through personal experience, were broken down simply by interacting with my participants on a daily basis and feeling accepted into the younger part of the community. The interview process and the links I have established proved positive far beyond the research encounter. Both the participants and myself were actively involved in shaping and constructing knowledge of the social world (Holstein et al, 1995).

My mixed race identity also proved interesting in the research experience, particularly in Sri Lanka, providing an insight into how ethnicity and appearance are linked (Ali, 2003; Song, 2003). In the UK people normally assume my ethnicity is of Mediterranean heritage and occasionally South Asian or white British. While in Sri Lanka my ethnicity remained ambiguous, although most people believed that I was white-British. Of all the new people I met while in Sri Lanka only one man, without prompting, asked if I was mixed race, Sri Lankan Tamil-white British. Later in the conversation I found out that his partner is also mixed race, Sri Lankan Tamil-white British and we had similar features and colouring.

Having a traditional Sri Lankan Tamil name meant that most participants assumed I would ‘look Tamil’. When I arrived to conduct the interview I was on many occasions ignored and in a couple

⁸ The disclosure of caste through name is extremely important to the Sri Lankan Tamil community in terms of status. Some of the participants were able to identify my families’ high vellala caste position (see chapter two) and were, therefore, more willing to be involved in the research. They may not have been as open and honest in their responses had I been of a lower caste position.

of instances met with shock and bewilderment. Once I had explained my 'white' appearance to the interviewees, this changed to fascination and curiosity. Before entering the field I was unaware that my appearance and name would cause such a stir, however I came to realise the uniqueness of mixed race Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo. The research experience as a whole benefited from my ambiguous identity as a number of interviewees confessed they had only agreed to be interviewed because they wanted to question me about my own experiences! (Ali, 2003).

5.8.2 The Social and Political Context

An understanding of the political and cultural climate of the fieldwork site is central to any analysis of interview data (Guneratnam, 2003). This proved particularly important for the fieldwork both in the UK and Sri Lanka. The ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka between the Tamils and Sinhalese is a contentious and painful topic (Fuglerud, 1999). There are thousands of displaced Tamils, many of whom have had friends and relatives killed. Tamils who have settled in Britain maintain strong links with Sri Lanka and remain well informed of the latest political developments. The conflict has made the contact and identification of certain Tamil groups extremely difficult and many Tamils are reluctant to speak openly for worry they will be linked to the Tamil terrorist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

In Sri Lanka the concern is even more apparent due to police and army harassment in Colombo. The access of certain Tamil groups is extremely difficult, although younger Tamils are far more willing to talk. The colonial connections between Sri Lanka and Britain are also important when researching the Tamil community both in the UK and Sri Lanka. This requires knowledge of the historical context of social research and without this it would be difficult to contextualise the experiences of the participants involved.

5.9 Problems and Limitations - Practical and Personal Problems in the Field

As is the case with most social research involving fieldwork, my time both in Sri Lanka and the UK did not always go according to plan and there proved to be various practical and personal issues at one point or another that hindered my work (Leslie and Storey cited in Scheyvens et al, 2003). Most of the difficulties faced during the fieldwork stage took place in Sri Lanka. In the UK the research process moved relatively smoothly and apart from some initial access problems, practical issues were kept to a minimum. The main administrative difficulties were prior to the Sri Lankan fieldwork, when to obtain a visa and save time in Sri Lanka, I sent my passport to the Sri Lankan High Commission in London. Six months later I was informed that it had gone missing!

Luckily it was quickly found although this didn't help my general anxieties and my faith in Sri Lankan administration.

In Sri Lanka I questioned, on a daily basis, why on earth I was there and wondered whether the fieldwork would be successful! Listed below are some of the main problems I faced on a daily basis, some more serious than others –

- Culture shock - This intensified any feelings of 'homesickness' and even though the culture shock subsided very quickly, there still remained points of extreme frustration
- Political problems of Sri Lanka and the repercussions of the conflict - Strikes, demonstrations and power cuts etc
- General disorganisation, politically and socially
- Differences in mentality regarding time i.e. interviewees arriving 2 hours late for an interview
- Transport such as extremely dangerous vehicles and driving
- Illness for a period of 3 weeks which left me bed ridden and wasting valuable research time
- Safety Issues - The reaction of local men to a single, young, western woman on her own in Colombo proved annoying and in some cases threatening, yet I learnt how to deal with this as time went on
- Mosquitoes and other types of wildlife, many of who had taken up residence in my bedroom and kept eating my food!

These are just a few of the complications I had to contend with, and most left me physically and emotionally exhausted. Safety was of paramount concern at all times, particularly due to the volatile political nature of Colombo. I took a number of steps to ensure my safety, including taking taxis at night, carrying my passport at all times, registering at the British High Commission (Craig et al, 2000). Yet, the overall fieldwork experience proved to be an ultimately rewarding and positive experience in which I re-evaluated my own aims, aspirations and needs.

6.9.1 Ethical Considerations

May's question is highly relevant to all forms of social research and the ethical boundaries that restrict, control and protect the research process. Ethical guidelines form the moral basis upon which social research acts, providing the discipline with both credibility and legitimacy, safeguarding the interests of the participants involved (British Sociological Association, 1992).

Firstly I had to ensure that the participants were giving informed consent. At the beginning of each of the interviews both in the UK and Sri Lanka, I outlined the purpose and specifics of the research project and highlighted, as stated above, that they were free to leave the study at any point. The participants were asked to sign consent forms that I have safely stored and were given the university and my own contact details in order to ask questions, withdraw etc (Homan, 1991). Consent is an ongoing process between participant and researcher, as Wax highlights: ‘Consent is a continual process, dependent upon mutual learning and development’ (cited in Irvine, 1998: 177).

All participants were ensured that their identities would be concealed in any future publications of the research and in the written thesis to ensure their privacy (Grinyer, 2002). Guaranteeing anonymity through pseudonyms meant that the participants were more willing to share confidential information in the research encounter. I wanted to ensure that the participants would remain anonymous, particularly if and when the research entered the public domain. Trade-offs between the dispersal of information and the assurance of confidentiality will have occurred throughout the research process, from the initial choice of sample to the dissemination of knowledge, so as to maintain interviewee anonymity (May, 1993; Rubin et al, 1995). Throughout the study I maintained a professional attitude and followed the ethical guidelines suggested by the British Sociological Association (Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association, 2002) as closely as possible.

5.9.2 Personal Gains

The research encounter is a reciprocal process whereby both the interviewer and participants gain from the experience. I therefore thought appropriate, in the reflexive nature of this work, to highlight some of my own personal gains from my fieldwork and the research project in general.

Firstly the subject of this study has allowed me to investigate issues of a very personal nature. Both the researching and writing of this thesis has allowed me to investigate many of the questions I myself had concerning the Sri Lankan Tamil community and my place within this context. By approaching the research in a constructive and fair manner I have observed and understood the social, political and economic structures and experiences that shape and often determine individual and community reactions. On a personal level, the research process has given me the opportunity to form contacts and establish friendships with Sri Lankan Tamils of all ages both in Sri Lanka and the UK. It has been emotionally rewarding to meet Sri Lankan Tamils who accept me as part of the community and do not make judgements based upon my father’s

choice to marry a white British woman. The research has also allowed me to make contact with family in Sri Lanka, who proved to be extremely welcoming and accepting.

Professionally I have met many inspiring individuals, who have been incredibly helpful and encouraging, an important element in maintaining momentum and motivation during the writing of a thesis. While in Colombo conducting fieldwork I was fortunate enough to stay in an affluent area of the city (Colombo 7) due to the safety and security concerns. Also the sample of my study, middle class Tamils, meant that I enjoyed a lifestyle I never have or probably will experience in the UK, involving Embassy and High Commission dinners, trips to spas and exclusive hotels etc. Both in Colombo and the UK the originality of my research gave me a type of 'celebrity status', which increased interest and participation in the project. Finally, this thesis has given me the opportunity to explore my own identity and location within the Sri Lankan Tamil community.

5.10 Conclusion

The research has been framed within the qualitative model, adopting an interpretivist epistemological position. The work also draws upon grounded theory as a means by which to generate data and construct appropriate theory. The details of the research design have been discussed and issues concerning cross-cultural research addressed. Problems of fieldwork in developing countries, the insider/outsider dilemma and ethnic matching have been considered in relation to my own research experiences. The chapter provides the methodological background, outlining the methods used to gather the data that is analysed in chapters six⁹, seven¹⁰ and eight¹¹.

The chapter provided an overview of the access strategies employed, sampling choices and analysis of interview techniques and periods of participant observation in specific detail to the fieldwork contexts of Sri Lanka and the UK. The importance of reflexivity is addressed and issues concerning context, reciprocity and interviewer identity. The practical and emotional difficulties encountered in the research process are also considered. There is a focus on ethical considerations and the demands placed upon a researcher to ensure anonymity and privacy in the research process. Finally there is a brief discussion of the personal gains and advantages of this

⁹ The Marriage Practices of Young Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo and the UK.

¹⁰ Traditional Practice and Cultural Identity.

¹¹ Migration, Transnationalism and the Second Generation.

piece of research, my experiences as a researcher and the effect the study has had upon my own identity.

CHAPTER SIX

The Marriage Practices of Young Middle Class Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka and the UK

6.1 Introduction

In Colombo and the UK, marriage practices, rituals and traditions form an important part in the lives of young Sri Lankan Tamils. Marriage, and the search for a suitable marriage partner, is a theme that transcends many of the other ideas and topics explored in this research. The discussion of marriage is also one of the main areas in which both the participants from Sri Lanka and the UK had clear similarities in their experiences and opinions. The overwhelming emotions of respect, obligation and duty were apparent in both communities, although as will become clear, expectations to conform were occasionally felt harder by those born and brought up in the UK.

The chapter begins with a discussion of pre-marital relationships. Many of the interviewees, both from Sri Lanka and the UK, had experienced at least one pre-marital relationship and some were currently with partners. Before one can look more closely at marriage it is necessary to consider the relationships that pre-cede and how the community and family reaction to these relationships can affect the choices and decisions made with regards to marriage (Stopes-Roe et al, 1990; Anwar, 1998; Hennink, 1999; Fields, 1999).

The traditional idea of ‘arranged’ marriage is fast being replaced by ‘parental introductions’ and ‘negotiated’ forms of spouse finding (Shaw, 1988; 2000; Stopes-Roe et al, 1990).

Individuals know what is expected and many were determined to find a suitable Sri Lankan Tamil partner for themselves. Some are content to allow their parents minimal intervention with the organisation of ‘blind dates’ and introductions (Modood, 1997). Most agree there is an increase in ‘love marriages’ within the community, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, although the term itself is difficult to define, as one British interviewee highlights:

I love the term love marriage, me and ... go absolutely mad, as if there should be any other type...(Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK¹)

The analysis then moves to a discussion of religious belief and how this influences the marriage process. Comparing the Sri Lankan and UK sample one can see the desire of the

¹ For a comprehensive overview of Sri Lankan and British participant demographics and personal information see Appendix B and C.

Christian British Tamils to maintain an identity that is strongly linked to Hinduism, in a way that is flexible, yet respectful of their Christian beliefs (Jebanesan, 2003). Christian Tamils have redefined historically Hindu traditions as 'cultural' and the religious split between Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus and Christians has made it unclear whether marriage practices are religious, cultural or both. Many understood introductions and negotiated marriage as another cultural method by which to ensure the preservation of ethnic and caste identity. Dowry is also an important feature, and although less visible in the UK than Sri Lanka, continues to play an important financial role in the marriage process (Jayawardena, 2000). Caste consideration also figures far more in the Sri Lankan group of respondents than the British, although they are aware of caste differences and it can and does impact upon the marriage process of young Tamils in the diaspora (Fuglerud, 1999).

Ethnicity figures heavily in the data gathered on marriage, continuing to provoke debate and discussion. In Sri Lanka, the choice of marriage partner centres on the ethnic differences between the Tamils and Sinhalese. For the Tamil community in the UK, however, the concern is far less about the Tamil and Sinhalese ethnic divide and more about the possibility of a second generation Tamil having a relationship with someone of non-Sri Lankan origin. Some parents are beginning to accept that their children are 'marrying out', however there still exist pressure and tensions for those who decide to pursue a mixed ethnicity relationship.

Both the subjects of gender and age in respect of marriage appeared frequently in the responses of participants from Sri Lanka and the UK. In both countries there are social norms and expectations that apply differently to men and women (Morrison et al, 2004). The social restrictions placed upon women, for example, of 'maintaining a good reputation', are still apparent and there is definite pressure placed upon women reaching a certain age to marry. It is also interesting to note that the Sri Lankan Tamil emphasis on education and especially that of women, links to the status and suitability of women in the 'marriage market' (Brah, 1992). The importance of migration and transnational marriage is limited in both contexts, but it is important to note that some contemporary Tamils both from Sri Lanka and the UK have crossed international boundaries to find a suitable partner.

With any discussion of marriage comes the inevitable need to consider divorce (Shaw, 2000; Singh et al, 2006). Divorce is highly criticised by the Tamil community, and in Sri Lanka particularly, seen as a divisive part of the Western culture. Divorcees, particularly women, face embarrassment and community rejection. In the Tamil community in the UK divorce is becoming more common, however concerns of breaking the social taboo are ever present and there is increasing pressure on individuals to ensure marriages remain intact.

Finally, the analysis reflects upon the expectations the younger generation in Sri Lanka and the UK may have of their own children's marriage choices. This is highly hypothetical as most of the participants were not yet married and without children, yet it was still important to compare their ideas with their own experiences. In Sri Lanka, the possibility of their children meeting and marrying a non-Sri Lankan seemed quite rare, however they were more open to the possibility than their parents, particularly those that had studied and lived abroad. For the second generation in the UK, the increase in mixed ethnicity relationships seems inevitable, especially as arranged and negotiated marriages become less common. However, most were concerned that the resulting loss of identity may in fact encourage future generations to actively seek a Sri Lankan Tamil partner.

6.2 Constructions of 'Love' in the East and West

When discussing types of marriage and the South Asian cultural context it is necessary to consider how understandings of 'love' and 'romance' differ. In the developed world, it is assumed that most couples meet randomly, 'fall in love' and then decide to settle. The idea of 'romance' and 'romantic love' is also highly important. However, the freedom to meet randomly is bound within a western framework of relationships, love and marriage (Gardner et al, 1994; Sriram et al, 2004; Lalonde et al, 2004; Singh et al, 2006). In Sri Lanka, marriage is still intrinsically tied to family respect, status and obligation. After marriage, couples remain much closer to the extended family than is typical in most families in the UK.

In South Asian culture, marriage is the joining of two families to maintain caste hierarchy and community status. Therefore, 'love' and 'romance' come secondary to the needs and desires of the family as a whole (Trawick, 1990; Dion et al, 1993). Even as Sri Lanka and particularly Colombo develops, with increasing western influences, these understandings of marriage persist. A number of interviewees talked of their desire to find and 'fall in love' with their future partners naturally, but love and respect for parents meant they were willing to partake in introductions:

They have certain expectations especially my dad, they have a lot of trust in us about tradition and their culture and the way they followed it is this is the way has to be.

They've sacrificed so much for us and why not give them the happiness of letting them choose. The final decision is yours, is it worth giving them that pain? (Interviewee 4, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

In the UK, the second generation who are exposed to the more western conception of love from a young age attempt to balance both their own desires with those of their parents and the

wider community. When asked about how he would like to find his own partner Interviewee 7 (UK) favours a romantic meeting, but realises that the reality may be different:

I would like to meet them in a romantic way, just naturally. But I'm not opposed to arranged marriage, as I get older I see that arranged marriages are just an extension of speed dating. Blind dates and things like that but it's handled by people that have an idea of genealogy better than your own and its all in your interest and arranged marriages like religion is fluid and today what it is here is not what it was fifty years ago in India or Sri Lanka nor is it what happens here (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

As Interviewee 8 (UK) highlights, for those of the older generation that had formally arranged marriages, love developed over time. Finding a partner prepared to work at the stability and longevity of marriage was in itself more important than romantic notions of love:

You start to realise that's its not as easy to meet someone who believes in marriage at the level that you do and is willing to stick at it. I can so see why that's a love in itself, sticking with it for so long (Interviewee 8, Male, 24, UK)

6.3 'Boyfriends and Girlfriends'- Premarital Relationships

In Sri Lanka there is great importance placed upon the purity and innocence of individuals. For many, the idea of having a partner before marriage is completely unacceptable due to family and community reaction and the way in which it can adversely affect possible marriage prospects. This is particularly pertinent in the outside villages away from the capital Colombo. However, over half of the participants in Colombo currently had a partner or had had one at some point in their life. Normally the relationship would be secret or would be heading towards marriage. 'Dating' in the casual sense we know it in the UK, still remains rare, although is far more common within the more affluent, middle class families:

Some parents are very accepting and very open. They want to meet the boyfriend or girlfriend, speak to them, see if they can kind of handle that. Is also to do with whether they want to have a tab on them cos otherwise we just sneak out at anyway. I mean that's very true of my ex-girlfriend, initially I wouldn't even be able to call her. Her parents would hang up on me, her brother was told to hang up on me, it ended up quite nice cos I went to meet them and stuff and eventually they were just like why don't you just come over? Everyone knew and they weren't going round hiding it. Obviously they wanted us to meet up during decent hours, daylight, ha ha ha, and not to be seen out too

much. Or doing anything inappropriate but otherwise it was OK (Interviewee 1, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

In the Tamil community in the UK it seems that hidden pre-marital relationships are far more common, yet they remain problematic for the older generation. The importance of family respect and obligation persists for the second generation who find it difficult balancing the relative ease with which people 'date' in the UK, with their parent's expectations and desires. Therefore, secrecy forms a major part of many young Tamil's lives in the UK, in which the second generation act out differing roles dependent upon the context. The migratory experiences of the first generation Sri Lankan Tamils created a strong educational ethic and pre-marital relationships are seen as distracting and divisive to this. As Interviewee 12 (UK) highlights, parents are either unaware of their children's relationships or choose to 'turn a blind eye', shifting some of the blame that maybe attributed to them by the wider community if the relationship were discovered or open:

They either don't know or they are in denial. The children try and hide any kind of boyfriend girlfriend situation and the parents are in denial. Denial can be a very powerful thing (Interviewee 12, Male, 24, UK)

Many of the interviewees were keen to openly date, however when it came to more serious pre-marital relationships i.e. living together, they were convinced that this was not appropriate until marriage. So although these relationships are disapproved of by the older generation, the younger Tamils in the UK are in part continuing their parent's ideas of respect and etiquette in relation to relationship and marriage practice:

There are people like me who don't want to live with someone before I marry them. You are getting married to them, I'm not into the whole 'testing the ground', that's bullshit. If you are getting married you are getting married and I think that these are the kind of traditions that come from culture. Your marriage is forever, it's not until you get divorced (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

Therefore, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, most young Tamils are reluctant to break community norms and openly date, but there are a few who are pushing the boundaries of what is considered acceptable and there are others who prefer to keep their activities secret:

I could put money on it that nearly everyone's relationships are secret. It's also to save face for your family as well. I don't want anyone to think badly of my parents. The Tamil community is quite scary (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

All of the interviewees, both in Sri Lanka and the UK felt some amount of pressure to uphold the status and integrity of the family, however it is clear that women face far greater pressure than men. Disapproved of behaviour can result in a young girl or woman being labelled in a negative way, affecting her chances of a 'good' marriage later on in life:

Even if our parents got to know about it and there was talk like this girls going out with this boy and have seen them here and there, obviously our parents will be thinking there is a black mark on our daughter, that kind of thing (Interviewee 4, Female, 20, Sri Lanka)

The interviewees in the UK are given more freedom to date, but the relationships where partner's introduced to parents and family are assumed to be far more serious. The introduction of partners to the family and community is a clear indicator that the relationship is heading towards marriage. Therefore, there is a great amount of pressure to find someone suitable for marriage at an early stage or to keep relationships secret. The more affluent, middle class Tamils in Colombo allow far greater freedom than even the Tamil families in the UK. The cosmopolitan setting in which the Colombo Tamils live differs vastly from the rigidly bounded society of the Jaffna Tamils (Jayawardena, 2000; Sivathamby, 2005), and it is the children of the Jaffna Tamils that I have spoken to in the UK. Therefore strict rules concerning pre-marital behaviour persist in the UK, more so than for those in Colombo.

For young Tamils living away from home, normally at university, the freedom is far greater and it is easier to keep a relationship secret as Hennink (1999) considers for young South Asian women in general. The second generation in this study spoke of the difficulty of balancing their two lives. The unrestricted life away from home and the other more formal lifestyle with parents, in the community, abiding by Sri Lankan Tamil social and cultural norms.

A popular topic for all the interviewees, both abroad and at home, concerned mixed ethnicity pre-marital relationships. In Sri Lanka mixed ethnicity applied predominantly to relationships between Sri Lankan Tamils and Sinhalese. In the UK it centres upon the second generation and their relationships with white British and Afro-Caribbean people. Interviewee 1 (UK)

talks of her brother's relationship with a white German woman and how long they have been together:

Maybe two or three months but it's very serious. He's met her parents and wants our parents to meet her. I feel confident that they will come around, famous last words
(Interviewee 1, Female, 28, UK)

Mixed ethnicity, pre-marital relationships and marriages are still frowned upon by the Tamil community and even though most of the young British Tamils have been in a mixed relationship at some point, they were reluctant to make the full commitment for fear of parental and community reaction and the perceived difficulty an 'outsider' to the community would face in understanding and abiding by cultural and social norms:

My last girlfriend who I broke up with six months ago I was going out with for three and a half years and I really thought I was going to marry her actually. But it wasn't right and I do think my cultural roots had something to do with that. I didn't feel like it was naturally working (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

For Interviewee 19 (UK), dating somebody of mixed Sri Lankan Tamil and white British origin allowed her to 'have the best of both worlds'. He is liberal and westernised, while also understanding the complexities and demands of the Tamil community in the UK:

I have been on a few dates recently with a guy who's half Tamil and half English and I think that one of the reasons I get on with him is that we have a lot in common with people who are mixed race. The mixed race thing is what I find attractive in him. He was brought up quite western and isn't very close to his parents. He's very western and knows less about Tamil culture and is less close to the Tamil community than I am but he also does know bits about it (Interviewee 19, Female, 26, UK)

Seeking and dating a mixed race Tamil is not uncommon for the second generation in the UK, some of whom seem anxious to find a partner who really does embody what it means to be a cultural hybrid.

6.4 The Sri Lankan Tamil Marriage Model

An extremely important comparative element of my research concerns the similarities and differences between marriage practice in Sri Lanka and the UK. Much research has been completed on personal relationships in the context of the choice of marriage partner within

South Asian communities (Bhabha et al, 1985; Ballard et al, 1977; Shaw, 1988; 1994; 2000; Stopes-Roe et al, 1990; Goodwin et al, 2000), and there is a distinct shift from what Singh et al (2006) call ‘hard’ marriages to ‘soft’ marriages in which individuals have more autonomy in their choice of marriage partner.

In previous research (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2002; 2004) it was apparent that ‘negotiated’ forms of marriage were far more common in the UK than ‘love’ marriages. While in Colombo ‘love’ marriages occur more often. Those interviewed in Colombo also seemed to have less restrictions placed upon them by family and community than their peers in Britain. Only a small proportion of those interviewed both in Sri Lanka and the UK stated they were happy to let their parents choose a partner. Most would prefer their parents not be involved in their own choice of marriage partner, however they understood the pressures that their parents faced within the community and the desire to preserve the Sri Lankan Tamil identity.

Outside of Colombo, in the Sri Lankan villages, more formalised types of ‘arranged’ marriage persist. However, a number of the interviewees stressed that the Sri Lankan Tamil community both in the home and settlement country are not involved in the ‘forced’ marriages we hear so much about in the UK². The family and community do still exert forms of pressure as Interviewee 17 (Sri Lanka) illustrates:

Arranged, yes. People are introduced and given a certain time period. That’s generally the case. But once they are introduced there is a certain amount of social pressure for them to then get married. It hasn’t changed completely. It’s not just introduction and whatever happens. There’s still a certain amount of control (Interviewee 17, Male, 22, Sri Lanka)

The extract from Interviewee 1 (Sri Lanka) below is tinged with irony, yet it illustrates the younger generation’s awareness of how the formal ‘arranged’ marriage processes worked in the past and their reluctance to take part in these now:

² See these websites for relevant links and details of ‘forced marriage’ in the UK.
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage> (Accessed 16/02/08).
http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5054286.stm (Accessed 16/02/08).
<http://www.forcedmarriage.nhs.uk> (Accessed 16/02/08).

I mean my dad jokes occasionally that I will get married to his sister's daughter it's traditional. I'm just like 'she is so ugly!' Even if she wasn't I just find it quite gross and I've done biology the chances are you getting like deformed kids are huge. It's amazing (Interviewee 1, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

The distinction between Colombo and Jaffna Tamils is also evident in the differing types of marriage. Traditionally the Jaffna Tamils are far more culturally conservative and caste concerned, whereas the Colombo Tamils are more liberal (Fuglerud, 1999; Jayawardena, 2000). Therefore, 'love' marriages are more common within the Colombo, rather than the Jaffna Tamil community. A number of interviewees in Sri Lanka questioned whether they wanted to marry at all, simply because they were reluctant to go through the traditional marriage process:

I'm not very interested in getting married as it's very difficult to find a good partner and unless I like someone and get married. Proposals, I don't believe in proposals. In our culture they don't accept the love marriages, especially the Hindu's. Now I think that it's changed. But still in Jaffna its there and people are still restricted in that (Interviewee 23, Female, 34, Sri Lanka)

In the UK it appears that marriage varies from the formally 'arranged' through to 'love'. Although, the majority of interviewees confirmed that parents and family were normally involved in the introduction of 'suitable' partners and that pressure still existed to marry within ethnic, caste and class boundaries:

For those that have lived their lives in the UK we choose our own partners but we choose partners that our parents would approve of (Interviewee 12, Male, 24, UK)

6.4.1 Parental Involvement in Marital Choices

When one considers the involvement of parents in the marriage process it is interesting to note that most interviewees were content for their parents to assist, although most wanted to make the final decision (Stopes-Roe et al, 1990; Modood, 1997; Anwar, 1998). Therefore, the traditional image of the antagonistic relationship between South Asian parent and child is challenged both in Sri Lanka and the UK.

Wanting to please one's parents and make them happy is a desire and value that crosses all cultures and societies. However, the young Sri Lankan Tamils both in the UK and Sri Lanka are aware of the importance of preserving cultural identity and maintaining status and respect

within the community. Therefore, many children allow and even seek parental approval and consent:

We are waiting for our parent's consent. If they consent then fine, but if not then we will have to give it up. So we have to get their consent as we very much believe in their blessings (Interviewee 22, Female, 27, Sri Lanka)

Many explained that as well as their parents, other members of the family and community can be involved in the search for a suitable partner. In Interviewee 19's (Sri Lanka) case her grandmother and aunt have been heavily involved in the introduction process:

I stayed with my grandmother and my aunty decided to do it. She came from Canada and she's like my mother. She knows what I need, what is my taste and everything. So the proposal was made and earlier I said no and after I said yes after we got to know each other (Interviewee 19, Female, 27, Sri Lanka)

In the UK the strong sense of obligation to family values and parental expectations exists, however there is more resistance to arranged marriage. Again, in many cases, it is not necessarily the parents that are directly involved with the matchmaking process. Other family members take responsibility, for example older aunts and grandmothers. Traditionally it is a female, matriarchal activity, and men are rarely involved. However, in the UK mothers are tending to be more lenient and fathers more restrictive:

He's really really conservative and because I'm getting older the pressure is increasing, baby age. So I meet people purely because the times I have said no, without trying to make my dad look like an evil person, he does get really angry and he does get really angry with my mum cos he thinks my mum should be making me do this (Interviewee 17, Female, 31, UK)

Interviewee 11 (UK) highlights the influence that the older members of the community have upon the behaviour of the second generation and how this influence can be feminised:

My gran, my dad's mum has a large part to play. She lives in the UK and she controls my dad so much and she's extremely gossipy and she would hear stuff from people and tell my dad and then he would get pissed off and come and get me about it (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

6.5 Marriage and Religion of the Sri Lankan Tamils

The Sri Lankan Tamils form two distinct religious groups, Hindu and Christian, and the way in which marriage processes are formulated within each is unique. Both Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus and Christians are culturally conservative in terms of marriage norms, yet it appears that in certain instances the Hindu community is more liberal than the Christian. Though many Hindu Tamils do still partake in highly traditional behaviour i.e. matching horoscopes and the use of marriage brokers, many of the traditions and cultural activities that define Sri Lankan Tamil identity are rooted within Hinduism (Fuglerud, 1999; Jebanesan, 2003; Hellmann-Rajanayagam in Hasbullah et al, 2004).

Therefore, the rituals associated with marriage and the marriage ceremonies are inextricably tied to the Hindu faith and this leaves Christian Tamils with a cultural dilemma. Christian Tamils are keen to maintain a distinct identity from their Hindu counterparts, while at the same time feel compelled to uphold their 'Tamilness'. Thus, particularly in the UK, Christian Tamils are adopting many of the traditions noted as Hindu, but reformulating these into cultural rather than religious indicators of identity:

Sometimes the Christian Tamils are compelled to follow the Hindu traditions but you can always say no, but some don't. They feel that it is a Tamil culture, they don't see it as Hindu (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

For many Hindu Tamils in Sri Lanka and the UK, the traditional system of matching and checking horoscopes continues. If a partnership is proposed but the analysis of the charts is incompatible then the couple will be advised not to marry. As Interviewee 2 (Sri Lanka) highlights, many of the younger generation do not believe in the matching of horoscopes, but go through with it to appease their parents and even suggested that the horoscope system is an 'escape route' for an unwanted marriage:

We had our horoscopes checked, I don't believe in horoscopes, I don't, but our parents do and we didn't want to make them unhappy. So after we meet and fall in love, and our horoscope are matched (Interviewee 2, Female, 25, Sri Lanka)

In Colombo, some Hindu families still practise arranged marriage in the formal sense, employing marriage brokers to find suitable matches, using horoscopes and photographs to propose unions:

In some families the broker or someone brings the photo and horoscope and first the parents will ask if the horoscopes matched. If the horoscopes match then they will show the photo to the girl (Interviewee 13, Female, 30, Sri Lanka)

However, this appears to be extremely rare in the UK and matches are found more often through social networks, family, friends and religious institutions.

When asked about the possibility of mixed religion partnership and marriage, most participants agreed that they would prefer to marry someone of the same religion:

I would want a good Christian, who understands me, and whom I can adjust to. We might have differences but if we can talk to each other about it that's good. The religious side is very important (Interviewee 3, Female, 20, Sri Lanka)

Some interviewee's parents are in mixed religion marriages. Interviewee 8 (Sri Lanka) explains how the couple negotiated the obstacles posed by their families and the community to marry one another. However, there is evidence of the patriarchal nature of Tamil society in that it was his mother that converted to Christianity in order to maintain her husband's reputation and community status:

In a Tamil society if a man changes his religion they will say he's not a man. So my mother herself fought with her parents and said 'I won't let him change his religion I want to convert to his religion'. So my mother converted some days before the marriage to Christianity and they got married (Interviewee 8, Male, 26, Sri Lanka)

The Christians in Sri Lanka are more open to mixed ethnicity marriages than the Hindus, although they remain strict concerning mixed religion marriage:

Actually ethnicity is not such a big thing if they are from the same religion. Because my parents wouldn't have a problem I don't think because I told my Mum that my friend has a boyfriend who is a Sinhalese Buddhist so I told her. The first question she asked was 'is he Christian?' If he had been Christian it wouldn't have been a problem but because he's not a Christian...I don't think ethnicity has much to play here (Interviewee 12, Female, 22, Sri Lanka)

Interviewee 16 (Sri Lanka) discussed in detail his sister's own personal experience and the church's reaction to members of the congregation marrying people of differing religious backgrounds:

... if a Christian girl wanted to marry a Hindu boy then obviously they would think bad. He is going to Hinduism. My sister married a Hindu guy, they had an affair and got married and the marriage was in a Hindu style but the thing is still my sister is a spiritual Christian girl, more spiritual than me (Interviewee 16, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

Many young Christian Tamils in Colombo that want to marry someone of a different religious background are employing 'conversion' as way of justifying their choices. By arguing that through marriage individuals may convert to Christianity they are gaining some leverage with the older more conservative generation.

Two relationships in the UK sample were mixed religion and one also mixed race. Both were asked about how this would affect their marriage ceremony, as the traditions for Christians and Hindus are extremely different. Interviewee 15's (UK) boyfriend is Hindu, while she is a practising Christian and they have discussed between themselves how it might be negotiated. Increasingly couples are opting for two marriage services, or they are attempting to combine the two:

Well I would love to get married in church and have the same traditions as my parents. I have already met my partner so he's Hindu so I don't know how that will affect his parents as he says that they are quite religious but I don't know how religious (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

The other mixed race, mixed ethnicity couple are interesting in that Interviewee 16 (UK), the Hindu, does not consider herself a particularly religious person, although she identifies with Hinduism. Therefore, she would want to have a Hindu marriage service to appease her parents and her boyfriend being white British is happy to go along with this. This seems to be the case for a number of the second generation in the UK who do not consider themselves religious, but still identify with their parents religious beliefs and background:

I would always say that I am a Hindu but I don't think that I am a practising Hindu. But my mum is and my dad probably and I know that they would want a Hindu wedding (Interviewee 16, Female, 25, UK)

Some of the second generation in the UK are keen to ensure the continuation of religious belief and practice, especially so that they can pass down certain cultural activities and rituals to their children. The limited knowledge of Hinduism among the younger generation is clear, however they are still passionate about wanting to pass on what they do know to their children:

I would try and keep all the rituals that Hinduism puts on us. I don't know Hinduism as well as I could and I think that there is a big accessibility problem with Hinduism anyway. I mean language is such a big barrier and even if you are first generation Tamils their knowledge of Hinduism isn't great (Interviewee 18, Female, 29, UK)

6.5.1 The Merging of Marriage Rituals - Hinduism and Christianity

One of the research questions concerning Sri Lankan Tamil identity in the UK focuses upon the apparent merging of Hindu cultural activities with elements of Christianity. What has emerged is a hybridity of religious belief and practice that incorporates certain elements of Hinduism and Christianity, excluding others.

An important ritual of the Tamil wedding ceremony is the 'tying of the thali'. The thali is a gold necklace that the groom gives to his wife and places around her neck during the wedding ceremony³:

The thali is a Tamil culture, for the Hindus the pendant is made of a Hindu God and statue but for Christians it is a heart and a cross and a dove. So that is the difference between a Hindu bride and a Christian bride (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

The ritual associated with the tying of the thali is rooted in Hinduism and the pendant of the chain will normally have an image of one of the Hindu Gods engraved onto it. Christian Tamils have kept the thali as an integral part of the wedding ceremony, replacing the Hindu God with a Christian image or symbol i.e. praying hands or a dove.

Many Christians believe that traditions like the pottu⁴ and thali are cultural, not religious:

... but the pottu and thali are not religious things. They are cultural things. It's not religious. pottu, thali and the flowers we hang from our hair. So these kinds of things are not religious, it is our cultural identity (Interviewee 13, Female, 30, Sri Lanka)

³ See chapter 7.2.1.

⁴ See chapter 7.2.1.

Traditionally, Christian Tamil women both in Sri Lanka and the UK would wear white saris for the wedding ceremony, while Hindu women wear the auspicious colour red. However, the loss of identity through discrimination and the conflict in Sri Lanka has meant many Christians are returning to the traditional Hindu colours as a subtle yet defiant way of asserting Tamilness:

It is quite a new thing for the bride to wear a coloured sari during her wedding. It used to be that the bride only wore white. But as time passed people liked the colour for saris. Also they wear flowers in their hair and light the oil lamp, this is Hindu (Interviewee 4, Female, 20, Sri Lanka)

Related to the merging of Christianity and Hinduism is the consideration as to whether Sri Lankan Tamil arranged marriage is religious or cultural. Rooted in religion and caste, individuals both in Sri Lanka and the UK agreed that marriage practices are predominantly cultural.

6.5.2 Mixed Religion Relationships and Marriage

The fusion of Hindu and Christian traditional practices and rituals within the Sri Lankan Tamil community is also as a direct result of mixed religion marriages. Mixed religion marriages have been common in Sri Lanka and the migratory community. For these couples, religious practice and faith are negotiated and compromises reached. In Interviewee 13's (UK) case her parents decided to adopt the Christian faith for the family, however as children they were allowed to visit the temple and perform there:

Yes, my mum's Catholic and my dad's Hindu but he went with my mum's religion. He's very into his own religion as in within himself. He's not very public about it. He goes on special occasions and maybe like once a month. Sometimes he asks me and my sister to go along but he doesn't force us to go. I'm used to being in the Temple because when we were younger we used to do all these dance shows in the Temple so it's nothing major to me (Interviewee 13, Female, 21, UK)

As discussed by most of the second generation interviewed in the UK, it appears that Hindu Tamils are far more flexible in the practising of their beliefs than the Christians. For those individuals whose parents were in mixed religion marriages it was normally the Hindu parent that allowed for the Christian faith to take precedence. This is somewhat unusual as the close link between Hinduism and Tamil culture and the Tamil desire to maintain their identity would suggest that parents would prefer to encourage the Hindu rather

than the Christian faith. However, most of the Hindu parents were happy to allow their children to be brought up in the Christian, rather than, Hindu faith. Some, like Interviewee 7 (UK) and his brother, who have been exposed to both Christian and Hindu beliefs therefore, adopt the rituals and traditions of both. For these individuals the merging of Hinduism and Christianity is understood as a natural process and an inextricable part of Tamil cultural and ethnic identity:

My mum's Hindu and my dad's Christian, but we practise both. So if I ever pray I have a Christian prayer and then a Hindu prayer and they follow each other and that's that. I do enjoy going to the Temple when I do go which is not very often but I do enjoy it when I do go as a cultural thing (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

6.6 The Dowry System and Marriage Brokers

In Colombo, all the participants mentioned dowry and it is clear that the subject provokes intense feeling and opposition, especially amongst the women involved in this study. Dowry is the: pre-mortem inheritance to the daughters of a family (Fuglerud, 1999: 100) and attitudes towards the practice and the monetary exchange involved do differ. However, most of the participants, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, were strongly opposed to the practice. In recent years the dowry system and the way it works have radically changed, both in Colombo and the UK, particularly for the middle classes (Jayawardena, 2000).

Today, in the UK, rather than the traditional exchange of gold jewellery, expensive saris and land, money is now exchanged to secure house deposits and for investment. In Sri Lanka for the affluent middle class participants this is also the case, however all were aware of the difficulties of dowry for the lower classes. A couple of the male participants were vocal about the expectation of dowry from their prospective wives both in Sri Lanka and the UK, however this may have been bravado for my benefit.

Interviewee 7 (Sri Lanka) explains that the increase in love marriages in Sri Lanka had led to a decrease in dowry, as exchanging wealth or goods is rare in love marriage cases. He also talks of the shift from forced to voluntary dowry in Colombo. The practice has become more symbolic, a way of remembering traditional rituals and maintaining identity. Also with women working longer before marrying, their savings and earning capacity are also now considered as part of the dowry package:

Slowly it is now vanishing because of the love marriages. Because most of the men think like this, female is giving the money and buying them so educated males are

thinking that. I look after my family on my own strength and if she is an educated person finding a job and both working together and then contribute to the family there's no need to give anything (Interviewee 7, Male, 23, Sri Lanka)

Within the Christian Tamil community it seems dowry is becoming increasingly rare due to the increase in love marriages and the opposing religious doctrine of Christianity:

Most of the good Christian preachers tell people not to take dowry as it is not fair. You can't tell about love and preach and then condone the dowry system (Interviewee 7, Male, 23, Sri Lanka)

Within the Hindu community, marriage brokers are responsible for matching individuals and organising dowry (Falzon, 2003). The brokers are normally religious men who are paid for their services by both sides, however this trend is gradually changing both in the UK and Sri Lanka. Agencies are now more commonly used to find and match suitable partners, many of which are Internet based with search engines for individuals to browse prospective partners. These 'online dating agencies' provide a forum with which to find suitable partners more autonomously⁵. There has also been a growth in matrimonial adverts placed in magazines, newspapers.

Some examples of matrimonial adverts from the British Sri Lankan Tamil magazine 'The Tamil Times' (2001; 2005) are given below –

- Tamil Christian parents seek groom for fair, pretty daughter, 25, working in Sri Lanka c/o Tamil Times
- Jaffna Hindu Tamil parents seek professionally qualified partner for son, 32, 5'6", handsome, qualified CIMA, Masters degree, holding senior financial position in US computer firm working in UK. Please apply with horoscope and details c/o Tamil Times
- Jaffna Christian parent seeks suitable partner for her unmarried daughter, 41, 5'3", working. Roman Catholic or Hindu preferred c/o Tamil Times

In Sri Lanka the amount of dowry a young woman can bring to a marriage is an important criterion for the more traditional broker trying to find a suitable match. Most participants

⁵ See <http://www.subamangalam.com>, <http://www.srilankachristian.com> and <http://www.lankamatrimonial.com> (Accessed 12/06/08).

agreed that the number of marriage brokers is dwindling, particularly in the larger towns and Colombo, however their services are still clearly available:

They get paid a percentage. If I want to find a marriage broker I'll tell my friend and he'll find one for me. And he'd say 'he's asking for 20,000' or something. Ok no problem so he goes searches some girls and comes back (Interviewee 11, Male, 22, Sri Lanka)

The issue of dowry can also cause problems in mixed ethnicity marriages, where in most cases a dowry would not be expected. If the marriage is mixed Tamil/ Sinhalese that is particularly complicated as the system is reversed and it is traditional for the man's family to pay the dowry not the womans! Therefore, dowry is one of the main reasons why mixed marriage is frowned upon in the Tamil community.

The financial amount of dowry paid also varies depending upon the caste, educational level, age, employment and appearance of the woman involved. The better educated and more attractive the woman, the less dowry that is expected, sometimes it is even written off. It is also dependent upon how the proposed husband fulfils the above categories:

If he is a doctor then 20 lax or 25 lax minimum and we have to give a house and jewels like that and after that job doctor is the first place, then engineer then accountant. Then the other government officials and then the graduates and like that there is a category (Interviewee 11, Male, 22, Sri Lanka)

In Sri Lanka and the UK today, the dowry, normally property (Thangarajah, 2004), is legally placed in the daughter's name to ensure the children's and her own financial security should the marriage fail. There is also a distinct difference between the practice of dowry in Colombo and the more remote areas of Sri Lanka. In the conservative northern Tamil stronghold of Jaffna, dowry remains an integral part of the marriage process. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have outlawed dowry (Sumathy in Hasbullah, 2004), along with caste, however it does still persist in the villages:

It is in practice and I have been told stories that in Jaffna it's like a competition. 'Demanding give me a house' you know and in our case also it's there (Interviewee 22, Female, 27, Sri Lanka)

Interviewee 33 (Sri Lanka) highlights the frustration felt by many of the female interviewees that money is saved for the dowry and not spent on adequate education, which would help support the wider familial network:

Even in marriage they are more focused on keeping the money for the dowry, that really annoys you. It's still very strong. If they spent the money to get some qualifications that would support (Interviewee 33, Female, 25, Sri Lanka)

While in some families the educational level of the woman functions as the dowry. By marrying an educated woman the man benefits from the financial gains of having a better qualified and therefore, better paid wife and also the children maybe more encouraged into education if their mother is well educated herself (Malhotra et al, 1996)

Interviewee 28's (Sri Lanka) thoughts on dowry summarise the general female Sri Lankan Tamil attitude towards dowry in Sri Lanka:

Well I am someone that is totally against it! The parents say they want to give the daughter something in her life and I guess that's fine as long as they willingly give it as a gift. I don't like how the grooms family demands 'we need a house, we need that'. It's buying the groom off. Marry the person for who she or he is not how much money you are going to get! (Interviewee 28, Female, 25, Sri Lanka)

In the UK most of the participants knew little, if anything, about the practice of dowry. The dowry system in its purest sense has been transformed in the UK from an expected financial or monetary exchange to a more acceptable form of gift giving:

I don't think that it was a direct dowry in the traditional sense of the term but I know that there was an exchange of things (Interviewee 10, Male, 23, UK)

The differing demands of life in the UK as compared to Colombo mean that the giving of jewellery and land is now more likely to involve the buying of property. Most of the second generation interviewed in the UK were highly sceptical of the dowry system in its traditional form. However, some of the women saw the positive elements and pointed out that the dowry is more of a gift that ensures financial security should a marriage fail.

Interviewee 2 (UK) finally considers the possible differences between Hindu and Christian Tamil families in the UK when it comes to dowry. As she suggests, Christians also practise

dowry and it is a tradition, like arranged marriage, that pervades all different forms of religious community. It is a practice that is similarly understood as cultural and not religious:

I think that Christian Tamils are also pretty caught up in the economic value too and class. I actually think that the dowry system has almost been explained as physical things like human capital. So the girl's economic potential like education and that its part of it (Interviewee 2, Female, 30, UK)

6.7 The Sri Lankan Tamil Caste System and Marriage

In Sri Lanka caste boundaries and regulations are less rigid than in India, however in terms of marriage, caste is an important determinant in the choice of partner. In Jaffna, one of the most traditional Tamil areas, caste remains highly influential. Even in Colombo, the cosmopolitan capital city, caste has still has a role to play in the marriage process. In the UK, caste is less rigid within the Sri Lankan Tamil community and migration has blurred the strict social categories. Yet, caste continues to have a role to play in the search for marriage partners throughout South Asia and within the diaspora (Seenarine, 2006). Caste becomes increasingly complex in the settlement country in terms of socio-economic position as a low caste Sri Lankan Tamil in the UK could achieve a higher social status through economic success and be comparatively wealthier than a high caste vellala Tamil. Identifying caste, therefore, proves more difficult when away from the 'home' country.

In Colombo, Interviewee 7 (Sri Lanka) considers the shift away from rigid social hierarchies as a result of education and how he believes migration has affected the preservation of caste. The older generation from the villages who are knowledgeable about caste have migrated due to the conflict and therefore the caste system in everyday life has in many ways broken down:

My mother especially when there were marriage problems in the community she used to consider caste, in that case in Tamil culture, in the marriage proposals. Nowadays is not like that, most people aren't looking at caste, there are a number of reasons for that. Number one free education, everybody can have a free education, so most of the people are educated now know, they know what caste is. The other thing that people who practise these things like the caste system they have migrated England and Canada and so there's nobody here to look at caste things seriously. I think these are the two basic reasons, the caste system is still here, it's there but is not so visible (Interviewee 7, Male, 23, Sri Lanka)

So in Colombo caste differences only become clearly visible in the search for a marriage partner. The marriage brokers still take account of caste and it is an important feature of any marriage proposal advertisement. This is also evident in the UK in magazines like the 'Tamil Times'⁶. When questioned about the differences between the caste system in Jaffna and Colombo, Interviewee 13 (Sri Lanka) highlighted that although less rigid, Colombo still has the caste system and remains a feature of community life:

But Colombo its also there. In the Tamil papers the marriage proposal advertisements first they put the caste, 'Our son is 37 years old, this qualification and we are seeking a girl from this caste' (Interviewee 13, Female, 30, Sri Lanka)

Even for couples that have met naturally, caste is a consideration and love marriages will often be prevented if the castes do not match:

If it is an arranged marriage then people will see the caste. Only in the love marriages are they not seeking the caste. But in some love marriages before selecting their partner they are checking what caste they belong to and after that only they are keeping their relationship (Interviewee 13, Female, 30, Sri Lanka)

Caste consideration is also inextricably linked to religious belief and most commonly practised by Hindu Tamils. The Christian Tamils criticise the caste system, but a few of the respondents highlighted that certain caste restrictions are still imposed by the family:

Among the Christians very rarely do they look at caste, about 5%. The others are more broadminded and they are not bothered. When it comes to marriage then the caste comes in. The Hindus and the Buddhists are very concerned about caste. When you see in the papers the adverts for marriage, first thing starts is the caste. Caste first and then the rest. Even if the groom is a drunkard or a womaniser they are not bothered as long he comes from a good caste (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

Even though Interviewee 15 (UK) is second generation in the UK she provides a unique example of how caste and marriage can and do come into conflict:

My uncle's best friend, his daughter went to study in Peredinya university and she met her now husband there, they met at university and fell in love, they are both Tamil. The

⁶ See section 6.6 for examples.

daughters parents were fine with them getting married but the boy's parents were actually Brahmins and very high caste and absolutely refused the girl as a 'daughter in law' and actually disowned the son. They got married but what they had to do for other people was that they got two other people to stand in as his parents and his brother had to sneak in and the parents refused to go to the wedding (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

Shaw highlights that marrying 'out' of ones caste in the British Pakistani community can and does sometimes lead to family rejection (2000). However, for the interviewees in this study, marrying 'out' of caste seemed rare and community norms and values are more deeply offended by mixed religion and mixed ethnicity marriage. Most of the Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK and Sri Lanka are of the vellala and the young middle class Tamils normally find partners within this group.

Anwar (1998) argues that for Sikhs and Hindus in the UK, caste is a more important indicator of choice of marriage partner than religion. However, in this study for the majority of Hindu Tamils, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, religious belief and ethnicity prove more important than caste. The Hindu Tamils were similar to the Christian Tamils in the way they constructed their norms of an accepted marriage partner. Yet, there were some cases whereby caste was integral to the choice of partner:

My mum's brother's cousin's son married a Catholic girl, even born-again Christian and there were big riots not because of the religion but the caste she was from was the issue. Shouldn't religion be more of an issue? But my mum was like 'no no, they are from this village and caste and that's not done'. If you are marrying out what difference does it make how far you marry out? That was quite a shock. When you are growing up you don't really realise who is affluent who isn't affluent, what their caste is but as you grow older you start to see and relate to what your parents are saying (Interviewee 18, Female, 29, UK)

However, in the UK and even Sri Lanka, identifying differences between caste and class proves complex. Traditional understandings of caste as created in Sri Lanka are shifting in the settlement country like the UK and at home.

6.8 Community Reaction to Mixed Ethnicity Marriage in Sri Lanka and the UK

Mixed ethnicity partnerships and 'out' marriages are still rare both in Sri Lanka and the UK, however there had been a definite increase in recent years and particularly within the British

second generation. In Sri Lanka mixed ethnicity is more commonly understood in terms of Tamil/Sinhalese (Sivathamby, 2005), while in the UK it tends to refer to Tamils and other ethnic groups like white British or Afro-Caribbean. In both countries the preservation of Tamil cultural identity has meant that the older generation and some of the younger look upon mixed marriage negatively, as a dilution of Tamil values and social norms.

In Sri Lanka, caste, religion and ethnicity are important considerations for Tamils and if somebody breaks both cultural boundaries then it has been known for the couple to be ostracised. This has also been the case in the UK. When one marries within the community, it is easier for the parents and relatives to trace the family and reputation of the proposed partner and attempt to ensure social compatibility between the couple. If an individual decides to 'marry out', a term commonly used within the Tamil community, then the consequences can be difficult, even if the parents and close family approve as Interviewee 22 (Sri Lanka) illustrates when asked about the community's reaction:

Very bad! Opposing and protesting. Because we need to get parent's consent and the relatives consent because it's going to be group. So relatives play a vital role whether we like it or. So it would affect very badly. They might keep us out when it comes to community life, we might be set aside (Interviewee 22, Female, 27, Sri Lanka)

In the UK it is evident that in most cases of mixed relationships and marriages that the Tamil parents eventually accept the couple, however it is the community and wider family networks that often disapprove and cause problems. The younger generation in both Sri Lanka and the UK are far more approving and accepting of mixed marriages:

My parents are more liberal than most and they would accept it. I tease them about it all the time! Its their worse nightmare but if it does come true they would just accept it but they would be worried about what their peers think as they would not be as accepting (Interviewee 12, Male, 24, UK)

Interviewee 3 (UK), touches upon the nature of disapproval and gossip, highlighting that the networks of the Sri Lankan community in the UK stretch further than simply the local context:

I'm pretty sure that my parents wouldn't mind and some of my mum's family wouldn't mind but they would be whispering. It's gone past that though because I am so removed from the Tamil community and I'm not seeing my family everyday. I know it

will be like ‘amma’s daughter, she married a white person’ (Interviewee 3. Female, 20, UK)

The negative reaction of the community to mixed ethnicity marriage remains rooted in the ideas and values of the older generation. It will be the second generation in the UK and the generation of equivalent age in Sri Lanka that begin to make changes concerning attitudes to mixed ethnicity relationships:

They would initially be shocked but I think that they would be supportive I reckon. My gran would be a bit weird and I don’t know if we would tell her. I said to my bro, ‘god forbid the only time she passes away is when we can marry unless it’s a Sri Lankan!’ (Interviewee 8, Male, 24, UK)

6.8.1 Marriage and the Preservation of Tamil Identity

Tamil identity is deeply threatened in Sri Lanka due to the conflict and resulting flight of Tamils out of the country. Therefore, the desire for a Sri Lankan Tamil partner often stems from the preservation of the Tamil cultural legacy. In Sri Lanka mixed ethnicity marriage tends to refer to the marrying of Tamils and Sinhalese and this type of union continues to be frowned upon by both communities:

The only difference marrying someone from a different culture I wouldn’t. I’m not racist but when all’s said and done the way they are brought up is more influenced by that culture. I want someone who respects the Tamil culture as I don’t want the Tamil culture to die (Interviewee 27, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

In the UK, most of the participants were also concerned with preserving the Tamil identity that they see being eroded in Sri Lanka by discrimination, conflict and migration:

I need to marry someone who’s cultural, not someone that doesn’t respect their roots (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

A number of the interviewees agreed that the individuals who were actively culturally involved in the community, i.e. spoke Tamil and attended Tamil dance and music classes, would be much more likely to seek and marry another Sri Lankan Tamil. Even Interviewee 16 who has a white British boyfriend, would like to continue certain elements of the South Asian culture for her children:

I think I would like them to have Hindu names' cos as you know my boyfriend is white and wouldn't want them to be called Mary or something like that. I don't like Tamil names so I think it would be a compromise. They wouldn't be twelve syllables long in the traditional Tamil way but they would have some Asianness to them (Interviewee 16, Female, 25, UK)

6.9 Sri Lankan Tamil Patriarchies and Marriage

Within the Sri Lankan Tamil society, gender divisions clearly exist, both in Sri Lanka and in the UK. There are certain expectations and, therefore, pressures placed upon women to conform to accepted social norms and codes of behaviour as is the case generally for South Asian women, whether living in the home or settlement country (Brah, 1992; Lalonde et al, 2004, Hussain, 2005; Puwar et al, 2003). There are distinct differences in the social and cultural expectations of women and patterns of patriarchy pervade the community both in the UK and Sri Lanka. Some young Sri Lankan Tamil men say they would prefer a Tamil wife as it is assumed that Tamil women are more obedient and respectful. Women are seen to take responsibility for the domestic elements of the family home, interacting with the in-laws and extended family in a submissive, 'feminine' manner:

That is why the Tamil wife is preferred, she will fully obey and stuff (Interviewee 11, Male, 22, UK)

However, Interviewee 11's (UK) attitude was not held by all participants, and most in Sri Lanka and the UK, were keen to maintain an equal and balanced relationship with their future partners. Both in Sri Lanka and the UK there is a strong expectation for younger women to study successfully and complete higher education, however it is still unlikely for a man to marry a woman who is more highly educated. The emphasis placed upon female education serves an important social role. The more educated a woman is, the more attractive she may be for prospective suitors and their families, sometimes reducing the expected dowry. The level of education directly relates to earning potential and the idea that men fulfil the patriarchal, provider's role within the family unit. If the woman is highly educated then there is the possibility that she will earn more and upset the traditional familial set up:

As in they don't want for example that the girl is more educated than the boy. We have this thing in Sri Lanka where the girl should not be more educated. I don't know why. The girl should not be richer than the guy, she should not be earning more money than the guy (Interviewee 2, Female, 25, Sri Lanka)

Ideas surrounding virginity and chastity are also gender driven, with far greater stigma attached to women's sexual and pre marital behaviour than men's:

There have been times where you dating someone who isn't a virgin and neither am I so what the hell. But then I've had friends who's relationships have broken down just because it. They knew right along but it became an issue (Interviewee 1, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

How a woman interacts with men before marriage can have a huge impact on marriage potential and possible marriage partners. Some parents will not allow their son to marry a woman who is rumoured to have had sexual relations with other men and openly had boyfriends:

If a guy gets branded as a womaniser it's some kind of an advantage for him. For a woman it's not. This is basically because the culture thinks that she will find it difficult to get married and lots of thinking is based on how you behave now will effect whether you can get married (Interviewee 10, Male 34, Sri Lanka)

Therefore, in Sri Lanka some strict gender divisions and rules still exist. In the UK, these rules are gradually changing and second generation women are demanding greater equality in all spheres of community and public life. However, many of the traditional ideas formulated in the Sri Lankan village are being perpetuated in the diaspora community. Interviewee 6 (UK) highlights the generational differences that women of the second generation in the UK are struggling against. Not only do they have to balance the competing norms of traditional Tamil life with British values, there is far greater pressure on women than men to conform. Therefore, the construction of a new hybrid identity becomes far more complex:

I think that as women become more and more empowered as the days go by, financially and how they are viewed within society. Their ambitions not only include marriage but also their career progression and they then want to settle down and have children at a later time after they have achieved things... A lot of the parents don't understand though that you can't encourage your children to be educated in the system here and have friends here who aren't Sri Lankan and be independent and survive in this country and then say you have to get married (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

Most young Tamil women want to get married at some point in their lives and have children, however they want to be given the freedom to decide this themselves, as Mirza found in her

study of black second generation women in the UK (1992) However, it must not be assumed that all Tamil families in the UK still hold the traditional views of gender and marriage. Women are gaining more autonomy with regards to marriage and career advancement is taking precedence:

My family's a bit more modern than other families though so they don't really concentrate on marriage just now. They'd prefer us to just establish ourselves in good careers before marriage. I have never been brought up to think that I'm going to get married at twenty-one (Interviewee 13, Female, 21, UK)

Also it is not only women that face pressure from the family and community to marry. A number of male participants voiced their own concerns regarding marital expectations:

Talking about my brother, now that he's qualified they say things [about marriage] but he just laughs at them. He's very career orientated at the moment (Interviewee 20, Female, 21, UK)

So the expectations and obligation felt by the second generation in the UK transcend both genders as they attempt to rebalance traditional Tamil norms with those of their home country.

6.9.1 The Acceptable Age for Marriage

The norms concerning age and marriage transcend both the UK and Sri Lanka, remaining gender specific. It remains far more common for women to marry younger than men and there is a large amount of stigma attached to a woman marrying and having children later in life. In the UK there is a move towards women marrying later due to educational commitments. However, the pressure to marry by thirty still exists and the community take an active role in voicing their concerns and worries if individuals, particularly women, are not married by their late twenties. In the UK the expected age for marriage does differ for men and women of the second generation, but due to education and a desire for independence the age continues to rise and it is not uncommon for Tamil women to marry in their thirties. Though the older generation are uneasy at this shift and prefer women to be settled in their early twenties and men in their early thirties:

One of my uncles daughters married when she was twenty-four and I said that's so young and he said 'what are you talking about, you will be married by that time!' I said 'no way I'm getting married then' (Interviewee 5, Female, 21, UK)

6.10 Migration, Transnationalism and Marriage

The themes of this work are strongly linked to the impact of migration upon the second generation in the UK and the experiences of their parents influencing family and community decisions. Therefore, it is necessary to consider marriage in the context of migration and the ways in which marriage is performed across borders (Clarke, 1990; Falzon, 2003).

In Sri Lanka there is a desire to marry a European or North American Tamil so that the individual in Sri Lanka can migrate to the more affluent country, most likely improving their education and employment prospects (Hellmann-Rajanayagam in Morrisson, 2004). While in the UK, some Tamil men desire a traditional Tamil wife and, therefore, return to Sri Lanka to find a partner. This is also the case for some second generation Tamil men too:

I know a few people that have gone back to pick their bride! I find that people that do that are either really desperate to get married or they want an easy life in terms of a 'yes sir' kind of person. It tends to be guys going back to Sri Lanka to get girls rather than the other way around (Interviewee 18, Female, 29, UK)

The migration of parents from Sri Lanka to the UK also illustrates cross border marriage. Many women left Sri Lanka to marry their prospective partners and settle in the new countries of the UK, Canada and Australia (Fuglerud, 1999). A number of the participants talked of their fathers coming to the UK for studies and their mothers following afterwards. Some met their wives in Sri Lanka before leaving, others on trips back to see family (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2002; 2004). A few had their marriages formally arranged and their wives came from Sri Lanka to the UK for safety and better prospects:

Dad left Sri Lanka when he was like twenty-five but he was a very relaxed chap as a kid and basically came to England to study cos one of his friends was coming to study. He ended up staying here due to work. Mum came here because she was getting married (Interviewee 4, Male, 24, UK)

6.11 First Generation Marital Experience and the Second Generation

For most of the interviewees there was a distinct correlation between the experiences of the parents and the effect this has had on the second generation in the UK. The migratory process and the journey travelled to the settlement country have had a huge impact upon the attitudes and opinions of the older generation. The time period at which the parents migrated is also important. Those that migrated longer ago are more likely to cling to the traditional values of the Sri Lanka they remember from their childhood and early adulthood. Even Interviewee 1

(Sri Lanka), a Colombo based young Tamil, highlights the status placed upon those who have migrated away from Sri Lanka and the way in which they interact with their children:

It will depend purely on when their parents migrated. If it's a while ago and they used to the way things are done in Sri Lanka then they will stick to it... Something I've definitely noticed is that the middle or lower end of the middle-class that segment would say to look up at people who have gone abroad or are living abroad especially other Tamil people (Interviewee 1, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

Interviewee 1 (Sri Lanka) also suggests that in Sri Lanka, the children from love marriages are better adjusted socially and psychologically than those from formally arranged marriages. Although this is entirely hearsay, it does appear that the parents who had love marriages are far more likely to allow their children more autonomy in the finding of a marriage partner:

Actually I can quite accurately say that personally the love marriage kids have grown up a lot better than those from arranged marriages (Interviewee 1, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

Not only do the experiences of the parents have an impact upon the marriage choices of the younger generation, but also the behaviour and choices made by their grandparents. The older generation remain influential in both the British and Sri Lankan communities and therefore their approval is very important, and particularly so when it comes to the choice of marriage partner. Some of the grandparents of the second generation in the UK eloped with their partners in Sri Lanka due to problems caused by caste and religious differences:

Yeah my gran did the same thing and eloped with my grandfather. I think it was a caste difference (Interviewee 8, Male, 24, UK)

Interestingly, this particular grandparent didn't approve of her daughter's wedding to a Catholic, as the family are Hindu. Interviewee 8 (UK) also worries that his grandmother will not approve of a marriage partner unless they are Sri Lankan Tamil and Hindu. Therefore, even though one would assume that the difficulties of the older generations would make them more understanding of the pressures their children and grandchildren face, this is not always the case.

6.12 Divorce in the Sri Lankan Tamil Community

Divorce remains highly controversial in the Sri Lankan Tamil community and is relatively rare. However, it does occur and is becoming increasingly more common both in Sri Lanka

and the UK. Interviewee 10's (Sri Lanka) parents divorced in Sri Lanka when he was a young boy:

My mum and dad divorced when I was twelve years old. Well initially there were misunderstandings and a lack of communication so it just bottled up and then suddenly knew they couldn't go on with the marriage so slowly they started moving apart fighting over who gets the children and stuff. Now both of them are remarried and my dad has another kid and they are living their lives (Interviewee 10, Male, 34, Sri Lanka)

Separation and divorce is particularly difficult for women due to gendered inequalities and can be highly detrimental to reputation and status in the community. Therefore, couples both in Sri Lanka and the UK are more likely to separate than legally divorce. It is also especially difficult for a Tamil woman to remarry following divorce due to the stigma attached:

Divorce is slowly becoming more, but in earlier times they don't like to get divorced. Even if they are separated they don't get divorced through the courts. They believe that later they might come back together. They think like that. Something happened like that in my family but the court case failed and if it fails once you can't apply again (Interviewee 11, Male, 22, Sri Lanka)

The way in which the Tamil community reacts to divorce also encourages most couples to simply separate rather than go through the courts. The welfare of the children and how they will be treated is also important:

Say if a guy is a really bad guy then it's not a problem but if they just don't agree and they get divorced then it's not viewed very well. He has to be a mean mean guy for you to divorce him. Men and ladies have problems so if the lady doesn't like she doesn't like to people to see that she is divorced. Just separated and keeps it at that. So you don't have to tell others and the child doesn't get humiliated, that's very important. It always comes down to other people watching you! (Interviewee 12, Female, 22, Sri Lanka)

Divorce remains highly taboo in the Tamil communities in Sri Lanka and the UK. It will be interesting to observe and assess whether divorce rates will rise with the second and third generations in Britain or if strict traditional norms will continue to guide behaviour.

6.13 The Second Generation, Marriage and Children

When asked about the expectations the second generation have of their own children and marriage there were varying responses. Both young Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo and the UK have differing thoughts on how they would raise their own children, the third generation, dependent upon the religious and social context of the respondent questioned. The main theme that emerged in most of the interviews was that the younger generation are far more likely to allow their children to make their own choices about their marriage partner. Attitudes towards mixed ethnicity marriages were more liberal and there was greater understanding of the pressures faced by the younger generations, both in Colombo and the UK. Religion remains complex, with most Hindus and Christians hoping that their child would marry within the religion. While for all participants, the preservation of Tamil traditions is extremely important. This varied from the language to a general knowledge of Tamil culture, however there was a definite concern for the loss of Tamil identity both in Sri Lanka and the UK due to conflict and the dilution of 'Tamilness'.

Interviewee 2 (Sri Lanka) wants her son to marry a Tamil Hindu in order to keep the traditional aspects of the community going:

Most of the cultural things I would like him to have like for example I would be really happy if he married somebody of the same nationality because we were brought up thinking that we are Hindus and that we should marry other Hindus. And that we should not get married to a like an Indian Hindu, we get married to a Sri Lankan Hindu. I would be happy if he did but I don't want him to be worried about what other people think, but definitely I would like him to (Interviewee 2, Female, 25, Sri Lanka)

While Interviewee 10 (Sri Lanka) thinks it is best if his children choose to marry outside of the community, possibly for health reasons and genealogy:

Who my children marry is their business. It's healthier to marry distant blood than someone close (Interviewee 10, Male, 34, Sri Lanka)

Interviewee 14 (Sri Lanka) would prefer his children to marry within the Tamil community, suggesting the conflict and disapproval by the wider community as reasons:

I would prefer if they married within the Tamil culture. If they wanted Tamil I would say 'yes' but if they wanted another culture I would have to think. But even if my children if they marry for love they shouldn't forget the Tamil thing. If you take Sri

Lanka, the Sinhalese community is huge and the Tamil is much less, so I don't think the community would like it (Interviewee 14, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

Interviewee 37 (Sri Lanka) considers the way in which attitudes change across and between generations and highlights how the third generation will construct their own social norms in the context of the society in which they live. This can be applied to both the younger generation in Colombo and the second generation in the UK:

I know for sure that they won't listen to me. Times are changing and it's so dynamic now. You see earlier you can't have love marriages and my parent's generation started that and its being accepted, so the next generation it will change again (Interviewee 37, Female, 29, Sri Lanka)

The second generation in the UK are also keen to ensure that Tamil cultural traditions are passed down to future generations, even though they themselves have limited knowledge of the language and cultural activities of the community. They believe that one of the most effective ways in which to guarantee this is to encourage their children to marry other Sri Lankan Tamils. Yet, the second generation currently in mixed relationships are more likely to give their children greater autonomy in their own marriage choices:

I think because of my own situation I would be quite happy with whatever. I don't think I'm that bothered. Hopefully I would bring them up in such a way that they'd be able to choose an appropriate person for themselves but I wouldn't want to control that (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

There is a definite sense that even though the second generation are keen to preserve their Tamil heritage, they have accepted that there will be increased pressures on the next generation which may mean they make choices, independently of the wishes and desires of the community at large:

I do believe that it's going to get diluted between my parent's generation and ours (Interviewee 18, Female, 29, UK)

6.13.1 The Future of Sri Lankan Tamil Marriage Practices in the UK

Finally, I questioned the respondents about the future of marriage practices within the Sri Lankan Tamil community, specifically for the second and third generation in the UK. The ideas and opinions varied with some believing love marriages would become increasingly

common, while others thought arranged marriage would persist due to the lack of Sri Lankan Tamil partners in the UK:

You would think that love marriages would be becoming more common and I think they are, but there's also going to be the group of people that cling onto what they know. Especially boys who might be looking for a traditional wife or something and there's none of those around so they might just go for the arranged route (Interviewee 20, Female, 21, UK)

Individuals tended to fall into two distinct categories when considering marriage, the second generation and future generations. The first set of participants openly expressed their desire to meet and marry a fellow Sri Lankan Tamil in order to help preserve the Tamil identity abroad. While the second group were actively looking to not marry a Sri Lankan Tamil or even a South Asian, as they saw the 'dilution'⁷ of 'Tamilness' as inevitable and ultimately beneficial to the community and the progression of race relations in the UK. Future generations may therefore, decide to also act to preserve the Sri Lankan Tamil ethnicity through marriage and procreation or might also rebel depending partly upon their own parents' marital choices.

6.14 Conclusion

Firstly the chapter looked to the constructions of 'love' and how marriage is understood in the Sri Lankan Tamil community as the joining of two families for economic and social advantage, rather than simply as a result of the desires of the individuals involved (Sriram, 2004). Therefore, the marriage act is seen as a far more significant social and cultural symbol, resting upon the preservation of caste, ethnic and religious boundaries. Yet, for the second generation in the UK and the younger generation in Sri Lanka, the modernising influences of western ideas of romantic 'love' are increasingly encouraging individualistic types of marriage. Both in Sri Lanka and the UK the younger generation are actively pursuing pre-marital relationships in an attempt to find their own partner, 'fall in love' and marry the person of their own choice. This is also evident in the growing shift from 'arranged' to 'love' models of marriage, although parental involvement and consent remains important both in Sri Lanka and the UK.

Religious belief and practice is also extremely important in the choice of marriage partner and the way in which marriage unions are organised (Jebanesan, 2003). Hindu and Christian

⁷ A term used by a number of the participants to describe the loss of ethnic identity.

Tamils have specific ways in which they negotiate marriage and same religion marriages are more common in Sri Lanka than the UK. Yet, mixed religion marriages occur more frequently than mixed ethnicity marriages. An element of particular interest is the merging of Hindu cultural traditions into the marriage practices of Tamil Christians. The blurring of Hinduism and Tamil culture is clear in the marriage ceremony and there are mixed reactions to this (Fuglerud, 1999).

The importance of dowry and marriage brokers in Sri Lanka and the UK has also been reflected upon. Dowry appears to be practised more commonly in its traditional form in Sri Lanka, but in the UK it still exists in the form of gifts and monetary help to ensure the bride's well-being (Jayawardena, 2000). In the UK marriage brokers remain important in the search for a spouse, both for Christian and Hindu families, with matrimonials placed in Tamil magazines and newspapers. Caste is also an important social variable in the marriage practices of Sri Lankan Tamils and continues to be taken into account when looking for a suitable partner. The Christian Tamils maintain that caste is irrelevant, however, some of the participants suggested that it does in fact still influence marriage choices.

The analysis moves on to consider mixed ethnicity partnerships, otherwise known as 'out' marriages (Wilson, 1984; Modood, 1997; Singh et al, 2006). Understandings of mixed ethnicity marriage differed in Sri Lanka and the UK. In Sri Lanka it is understood as ethnic difference in the sense of marrying a Sinhalese, while in the UK it was seen as marrying someone not of Sri Lankan Tamil descent. In Sri Lanka, marriages between Tamils and Sinhalese do occur, albeit rarely. However, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, marrying someone of a different ethnic origin is unusual. Community and family displeasure and the need to preserve the Tamil identity proved to be the main factors discouraging mixed ethnicity marriage in Sri Lanka and the UK. Then ideas of patriarchy in the Sri Lankan Tamil community were explored and the persistence of traditional gender roles in the UK and Sri Lanka. The community are keen to ensure that the female members are well educated and in highly professional careers, however once married this is often sacrificed to care for the home and children. There is also a persisting value placed upon female virginity prior to marriage. Today, women are choosing to marry later in life and some are continuing to work after marriage (Morrison, 2004).

The discussion then reflects upon the marital experiences of the first generation and how their life stories impact on the second generation. It seems that in many cases difficulties faced by the first generation with regards to choice of marriage partner would not automatically make them more liberal with their own children. Similarly the parents of the first generation, some

of which broke social taboos by eloping, also hold rigid ideas of who their grandchildren should marry.

Divorce remains highly controversial, especially for women, although it does occur. The trend seems to suggest it will become more accepted as more people divorce. With regards to the future of marriage practices and the third generation, it appears that they may have slightly more choice than their parents the second generation, however the importance of preserving the Tamil identity and heritage is clear. This may only be achieved by marrying within the community. Thus, negotiated forms of marriage and introductions will persist along with 'love' marriages.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Traditional Practice and Cultural Identity

7.1 Introduction

There are three main pillars that support Sri Lankan Tamil culture, the house, the temple and the village. These features are clearly important in helping the first generation to preserve homeland memory, heritage and identity (Cheran, 2001). However, for the younger generation in Sri Lanka and the middle class second generation in the UK, these pillars have become increasingly less important to their construction of identity. Only a couple of the participants, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, had been able to visit their parents' childhood homes and most felt little, if any connection, to their parents' village. The temple plays a part in the lives of many young Hindus, however the younger Christian Tamils have little contact with this particular setting. Both the Sri Lankan and British Tamil younger generation are creating their identities differently to their parents in light of the many social, political and economic influences upon them in everyday life.

In both the Sri Lankan and British communities observations can be made about how Tamil Christians are adopting Hindu traits in religious ceremonies and rituals. Tamil ethnic identity is inextricably tied to Hinduism and in order to help preserve and strengthen the sense of ethnicity, many Christian Tamils are including Hindu traditions in their own lives. The food, dress and music of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in both research sites is considered as an important element in the understanding of the preservation of community culture and ethnic identity.

The intricate differences between Indian, Jaffna and Colombo Tamils are explored, along with the impact of the conflict on ethnic identity in both Sri Lanka and the UK. The responses and attitudes of the second generation are particularly important and their possible role in the resolution of the conflict. Ideas of identity, nationality, ethnicity and class are explored in relation to the British Tamil second generation and the preservation of the mother tongue and the implications of language loss for the younger generation and Sri Lankan Tamil identity in the UK. The participants in the UK reflect upon their own experiences and both the successes and failures of Tamil schools in the UK in helping to preserve Tamil identity abroad. The social and cultural pressures experienced by the younger generation in Colombo and the second generation in the UK are then compared and contrasted. Finally, the analysis looks to the possible loss of Sri Lankan Tamil identity and the feelings and reactions of the second generation in the UK.

7.2 Religion and Identity - The Cultural Merging of Hinduism and Christianity

A key observation made in both periods of fieldwork in Sri Lanka and the UK is the way in which Hindu and Christian religious practices are merging. Christianity in the form of Roman Catholicism arrived on the island with the Portuguese in the 16th century. The arrival of the British in the 19th century brought more varied Protestant groups (De Silva, 1998). The conversion to Christianity, and in particular the Protestant denomination, occurred largely within the more affluent, educated middle class Sri Lankan Tamils¹ who could speak and understand English translations of the Bible. This trend has persisted, and even today in Sri Lanka and the UK, those that follow the Christian faith are more commonly from the middle and elite class. In this study, over half of the participants both in Sri Lanka and the UK sample are Christian.

The emergence of popular charismatic churches in both Sri Lanka and the UK is drawing the community away from the more traditional denominations. An in-depth analysis of the changes in the structure and scope of Christian Tamil belief is beyond the scope of this thesis, however it is worth bearing in mind in relation to the ways in which Hinduism and Christianity have adapted to external influences. The majority of Christian interviewees in this research followed the Protestant faith, however it is apparent that both in Sri Lanka and the UK, Protestant churches are adopting the policies of the more conservative charismatic churches. Therefore, many of the participants were quick to comment upon how the Hindu community and parents, particularly in the UK, are far more tolerant and progressive than their Christian counterparts, whose religious beliefs have become increasingly traditionalist and conformist, impacting upon the lives of the younger generation.

Whichever Christian denomination the young Tamils follow, it has become increasingly visible that Hindu and Christian traditional practices have blurred within both the Sri Lankan and British communities. The impact that the conflict has had upon Tamil identity construction and preservation is complex. The trauma, resentment and bitterness felt by many Tamils who left Sri Lanka due to the war and the loss of family and friends to conflict, has in most cases, made identity stronger (Daniel, 1996). For Christian Tamils wanting to preserve their Tamil identity, faith can make this difficult. Most Sri Lankan Tamil traditional practice and cultural rituals are immersed in Hinduism (Jebanesan, 2004) and to be Christian and Tamil can result in a loss of ethnic identity. Historically, in Sri Lanka as Hellmann-Rajanayagam states:

¹ Normally of the dominant vellala caste.

When we argue that Christians were not excluded from Tamil society on the basis of religion, we must remember that Christians did not want to be excluded either. They made every effort to prove that they belonged in Tamil society and to demonstrate their Tamil identity. They felt part of their society, in ethnicity and culture, and they were accepted and acknowledged by society as long as they complied with the way of life and the social structure, viz., the caste system (2004: 73).

In modern Colombo and the UK where the caste system is less rigid and the community increasingly dispersed, conserving a sense of ‘Tamilness’ is proving ever more difficult. In order to prevent the loss of ethnic identity and Tamil culture Christians have reinvented and redefined many Hindu traditional rituals and practices as ‘cultural’ rather than ‘religious’. This is often to the annoyance of Tamil Hindus! This behaviour is evident in both the Sri Lankan and UK Christian community, and as the younger generation highlights, the blurring and reconstruction of religious, cultural and ethnic norms has virtually rewritten how Christian Tamil identity is understood both inside and outside the community. When questioned about the differences between Hindu and Christian Tamils and the Hindu reaction to Christian Tamil behaviour Interviewee 20 (Sri Lanka) gives the following response:

Eating habits are a bit different, we think that the cow is a holy thing while they do not. They consume beef and stuff like that. There are certain differences but what I would say is that the Tamil Christians still want to be a part of Hinduism. The culture and everything. If you go to their houses the ladies dress very much like Indians and they even wear the pottu and everything. What I have experienced is that they want to be part of our culture and everything but still also have their side. They are trying to strike a balance as Interviewee 20 highlights:

What do the Hindu Tamils think of that? (Interviewer)

Not good, I’m ok with it, but then you get into a debate about who came first and whatever. But some of the strong Hindus really into the religion they don’t like it at all (Interviewee 20, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

As Interviewee 20 (Sri Lanka) suggests Christian Tamils find it increasingly difficult to maintain their Christian faith while also preserving their ethnic identity that is so embedded in Hinduism. Thus, the embedding of ethnic identity in religious belief and the inextricable link between culture and religion has created a dilemma for the converted Christian Tamils both in the UK and Sri Lanka. Menjivar (2002) highlights how churches in diaspora communities

have always been important in the encouraging of links with the homeland, and this is clearly the case for Sri Lankan Tamil run churches in the UK. However, while keen to promote Sri Lankan Tamil identity, the churches must also be careful to avoid endorsing Hindu rituals and traits.

7.2.1 The Pottu and the Thali Kodi



Plate 4. The tying of the Thali Kodi at a Christian Wedding Service³



Plate 5. The Marking of the Tamil Pottu²

There are two clear instances whereby the blending of Hinduism and Christianity is evident, the tying of the thali kodi at the Tamil wedding service and the marking of the pottu.

The bindi⁴ as it is more commonly known in the western world, is a forehead decoration worn in Asia, normally by Hindus. Traditionally it is a dot of red colour applied in the center of the forehead close to the eyebrows, but it can also consist of a sign or piece of jewellery. Within the Sri Lankan Tamil community this mark is known as the pottu. Both men and women can wear the pottu as a sign of their faith (tilak), and many believe it is the 'third, all seeing/all knowing eye'. However, for the Sri Lankan Tamil community the pottu is also a central marker of ethnicity and identity.

Christian Tamils who want to wear the pottu as a symbol of ethnicity are also in a difficult situation due to the ritual's Hindu roots. Thus, many Christian Tamils argue that the pottu is no longer simply a religious gesture, it is also cultural, with little, if any links to Hinduism.

² http://www.moe.gov.sg/edumall/tl/digital_resources/digital_photos13.htm (Accessed 15/02/08)

³ <http://www.acns.com/~mm9n/marriage/m009.htm> (Accessed 15/02/08)

⁴ From Sanskrit bindu, meaning 'a drop, small particle, dot'.

The pottu is being redefined as a Tamil cultural symbol by Christian Tamils eager to preserve their ethnic identity:

The Sri Lankans identify the Tamils if they wear a pottu whereas Christians do not keep. With that it can be difficult to identify a Christian Tamil or a Hindu Tamil. All the Sinhalese and all the others feel that only if you keep a pottu are you a Tamil. But we don't accept that. Some Christians keep a pottu, in the church they are not allowed to wear but when they go home some do because the pottu is a Hindu culture. But then the Christians because they want to expose themselves and show themselves as Tamils they keep the pottu. It was a religious ritual and now it has become a cultural sign. We Christians who are really strong don't keep it because we feel it is one of the signs for one of the Hindu Gods, Shiva, the third-eye (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

However, there are differences in how this is negotiated by Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo and the UK. The ongoing discrimination against Tamils in Sri Lanka has meant that many individuals are scared to openly express their ethnicity and hide their identity for fear of persecution by the Sinhalese police or army. By wearing the pottu in Sri Lanka, one is openly identifying themselves as Tamil and expressing their ethnicity:

I never wear the pottu. One reason is sometimes I don't want to be associated as a Tamil, it's not very safe here and the way I dress and go about, I guess people don't think that I am Tamil (Interviewee 31, Female, 31, Sri Lanka)

In the UK Tamils can wear their pottu openly, however the Christian Tamils still face the complexity of being identified as Hindu. As in Sri Lanka, the pottu has been redefined by the Christian community as a cultural rather than religious expression:

I've grown up with the pottu seeing it as cultural, Mum and ... wore them but I always thought of it as cultural rather than religious (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

The thali kodi is another traditional practice that has transformed into both a Hindu and a Christian ritual. Similar to the exchanging of rings in western society, the thali kodi is the chain given to the bride during the marriage ceremony. The thali kodi is worn around the woman's neck until her husband dies and the widow then becomes a highly inauspicious being:

The tying of the thali is the symbolic core of the marriage ritual and is what legitimises sexual union, confers upon the wife a code of obedience and, in a sense, entrusts her with the prosperity and well-being of the family (Fuglerud, 1999: 110).

In Sri Lankan Tamil tradition the chain normally has a pendant on it inscribed with an image of a God or deity for Hindus. However, Christian Tamils have replaced the Hindu imagery with Christian symbols like a cross or doves. Similarly to the pottu, the thali has now become a Tamil ethnic identity marker, altered by the Christians to embrace the religious diversity of the community:

The thali is a Tamil culture, the Hindus the pendant is made of a Hindu God and statue but for Christians it is a heart and a cross and a dove. So that is the difference between a Hindu bride and a Christian bride. The Thali is the same but the pendant differ (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, UK)

There is some conflict as for example my mother is Christian Tamil. She wears a pottu and also wears the thali. On the Hindu thali they mention one of their Gods and on my mothers thali it shows the cross. My mother she wears a thali to show that she is in the Tamil culture and that's why she wears these (Interviewee 11, Male, 22, Sri Lanka)

The Hindu people say that pottu and thali is religious because most of the Tamils are Hindus. So I don't think that it's very clear about that. So they think that these identifications are religious identities but it's not religious. It's Tamil identity (Interviewee 13, Female, 30, Sri Lanka)

Well when I talk about Hindu traditions we don't call them Hindu anymore. We just call them Tamil traditions. The wedding ceremony and putting on the thali is not related to Hinduism at all. Though the Hindus also put the thali it's a Tamil tradition (Interviewee 27, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

The way in which Hinduism and Christianity have merged in the UK community has not gone unnoticed by the younger generation. In many Christian wedding services a number of Hindu traditions are being included. The bride may wear a white dress or traditional dress during the wedding service and then change into the traditionally Hindu red sari at the wedding reception:

I have found that my friends that are Tamil Christian are a lot more westernised. We definitely don't have as many traditions. Like for a wedding you might wear a white dress. When my cousin got married she wore a white dress in the Church but she had a Tamil mass and at the reception she got changed into a red sari and it was really nice (Interviewee 20, Female, 21, UK)

With weddings and things like that I know my parents had a Catholic wedding and she wore a white sari but then you have the traditions after that like the thali and my dad gave her the red sari so you have all those traditions as well but I don't know how far that is Hinduism (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

The clear link between the red sari and Hindu religious belief concerning 'hot and cold' states and auspiciousness is ignored by Christian Tamils who see certain rituals as now cultural, not religious (Daniel, 1984).

7.2.2 Education and Religion

During fieldwork in Sri Lanka the influence of schooling was often mentioned and in particular the impact of international schools in Colombo. The majority of Sri Lankan interviewees had attended the private and prestigious Colombo International School and the importance of these private international schools became apparent when I began networking and interviewing. Many of the affluent, middle class Tamils in Colombo attend these international schools due to the poor state of the education system in Sri Lanka and the ongoing language difficulties.

The international schools follow the British educational model and most use the English medium unlike the state run schools prioritising Sinhala. The international schools teach GCSE's and A Levels for those hoping to study at university abroad, as many of the students go on to do. Colombo International School is staffed by foreign, as well as local teachers, is co-educational, attended by differing ethnicities and religions. The students are exposed to far greater social diversity in the school context and most are less conservative and traditional in their social outlook.

Most Sri Lankan international schools prioritise the Christian calendar, although even this is limited:

International schools in our part of the country they tend to be more westernised and towards Christianity. They practise Christmas and everything to do with Christianity.

It's not that there are a lot of events for the other religions. If Ramadan is going on then yes they know that it's going on but there is nothing to bring it into school (Interviewee 20, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

The influence is type of school has upon the students is important as it is these educated and affluent young adults that could be making the most positive changes in Sri Lanka, along with the second generation. However, security, peace and relative equality is too strong a draw for many who decide to distance themselves from the unrest at home.

7.3 Cultural Life - Dress, Food and Music

The traditional dress for Sri Lankan women is the sari and for men it is the veshti⁵. The younger generation in Colombo are now predominantly wearing western types of dress for comfort and fashion. However, for work, church and the temple, women still wear the sari. Men sometimes wear the veshti, yet it seems there is more expectation placed upon women to maintain cultural norms, wear traditional dress and remain modest, even in the city:

We must wear saris for the office. Earlier I worked at the university as a lecturer and as a lecturer only the students and other staff recognise us, they will behave in a proper way and respect. And if you wear the modern dress they won't behave and it's very difficult to control the students. If we are going anywhere for official work we wear our customary dress, the sari. Other than that, when we are going to meet friends I wear normal frock or skirt and blouse. Then pant jeans I don't wear very much as my parents doesn't like (Interviewee 13, Female, 30, Sri Lanka)

If I do go for a wedding that's held in a temple then I would wear a veshti. So everything stays the same just my jeans become the veshti if I'm going to the Temple (Interviewee 10, Male, 34, Sri Lanka)

In the UK, all of the female interviewees agreed that they only wore the traditional sari for weddings, cultural events, special occasions and visiting the Temple. Most enjoyed wearing the sari and felt proud that they have a national dress that marks them out differently from their white British peers. Interestingly, both young British Tamil men and women are also adopting and wearing the traditional dress of other parts of South Asia. It is not uncommon to see second generation Sri Lankan Tamil women in London wearing the shalwar kameez, the traditional dress worn by both women and men in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and

⁵ Both worn for comfort and ease of movement in the tropical Sri Lankan climate.

Afghanistan. Sri Lankan Tamil men are now more commonly found wearing the sherwani, the national dress of Pakistan, for weddings and special occasions. The reason for this shift is unclear, however it is yet another example of the merging of cultures in the UK diaspora communities.

Food is an important symbol of Tamil identity and Sri Lankan Tamil cooking is quite different from Sinhalese methods. Even though Tamils are reluctant to openly express their identity in public in Colombo, they can enjoy traditional food in the privacy of their own homes. Colombo is now a vibrant, cosmopolitan city, with restaurants and shops selling foods from all parts of the world. However, it is clear that the Tamil families in Colombo are still keen to maintain the traditional foods of the Jaffna area:

We have a Tamil way of preparing food like pittu, string hoppers, dosai. That is our breakfast and dinner, she prepares those foods for us and for lunch we have rice and our own way to prepare curries (Interviewee 13, Female, 30, Sri Lanka)

In the UK families are also eager to continue and encourage Tamil cooking practices and many of the second generation eat curry and rice on a daily basis, except for when eating out with friends:

Well, I think there's all the physical things like eating rice and curry when I'm at home and eating with my hands, that's a cultural phenomenon (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

A couple of the female participants had studied traditional bharatanatyam dance and Interviewee 11 (UK) had learnt to play the veena⁶. However, only the Interviewee 11 (UK) had completed his training and had played at his own arangetram⁷ performance. None of the British participants regularly listened to modern Tamil music and only a few watched Tamil films. As Interviewee 7 (UK) highlights, they have little if any exposure or connection to these types of entertainment and, therefore, often equate Tamil popular culture with that of any other foreign country:

I like taking part in cultural things, like if my dad's watching a Tamil movie I don't mind sitting and watching it. I treat it like watching any foreign film so maybe there's a

⁶ <http://www.webindia123.com/music/instru/veena.htm> (Accessed 15/02/08)

⁷ Arangetram is a graduation performance that is the part of the traditional format – the Margam (path). It reflects the different stages of the dancer's consciousness. In Tamil (one of the south Indian languages) Aranga means raised stage and Etram means climbing <http://library.thinkquest.org/04oct/01260/arangetram.html> (Accessed 15/02/08)

level of distance there? My dad plays Tamil music in the car so I'll listen to that. I think that both me and my brother have been brought up in such a way that many different cultures and knowledge bases are knitted into our personality naturally (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

7.3.1 Generational Difference and Cultural Life

In order to understand the experiences of the younger generation in both Sri Lanka and the UK I asked about the differences between their own cultural lives and their parents. Both the Sri Lankan and British participants noticed significant differences, reflecting how quickly social and cultural norms can change within one generation. It was evident, however, that a number of the Sri Lankan parents in the UK are seen as stricter and more traditional than the parents in Colombo.

In Colombo, as Interviewee 26 (Sri Lanka) and Interviewee 37 (Sri Lanka) reveal, they are given far more freedom with regards to dress and behaviour. Their parents have chosen to adopt a less traditional approach and many of the cultural and social expectations of the village life have been supplanted by the norms of living in a vibrant and cosmopolitan capital city:

I'm very lucky that my parents are so broad-minded and I suppose because they have been travelling for so many years. Dads very broadminded, some parents won't let their children cut their hair and I just say 'I'm going to do it'... I have two elder sisters and ones more eastern. She likes to wear sari and that cultural dress whereas my second sister and me are always in jeans and shorts. At home I'm always wearing shorts and towards the western (Interviewee 37, Female, 29, Sri Lanka)

Those days and comparing now it's completely different, for example, the dress code, the education level, the discipline and respect. The way they were brought up was very different. For example children have more independence and freedom (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

In the UK interviewee 1's (UK) parents are still following many of the traditional Sri Lankan norms and values of the village. This proved to be the case for many of the British participants who struggled to assert their own identity within the UK context, while also trying to abide by Sri Lankan parental expectations. The desire to preserve the Tamil identity has transcended both the Sri Lankan and British context, as the migrant generation

encourages the second generation to ‘behave’ Tamil. Yet, most of the second generation have moved against this, redefining their own identity along British and Tamil lines:

They are more Sri Lankan. They still observe the Sri Lankan protocols and observe their codes as opposed to be me, I’m more westernised and outside that way of thinking (Interviewee 1, Female, 28, UK)

7.3.2 Cultural Rituals - Samathiya Veedu

The coming of age ceremony, also known as the ‘attainment’ and ‘puberty rites’ ceremony, proved to be the most common religious/cultural ritual discussed by the female interviewees. This ceremony marks the beginning of menstruation (theetu) and the traditional transition to womanhood. Interestingly, this ceremony was only mentioned by the British interviewees and although rooted in Hinduism, is also practised by Christian Tamils. For some the ceremony is a private affair, while others hire a large hall, inviting family and friends. For those that have migrated to the UK, the ceremony is seen as not only a celebration of womanhood, but also an opportunity to demonstrate wealth and prosperity to the rest of the community:

I think nowadays it’s really bizarre, especially the people that have migrated here they do it on a big scale in a hall and it’s just huge (Interviewee 18, Female, 29, UK)

It’s a symbol of prosperity now as well (Interviewee 19, Female, 26, UK)

Although the Christian Tamils in the UK practice this ritual, the ceremony is normally private. The Hindus, but, practice the ceremony on a much grander scale as explained below:

Well I went to one not that long ago and they hired a huge hall and booked food for everyone and told so many people and she had to sit on the stage and have photos and there was a huge photo album and video. They did all this stuff with the coconut and all the things that go with it and whole plates of different things that the women have to carry up and place around the girl so it was very traditional in that sense and I had never seen that before. My parents did nothing like that to me. We didn’t have any kind of ceremony at all. My parents told the family and I can understand why cos it’s a celebration and close friends and all the presents started coming in I would see it as cultural as you don’t really have anything like that in Catholicism. I had to hold some spices in my hands and had a really good scrub down and I got new clothes for it, so I was wearing my new clothes and had to pray and my family prayed with me but that was it between the four of us and obviously my brother had no idea what was going on

between us. The girl found it so embarrassing cos the guy she fancied was there but she was dressed up so much. Well she had this beautiful sari, so heavy almost like a wedding sari and she had a make-up artist, flowers in her hair, jewellery, the full works (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

Historically, the ceremony demonstrated to the village that a young woman had reached sexual maturity and was of marriageable age. In the UK today both Tamil Christians and Hindus have adopted the traditionally religious ceremony in order to promote wealth and success to the rest of the community. The continuance of these ceremonies in the UK has important implications for the second generation and whether they will also choose to continue the tradition with their own daughters.

7.3.3 The Passing down of Traditions

...what these parents were nurturing was not so much a connection with Guatemala per se but rather an expression and knowledge of their ethnic heritage, which the children were often unable or simply reluctant to fulfil. There remains the important question of whether the second generation will carry on its Mayan legacy; and if it is carried on, will an orientation to home be part of its expression? (Menjivar, 2002: 548).

Menjivar's quote concerning the Guatemalan second generation in the US and the generational passing on of traditional practice and ethnic identity poses an important question relevant to the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK. Responses to the questions surrounding the passing of traditions to the third generation were varied. All hoped to pass on some form of 'Tamilness' to their children i.e. the religion, language or a general understanding of the Tamil community. However, some were clear about the desire to give their children the freedom to construct their own identities.

A couple of participants went so far as to say they hoped that their children would move away from the community completely. This may be as a direct result of negative experiences with their own parents, the pressure to conform or simply the realisation that the continuation of certain practices is unfeasible. In Colombo Interviewee 20 (Sri Lanka) was clear about not wanting to influence her children in any way, although this will also be dependent upon the desires of her future partner. Interviewee 24 (Sri Lanka) would like his children to have some knowledge of the cultural side of Tamil life, yet they can then make their own decisions as to how much or how little they practice this:

I will not be enforcing anything on them. I spent some time in New Zealand and I have seen people having difficulties trying to enforce and children not listening (Interviewee 20, Female, 27, Sri Lanka)

Yes some of them. I would expect them to know what cultural environment that they've come from and then it's up to them (Interviewee 24, Male, 28, Sri Lanka)

Interviewee 2 (Sri Lanka) holds more traditional views and hopes that her son will marry a Hindu Tamil so he can then pass on traditions:

Most of the cultural things I would like him to have like, for example, I would be really happy if he married somebody of the same nationality because we were brought up thinking that's we are Hindus and that we should marry other Hindus (Interviewee 2, Female, 25, Sri Lanka)

In the UK there is a real desire to pass on the cultural aspects of Tamil identity to the next generation, however, all are aware this will be difficult. As the second generation continue to 'marry out' of the community, traditional practices may become diluted unless parents make an effort to teach their children rituals and behaviours:

If the person I choose to settle down with is not Sri Lankan or of a different ethnicity then I would make sure that the kids would have some understanding of Sri Lanka. The background of the country and the history and the people (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

Interviewee 19 (UK) lacks the necessary understanding of the Tamil language and Hindu traditions to teach her children. Even her mother has forgotten many of the meanings associated with Hinduism:

I don't know Hinduism as well as I could and I think that there is a big accessibility problem with Hinduism anyway. I mean language is such a big barrier and even if you are first generation Tamils their knowledge of Hinduism isn't great. It's bizarre and I think it's really important. I mean most of it is in Sanskrit. So that's a big barrier. I can ask my mum and she will be like, 'I don't know' (Interviewee 18, Female, 29, UK)

The older middle class generation who arrived from Sri Lanka were so keen for their children to assimilate into British society that they stopped teaching their children about Sri Lankan

Tamil culture and in many cases the language. Interviewee 4 (UK) wishes that his parents had taught him more, although understands their reluctance:

My name's Paul and his is John, they named me and my brother like this so that we would fit into the society. When my parents came over they were like twenty-five and this was twenty-five years ago and they were worried about racism and stuff so they wanted us to be as into society as possible so they gave us English names and maybe because of that they didn't feel it was necessary to teach us immense amounts about our culture. I wish I had been brought up in a more cultural way so I could have more understanding about certain events and passing things onto the next generation would be easier (Interviewee 4, Male, 24, UK)

7.4 Tamil Identity

'In other words, while the situation of exile influences the choices they make and the importance they place on each of the two conceptions, the raw material of Tamil's identity construction is invariantly brought from Sri Lanka. This makes it necessary to focus not only on what Sri Lanka means to the migrant, but also how migrants are contextually defined in Sri Lanka' (Fuglerud, 1999: 138-139).

Fuglerud's statement can be taken one step further to not only include migrants, but also their children and grandchildren, and how their identity is informed and influenced by the Sri Lankan context. Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic and cultural identity is extremely complex and for the younger generations exposed to western social and cultural norms in Colombo and the second generation in the UK, navigating this identity can be frustrating, problematic and often confusing.

At this point it is worth noting the historical context of: 'what it means to be Tamil' and what 'Tamilness' is? (Cheran, 2001: 7). Cheran (2002) looks to the literary texts to outline the development of Tamil identity, suggesting 100 B.C- 300 A.D⁸ as when Tamil literature probably emerged. In the post- Sangam period, language, ethnicity, caste and religion contributed to the definition and making of the Tamil, (2001). Even though castes, religion and ethnicity have diversified, the language remains and Sri Lankan Tamils of differing backgrounds speak Sri Lankan Tamil in one form or another. The second generation in the UK lack Tamil language skills, having little, if any, relationship with religious and caste divides. Thus, the idea of Tamil identity in its purest and traditional form is being altered, modernised and re-invented by a generation born and raised away from the country of origin.

⁸ Sangam Period – The period when the first Tamil works and literature were written.

The second generation move between the pressures and demands of their hybrid identities daily and this section explores how the participants viewed their own lived experience of identity. In both Sri Lanka and the UK the participants were asked whether they felt a strong connection to the Tamil identity and what this meant to them. The responses varied, although in Sri Lanka the younger generation felt far more Tamil than the second generation born and raised in the UK:

My name is very Tamil. Everyone knows. So I feel proud to be Tamil (Interviewee 36, Male, 26, Sri Lanka)

Throughout the research the participants gave varying reasons for the complexities of the British Sri Lankan Tamil identity. Some felt less Tamil due to their lack of knowledge about the ethnic group. Others felt that their friendship group had an important role to play in the preservation of the Tamil identity. A number of participants related how Tamil they felt to the area in which they had grown up. Those that had been raised within or close to the main Tamil settlement areas in the UK had stronger links to the cultural and ethnic identity than those raised further away, with little contact. The participants that felt 'strongly Tamil' linked this to their parent's influence. By organising visits to Sri Lanka and encouraging the learning of the Tamil language and traditions, parents helped their children to embrace the Tamil identity more confidently:

Well no not really cos I don't really have a lot of Tamil friends. At home I know people through my parents but the friends that I make myself are more English just cos that's the ways its always been. And the music that I listen to is different to Tamil people, they tend to listen to RnB cos its similar. I quite like my rock music and I cant find anyone to identify with in that way who is Tamil. I'm quite different that way so I do have mixture, although I do have Asian friends (Interviewee 20, Female, 21, UK)

In Cardiff it doesn't matter at all, what race I am. Here it makes a big difference [Leeds]. I have only really identified my culture up here. I have never really done that before. In Cardiff people don't care who you are, they love you for who you are. But up here it's the first thing Asian people ask you, what race are you? I get very distraught because I never faced that before and I had such a big culture shock when I came to university. I just found it very difficult to branch out and meet people of different backgrounds really...I'm so proud of being Tamil. In Cardiff I could flaunt my

Tamilness because no one else was Tamil or from Sri Lanka and quite sad that I didn't know too much about the culture or perform well (Interviewee 3, Female, 20, UK)

7.4.1 Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils



Plate 6. Indian Tamil Tea Pickers in the hill country, Sri Lanka⁹

Before embarking upon the fieldwork in Sri Lanka I was largely unaware of the complexities of using 'Tamil' as a descriptive term. Throughout the interviews it became increasingly clear that the Sri Lankan Tamils disassociate themselves from the Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils view these people as a unique, distinct and largely inferior ethnic group. The divisions are drawn along the lines of language, education and caste (Daniel, 1996; Fuglerud, 1999).

The Sri Lanka Tamils of Indian Tamil origin¹⁰ are descended from indentured workers sent from South India to Sri Lanka in the 19th and 20th centuries to work in coffee, tea and rubber plantations, as illustrated in the photograph above (Sinnathamby, 2004). These Tamil-speakers live in the central highlands, also known as the Malayakam or Hill Country. Although they are all termed as Tamils today, some also have Telugu and Malayalee origins as well as diverse South Indian caste origins (Daniel and Thangaraj in Daniel et al, 1995; Daniel, 1996; Ghosh, 2003; Jayawardena, 2003).

Due to the discriminatory nature of Sri Lanka's politics towards its minority communities, hill country Tamils have been migrating to traditionally Tamil-speaking regions in the Northern province: 'Sri Lankan's call them Indians and Indians call them Sri Lankan's. 'Aliens' in Sri Lanka, they are unwelcome in India' (Daniel, 1996: 109).

⁹ <http://www.payer.de/mahavamsa/chronik00430.gif> (Accessed 03/02/06)

¹⁰ Also known as the Hill Country Tamils, Up-Country Tamils or simply Indian Tamils

After the Black July pogrom of 1983, Sri Lankan Tamil and hill country Tamils came together in refugee and resettlement camps and the differences are slowly eroding. Many hill country Tamils have intermarried with Sri Lankan Tamils and generally consider themselves as Sri Lankan Tamil in the annual census. Historically, the higher caste vellalar Sri Lankan Tamils have discriminated against the hill country Tamils, based on caste prejudices (Daniel, 1996).

The first Prime Minister, D.S. Senanayake introduced the Ceylon Citizenship Act in 1948 and the Indian-Pakistani Citizenship Act of 1947 amended the Parliamentary Elections Act which disfranchised the Indian Tamils. As they had no electoral power they ceased to be of concern to politicians. The plantation workers were thus forgotten from 1948 – 1964. They did not profit by any progressive legislation in the independent Sri Lanka and the housing, health and education of the plantation workers was in total neglect. Infant mortality was highest among them and it became the dying community of Sri Lanka (Ghosh, 2003; Jayawardena, 2003).

The Srima-Shastri pact of 1964 and Indira-Sirimavo supplementary agreement of 1974 paved the way for the repatriation of 600,000 persons of Indian origin to India. Another 375,000 persons were to be accepted as citizens of Sri Lanka which made them enter the polity. These repatriation agreements were the harbingers of the destruction of this community, which had evolved into a composite group with a distinct culture of its own. In the fifties and sixties this community was clamouring for education and recognition of its distinctive culture. An educated middle class comprising teachers, trade unionists and other professionals began to make its appearance (Daniel and Thangaraj in Daniel et al, 1995; Ghosh, 2003; Jayawardena, 2003). More recently there have been moves to improve the working conditions and lives of the Indian Tamil plantation workers in Sri Lanka, yet discrimination persists, evident in the data gathered from the Sri Lankan participants:

The accent is different; as soon as you hear you can say she is from India and she is from Sri Lanka. The accent differs and then some people's dress code differs. Most of the Indian Tamils they come from the up country so the Sri Lankan Tamils don't regard them as they feel that all that come from the up country are tea pickers and they are not. Intermarriage is very rare but my brother is getting married to an Indian girl, he's proposed and our relatives are totally opposed (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

When asked if the Sri Lankan Tamils see themselves as different socially and culturally from the Indian Tamils, Interviewee 20 (Sri Lanka) gave the following response:

Well Sri Lankan Tamils clearly like to think so!! (Laughing) I guess its something, which has just been there. Other than that I guess the Jaffna Tamil prided themselves on their education which is something you find when you go outside this country. They drove their children to study harder (Interviewee 20, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

Thus, there still exists a huge practical and emotional gulf between the Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils and one must draw attention to this when considering the construction of Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic identity politically and socially.

7.4.2 Jaffna and Colombo Tamils

Another clear distinction within the Tamil community in Sri Lanka is the divide between the Jaffna and Colombo Tamils (Daniel, 1996). Although the majority of the Colombo Tamils are of Jaffna and the northern province origin they have lived in Colombo for many years, adapting to life in the capital city. Historically, the Tamils that settled in Colombo were of a higher social class, lawyers, doctors, bankers etc, and formed what Jayawardena terms the: 'Colombo Tamil Bourgeoisie' (2000: 202).

The Colombo Tamils like the Indian Tamils, are socially and culturally different from the northern Tamils in a number of ways. The Colombo Tamil accent and dialect is distinguishable, their attitudes and opinions are often more traditional and conservative and therefore, their behaviour can be different and alien to the younger generation born in Colombo. The Jaffna Tamil have less exposure to different ethnic communities than those living in Colombo and are seen as less worldly:

Colombo people look at Jaffna people like the remote area people. They are very much backward compared to the Colombo people. We move a lot with others, we are outgoing and social events, they are not. Though they are educated they are very backward, they know English but they don't want to speak it. They very rarely speak it. Colombo people take it as an advantage and they show off! They are very modest in their dress (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

Although their heritage suggests that they are closer to the original conception of 'Tamilness':

In Colombo you move with more communities and as a result your exposure is more and you learn more and are open to the restrictions as well as the opportunities. Whereas a person from Jaffna is more closed environment and biased and more

ignorant but maybe closer to the roots and traditional than a Colombo Tamil
(Interviewee 30, Male, 32, Sri Lanka)

Caste is also extremely important in the perpetuation of cultural identity, relating directly to the behaviour and attitudes of the Jaffna Tamils. In Colombo, caste is less pervasive within the middle class Tamil group than in the Sri Lankan villages and is normally only referred to in terms of marriage. Yet, Jaffna Tamils of the vellala caste still see themselves as the most 'culturally pure' and this affects how they and their children experience cultural life, internally and externally to the village:

...vellala were not only the highest caste, but perceived, as carriers and guardians of Tamil culture, as the quintessential Tamils. This perception is very ancient. It was not enough to simply be a vellala to be Tamil, but on the other hand to be Tamil meant to be vellala (Hellmann-Rajanayagam in Hasbullah et al 2004: 104).

The dialect and accent of the Jaffna Tamils also differs to the Colombo Tamils. The Tamil spoken by the Jaffna Tamils is purer and closer to the original Sanskrit than the Tamil spoken by Colombo Tamils. Yet, the Jaffna Tamils often lack the Sinhala language skills needed to live and work in Colombo:

They are also very reserved and that might be because of the war, they are very down and I think that's the war effect. The stress has made them very small and rigid and they don't move much with anyone. They are changing, but Colombo Tamils are far more outgoing. The opportunities you know, you meet so many other people. And many only speak Tamil, they don't communicate in Sinhalese or English unless they learn. Colombo people are tri-lingual (Interviewee 22, Female, 27, Sri Lanka)



Plate 7. Galle Road – The main coastal arterial road that leads from Colombo through the Tamil dominated area of Dehiwela to the far south of the island¹¹

Certain neighbourhoods of Colombo are now predominantly Tamil, and Sinhalese avoid living in these areas. The Tamils from Jaffna feel safer living in the Tamil areas of Colombo. The Jaffna Tamils are able to purchase land and houses in these districts due to foreign investment and remittances, pushing up the price of property:

The most concentrated areas are Kotahena and Wellewatte. In Wellewatte there are a lot of Jaffna Tamil, they have all left and come here and the generations who left have come here and started building a lot of real estate and apartments and putting them up for sale, the prices are very high. I knew a lot of people who went to the UK and they are basically funding a lot of projects here (Interviewee 9, Male, 29, Sri Lanka)

The more affluent middle class Colombo Tamils prefer to live in more ethnically mixed areas like Colombo Seven, where the houses and area are of a much higher standard. To a certain extent the Jaffna Tamils resent the Colombo Tamils both for their wealth and also for their distance from the conflict in the north of the country. Having lived in the capital for many years, the Colombo Tamils are more at ease living side by side with the Sinhalese people.

¹¹ Personal photograph taken in Colombo August 2005.

7.4.3 The Conflict and Identity



Plate 8. Sri Lankan police officers guard the street at an entry point in Colombo¹²

When asked about whether the conflict had strengthened or weakened Tamil identity both the Sri Lankan and British participants gave similar responses. It was considered identity had weakened due to the Sinhalese government's suppression and the constant fear of persecution on ethnic grounds. However, the recognition of this loss and the resolve of the Tamil community to ensure their identity is preserved have led to a rejuvenation of certain ethnic and cultural traits. The adjustment to living under the conditions of war happens naturally, however in a conflict determined by ethnicity, identity of the minority group can be difficult to sustain. As Winslow and Woost suggest, the adjustments made become part of the war and then contribute to the continuation of the conflict:

Both Sinhala and Tamil residents suggested to us that employers increasingly were reluctant to hire Tamils because they were too often delayed at checkpoints. It was not that Tamils were unreliable; it was simply that they experienced the 'normalisation' of security in a particularly costly fashion (2004: 12).

Tamils in Colombo are expected to carry identity cards and police reports, to prove that they have no links with the LTTE:

They just come and check otherwise they will think that we are hiding Tigers and that can lead to further misunderstanding and problems (Interviewee 26, Female, 24, Sri Lanka)

¹² <http://www.irandaily.ir/1383/2150/html/politic.htm> (Accessed 17/04/06)

They stop you and the driver and they take his credentials and sometimes they ask you to get off as well and then they will check the ID, no questions asked you have to present them with your ID. If you don't have the ID you present the police report. The police report is something, which shows you are part of this family, you stay at this residence and your ID number is this. Its better to have one just to show that you are living in Colombo and not some deserter. At one point I took a sea bath with my ID card and it was all messed up and you couldn't really see my face so I gave him the card and they hate it when you speak in English to them. If you say that my name is H... B... and I stay at ...then they say no tell me in Sinhala. Not that you don't want to tell them in Sinhala but your Sinhalese is bad and you don't want to offend him by showing that you know English well, but what would you get by trying to talk to an army guy or a cop in English you are not going to get any return. That is going to frustrate him more. I of course can speak in Sinhala but imagine the people who have been educated in English all their lives and don't mean any harm to the society and they get caught they have all the documents but if they have to have a conversation and this guy answers back and offends him that he's talking in English it just doesn't make any sense at all (Interviewee 20, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

The impact of trauma caused by the first generation's experiences of war and loss has also had a profound effect upon the way in which many of the younger generation both in Sri Lanka and the UK have been raised. One cannot begin to imagine the psychological impact of witnessing and experiencing violent conflict and the loss of family and friends (Daniel et al, 1995; Jebanesan; 2004; The University Teachers for Human Rights, 1994). The emotional upheaval and sense of loss felt by many Tamils in Sri Lanka and the diaspora communities globally has clearly left its mark and does in many ways influence the choices and reactions of the first generation to their children. Ultimately it is the breach of trust between the Tamils and Sinhalese that has been felt most acutely:

In Sri Lanka in July 1983, when victims of anti-Tamil riots turned to the police and the armed forces expecting protection, many policeman and soldiers either joined the rioters and attacked the victims or stood by to watch or encourage the mob on its rampage. These victims were shocked and felt their trust betrayed (Daniel et al, 1995: 228).

Although many Sinhalese families protected Tamil friends and neighbours during the violent riots of 1983, there were many more who stood by and allowed the atrocities to occur. The trust that was broken during this time and since by individuals and the government has made

the Tamil community both introverted and suspicious. This has had a two-fold affect upon the lives of the younger generation, both in Sri Lanka and the UK. In Sri Lanka there still exists an emotional gulf between Sinhalese and Tamils. Even though most of the interviewees had Sinhalese colleagues and friends, they felt more secure living in Tamil areas of Colombo and mentioned the underlying tensions that still exist. This has led to a concealment and suppression of Tamil identity on a day-to-day basis. One way in which Tamils are hiding their identity is by speaking Sinhala. Most of the younger generation in Colombo are tri-lingual, speaking Tamil, English and Sinhala, so are able to work and study relatively easily (Daniel et al, 1995). However, some Tamils are even changing their names so as to hide their true ethnic identity:

I think that it's happening, people hiding their identity. The last three or four years when I go to tournaments in Colombo I'm scared to speak Tamil. If we are Tamil we have problems. So a lot of people speak Sinhalese, not English but Sinhalese (Interviewee 16, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

I know so many people that have changed their names. That's just so pathetic. One guy is called Robbie Mahendran, he now goes as Robbie Mahen and he's married a Sinhalese so he can move up. That's just terrible, he's a very bright person but I lost all my respect for him when I heard he had done it. But so many people are doing it. I suppose you could say that it is a blessing in disguise as it gives a lot of Tamils abroad the chance to come up, because if they were here they would never come up. I wanted to join the Foreign Office but my father said that there is no point as you wont get selected, even if you are the best (Interviewee 37, Female, 29, Sri Lanka)

As an oppressed minority ethnic group coming to the UK it is evident that the older generation have tried extremely hard to preserve the Tamil identity that they feel is being suppressed and eroded in Sri Lanka. Cheran (2001) discusses the creation and preservation of a Tamil 'collective memory' in the Canadian context, and this can be applied to the more recent refugees in the UK. Yet, at the same time the middle class migrants actively distance themselves from the illegal activities of the LTTE in the UK and adopt an 'a-political stance'. They avoid involvement in LTTE public rituals of remembrance, for example Heroes Day November 27th¹³ (Whiteman, 2006; Nayaran Swamy, 2004). This marks one of the clear differences between the children of the second and third wave of migrants to the UK:

¹³ Heroes Day November 27th – Annual Remembrance Day to remember all those that have been killed in the LTTE struggle. Began on 27th November 1982 when the first LTTE cadre was killed, Lt. Sankar and celebrated by Tamils internationally.

It's either gone very strong as a reaction to it, that you very much identify as an oppressed minority and that always gets very much exacerbated when you come into a new country as a minority and you kind of have a minority complex and you see that aspect in the UK. My parent's family came in the 70s after the Sinhala law but before the 83 riots. And actually that group of middle class, well-educated Tamils are very a-political. They do their up most to not be involved in politics. I think those which have come since 83 are much more politicised and active (Interviewee 2, Female, 30, UK)

7.4.4 Friends and Identity

Friendship networks can have a profound effect upon how individuals form, maintain and change identities. While at primary and secondary school many of the UK participants discussed how they had had predominantly white British friends. Upon reaching Sixth Form and then university the balance had shifted and making South Asian friends became easier and more common. This is clearly not the case for all the interviewees and a few had more mixed ethnicity friendship group, while a couple actively chose not to associate with other South Asians. Interviewee 11 (UK) discovered, as he grew older his interest in Sri Lankan Tamil culture increased and as a result of this may have been drawn to other South Asians of a similar background. He found exploring his own ethnic identity to be easier and more comfortable with a network of South Asians around him:

To be honest most of my friends are Asian... When I was younger I wanted to be more white cos I went to a predominantly white Christian school so we always stuck around with everyone else. But as soon as we went to sixth form it all changed. We stayed good friends but I didn't spend as much time with them. Now my brothers going through the same thing and going to uni and I can imagine him doing exactly the same thing. Being more cultural and starting Sri Lankan society. Whereas I wouldn't even have thought of that when I was 14 or 15 (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

Similarly Interviewee 13 (UK) explains how close friends of the same or similar ethnic background can understand, relate and support each other through the social and cultural pressures they face:

I think we feel comfortable together, I don't know if that's because we are all Sri Lankan. It's not like we all speak Tamil or anything. I think that's why me and ... get on so well. We always sit and discuss stuff like arranged marriage and stupid things

like that, we understand each other's cultural background (Interviewee 13, Female, 21, UK)

7.4.5 Second Generation Identity - British Socialisation

The individuals in this study balance the expectations of their parents' with the social and cultural norms of growing up in British society. Sometimes these two worlds collide and can make understanding who one is and where one fits extremely complex. The debate surrounding 'Britishness' entered the public arena with force following the 7th July bombings in London when it was discovered that three of the bombers were British born and one had lived in the UK most of his life¹⁴. The public could not understand how and why men born and raised in the UK could pose such a threat to the people of the country in which they lived. Although their behaviour was clearly a radical and extreme response to the disenchantment they felt, it brought attention to the difficulties certain minority groups still find in embracing the British identity (Hutnik, 1992; Modood in Modood et al, 1997; Parekh, 2000). It is clear that the British born second generation experience feelings of frustration with the political system and the way in which they are represented in the media, government rhetoric and everyday life.

Interviewee 7 (UK) suggests that for him factors other than ethnicity influence his day-to-day life and ethnicity:

I think ethnicity is like a prism through which you get passed and you come out in like refracted light and it does influence everything that you do. Race, gender does affect my daily life but then I wouldn't want to put my finger on it as so does the university I went to. The fact that I went to a Midlands university and not a London university has affected my daily life and the way I see people so I wouldn't put my finger on it (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

Participants were still asked the question 'where are you from?' and the follow up, 'No, where are you really from?' Constantly having to reaffirm and defend ones own national identity is frustrating and many of the interviewees in this study had become disillusioned. Yet, as Nazroo et al suggest: 'ethnic groups are not only formed by external labelling, but also as a consequence of individual agency' (2003: 903).

¹⁴ <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4678837.stm> (Accessed 18/02/08)
http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk/2005/london_explosions/default.stm (Accessed 18/02/08)

This is clearly evident in the case of second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK who are actively engaged in defining their own identities:

Yes I think when I was younger growing up being Asian in this country wasn't particularly cool and we struggled with that, both my sister and myself. You didn't feel like you belonged but now we do. I don't know whether it's because we are older and more confident in ourselves or because society has become more accepting. It's palpable now that you can go to the police, where I work for example, two or three times a week curry will be on the menu as part of the British menu and I will see a lot of the officers choosing it and that to me is amazing. I think that society has now accepted Asians as part of British culture and Asians as being British and that has made me more confident in the way that I see myself (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

Interviewee 4 (UK) when abroad considers himself British, with his familial roots in Sri Lanka:

When I'm travelling I always introduce myself as being from the UK or England. I never say with a background of being Sri Lankan. I never say that I am originally Sri Lankan. I guess I do classify myself as British but my roots are in Sri Lanka (Interviewee 4, Male, 24, UK)

Interviewee 9 (UK) also identified himself as British, however in supporting sport he will favour the South Asian team over the English, as Tebbitt once suggested (Parekh et al, 2000).

Interviewee 7 (UK) sees himself as possessing a hybrid British Sri Lankan identity:

Well in the 80s Norman Tebbit in the cricket said that a lot of the Asians here would consider themselves British but down to England versus India they will always support India and I do question that kind of thing. If Sri Lanka or India were playing England I would always support India or Sri Lanka. That's a bit weird as I do consider myself British (Interviewee 9, Male, 31, UK)

I would say that I am a British Sri Lankan hybrid born in Walthamstow and brought up in Wembley (Interviewee 7, Male, 30, UK)

7.4.6 The Second Generation and Dual Nationality

Two of the participants in the British sample had applied for dual British/Sri Lankan citizenship at the time of interview and as Interviewee 11 explains:

I'm really proud to be Sri Lankan and after the age of twenty-one you can apply for dual nationality and I have applied for that. I want to get a Sri Lankan passport so I have both (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

The other interviewees seemed content with their legal British status, even though some may feel more Sri Lankan Tamil than others:

I have a British passport. For example if you were in Sri Lanka and the war kicked off no aid would come to you if you had a Sri Lankan passport so there's huge benefits to a British passport but I do class myself as Sri Lankan (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

Interviewee 7 (UK) was quick to express his approval when asked about his own British passport and what that meant to him:

I'm very proud of it (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

There does seem to be a definite increase in second generation individuals seeking dual nationality as a means by which to gain ownership of their ethnicity, cultural heritage and identity. The practical advantages to dual Sri Lankan/British nationality are limited, however emotionally it may provide a way of reconnecting with the country of origin. Dual nationality may also be understood as a way to reflect legally the British and Sri Lankan Tamil hybrid lifestyles that the second generation experience in the UK today.

7.4.7 Class and the Second Generation

Historically in Sri Lanka, economic hierarchical structure has been based upon caste. However, the recent move of many Sri Lankan Tamils from villages to towns and urban areas has changed definition along caste lines to that of social class (Freeman, 2001).

Thus, in Sri Lanka and the UK, most middle class, educated Tamils would now define themselves in terms of class rather than caste. In the UK community, the main way of expressing social hierarchy is through material possession and wealth. Many of the older generation second wave migrants to the UK have been financially successful, yet the second generation often feel uncomfortable with their parent's expression of middle class values i.e. expensive cars, private school for their children and large houses:

I think I fall with the middle class bracket and yes I am middle class. I like to think that I don't think about it but in certain areas and pubs, places where it's more working class

it becomes more pronounced and you feel that there is a separation there and I think that I would be lying if I said no (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

... then my dad took over this company and got wealth well quickly. So its been interesting to see how all communities, the Sri Lankan community, how they reacted to that money transfer and that amount of money. That's when you start to realise the class difference. So you can work in town, I work in town with kids from under privileged backgrounds and all the teachers I work with if they knew where I lived in Barnet. I would never get them to pick me up man, I always walk down to the station. If they saw my house man, and cos I am still broke. I don't have any money and I'm living at home with my parents and that's why it's a nice house. So I just go down the road and get picked up and say 'oh yeah get me from there'. That's quite weird I suppose (Interviewee 8, Male, 24, UK)

7.5 The Mother Tongue and the Preservation of Identity

The ability to speak and understand the mother tongue proved to be a topic of much interest for the participants both in Colombo and the UK. The 'language issue' as it is often referred to in Sri Lanka is particularly contentious due to the political situation and the historical link to education (Daniel in Kleinman et al, 1997; Sivathamby, 2005). In the UK it seems that the knowledge of the mother tongue, or lack of, is the main difficulty that frustrates and annoys the second generation.

In Sri Lanka many of the participants studied at international schools and the medium used at these private educational establishments is English. So the middle class, affluent young adults in Colombo are taught Tamil, Sinhala and English by their parents and in language lessons at school (De Silva, 1998). There is frustration that they have to know and speak Sinhala, however most individuals accept that it is as a result of the conflict and therefore, there is little they can do about the situation:

I feel very important. I speak Tamil with my friends, with my Dad. Work we speak in the three languages, English, Tamil and Sinhala. Depends on the person. Sometimes its 'Thanglish', half English, half Tamil. 'Singlish' and 'Thanglish'. Its like Tamil and English mixed (Interviewee 27, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

In Colombo we need all three languages but when you go to the north and east you need Tamil. At the same time it's a must to know Sinhala in the south. People from the north who have been born and brought up there they are forced to learn. The people in

the south have a choice, if they want to learn but they don't have to. So all the Tamils in the Escape office know all three languages. There were one person who I was speaking to, she's away on a field project, she's from Jaffna and she was forced to learn Sinhala in order to communicate and she's really improving. There have been a lot of Sinhala people who came here who don't speak Tamil as they never needed it so didn't learn. Our generation is forced to learn Sinhala in Colombo. It's very easy to get out of situations (police) if you know Sinhala and some don't even look at your name they just see how you speak. Because I learnt it from very young I can speak it exactly as they do. So they are ok (Interviewee 34, Female, 23, Sri Lanka)

All of the interviewees in the UK had limited, if any, Tamil language abilities. Ironically, it is the one feature of Tamil cultural life they all wish their parents had taught them (Ghosh, 2003). However, the blame for the apparent loss of language must in some part rest with the older generation and perhaps some of the regret felt is in fact guilt. Most of the interviewees in the UK stated that their parents had made little, if any, effort to teach them Tamil at home. They were saddened that they were unable to speak and understand Tamil, particularly as they knew they would be unable to pass the language on to their children and future generations. There is a real concern that Tamil will be lost within the next couple of generations:

It is something that is an aim for me, to learn Tamil. And hopefully again whomever I end up with I want to pass it onto my children. It's a beautiful language and it's going to get lost with my mum and dad if I don't learn it (Interviewee 19, Female, 26, UK)

I would have loved to be able to teach them Tamil but I really don't know it so I can't. I can understand it and watch Tamil films but I can't speak it. I think I probably have the capability but when I was younger people would laugh at me so I would go back to English and my brothers even worse. He doesn't even understand it (Interviewee 20, Female, 21, UK)

Interviewee 7 (UK) finds his lack of Tamil language most annoying when he travels to India for work. He is unable to converse with the Tamil artists and his father must accompany him to translate:

In the last year being in Chennai and not being able to speak and watching my dad converse with the artists. Telling an artist a question and my dad translating it was frustrating because I would have liked to. I'm going to start lessons soon to learn again (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

Both Interviewee 15 (UK) and Interviewee 14 (UK) suggest reasons for the reluctance of the first generation to teach their children the Tamil language. When the first generation migrated to the UK they were keen that their children would integrate successfully into the British education system and this meant ensuring that the English language skills were well adopted. Interviewee 7's (UK) sister who was born in Sri Lanka had limited English language ability and the school reprimanded her parents for this. They therefore ensured that when Interviewee 7 was born her English would take priority and Tamil was not encouraged. Also as Interviewee 15 (UK) suggests, many of the middle class, highly educated Tamil migrants to the UK were proud of their ability to speak English. In Sri Lanka it served as a symbol of education, status and privilege. These feelings of pride persisted in the UK and children were steered towards learning English as Tamil was seen as unnecessary and redundant in the settlement country:

No, when my parents first came to the country my sister was about 8 and when she went to school she didn't speak any English, only Tamil. At parents evening they bollocked my parents and said 'how's she going to integrate? She can't even speak English' so I was born after that and since that they only tried to teach us English and never forced us to speak Tamil (Interviewee 14, Male, 23, UK)

My dad's father can't speak a word of English. My cousin went and had to have a translator to speak to them and he was so upset that he couldn't speak to his own grandfather and when I went there I could and it was so nice just to have a conversation. I think you find with a lot of families that come here that they don't speak it, they just stop. There are so many people at home that I know whose children just don't speak Tamil and its quite funny the parents are proud of the fact that they don't speak Tamil. It's like they don't need the language, its quite arrogant and that Tamil is beneath them and I'm totally surprised and I don't know why (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

Another important reason touched upon by a number of interviewees was the effect of trauma upon the first generation and its impact upon the younger group¹⁵. The emotionally painful and often traumatic experiences that the first generation faced in Sri Lanka have meant many of the migrants that came to the UK initially rejected their Tamil cultural roots. Conversing in Tamil brought back distressing memories of the conflict and relatives and friends that had been lost. Therefore, some migrants made an active choice to speak predominantly in English and refrained from teaching their children, the second generation, the mother tongue.

7.5.1 The Tamil Schools of the UK

Many of the parents that were concerned about their children's lack of cultural knowledge sent them to Saturday 'Tamil schools' to learn the Tamil language and traditional dancing, singing and cultural activities. These schools are mostly concentrated in the London area and most of the participants had attended Tamil school at some point in the childhood:

Yeah I did but only for a year or two. I did language and vocal lessons but I think I was just hopeless and I hated it. It was the travelling too because where we lived wasn't a particularly Sri Lankan area, in Ascot. It's about an hour to London (Interviewee 16, Female, 25, UK)

No because I was based in Cardiff and there was not that influence whereas if I had been in London there would have been, like going to Tamil school (Interviewee 3, Female, 20, UK)

When living in London I even went to Tamil school for a short period of time. The numbers of these particular schools are rapidly growing, perhaps due to the realisation that the Tamil language within the UK community is being lost. However, many of the interviewees admitted they had learnt little at Tamil school and treated the schools as a place to socialise:

Well they sent me to Tamil school but me and ... just played basketball (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

Interviewee 11's (UK) father used to run one of the larger Tamil schools in Croydon and he was fortunate enough to gain his GCSE and A Level in Tamil language. This is extremely rare and only he and one other interviewee had obtained a qualification in Tamil language. However, it does illustrate that some of the second generation are keen to learn cultural traits:

¹⁵ See section 7.4.3

Since about six years old I went to Tamil school every Saturday with my family and there I learnt Tamil language. It was the South London Tamil School and its now called the Croydon Academy of Eastern Arts and my dad was a principal there at the time so I was encouraged a lot to go there and I did Tamil up to A Level and GCSE and I also learnt South Indian drums and I graduated in that. So that's the cultural side of me. The GCSE is a language exam and you have comprehension, essay writing, stuff. Fully Tamil and nothings in English and that's set by OCR the examination board and A Levels it's three three hour exams in Tamil culture, literature and language
(Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

Many British universities also have Sri Lankan Societies for both Tamils and non-Tamils to become involved in the cultural events associated with Sri Lanka. These groups help to preserve both Tamil and Sinhala culture and do provide Sri Lankan international students and the second generation with the opportunity to learn more about their cultural heritage in a fun and entertaining way¹⁶.

7.6 Social and Cultural Pressures in the UK and Sri Lanka - A Comparison

Previous research in the UK suggests that the second generation believe social and cultural pressures are felt more acutely in the settlement country, rather than in the country of origin. The desire to preserve the Tamil identity is increased when extracted from the country of origin (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2004). To develop this idea in more detail the participants in Sri Lanka and the UK were asked about their own experiences and whether they thought cultural traditions and rituals were preserved more intensively in the settlement community than in Sri Lanka.

Most of the interviewees, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, believed that the British second generation faces more social and cultural pressures than the younger middle class in Colombo. The main reason given by both sets of the participants lies with the first generation migrants. These individuals cling to the norms and values of the Sri Lankan society they left twenty to thirty years ago, oblivious to the way in which Sri Lanka, and Colombo particularly, has developed and changed in the time they have been away. The social and

¹⁶ Examples of University Sri Lankan Societies include Cambridge University <http://www.societies.cam.ac.uk/cusrs/> (Accessed 21/02/08) and Southampton University <http://www.geocities.com/slsocsoton/index.htm> (Accessed 21/02/08).

cultural norms of the villages and towns have changed due to external influences and the conflict. There are more distractions for the younger generation, particularly in Colombo:

I see struggles between my aunties and cousins as they remember how they were in Sri Lanka and but when they come here they get a shock as we are doing what they don't want their children to do there in the UK! The ideas that the first generation have about Jaffna, they are stuck and Sri Lanka's changed and moved on (Interviewee 36, Male, 26, Sri Lanka)

The older generation in Sri Lanka exposed to the changes in social and cultural norms have been forced to adapt to these developments as the younger generation openly challenge and push the boundaries of behaviour. In the UK however, the first generation are not exposed to these changes and cling to values of the society in which they were raised. To many of the first generation the behaviour of the younger British population, drinking, smoking and sexual conduct appears abhorrent and wholly Western. Yet, in Colombo and other Sri Lankan towns, among the affluent younger generation this behaviour is increasing.

British born Interviewee 6 (UK) sees a vast difference between the social and cultural pressures of the middle class younger generation in Sri Lanka and the second generation in the UK. He points to problems in balancing the traditional cultural expectations of the first generation with the everyday pressures of being a young adult in the UK. Trying to maintain the respect of the older generation whilst also living ones life within the British context can prove exhausting and often frustrating:

Having to deal with the whole new culture and the clash between the inherited and adopted culture it's a little bit unprecedented (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

Interviewee 3 (UK) illustrates the point that the Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK are keen to maintain their ethnic identity and attempt to transfer this to their children, the second generation. She argues that in Sri Lanka there is less need to promote the Tamil identity to children and the younger generation (although this is questionable with regards to the impact of the conflict upon Tamil identity). However, she does raise an interesting point that in Sri Lanka ethnic identity is considered as an intrinsic part of growing up, while in the UK ethnic identity for second generations needs to be taught and nurtured:

I think the Sri Lankan parents here are a lot more nationalist and take a lot more pride in being Sri Lankan. They feel they have to defend it a lot more in order to preserve it

in their children. So it wouldn't be so much of an issue in Sri Lanka. You would have typical growing up issues in Sri Lanka, like go to school, don't bully, the usual stuff that any child goes through. Whereas here there are extra elements of having to preserve a certain way of life (Interviewee 3, Female, 20, UK)

Interviewee 11 (UK) understands the social and cultural pressures of Sri Lanka and the UK to be very similar, yet it is the force of these that is different. The younger generation in Sri Lanka face similar dilemmas concerning pre-marital relations, religious belief, dress etc, however in the UK the traditionalism of the first generation Tamils is felt far more acutely when placed along side the norms and values of British life:

The social pressures they face are pretty much the same but the magnitude of it differs (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

7.7 The Collective Memory - Loss of Identity and the Second Generation

As the language continues to disappear there is the inevitable loss of identity that may occur within the second and following generations. I therefore, questioned the participants, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, about their concerns for the possible future loss of identity for those born to Sri Lankan Tamil parents abroad. The responses were mixed, with some individuals very worried about the dilution of Tamil culture, while others saw the changes as an inevitable part of migration and the development of society. All of the interviewees gave reasons why they thought that the Tamil culture was weakening in communities abroad and some even highlighted in Sri Lanka itself the way in which the conflict has affected the Tamil identity. Interviewee 33 (Sri Lanka) is worried that the Tamil identity may be lost abroad, however, she admits that her knowledge of religion is limited, even though she lives in Colombo:

My cousins abroad go to Tamil lessons every Friday, as they don't want them to lose it. It worries me that it will be lost. Even the knowledge of my religion in Colombo is being lost. For example if you go to the temple there is different things on different days and my parents know all about it but I don't, I get lost in those aspects. The next generation's knowledge will be less (Interviewee 33, Female, 25, Sri Lanka)

Interviewee 30 (Sri Lanka) is far more optimistic than many of the interviewees, and sees the development of Tamil identity abroad as natural and inevitable. He argues that as long as children are happy then that is what is important, not the continuation of an identity that is bound to change. Interviewee 30 (Sri Lanka) is also more relaxed about the situation and

suggests that the world may have changed to such an extent in twenty years that even the differences between Tamils and Sinhalese may have been resolved:

Well does it matter? You're a Tamil and you have an identity, if I was born as a British and I live a British life and whatever religion I follow as long as you are happy what does it matter? I mean you can't have the best of both worlds. My sister used to want my nephew to be a Sri Lankan in every sense but have the best of Australian life. One of the comments my father's friend made to her when she was here on holiday was good. She said she wouldn't want to bring up her child in a non-Sri Lankan way and the comment was that they are 'children of the world' so don't treat them in any particular way. My nephew is very happy and for him it doesn't matter whether he's Sri Lankan or Australian, I mean he's the most Australian kid I have seen, more so than the native Australians. What the heck, what we were as Tamils in the past has changed and it doesn't make any difference to me. As long as they are happy that's all that matters. I had assumed that when you go overseas that the natural tendency would be that your kids are Brits and that you become British and colour doesn't matter and you live a British way of life. So I'm surprised that there is an expectation that a Tamil should be a Tamil in the British system. Of course there is nothing wrong it's something that happens naturally (Interviewee 30, Male, 32, Sri Lanka)

In fairness I don't think that they can keep it alive. I would say maybe two generations and it will be gone. If my aunts have kids, most of them speak Tamil at home but most don't speak it fluently. They can understand but reply in English or at best they mix and match. I can't see a generation down them maintaining anything. It bothers me to the extent that we are going to have kids that don't know much about their roots and their identity. But then at the same time I am also happy that they are in an environment that is safer and conducive to their living so it's a bit of both. And I think that the world is shrinking so rapidly now that maybe in twenty years time none of these things will matter, it doesn't matter if you're a Tamil or Sinhalese (Interviewee 24, Male, 28, Sri Lanka)

In the UK Interviewee 6 (UK) highlights how the emergence of Tamil schools and cultural lessons is as a result of parental concern that Tamil identity is being lost, yet there are those of the younger generation who are moving away from their traditional roots:

I suppose there is always going to be a certain amount of dilution living abroad but you do get one lot of people that do send their children to Tamil classes and make sure they

are doing all the Tamil stuff, like dancing. Then you get people like me that step aside from it and do their own thing so I guess it is being lost but I wouldn't say that I am worrying about it either though. I see it as inevitable (Interviewee 6, Male, 30 UK)

Interviewee 2 (UK) considers the link between location and the loss of identity. She believes that for those raised in the Tamil community in areas like East Ham and Ilford, the loss of identity will be far slower than for those like herself who grew up detached from the main settlement of the Tamil diaspora:

Yes it's definitely got watered down. I mean the Christians, my background. Most of my cousins don't speak the language, most of my family didn't grow up in London and are operating a very Anglo Saxon culture, educationally, professionally and socially. Most of the people I know more than half are in mixed marriages and I think it's definitely getting more watered down and that's to do with location and socio-economic class. I think it's very different if you are growing up in say the East Ham Tamil community that is very insular. There it will be watered down but not as fast. For me it's gone almost in a generation. There's no real connection. There are a few individuals trying to maintain links but actually for most people there's no link (Interviewee 2, Female, 30 UK)

Interviewee 19 (UK) has personally struggled with the possible loss of identity and that her children, born and raised in the UK, may know little about the Tamil culture:

I have really grappled with it because I feel like it defines so much, it really defines my being and who I am, the way I am with my friends and family, food, culture, just everything and even if I'm not with someone who's Sri Lankan I would feel really sad if my children didn't know anything about my culture. Because it's a part of me it's a part of them and the idea of it getting lost in the next generation really saddens me because our culture is so enriched (Interviewee 19, Female, 26, UK)

Interviewee 16 (UK) points out the effect the increase in mixed ethnicity marriages may have upon the dilution of Tamil culture, while Interviewee 18 (UK) suggests that instead of being lost, Tamil cultural identity will in fact be reinvented by the second and subsequent generations living abroad:

Yeah it is sad and I don't know whether it will be just bred out because there will be more and more mixed marriages and say if I have a mixed marriage and have children

that are mixed if they marry someone Sri Lankan great but if not then they lose culture more and more. I don't know whether they would be as strong in their culture and beliefs. I think they will be even weaker than me. I hope it doesn't but it probably will do (Interviewee 16, Female, 25, UK)

I think what might happen is that we create a new Tamil identity (Interviewee 18, Female, 29, UK)

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the complexities of Sri Lankan Tamil identity and the relationship of identity construction to religion, ethnicity, education and language. The analysis has considered the impact of traditional practice upon the identity formation of both the younger generation in Sri Lanka and their counterparts, the second generation in the UK. The importance of cultural rituals and traditional markers of ethnicity and caste to the older generation is clear. This enquiry, however, has focused on the attitudes and feelings of the younger generation, working towards a greater understanding of ethnic identity preservation in the face of competing social norms and values and the impossibility of maintaining the cultural life of the village in an urban, mixed ethnicity, cosmopolitan context.

The complexities and difficulties of sustaining a minority ethnic identity in a discriminatory political and social context are clear. The ongoing civil war in Sri Lanka, drawn along predominantly ethnic lines, has seen a gradual erosion of Tamil identity and as result of this, in both Sri Lanka and the UK, there has been a definite merging of Hindu and Christian cultural rituals. The historically symbiotic relationship of Hinduism and Tamil identity has meant that many Christian Tamils are adopting Hindu cultural traits so as to preserve their expressions of 'Tamilness'. The pottu and thali are two examples of Hinduism, Christianity and Tamil ethnic identity joining. The blending of Hinduism and Christianity has also occurred as a result of increased mixed religion marriages, whereby parents teach and practice both Christian and Hindu religious rituals. The non-religious nature of the international schools in Colombo means that many of the younger generation are less religiously aware and, therefore, happy to combine Hindu and Christian customs in their own lives.

The similarities between the middle class young adults of Sri Lanka and the UK continue when one explores everyday expressions of cultural life. The traditional Sri Lankan Tamil dress, the sari for women and the veshti for men, is normally only worn for special occasions like weddings. Other South Asian fashions are becoming increasingly popular. Food remains a unique expression of identity, in both Sri Lanka and the UK. Some participants in each

country had participated in traditional dance and music classes although most had given these up when reaching their teenage years. When considering generational differences and the way in which parents treat their children in Sri Lanka as compared to the UK, an important point worth noting is that both sets of participants thought that the older generation in Sri Lanka were more liberal with regards to dress, behaviour, and allowing their children more social freedoms. This is due in part to the first generation in the UK attempting to hold onto the conservative cultural traditions of the Tamil village, while those in Colombo have changed due to the modernisation of city life.

The samathiya veedu, or ‘coming of age ceremony’ was the cultural ritual most commonly referred to by participants both in the UK and Sri Lanka and it is an example of how religious rituals have changed in both context and meaning. Traditionally Hindu, some Christians also celebrate this event and stage the ceremony for family and friends. For many Hindus the ceremony is a grand event, and along with the religious and cultural connotations, also serves as a marker of wealth and prosperity to the rest of the community, particularly in the UK. Perhaps the most insightful element of the responses given about this ceremony, was the reference to whether or not these types of traditions would be passed down to future generations. The majority of interviewees in Sri Lanka and the UK hoped to pass down some elements of Tamil cultural practice to their children, however, they are aware this will be extremely difficult due to their own limited knowledge. The second generation may have to rely on their parents, if still alive, to teach their children the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka.

The central theme of this analysis is that of Sri Lankan Tamil identity, the complexities of understanding of what it is to be ‘Tamil’ and how this influences and affects the younger generation in Sri Lanka and particularly the second generation in the UK. The historical and traditional view of ‘Tamilness’ based upon caste, religion and location in Sri Lanka, is less relevant for those raised in the capital city, Colombo. It is more similar to the experiences of the second generation in the UK who balance ethnic and cultural heritage with the norms and values of wider British society. So even for those born and brought up in Sri Lanka, the traditional idea of what it is to be Tamil is vastly different from their parents lives that were governed by caste, religion and village politics. To the second generation in Britain, these differentials are even more alien and the Tamil identity in the diaspora context continues to change and develop in response to external forces and redefinition by individuals themselves.

To analyse Sri Lankan Tamil identity it is necessary to understand the differing categories of Tamil that exist, even though they may not be legally recognised as such. Sri Lankan Tamils view the ‘plantation’ Tamils or ‘Indian’ Tamils that were brought to Sri Lanka to work on the

tea estates as ethnically and socially different. The Sri Lankan Tamils in the north of the island (Jaffna Tamils) consider themselves closer culturally to the pure Tamil identity. Their proximity to the Sri Lankan Tamil homeland Jaffna and high caste (vellala) position enables them to view Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils in the east of the country as socially inferior. None of the participants in Sri Lanka talked in depth about the differences between Tamils in the east of the island and those in the north, however, it is worth mentioning that even these two groups do not always see eye-to-eye! The Tamil dialect and accent of the Indian and eastern Tamils differs to that of the Jaffna Tamils and therefore, marks the communities as unique.

The interviewees also talked of the marked differences between Jaffna Tamils and Colombo Tamils. As stated above Jaffna Tamils are considered to be more traditional, cultural and generally conservative than their counterparts in the capital city. Most of the second wave migrants to the UK during the 1960s and 1970s would have travelled straight from their villages in the north of Sri Lanka to Britain, spending little time in their country's cosmopolitan and socially progressive capital. Thus, it is these individuals (Jaffna Tamils) who now cling to the conservative norms and values of the village structures in which they once lived, influencing their children, the second generation, while the Colombo Tamils are increasingly liberal in their expectations and attitudes towards the every day lives of their children.

The conflict in Sri Lanka has had a huge impact on the construction and preservation of Tamil identity. Ethnic identity for Sri Lankan Tamils has both conversely weakened and strengthened. Constantly under suspicion and forced to carry identity cards, Tamils in the city are forced to conceal their identity. The Sri Lankan military and police feel a constant threat from the LTTE and Tamils refrain from wearing the pottu and speak Sinhala to avoid attracting attention. The conflict experiences of the older generation have also had a profound effect upon their behaviour in the UK. The loss of family and friends, the experiences of trauma and the threat to Tamil identity in Sri Lanka have motivated many migrants to exaggerate traditional practices and cultural rituals in the diaspora. The fear that 'Tamilness' will one day be lost completely in Sri Lanka, has encouraged many Christian migrants to reintroduce traditions, many of which are Hindu, that had been largely abandoned in the home country.

The analysis then looked in more detail at the second generation in the UK and their experiences of Tamil traditional practice and the preservation of identity in the diaspora context. All the British participants felt that they experienced hybrid identities, whereby they

balanced the complexities of Sri Lankan Tamil parental expectations with that of wider British norms and values. Also most interviewees wanted to embrace a British identity, although they often felt external influences, like racism, prevented this. Therefore, many interviewees chose close friendship groups and networks of people with similar ethnic backgrounds. A couple of the interviewees were in the process of obtaining dual nationality and it appeared that this was primarily both an emotional and practical way to reconnect with their heritage. This could also be argued to be a legal reflection of the hybrid identities which they experience.

The participants also agreed that there has been a definite shift from caste to class hierarchy in the British Sri Lankan Tamil community. In Sri Lanka most Tamils are of the high vellala caste, yet in the UK caste is of less significance to migrants who are able to move more easily in a hierarchical system based on financial advantage. Many Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to the UK have achieved great economic success and live what would be considered middle class lives. Thus, there are now Tamils of differing socio-economic status in the UK and the predominantly middle class second wave of migrants look down upon the more recent, less affluent refugees, even though most are of the vellalar caste.

Preservation of the mother tongue proved to be another area of importance for the UK interviewees. The vast majority of middle class second generation Tamils in the UK lack the necessary language skills to pass on Tamil to their children. All the participants agreed that the Tamil language was the most important cultural trait in the preservation of identity, however were saddened that their parents had not made more of an effort to teach them the language. Of all the traditional Tamil rituals and practices, language was the element all interviewees wished they possessed. Yet, whether due to concerns over integration or the affects of trauma, the first generation have failed to give their children the necessary language knowledge base.

Most participants hope that parents will be able to teach their grandchildren and that the language will be passed on this way, effectively missing a generation. There has been an attempt to preserve the language and ultimately Tamil identity through the creation of Saturday Tamil schools in London. Over the last twenty years many more have opened, however, for many it is too late. In the future these schools may prove invaluable in the passing down of cultural knowledge to the third and fourth generations. Tamil language and literature GCSE and A Levels are also now available in some secondary schools and the second generation may encourage their children to learn where they did not.

Finally, both sets of participants were asked to think about comparing their experiences with those of the same age group in the other research site and also to consider the possible future loss of Tamil identity. Most of the participants recognised that the social pressures in Sri Lanka and the UK differ due to the social, political and economic environment. However, both sets suggested that those in the UK may face more social and cultural pressures due to their parent's desire to preserve the Tamil identity in the diaspora country. Also, there is less need to promote 'Tamilness' in the country of origin than in the migratory country. Another interesting point made by some of the interviewees is that the 'bad behaviour' Sri Lankan Tamil parents in the UK blame upon British living, i.e. drugs, alcohol, smoking and clubbing is now as prevalent in Colombo among the middle class Tamils as it is in the UK. Some participants were worried that in a couple of generations Tamil identity may be lost, while others thought it inevitable and natural. What is clear though is that Sri Lankan Tamil identity in its traditional form is being reinvented and redefined by both the younger generation in Sri Lanka and the second generation in the UK. In a few decades time it may prove unrecognisable from what it was historically and traditionally.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Migration, Transnationalism and the Second Generation

8.1 Introduction

This chapter raises the themes and questions associated with the migration of the first generation of Sri Lankan Tamils to the UK and how their experiences have influenced the everyday lives of the younger generation, both in Sri Lanka and the UK. The importance of transnational links to the second generation are relatively under theorised (Faist, 2000; Vertovec, 2001) and this chapter addresses this in relation to the Sri Lankan second generation in the UK, assessing the extent to which the group may maintain social, cultural, economic and political links with the homeland.

With many of the themes there has been little, if any, previous research on the topic in relation to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora (Fuglerud, 1999; 2001). Therefore, the observations made are grounded in the experiences and thoughts of the participants in this study and there is no attempt to apply the specific analysis of the Sri Lankan Tamil community to that of any other South Asian second generation group in the UK. The cross-national focus of this project allows for the qualitative comparison of two research groups that informs and helps to deconstruct the social and cultural lives of both sets of participants (Portes, 1997; Fouron et al in Levitt et al, 2006).

The chapter details the reasons for the migration of the first generation in the eyes of their children and highlights how the politicisation of the education system and discriminatory policies of the Sri Lankan government forced many young Tamil men to seek qualifications abroad. Directly related to this are the experiences of conflict for both the younger generation in Sri Lanka and the second generation in the UK. The effect of trauma on the first generation and contact with the LTTE is detailed in particular reference to the impact upon the children of the second wave migrants (Daniel, 1996).

The traditional and conservative nature of Jaffna and the surrounding villages is considered once again in relation to the experiences and behaviour of the first generation and how this may have affected the way in which they have raised and influence the younger generation. The participants were also asked to provide their reflections on their parents and families' ownership of property and the loss of land in Sri Lanka due to the conflict.

The notion of the 'myth of return' (Anwar, 1979) can be applied to the first generation of second wave Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK, who remember and long to return to the peaceful

Sri Lanka before the onset of widespread violence and conflict. Both sets of participants were questioned about the reality of their parent's return and most agreed that permanent return to Sri Lanka would be rare, especially in light of the recent worsening situation. Linked to this are the suggested transnational links that exist between the UK and Sri Lanka in the form of remittances and socio/political ties. The participants give their views and experiences of transnational links in relation to the LTTE, the tsunami of 2004, emotional attachments between the UK and Sri Lanka and the loosening of transnational ties with the second, third and subsequent generations.

8.2 The Migratory Journey

In order to analyse the impact and influence of the migratory process upon the second generation in the UK it is first necessary to establish from both sets of participants who had migrated, when, and the reasons for leaving Sri Lanka. The analysis considers both ends of the migratory journey and the many 'push and pull' factors that motivate and, often force, international movement (Castles, 2000; Arango, 2000).

The quotes below by Sri Lankan participants illustrate the reasons why family members left Sri Lanka and the locations these individuals chose to settle:

My sister went to Australia because she felt that she didn't want to bring up her son in an environment of ethnic strife and safety was an issue. She had gone to work overseas and came back saying she wanted to live here and at that time bombs were going off and killings and when she came back she found it very stressful. Carrying the identity card and be careful and you tend to go where there's no security checkpoints and she realise why should she or her son should go through that (Interviewee 30, Male, 32, Sri Lanka)

My brother left for university because you don't get any proper medical colleges here, you do get them but you learn the Sri Lankan system. Which means you have to do the exam in Sinhalese or Tamil. He decided to work there because there are better prospects (Interviewee 2, Male, 25, Sri Lanka)

The second generation in the UK were also clear about the reasons why their parents had left Sri Lanka. In many cases there was a familial network of migration, whereby elder male family members migrated first and then financed the migration and movement of younger siblings. This system of 'chain migration' has been popular in the moves of many diaspora

communities and has allowed for the relocation of individuals, mostly men, to escape conflict and seek education and employment abroad (Castles, 2000; 2004).

As the quote below highlights, many Tamil migrants left Sri Lanka with a view to return or to continue international movement. However, once marriage and family commitments take priority, ideas of further migration were sidelined (Castles, 2004). Also, the persistence of the colonial history of Sri Lanka meant that links with Britain remained strong and many Tamil migrants chose the UK on the advice of their parents and grandparents:

Dad left Sri Lanka in 74, no that's when he got married. I was a honeymoon baby, gross. Dad left because ... Dad had already come over and said that there was work here and his intention was always to leave. There was an understanding that at his age you go to university, work for a couple of years and then you go to another country to progress. There was the choice of Canada or England or Germany. England was the place though as my grandfather always thought that the British gentleman should always be someone you aspire to be and that filtered through to the kids and that's why they came to England (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

They left for work and to get away from the troubles. I think my mum left to go to Zambia before my dad left there, I'm sure. They were in Zambia for four years max. I think that they got married there. I think so and then came to the UK 'cos they didn't get a Visa to Canada and my parents got jobs in Cardiff, otherwise we would have stayed in London. I think I prefer it though (Interviewee 3, Female, 20, UK)

Although the second wave (Daniel et al, 1995) of migrants left Sri Lanka before the violent pogrom of 1983, and were therefore not classified as refugees, leaving their homeland was in many respects forced and their experiences continue to influence the lives of their children in the diaspora communities worldwide.

8.2.1 The Second Generation and the Conflict

The second generation in the UK do have some awareness and knowledge of the conflict in Sri Lanka, analysing this is vital to any understanding of the emotional attachments these individuals may have to the 'homeland'. The possible disengagement of the second generation from the political situation on an interpersonal level is considered by Jacobsson (2006), however her work focuses upon the thoughts and experiences of the younger generation born in Sri Lanka and who then moved to the UK at a later date. Her work, unlike my own, does not look to the middle class, professional second generation born and raised in

the UK. Although insightful and important, the work also provides no comparison of the two ends of the migratory journey so as to compare the British second generation to their counterparts currently living in Sri Lanka. Thus, there is a definite need socially and politically to further understand the emotional and practical engagement the second generation have with the 'homeland' and the extent to which the second generation has severed ties.

Some of the participants had little, if any, real understanding of the causes of the problems, while others were at least aware of some of the events that had led to the political unrest (Hyndman, 2003). None of the UK interviewees had any in-depth knowledge of the political history of Sri Lanka, and most felt wholly removed from events, even though they had friends and family directly affected by the troubles. As highlighted below, all of the interviewees felt frustrated by the conflict and also their own lack of understanding. There is also a sense of guilt in the voices of some of the participants who feel they should be involving themselves more, yet feel disengaged. Many of the participants are involved in charity work and fund raising for Sri Lanka¹. However, their lack of true understanding is no different than that of any individual in the West trying to empathise with people in war torn conflict situations:

Well it does come up. It's a tricky one, I have read the books and spoken to lots of people but I still don't understand why it started off. I know it was they weren't treating the north as fair to the south and it's there. I feel guilty for being able to be impartial to it at times that it suits me. I'm a British Tamil and I don't want to go into it in that detail, whereas other people are so passionate about it and diplomatic and we have friends on both sides (Interviewee 18, Female, 29, UK)

Its almost like the longevity of it all has kind of meant that people do care but especially with us, its been going on so long that you don't feel that there is ever going to be any kind of resolution. Almost as though you're resigned to it all. We are not removed from the problems that its caused in terms of we are all involved in charity work of one form or another and that's a common thing with all of us but even my grandmother, my dad will tell me stories, that still blow my mind. Her first cousin was sitting on the porch with her and she was shot dead cos she was shot dead in cross fire and its just things like that. And that's my immediate family and I know nothing of any of this. They were caught in the conflict. My parent's house and my dads parent's house, was riddled with bullets and eventually bulldozed because it was damaged in the

¹ <http://www.secondgeneration.info> (Accessed 03/03/05).

fights and my grandmother had this amazing story, which I still don't know about how she travelled down to the south to get away from it. And its all of those things that shouldn't be removed from me as it immediately affected my family but I still I know next to nothing about what is going on there (Interviewee 19, Female, 26, UK)

As Interviewee 4 (UK) highlights below, her father is even involved with the funding of the LTTE in the UK, but her knowledge of the conflict remains limited. She finds it difficult to broach the topic of the conflict due to its sensitive nature and also her sense of emotional distance from her parents:

To be honest I don't know a huge amount about the problems in Sri Lanka, I don't know the 'ins and outs' and all the political aspects so I don't have a view as I don't have enough information to form a view... My parents are like, they are parents they look after me and look out for my well-being and stuff and we have fun but they are like parents where it's hard to talk to them about things. I think my dad would talk to me. But my parents are too concerned with my education and well being to talk about unnecessary things that don't concern me (Interviewee 4, Male, 24, UK)

The trauma felt by many of the first generation, who lost family and friends, is still acute and prevents the conflict from being openly discussed by many families in the UK (Daniels et al, 1995). There is also a distinct silence among the middle class Tamils who disagree with the actions of the LTTE but are reluctant to speak out against the organisation. Interviewee 15 (UK) provides a description of the ethnic conflict, yet this still does not fully encapsulate what has happened:

Well yeah I know kind of; I've got a good grasp but I don't know the particulars. There was the whole problem when the British left Sri Lanka and gave command back to Sri Lankan's it was mainly a Sinhalese government and then after that they started the oppression of Tamil people. So I'm really happy that there is a cause and the cause that there is an independent state for Tamil people because the opportunities that you have there are so limited being a Tamil person. You don't get the top jobs, you don't even if your are the best at what your studying. You wouldn't necessarily get the place it would go to a Sinhalese person and that's completely unfair and a stupid situation and there are so many Tamil people that are really having to do so many different jobs and they just don't have the opportunity (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

Most of the second generation participants in this study were largely unaware of the historical context of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, and also the current social and political situation. These limitations are once again considered when analysing the transnational links between the second generation and Sri Lanka, and the implications for future links between the 'homeland' and the UK.

8.3 Jaffna - 'Tamil Eelam'

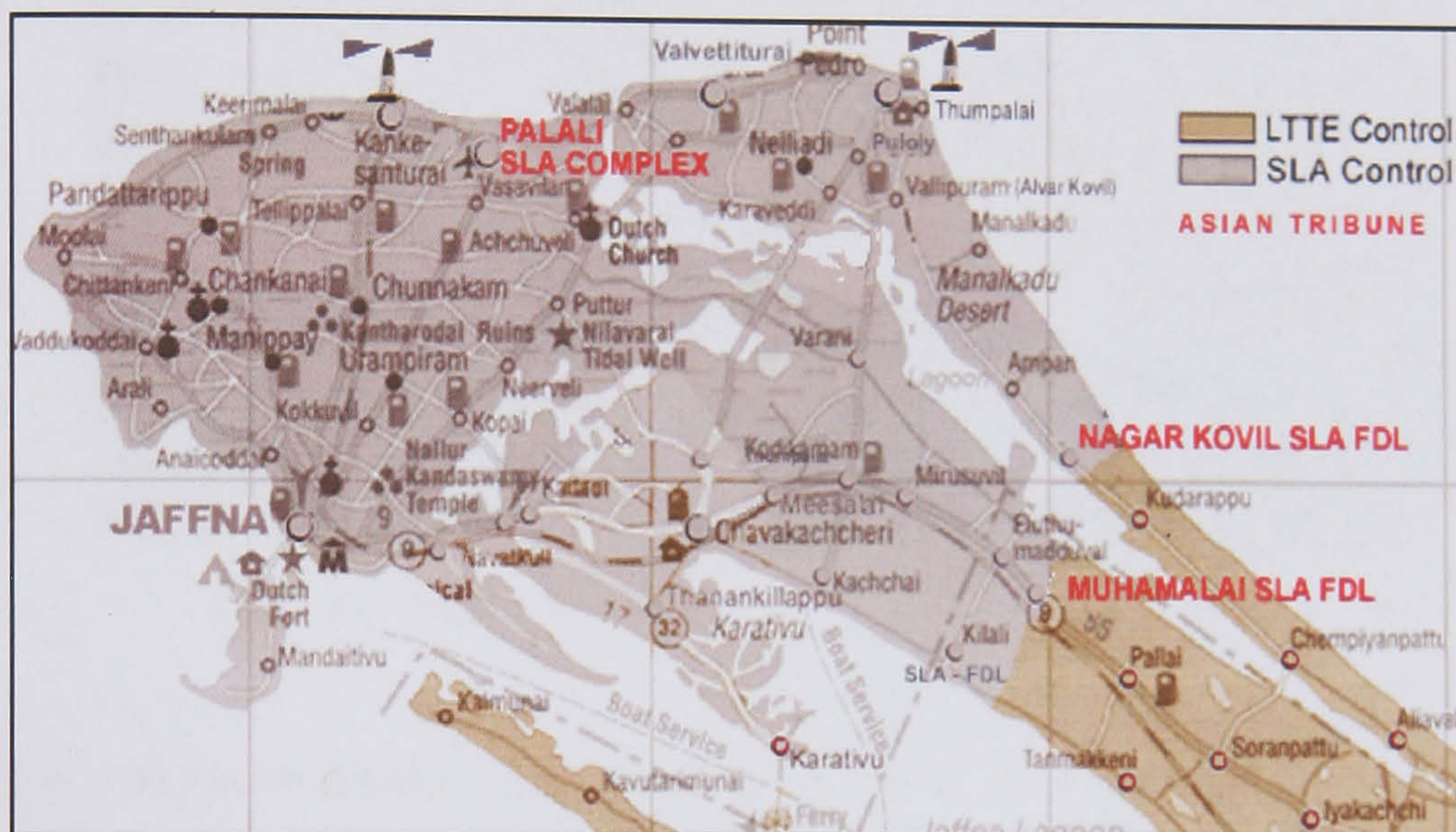


Plate 9. Map of the Jaffna Peninsula²

Related to the understanding of the conflict are the opinions of the second generation on Jaffna, the Tamil 'homeland' (Fuglerud, 1999). Many of the participants' parents were born in Jaffna or the surrounding areas and the research questions explored which of the participants had visited the peninsula and what they thought of the area. Some of the interviewees living in Colombo were born in Jaffna, still had family living there and regularly visited, especially for religious ceremonies and important events:

Of course, we go all the time. When there is a ceremony or occasion, as we don't have many relatives around in Colombo. Most of them are four or five hours away so we travel to them and we spend occasions like Christmas, Pongal, and Diwali together (Interviewee 22, Female, 27, Sri Lanka)

However, for most of the younger generation living in Colombo, Jaffna had only been visited a couple of times due to the ongoing political problems and the dangers of travelling to the

² <http://www.asiantribune.com/files/images/Map%20Jaffna.gif> (Accessed 05/03/06).

north of the island. Throughout my period of fieldwork people had ventured into the northern areas of the island with relative safety. However, the assassination of the Tamil Foreign



Plate 10. Memorial Poster for Kadirgamar in Colombo³

Minister Kadirgamar on August 12 2005 and spiralling violence following the election of hard line Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse in November 2005, meant that travel to Jaffna and surrounding areas has become extremely dangerous and advised against by the British government⁴. Interestingly, the Sri Lankan tourist board give no warnings or cautions about travelling to the north!

Even though the situation in Jaffna is extremely volatile, economic and social development continues due to foreign diaspora investment and remittances as the conversation below highlights:

The Tamils living abroad, they want to develop Jaffna (Interviewee 35, Female, 31, Sri Lanka)

Definitely (Interviewee 34, Female, 23, Sri Lanka)

I see struggles between my aunties and cousins as they remember how they were in Sri Lanka and but when they come here they get a shock as we are doing what they don't

³ Personal photograph taken in Colombo following Kadirgamar's death, August 2005.

⁴ <http://www.fco.gov.uk/> (Accessed 07/09/06).

want their children to do there in the UK! The ideas that the first generation have about Jaffna, they are stuck and Sri Lanka's changed and moved on. Tamils from outside Jaffna are rebuilding their houses there and it's moved on (Interviewee 35, Female, 31, Sri Lanka)

A few of the second generation in the UK had visited Jaffna at least once, and a couple had been recently. Interviewee 11 (UK) has stayed in Jaffna more than the other second generation participants and gave a comparison of the situation in 1995 to 2004. He highlights the dangers faced on their first trip and the situation in Jaffna in 2004. The ceasefire agreed in 2002 has rapidly disintegrated, ending in January 2005.⁵ Jaffna is once again a site of unrest and violence.



Plate 11. Jaffna Public Library⁶

As Interviewee 11 (UK) explains:

Well I have been six times now from 1995, which was the first time, I went 'till last time in 2004 so I can kind of see the change in Jaffna. When I went in 1995 it was amazingly scary. There were no planes or public transport up to Jaffna. What we had to do was to get a place called Vavuniya and from there got a fish boat there to Jaffna. It was like two hours in pitch dark so the army couldn't see us and I was only ten at the time. It was a big risk but there was a peace treaty for the space of a month and for that

⁵ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/country_profiles/1168427.stm (Accessed 22/02/08).

⁶ <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Jaffnalibrary1.jpg> (Accessed 01/02/06).

month my dad said ‘we have to take you in case we can’t come ever again’. So he took the risk and all four together so we went and did it. We were due to leave on the 20th June I think and on the 18th a bomb went off in Jaffna and we just left as soon as that happened. That was probably the scariest point in my life ‘cos I have never been in that situation before. Comparing that to now when I went it was amazing. There’s a bus there, they’re planes going regularly and Jaffna town centre is bustling and so much happier. Obviously things are going on because the last time a police chief got murdered by some Tamil guys in Jaffna and there was a curfew and we had to be in by 6’o clock. But generally life seems to be getting a lot better for the people there and its really peaceful there. You can just chill. You can’t do much, it can get tedious if you don’t have family there. I’m just upset that it’s starting up there again. The library was completely bashed up and a big hole. It’s just all ruins, you go to an area and all around you is fields and ruins but then as a godsend the new library they have just rebuilt is so beautiful. It’s really nice. So people can see the war on one side and the rebuilding on the other (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

Interviewee 13 (UK) refers below to the more rural nature of Jaffna and the surrounding villages. The largest Tamil caste, the vellala’s (Jebanesan, 2003) are of farming origin and therefore, the Jaffna peninsula is predominantly agricultural. Sri Lankans understand Jaffna as being more traditional and conservative than Colombo⁷. Interviewee 13 (UK) talks of the male soldiers’ reaction to western female clothes and the way in which Tamils from abroad and particularly the second generation, are highly visible and a source of curiosity. This serves as a reminder of the social and cultural restraints in which their parents grew up and the vast disparity of the lives of the second generation in the UK and their parents’ village life in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Jaffna is a symbol of ‘Tamil’ pride and tradition and it is no wonder that parents from the northern villages are reluctant to allow their children the relative freedoms of their white British peers in the UK:

We flew up and only went for two or three days but I couldn’t have spent anymore time there than I did. There’s not much to do. We visited all the people we had to visit and we were still bored. There’s nothing to do. The only reason we went is because me and my sister had never been before and my dad wanted to take us before it started again. We went to see his house, he lived on an island just off the coast called Kites. I’m glad I went cos its interesting to see where your parents lived. I don’t think that I would go again though as I wouldn’t know where to go. We stayed in a hotel. It’s my dad’s

⁷ See chapter 7.4.2.

friend's brother's hotel and it's quite new and had air conditioning. It was bit scary 'cos like there was no streetlights. We had to walk to this guy's house and it was just round the corner, there were no lights though. There were stray dogs running around and this and that. The people are a bit strange. Me, my mum and my sister went to church, it was a Sunday and I had worn jeans and a cut off arms top and my sister had the same 'cos it was boiling and we were walking to church and these army guys were following us and wolf whistling and my mum was there! We got to church and sat there and my mum was like 'I should have told you to cover up a bit, the nuns might not give you communion!' I was like that's a bit harsh and everyone was looking at us and stuff. Everyone else was in saris and long sleeve dresses. I felt uncomfortable. In Colombo you can just walk around like that and no one cares (Interviewee 13, Female, 21, UK)

8.3.1 Property Rights in Sri Lanka

Very few of the British second generation participants in this study were aware of the land and property their parents still own. Whether their parents will ever be able to reclaim family land and property in the north of the island is uncertain, depending on the future political situation of the island. Sri Lankan Interviewee 7 (Sri Lanka) observes how the migrants are buying property in Colombo for investment purposes and remaining family members to live in:

Most of them have flats, you can see them all in Dehiwela. They were built by the people there have migrated. They send money and their relatives here get contractors to build them (Interviewee 7, Male, 23, Sri Lanka)

The responses below from the second generation in the UK illustrate the current situation in Sri Lanka:

Well yeah my mum actually owns a property in Jaffna and my dad's parents are living in it. My mum's family were living in Colombo but they had property in Jaffna as well but now my Dad's parents are living in it as their property got knocked down (Interviewee 20, Female, 21, UK)

I don't know because my parents still have their Sri Lankan passports and I think my dad is holding onto it because he doesn't want to let go of land (Interviewee 3, Female, 20, UK)

Yes, my Mum likes to point out that she has a lot of land but I don't think that we will ever be able to lay claim to it. My grandfather was a big businessman in the village (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

Yes, they do. My dad's house is there, the one he grew up in and the hotel in Jaffna and then in Colombo my parents recently bought a flat in Dehiwela (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

Yeah, my dad's land isn't accessible in the north, we lost a lot of factories there. My grandfather used to own a stainless steel factory, which is all burnt now but my parents still own houses there so they still go and visit (Interviewee 8, Male, 24, UK)

The older generation are aware that they may never see or live in the properties they own in Sri Lanka, especially in the north, however they act as a reminder of how life used to be and help the community maintain both emotional and practical links with the homeland.

8.4 The 'Myth of Return' - Visits to Sri Lanka

The 'myth of return' (Anwar, 1979) is the notion that migrants believe they will one day permanently return to their country of birth to settle and live. Migrants often construct a romanticised view of how they remember the country of origin. Many Sri Lankan Tamil migrants hope to return to Sri Lanka when the political problems have settled (Alagiah, 2006). However, very few migrants ever permanently return to their country of origin once children are born in the settlement country, in this case the UK (Faist, 2000).

Linked to this are the visits that the second generation make to Sri Lanka. All of the interviewees had been to visit family and friends in Sri Lanka at least once and some had been on multiple visits. However, none wanted to move to Sri Lanka for any extended period of time and most were reluctant to return for a number of years. The lack of enthusiasm for continual visits to Sri Lanka and the limited correspondence between the second generation in the UK and their peers in Colombo does throw doubt on the transnational nature of the second generation. It will be interesting to observe future contact and whether they will want their own children to visit Sri Lanka regularly. Once older family members pass away, these links may weaken:

We used to until my grandmother passed away on my father's side and my grandmother on my mother's side is now dead and we have hardly any relatives there so we don't go over very often. We used to go for four to six weeks and if anything

now it's only going to be a couple of weeks. The folks are in India at the moment and they only stopped off in Sri Lanka for a couple of days. Literally two days to see my grandmother and that was it, so those links are going. Because I have been there so many times growing up I don't feel like I have to re-establish the link. There are other places in the world that I want to discover and that I am curious about and I don't think that that would lessen my link with Sri Lanka. (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

The conflict has made many of the participants reluctant to visit Sri Lanka, even though some would like to explore their own heritage. Access to the northern areas of Sri Lanka is difficult and dangerous:

Yeah I wouldn't mind but it's not a deep burning desire. I would like to go back and find out about it but not in the state it's currently in because of the tension and it wouldn't be a proper exploration (Interviewee 10, Male, 23, UK)

Interviewee 19 (UK) believed her visit to South India allowed her to embrace her Tamil heritage more successfully. Tamils are the majority ethnic group in South India, the Tamil language is widely used and Tamils are able to openly express their identity, unlike Sri Lanka:

That was why I loved going to India. I had so much more of an emotional connection being in Chennai than I did being in Colombo and a lot of it is because the first language is Tamil and in Colombo it's not. You are surrounded by people who speak your language and look like you and they are your family. I felt at home there and really comfortable (Interviewee 19, Female, 26, UK)

When asked about the 'myth of return' (Anwar, 1979) the Sri Lankan interviewees thought that the majority would not return permanently to Sri Lanka:

I know the older generation want to return as they have been brought up here and maybe once their children settle they might. But it depends on the situation here. Now a lot of people are visiting but at the same time a lot of people are selling off their properties as they fear that there will be another war (Interviewee 27, Female, 29, Sri Lanka)

Most of the older generation have family in the UK and would be reluctant to leave children, grandchildren and friends behind. For many Tamil families in the UK there are now no relatives left in Sri Lanka:

All of them claim that they would like to retire in Sri Lanka but I don't think that it will happen. 'Cos I think that they have all become attached to where they are now
(Interviewee 9, Male, 29, Sri Lanka)

The British participants were in agreement with their Sri Lankan peers about their parents' and grandparents' ideas, identifying their desire to return, but also the reality of the present situation. The 'myth of return' not only refers to the unlikelihood of the older generation returning to their country of origin, but also the way in which they have constructed Sri Lanka in their memories. Most of the older generation are comfortable living in the UK and if truthful, would be reluctant to return to village life where water is obtained from the well and electricity is sporadic. Yet, clinging to the hope they may one day return to Sri Lanka helps the older generation to deal with their traumatic experiences:

I think you get used to a certain level of living and you have your contacts where you live now and knowing when you come back you will always be an outsider
(Interviewee 16, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

8.5 Transnational Links between Sri Lanka and the UK

The following section explores in more detail the theme of transnationalism and the extent to which the second generation in the UK are maintaining transnational links with Sri Lanka (Van Hear, 1998). It currently appears that contact between the second generation in the UK and Sri Lanka is limited. Most of the second generation have family and friends in Sri Lanka, keeping in touch via email, phone and text message, however, most admitted this was sporadic. Evidenced by this research, it does appear that transnational attachments between the second generation in the UK and Sri Lanka are weakening. However, the links may eventually transform and adjust, rather than completely disappear:

Yes I do, well in terms of family there's loads of contact 'cos as you know the community's well strong. But there's not that many links between the younger generation here and those in Sri Lanka but the older generation there's loads
(Interviewee 8, Male, 24, UK)

More recently contact has increased with the emergence of websites like ‘facebook’⁸ and ‘myspace’⁹. These networking sites have allowed individuals to share photographs, messages and videos. However, these sites had not yet gained popularity in 2005 and were not mentioned by any of the participants.

8.5.1 Remittances and Financial Exchange

Work on remittances, both social and financial, is well represented in much of the transnationalism and migration literature (Modood et al, 1997; Van Hear, 1998; Castles, 2000; Faist, 2000; Shaw, 2000; Levitt, 2001; Vertovec, 1999; 2001). The money that is generated in the diaspora and sent back to Sri Lanka is vast (Sriskandarajah, 2002). These cross border transactions are often cited as an example of transnational links between home and host countries. The older generation in the UK are actively involved in sending funds back to Sri Lanka and these include both legal remittances for family support and illegal financial support for the LTTE:

...if there are relatives out in Jaffna with no other source of income then definitely there will be family looking after them from abroad. Friends as well, that happens a lot (Interviewee 9, Male, 29, Sri Lanka)

Although, the second generation middle class, affluent individuals in the UK are less involved in this system of exchange. The tsunami of December 2004 sparked second generation fundraising,¹⁰ but, the extent to which this continues over the last 3 years is debatable. The extent to which remittances will continue in the future is now questionable, particularly as older family members pass away (Vertovec, 2001; Levitt, 2001; 2006). Remittances are now even discouraged due to the illegal activities of the LTTE in the UK, as focused upon below (Sriskandarajah, 2002).

⁸ <http://www.facebook.com> (Accessed 15/02/08).

⁹ <http://www.myspace.com> (Accessed 15/02/08).

¹⁰ See section 8.5.3

8.5.2 The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the UK



Plate 12. Symbol of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)¹¹

Declared a 'terrorist' organisation by the British government in 2000 and officially in the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002, any funding of this group from within the UK is considered illegal¹². The continuing annual 'Heroes Day' (Whiteman, 2006; Nayaran Swamy, 2004) celebrations on November 27th in London are an illustration of Tamil Tiger support in the UK and financial exchange between the UK and Sri Lanka to help support the Tamil Tigers cause is said to be common:

Yes there are fundraisers in London and there is support from my parents and their peers for the cause. I'm quite against the idea but my father has been to one. They organise quite public and massive rallies. It was a gathering of over ten thousand Tamils as a fundraiser and as propaganda for the Tamils. I think it was the Heroes Day rally (Interviewee 12, Male, 24, UK)

The LTTE in the UK are well known for using intimidating tactics to extract funds from the British Tamil community:

People come to our house and stuff and say that they are from the LTTE-UK branch and they go around. (Interviewee 11, Male, 21, UK)

The second generation in the UK involved in charity fundraising keeps a low profile so as to avoid LTTE extortion:

¹¹ http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Ltte_emblem.jpg (Accessed 06/04/07).

¹² <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6250396.stm> (Accessed 12/10/07).

Yes I know that there is funding campaign and when we were organising our balls a lot of relatives expressed fears that we would have the Tigers turn up on our door and insist that some of the money comes to us. And there was a genuine fear of that. We never heard anything and I don't think they ever came to know of us at all as we never advertised in the Sri Lankan press (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

The middle class, professional second generation in this study are keen to distance themselves from the activities of the LTTE in the UK, unlike many of the newer, less affluent migrants (Daniels et al, 1995; Cheran, 2003). It has been suggested that the Sri Lankan Tamil criminal gangs operating in London¹³ have links to the LTTE as the members are often more recent migrants from Sri Lanka and the children of the refugees who came in the 'third wave' (Daniels et al, 1995).

The second generation born in the UK, however, have no first hand experience of the conflict and, therefore, no obvious way of identifying with the LTTE's cause. The allegiances their parents held have diluted and for many of the older generation in the UK, the LTTE has lost support due to their threatening behaviour and extortion. The illegal nature of the LTTE has led to an active discouragement of remittance funds and therefore, the second generation are even more reluctant to send funds to Sri Lanka for fear they may fall into the wrong hands (Sriskandarajah, 2002).

8.5.3 The Tsunami and Transnational Links



¹³ Infamous Tamil gangs in London include The Tooting Boys of South London and the East Side Boys of Redbridge, East London.
<http://www.streetgangs.com/billboard/viewtopic.php?p=151241&sid=e9cc900f31e8a937e5a2cb91d04b11c8> (Accessed 23/02/08).

Plate 13. Devastation following the Tsunami, Boxing Day, 2004¹⁴

The devastation caused by the Tsunami of December 2004 was immense with over 38,000 people killed in Sri Lanka alone and thousands more remain missing. The donations received from the UK and other countries were immense and many of the second generation were involved in many fundraising activities (Savage et al, 2007). All of the participants in Sri Lanka and the UK agreed that the Tsunami had increased the amount of contact between the two nations¹⁵. All also felt angry that the money raised had been politicised by the Sri Lankan government and that vast amounts had been wasted and fallen into corrupt hands:

I heard numerous stories of kids my age who were recently doctors who flew back to Sri Lanka to help which I think was amazing. I think the Tsunami increased contact and that people of my generation were more pro-active with regards to Sri Lanka and what they could do to help. It's just a shame that it took a disaster to bring that about but that's sometimes what has to happen (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

The reaction to the Tsunami could be seen as evidence of new transnational links between the second generation in the UK and Sri Lanka (Laczko et al, 2005). However, a number of the Sri Lankan interviewees highlighted their concern that the links will lessen and transnationalism in terms of financial exchange may cease all together, an idea I have termed 'transnational redundancy' (Kivisto, 2001; Vertovec, 2001).

8.6 Personal Migration

The participants were questioned about their own future migration ambitions and plans, considering whether the current security threat in Sri Lanka is serious enough to encourage young Sri Lankan Tamils to move abroad. Conversely, the second generation in the UK were asked about any desires to move and settle in Sri Lanka. Most individuals in both groups were content to remain in their own countries, however there were a few individuals who had seriously considered migrating abroad.

As Interviewee 1 (Sri Lanka) highlights, the employment situation in Sri Lanka is still difficult for Tamils and many people continue to move abroad to find work worthy of their qualifications:

¹⁴ http://www.ccn1.net/POTD/sri_lanka.jpg (Accessed 03/02/08).

¹⁵ <http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefresources/111384182297.htm> (Accessed 09/05/08)

Until about six months ago I was dead set on staying here. Making my money here because I'm Sri Lanka and I want Sri Lankan money and I don't want to go abroad and earn money in someone else's country in another currency and then come back here. I kind of look down on that probably because of my school thing, they try to live the high life and we just looked down on that. But of late looking at the prospects here if you want to be businessmen fine, but if you want to be a professional it's not so great (Interviewee 1, Male, 21, Sri Lanka)

The British participants were extremely vocal about their reluctance to leave the UK and move to Sri Lanka. A couple were willing to move to improve employment prospects, however, this was a future, rather than current desire:

No probably not. I had the opportunity to a couple of years ago when my uncle was setting up a property management group and I was in that field and he wanted me to head it. Possibly in a few years time but not at the moment. There are so many advantages that this country offers. For example the efficiency of how everything works (Interviewee 9, Male, 31, UK)

Interestingly, the main concern for the second generation is the difference in the standard of living and popular culture, rather than the evident security risks. On a day-to-day basis the smallest differences become magnified¹⁶ and most of the interviewees were clear that this would be difficult to sustain permanently. Colombo is an expensive capital city for a developing country and to maintain a high standard of living individuals have to earn a relatively high salary:

No! I don't like the style of life there, I prefer it here and unless I was living in Colombo in quite a high profile job then I could maintain the standard of living that I have here (Interviewee 15, Female, 21, UK)

I'm used to normal roads, normal driving, and normal bathrooms. I'm happy to rough it, less so than my brother, but I am happy to rough it but I wouldn't like to live there. I don't want to go to a club and listen to 'Mysterious Girl' and Peter Andre and pretend that it's a new track. My cousin does that on a regular basis and he hates it. No one goes out to have a pint after work to talk. If they go out they go out to get hammered. And I'm not into all that (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, UK)

¹⁶ For example electricity cuts, strikes and protests, limited entertainments i.e. cinema, restaurant and shops and dangerous driving as compared to the UK.

8.6.1 'Education Abroad' – The Desire to Study Internationally

Even though many of the Sri Lankan participants were reluctant to settle elsewhere permanently, a couple had studied abroad and all knew of people that had left the country for university studies. This has both positive and negative consequences for the community they leave, return to, and the development of the country:

Both positive and negative differences I think. Most people that study overseas are independent and their attitudes have either become very liberal or very biased. I have two people in my department and both are Muslims. One has gone abroad and stayed with other ethnic groups and their views of life has changed significantly, more open-minded and stuff like that. The guy that went there and stayed in a shared house with his own community has come back even more radical! The education abroad is a definite advantage as our education system isn't that good (Interviewee 30, Male, 32, Sri Lanka)

Many young Sri Lankans are leaving the island to settle elsewhere and this is having a devastating effect, socially, politically and economically in the form of 'brain drain'¹⁷ (Adams Jr, 2003; Carrington et al, 1999). While Sri Lanka is unable to offer well-paid professional positions to Tamils due to both economic failings and discrimination, they lose a valuable and necessary workforce to more affluent and accepting countries. It is the educated younger generation of Sri Lankans that have the financial means and political will to try and work towards a solution to the conflict.

Many students who go to English speaking countries and universities return to Sri Lanka and continue to speak English, rather than Tamil. There is a concern that Tamil will be lost and studying abroad can worsen this:

Yes a lot, oh my god that is the worst thing when they go abroad and then come back here. It is difficult to speak Tamil with them when they come back. They speak English only. My opinion is that wherever they go they should keep their language (Interviewee 14, Male, 24, Sri Lanka)

Interviewee 22 (Sri Lanka) considers the positive side of migration for studies in the observations of her own sister:

¹⁷ Although these studies explore 'brain drain' to the US, they highlight the continuing loss of financial, political and social intellect from developing to developed countries like Sri Lanka to the UK, Australia and the United States.

Mentally, your way of thinking broadens, she has improved a lot. I think that it helps. You get to see the world and so many good things and bad things you get to experience. Every student should get that exposure. All she got is improvements, nothing bad so far, so my parents are ok. (Interviewee 22, Female, 27, Sri Lanka)

8.7 Emotional Attachments to Sri Lanka – The Second Generation in the UK

To understand the links between the second generation in the UK and Sri Lanka it is also important to consider the emotional and practical ties. Contact between the UK and Sri Lanka is occurring, however, there is evidence to suggest that these ties may weaken as the older generation in both countries die (Rumbaut in Levitt et al, 2006). Thus, it is essential to also consider the emotional attachments the second generation have to Sri Lanka, how these are constructed and why.

Interviewee 8 (UK) argues that in the UK he often feels excluded from the white majority due to his ethnicity and colour, while in Sri Lanka he also feels isolated due to his British heritage and the apparent cultural differences. In the UK he experiences the Sri Lankan Tamil elements of his identity more acutely, while in Sri Lanka he feels more British:

Like here you're sat with some English guy who's born and bred here and got his whole bloodline here and you don't feel part of his crew. You go to an England match and standing in the crowd wearing your England flag but look Sri Lankan and English people shout at me 'why am I wearing an England flag?' And then you go to Sri Lanka and think 'oh yeah I'll go there' and walk around with hair like mine and look at me like I'm some sort of mad man or training to be a priest. So there you feel British but when you come here you feel a bit more Sri Lankan (Interviewee 8, Male, 24, UK)

Interviewee 6 (UK) sees Sri Lanka as a 'homeland', where his parents were born, and he places importance on parental heritage as a marker of social and cultural identity. Interestingly, it is this participant who in the next section considers Britain to be his home, making the distinction between the 'original' homeland and the 'home' in which you are actually born. It appears that the romanticised notion of Sri Lanka that the older generation hold onto in the 'myth of return' (Anwar, 1979) is also manifesting itself in the thoughts and opinions of the younger generation. The second generation have no intention of living in Sri Lanka, Interviewee 7 (UK) included, yet they continue to hold onto the romanticised image of the country. In one breath they criticise the political, social and cultural state of Sri Lanka, but yet in the next they cling to the paradise they construct in their imagination.

Interviewee 7 (UK) also places the emotional attachment within the context of comparing the life of Tamils between the countries. As he highlights, the social concerns of both communities are similar and create a bond across borders:

Because it's your homeland and it's where your parents are from it forms the basis of who you are culturally and your personality. I know that sounds a bit bizarre but it does actually have an affect. There are similarities between the Tamil community in the U.K and Sri Lanka even though we live here. The family environment, inviting people to stay. Yes you do get that in other cultures but I think it's particularly pertinent in ours so yes I do have an emotional attachment to Sri Lanka (Interviewee 7, Male, 30, UK)

Interviewee 14 (UK) is very clear about the lack of ties he feels to Sri Lanka as a result of his experiences in the country:

No I don't feel emotionally attached. I just don't really enjoy being there and it's the weather more than anything else and think because of that I have stopped getting too attached to it. I have only been there about 5 times (Interviewee 14, Male, 23, UK)

Thus, there is a second generation with mixed emotions towards Sri Lanka, with an underlying theme that most feel some form of emotional attachment, yet the country itself holds little attraction (Rumbaut, 1998; Waters et al, 1998).

8.7.1 The Second Generation and 'Home'

In previous research with the first generation it became clear that although most had lived in the UK for over twenty years they still viewed Sri Lanka as home (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2004). However, most of the interviewees in this study believed that the UK was home and Interviewee 6 (UK) explains that although he does not feel English, he has grown up in the UK and is comfortable in this culture:

I consider England to be home. But I don't feel English, that's the bizarre thing. Britain is home and England is home and I have an affinity with the country. I understand the culture and I am part of that culture. I don't feel that same affinity for Sri Lanka. I have a respect for Sri Lanka and affection for it but could I live there? No. I see here as my home and I see myself as British and my friends and society also see me as British so I don't feel alien in that sense. Having grown up watching Blue Peter then yeah (Interviewee 6, Male, 30, UK)

Even Interviewee 17 (UK) who has travelled extensively and lived abroad sees the UK as home, while Interviewee 16 (UK) succinctly states that she was born and raised in the UK and, therefore, Britain is her natural home:

Here, London. I want it to be home as in this is it, I have come full circle and want to settle. It's about where you feel comfortable and happy and the lifestyle. Australia is too slow and America is too materialistic and you get caught up in it (Interviewee 17, Female, 31, UK)

I would say that England is home. I was born and bred here and I've never been to Sri Lanka (Interviewee 16, Female, 25, UK)

8.8 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the impact of migration upon the younger generation in Sri Lanka and the second generation in the UK. The analysis has considered the extent to which the second generation engage in transnational attachments with Sri Lanka and whether these will persist in the future. Evidence has been drawn from both the participants in the UK and Sri Lanka to further understand the complexities of each group in comparison and to look at both ends of the migratory journey, a key feature so often ignored by other migration and ethnicity writers.

The parents of the second generation in the UK, the second wave of migrants from Sri Lanka, left to pursue studies, find work and more importantly escape the escalating political troubles and violence against the Tamil minority (Daniels et al, 1995). This group, mainly men, were expected to then send funds back to their families in the villages and facilitate the migration of other siblings and family members. The second generation participants gave differing examples of their parents' migratory journeys that brought them to the UK, however all were in agreement about the difficulties that motivated their move.

All the participants were aware of the reasons for their parents' migration, however when asked in detail about the conflict in Sri Lanka their knowledge was limited. They had little understanding of the problems and felt removed from the experiences of the Tamils there. Compounding this is the middle class Tamil reluctance to be associated with the LTTE and this has the effect of distancing the younger generation from the conflict also. Many of the second generation interviewed had family and friends directly affected by the conflict, with the loss of property and life. However, the majority did not feel personally affected by the conflict and had no concerns about their identity as a Tamil. There is a definite resentment

between the newer refugees from Sri Lanka and the established migrants who came many years ago.

Members of the diaspora have led relatively affluent and peaceful lives, while the newer migrants have had to suffer from discrimination and violence. The diaspora group argue that they too have suffered personal loss as a result of the war and that the newer migrants are less educated and disrupting the social and political acceptance that has been gained in the UK. Thus, in many ways, the middle class try to remove themselves from discussion of the war and the situation in Sri Lanka and this approach has been passed down to their children, the second generation.

To understand the second generations relationship with their parents' homeland further I then enquired as to whether they had visited the village their parents grew up in and also if they still owned land or property in Sri Lanka. Jaffna is the main town of the northern peninsula where the majority of Tamils in the UK originate from and I asked whether the participants, both Sri Lankan and British, had visited the area. Only a handful of individuals from both the samples had been to Jaffna, and only a couple to their parents' village of origin. Jaffna is not only a strong symbol of Tamil identity and ethnicity, it also represents the formal and conservative nature of Tamil village life, and for most of the second generation the experience proved alien and uncomfortable.

Those that had visited gave the impression that they had really wanted to identify with the place of their parents origin, however the village life explained, even today, is a world away from the modern lives of the second generation born and raised in the UK. A number of the second generation interviewed discussed parent's property and land in Sri Lanka, yet all were realistic that their parents would be unlikely to visit again. Much of the agricultural land in Jaffna is now mined and extremely dangerous, while a number of the properties were taken over by both the LTTE and the government during the conflict. However, even though many of the older generation may not see property and land again, they still serve as symbols of emotional and practical attachment to the country of origin for the exiled community.

Directly related to this is the idea of the 'myth of return', whereby the older migrant generation cling to the idea they will one day return to their country of origin permanently. Once again the second generation realise that their parents hopes are unrealistic. They themselves have no interest in living in Sri Lanka, even the capital, and the conflict shows no signs of abating in the near future so moving back to the village would be dangerous. The

second generation have visited Sri Lanka, although this is often to visit grandparents and when they die the continuation of visits may decrease as is already evident.

A central theme running through this chapter is the idea of transnationalism and whether or not the second generation maintain transnational links with Sri Lanka. There is contact between the British Tamils in the UK and Sri Lanka, although it is limited. Advancing technology has allowed for cheaper increased contact and the emergence of social network facilities like 'Facebook' has improved communication channels, however this also remains limited. Financial exchanges and remittances between Sri Lanka and the UK are immense, yet it is the older generation in the UK that currently provide most of the funds and are most actively involved.

As a further indicator of the second generation transnational activity it appears that the second generation are only partially involved in the sending of funds back to Sri Lanka. Many are actively involved in charity work, however straight funding to relatives in Sri Lanka is rare as parents have this responsibility. The majority of money goes to elderly relatives and therefore, once they die the obligation to send money back may be lost. The second generation are also reluctant to send financial help to Sri Lanka for fear it will fall into LTTE hands and as highlighted previously, they do not want to be in any way associated with the organisation. The tsunami of 2004 did spark a renewed interest in sending funds back to charities in Sri Lanka, however as suggested by many of the Sri Lankan participants, for how long this help will be sustained is unclear.

Many of the Sri Lankan interviewees had little or no desire to migrate abroad, even though the conflict continues to cause employment and educational problems. The second generation were even more vocal about their reluctance to move and settle in Sri Lanka. For those that had left Sri Lanka for education abroad, when they returned the participants noticed clear differences in how they behaved and the attitudes they held. Individuals were noticed to be more liberal and outgoing, however, this then meant that often on return to Sri Lanka they found life restricting and were quick to migrate permanently. This has led to a loss of intellectual resources for Sri Lanka and this has evidently had a negative affect upon the economic, social and political climate of the country as a whole.

Finally, the British participants commented upon their emotional attachment to Sri Lanka and where they considered 'home' and why. Some of the interviewees felt an emotional attachment to Sri Lanka, however explaining and justifying this proved far more difficult. For a few it was as a result of racism and rejection in the UK pushing them towards their parents' homeland, while for others it was simply due to the country as a symbol of their heritage. For

most their attachment to Sri Lanka derived from their ethnic link rather than the actual country, as highlighted by their reluctance to move there and the limited transnational links. Therefore, the notion of emotional attachment was very much as it is described, emotional and in no way a practical feeling of linkage to Sri Lanka. When asked about 'home' all of the British interviewees stated that the UK was their 'home' and that although they may feel a connection to Sri Lanka, where they feel comfortable and safe is the UK.

CHAPTER NINE

The Conclusion

The Sri Lankan Tamil Second Generation in the UK Challenges, Aspirations and Future Identities

This concluding chapter draws together the thesis by returning to the main research objectives discussed in the introduction and outlining the major arguments and findings of the study. Firstly, the research aims of the thesis are highlighted in connection to existing literature. Then the key findings of the thesis are highlighted, focusing upon the data collected and interpreted in the analysis chapters, six, seven and eight. Lastly, the chapter explores the agenda and scope for further research in the academic area of this research.

9.1 Research Aims

There are many studies that focus upon the lives and experiences of the children of migrants, known as the second generation. However, during the course of the research it became apparent that at present there are no empirical studies that explore the experiences of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK. Any research that has been completed tends to focus upon the children of the more recent migrants of refugee status (Bloch, 2000; Candappa, 2000) and the second generation involved in Tamil gangs in London (Smith, 2008; Sullivan, 2006). Although even work of this nature is limited.

Also few, if any, studies of the second generation in the UK highlight the similarities and differences between the lives of those in the country of origin and the settlement country. By focusing on both research sites the study provides an insight into how the experiences of the first generation in Sri Lanka may have influenced their responses and reactions to their children born and brought up in the UK. Therefore, this empirical research study is unique on three levels, firstly by exploring the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation, secondly by focusing upon the middle class children of the second wave of migrants (Daniel, 1995; 1996; 1997) and thirdly by presenting a comparison of both ends of the migratory journey as a means by which to understand the lives of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK in a more detailed and inclusive manner. The research questions that guided this study are presented below -

- How has the migratory journey of the second wave of Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to the UK had an effect upon the rituals and traditional practices of the diaspora community and their children, the second generation?

- How do the lives of the second generation in the UK compare to those of their peers in Colombo, Sri Lanka? Do these groups construct their identities differently? Are there specific practices and rituals that remain similar?
- How have transnational exchanges altered with the second generation? Are transnational links weakening or simply changing shape?

To gather the data for this study I conducted 57 in-depth, semi-structured interviews in total, 37 in Sri Lanka and 20 in the UK. To do this I completed a 3-month period of fieldwork in Sri Lanka from June 2005 to September 2005. In the UK the fieldwork also lasted 3 months from January 2006 to April 2006. In Sri Lanka the participants were aged between 17-34 years old and in the UK 20-31 years old. In Sri Lanka 18 of the interviewees were male and 19 female, while in the UK 9 were male and 11 female.

9.2 Main Findings and Observations

This section outlines the main findings of the thesis and the thematic organisation of the analysis chapters in relation to the comparative experiences of the Sri Lankan Tamil, middle class, second generation in the UK and their peers of a similar age, socio-economic status and ethnic background in Sri Lanka. The thesis included three analysis chapters, which focus upon the primary themes of marriage and relationships, traditional practices and cultural identity and migration and transnationalism.

Chapter Six (The Marriage Practices of Young Middle Class Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka and the UK) considered the relationships and marital experiences of the younger generation in Colombo and the second generation in the UK, comparing and contrasting the lives of those in the country of origin with those in the settlement country. The chapter analysed the extent to which relationship norms and marital traditions have been transplanted by second wave migrants (Daniel, 1995; 1996) to the UK and how these ideas persist and are practised in both research sites.

In terms of pre marital relationships, in both research locations, the interviewees agreed that there had been a shift with the younger generation towards the 'romantic' ideal of meeting someone naturally and falling in love. However, most admitted that the pressure to meet someone of the same religion, ethnicity and caste meant this ideal was often transcended by community and parental pressure. Dating is becoming more common for the younger generation, although according to the respondents experiences it appears to be more accepted in Colombo than the UK and within the affluent, middle class families. In the UK, normally only serious relationships heading towards marriage are openly admitted to extended family

and the community. Some participants at university away from home found maintaining relationships easier, however this still causes difficulties during extended holidays and when students finish their studies.

In the UK there has been a move towards more negotiated forms of marriage, rather than the stereotypical arranged marriage talked of in the literature and the media. Sri Lanka has seen increasing numbers of love marriages, particularly among the Colombo Tamils. However, there still exists an expectation to marry within particular caste and ethnic boundaries. In Sri Lanka the respondents would normally seek parental consent in marital choices, while in the UK there is more resistance to this. In both settings it is the women of the community who are most involved in the identifying of possible couples and the negotiating of marriage choices.

Religion is also inextricably linked to the marital practices of the Sri Lankan Tamil community and there are both similarities and distinct differences between the experiences of those of Hindu and Christian backgrounds. Many Hindus both in Sri Lanka and the UK continue to match horoscope charts to check the compatibility of those marrying. A couple of participants talked of individuals using the incompatibility of the charts as a means by which to exit unwanted marriage proposals. In Sri Lanka marriage brokers are still employed to find suitable partners for those in the Hindu community, while in the UK this practice is rare, although not unheard of.

In the UK and Sri Lanka both sets of interviewees were opposed to the dowry system and it is clear that the practice has changed for the more affluent middle class both in Colombo and the UK. Rather than the traditional giving of jewellery and saris, parents of the bride are now giving their daughter's property, money for housing deposits and savings. The dowry now commonly remains in the name of the woman to ensure financial security in case of divorce or separation. There is normally no dowry in love marriages, however sometimes a symbolic gesture is made. Marriage brokers are still organising dowry in Sri Lanka as it normally forms part of their payment. The LTTE are openly against the practice of dowry, yet it still continues in Sri Lanka. The UK participants, both men and women, had little knowledge of the dowry system. Although all were against the practice, many understood how and why it had evolved. In Sri Lanka and the UK the Church advises the Christian community against practising dowry, however it does continue. One of the main reasons mixed ethnicity marriages are frowned upon both in the UK and Sri Lanka is due to the loss of dowry in these types of union.

Caste is also important in terms of marriage practice, as in both Colombo and the UK it is within this context that the social classification system becomes most visible. The caste

system has been extremely rigid in Jaffna, however due to conflict, internal displacement and migration it is beginning to erode. However, even though caste has a role to play in the selection of marriage partner, ethnicity and religion seem to be of greater importance.

In Sri Lanka, within the educated sectors of both the Tamil and Sinhalese communities, there are some mixed ethnicity marriages, yet these are still limited. In the UK marriages between Sri Lankan Tamils and those of different ethnicities are on the rise, yet relationships with Afro-Caribbean's are still extremely uncommon and disapproved of by the older community. From the responses analysed, the Christian community are more accepting of mixed ethnicity marriages than the Hindu community, yet they are more conservative and less approving of mixed religion marriages than the Hindu community. In Sri Lanka Christian Tamils desiring a Hindu or Buddhist partner employ religious conversion as a tactic to allow mixed religion marriage, arguing that by marrying their partner they will be able to convert them over time. One of the most important reasons why the community frowns upon mixed ethnicity marriage is due to the preservation of the Sri Lankan Tamil identity. By 'marrying out' it is considered that the Sri Lankan Tamil identity will be 'diluted'¹. Ironically, many of the second generation in the UK whom have both Sri Lankan Tamil parents are also losing the language etc as outlined in Chapter Eight.

In terms of gender roles and community pressure, women are still expected to remain chaste and virginal before marriage. Families are more controlling of their daughters behaviour, while men are allowed far more social and sexual freedoms. Women in the community in Sri Lanka and the UK are normally well educated, however this also improves their choice of marriage partner and is therefore encouraged by parents and the community. The female respondents both in the UK and Sri Lanka felt the pressure to conform, however the British women found it even more of a struggle to balance the norms and values of the community with their own desires and needs. In both settings the male interviewees identified similar social pressures in terms of marriage and also found themselves to be 'walking a tight rope' in order to keep everyone happy. Both in the UK and Sri Lanka it is gradually becoming more acceptable to marry later in life, although this also depends upon gender, with women expected to marry by their late twenties, while men were able to wait until their thirties and even forties.

None of the interviewees were interested in migrating to find a marriage partner. However, some talked from their knowledge of other members of the community both in Sri Lanka and the UK moving abroad to find a partner and marry. The first generation's experience of

¹ An interesting term used by one of the interviewees.

marriage has also had an impact upon the experiences of their children. A number of the interviewees' parents in Sri Lanka and the UK did have love marriages and some were therefore willing to allow their children the freedom to select their own partners.

Controversially, many of the respondent's grandparents had married outside of their religious, caste and ethnic boundaries and some had even eloped. However, these individuals still expected their grandchildren to conform to the community values they themselves openly rejected in Sri Lanka.

Divorce remains highly taboo in the community both in Sri Lanka and the UK, especially for women. Therefore, couples tend to separate rather than legally divorce. Divorces are becoming more common however, and it seems this trend will continue. The interviewees' expectations of their own children differed broadly. A few, both in the UK and Sri Lanka, hoped that their children would marry within the community and religion, yet most reflected that they would be more relaxed than their own parents. Lastly, there were three main reactions to the future of Sri Lankan Tamil marriage practices in the UK. A number of participants wanted to marry a fellow Sri Lankan Tamil to ensure the preservation of ethnicity and identity, others hoped that some of the traditions would be preserved but realised that there would be changes and the last group were actively seeking to marry someone outside of the community and Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic group and saw the dilution of Sri Lankan Tamil identity in the UK as inevitable and natural.

Chapter Seven (Traditional Practice and Cultural Identity) focused upon the cultural lives of the interviewees, analysing how young Sri Lankan Tamils construct and understand their identities both in the country of origin and the settlement country.

The chapter discussed the impact of religious belief on cultural identity, arguing that some of the cultural practices of Hindu and Christian Sri Lankan Tamils are beginning to merge. Many of the main Sri Lankan Tamil cultural expressions are inextricably linked to Hinduism, and for Christian Tamils both in Sri Lanka and the UK this causes difficulties. The Christian community must balance the desire to preserve their ethnic identity with their religious beliefs. Many of the Christian Tamils, particularly in the UK, avoid contact with Hindu sites of worship and even refuse to attend the weddings of Hindu family members. However, conserving the Sri Lankan Tamil identity has become increasingly difficult, both in the UK and Sri Lanka and there are clear instances whereby Christians are adopting Hindu rituals. The Christian community defend this by arguing the rituals are cultural not religious, yet it is clear most, if all, are rooted in the Hindu belief system. The wearing of the pottu and thali are examples of this merging, or as one interviewee stated 'confusion'. Both are considered to be cultural symbols, however traditionally and historically were Hindu expressions.

The participants were limited in their reaction to education and religion, both in the UK and Sri Lanka. The main analytical point made concerned the International Schools most of the affluent, middle class Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo attended. These schools structure their year around the Christian calendar², however the participants who had attended this type of school, claimed that the education itself was largely unreligious due to the diverse religious backgrounds of the students in attendance³. Therefore, as a couple of the interviewees suggested, the lack of religious education at school simply added to their lack of knowledge of both cultural and religious rituals.

When questioned about their expressions of cultural life in terms of dress, food and music the responses of the participants in the UK and Sri Lanka were similar. Most of the women only wore the traditional dress, the sari, for special occasions like weddings, while the male traditional outfit, the veshti, is worn even less. All of the participants ate traditional Sri Lankan Tamil food on a regular basis, however in both research sites, the younger generation are far more experimental and happy to eat other types of cuisine, unlike their parents. Most of the participants were not interested in either traditional or modern Sri Lankan music, preferring western genres like pop and indie. A couple of the interviewees in the UK and Sri Lanka had learnt traditional dance and musical instruments to a high level, however they had all stopped in their late teens.

There are clear differences in the way and extent to which the first and second generation practice traditional rituals and partake in cultural activities. In Colombo, social life is less traditional and conservative than in Jaffna and the villages. The move from village to city life has meant many of the older generation in Colombo have had to adapt to the pressures of living in a busy, ever modernising, cosmopolitan capital city. However, in the UK many of the participants argued that their grandparents and even parents are still trying to preserve and follow the social and cultural norms of Sri Lankan Tamil village life. The second generation all stated that they were far less cultural than the older generation and most were comfortable with this.

The coming of age ceremony is one of the main Sri Lankan Tamil rituals performed both in Sri Lanka and the UK, by Hindus and Christians alike. However, the way in which it is practised in each research site and religious community does differ. For the Hindu community, the ceremonies are grand and expensive affairs, often with the hire of a lavish venue and catering for hundreds. Whereas, for the Christians in both Sri Lanka and the UK.

² Mainly due to the historically British influence on the private school education system in Sri Lanka.

³ Students are of Hindu, Christian and Buddhist religious background.

the ceremony is normally restricted to close family and is a more private affair. The ceremony is now a symbol of prosperity in both Colombo and the UK.

Most of the participants, both in the UK and Sri Lanka, hoped to be able to pass on some Sri Lankan Tamil traditions to their children, however they were aware of how limited their knowledge is. This is further compounded by the problematic Tamil language skills of the second generation. However, all of the interviewees wanted to give their children more freedom and choice in their cultural lives and some even wanted their children to move away from the constraints of the community.

Both in the UK and Sri Lanka, Tamil identity is highly complex for all generations as a result of the war, the differing ethnic communities of the island, internal displacement and migration. The Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils see themselves as distinctly different from one another, while there are also divisions within the Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic group itself. The Jaffna and Colombo Tamils vary in their behaviour, attitudes, accent and language. Coming more recently from the villages of the Jaffna peninsula, the Jaffna Tamils are often more caste interested, conservative and wary of the Sinhalese in Colombo.

The conflict has had a profound effect on Sri Lankan Tamil identity in Sri Lanka, filtering through to the worldwide diaspora. Tamil identity has been weakened by government oppression and persecution on the island, encouraging Tamils to hide their ethnic identity by speaking Sinhala and changing their Tamil names. Yet, this has also had the opposite effect of strengthening the ethnic identity of the Tamils and one important and dangerous product of this has been the emergence and growth of the LTTE. By attempting to control and repress the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Sri Lanka, the government has both helped to create and perpetuate the ongoing conflict. The break of trust between the Tamils and Sinhalese and the impact of trauma have served to internalise and intensify the violence further, which again serves to deepen the Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic identity further. According to the participants these feelings have been transplanted to the settlement countries, particularly with the more recent refugee immigrants, and is beginning to cause discord in the diaspora.

The participants had mixed feelings towards their own Tamil identities. Social determinants like parents, friends, community interaction and location are hugely important. Many of the British interviewees believed that their skin colour and Tamil name still defined their identity and ethnicity within the UK and that some of the British public are unable to detach nationality from ethnicity. Therefore, ascribing ethnicity to those who want to be viewed as British. Many participants considered themselves to be British with 'roots' in Sri Lanka, a

hybrid identity. One of the interviewees talked of the complexities of identity in particular settings, for example sport, where allegiances can be divided.

Friends also play an important role in the identities of the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation and most of the UK interviewees changed from a predominantly white British friendship group at primary and secondary school to South Asian friends at Sixth Form and university. As the second generation grow up some start to search for friends from similar backgrounds who are more understanding of the social pressures faced, while also searching for a general South Asian ethnic identity.

Another important element of second generation identity is language and the mother tongue. In Colombo most of the participants could speak Tamil, however it is normally only spoken at home due to the political situation. However, in the UK the majority of middle class Sri Lankan Tamils are unable to speak or understand the Tamil language. Two of the main reasons why the second wave of migrants failed to teach their children the mother tongue was due to the trauma caused by conflict and the desire of the parents to ensure their children integrated into school successfully. Once the parents realised that their children were accomplished English speakers it was then too late to teach them Tamil.

A number of Tamil schools have emerged in the UK attempting to teach children the language and cultural traditions of Sri Lanka, yet according to the interviewees in this study they have not been completely successful. There are also Sri Lankan societies at a number of universities across the UK which encourage the teaching of Tamil, however like the Tamil schools, there is not the necessary intensity to successfully teach the language to a fluent level.

An important comparative element of the study focuses on the similarities and differences of the social and cultural pressures of the younger middle class generation in Sri Lanka and the UK. Both sets of participants argued that those in the UK face increased pressure by comparison with those in Colombo. The primary reason being that the second wave of migrants to the UK cling onto the norms and values they remember of their own upbringing, often within the conservative villages surrounding Jaffna. As those in Sri Lanka highlighted, Colombo and even Jaffna have now modernised and are gradually becoming more liberal, however the older generation in the UK hold onto their experiences of Sri Lanka in the 1960's and 1970's. The second generation in the UK must balance their parents desire to preserve the Tamil identity, which is under threat, with their everyday lives growing up in Britain. It is obviously not a constant battle, however it would be naive to suggest there are not points at which there is conflict.

Lastly and directly related to a previous point, is the idea of identity loss and collective memory. Both sets of participants were asked if they thought that Sri Lankan Tamil identity would eventually be lost in the UK and if they were concerned about this. There were mixed responses, with some interviewees concerned about the loss of Tamil culture, while others saw the 'dilution' as a natural progression of society and culture. Some also mentioned that the increase in mixed ethnicity marriages might have an impact on the gradual erosion of Tamil identity. The most striking response reflected that there maybe a positive, new Sri Lankan Tamil identity that encompasses all variations of what it means to be Tamil both in Sri Lanka and the UK.

Finally, Chapter Eight (Migration, Transnationalism and the Second Generation) focused on the migratory journey of the first generation and the impact their experiences have had on the second generation born and raised in the UK. The analysis questioned the persistence of transnational links and emotional attachment to Sri Lanka with the second and subsequent generations and the possible onset of what is termed in this study, 'transnational redundancy'. Lastly, the second generation's idea of 'home' is explored and the thesis argues that many of the participants in this study are still unsure of where their emotional and practical attachments to home lie.

The three main reasons why the second wave of first generation Sri Lankan Tamil migrants came to the UK, as highlighted by the second generation, are the conflict, education and employment. These are all clearly interlinked. The discrimination against Tamils in Sri Lanka from the 1950's onwards meant that many young Tamil students were denied the opportunity to study on the island. Therefore, many of the wealthier parents in the Jaffna area sent their children, particularly sons, abroad to study in countries like the UK, the US and Australia. Many young Tamils also left the island due to the discriminatory employment situation. These are the primary factors that propelled the interviewees' parents to migrate from Sri Lanka to the UK. They reflected that their parents came to the UK for the standard of living, high educational standards and also interestingly due to Sri Lanka and Britain's colonial links⁴.

The migration of Sri Lankan Tamils to the UK from the 1950's through to the present time is as a direct result of the continuing political strife in Sri Lanka and it seemed an appropriate point in the thesis to ask the second generation about their knowledge of the conflict. Most of the respondents knew little of the history and details of the problems, however they made it clear they were reluctant to become in any way involved and most preferred to remain

⁴ This seems to be as a result of the favourable way in which the British treated the Sri Lankan Tamils during colonial rule.

detached. This is one of the clear indications that the second generation are beginning to sever some of their parent's ties with Sri Lanka.

Ironically many of the younger generation in the UK were highly involved in organising fundraising in the wake of the tsunami in 2004, however they have little involvement, emotionally and practically, with the people caught up in the ongoing violence. The conflict feels somewhat distant and remote to the second generation brought up in the relative stability and comfort of the UK. Many of the interviewees felt that their lack of knowledge about the situation in Sri Lanka stems from their parents reluctance to discuss their experiences due to the effects of trauma and loss. Yet none commented that they had explored or researched the history of the conflict themselves, even though all are well educated and could easily access the information.

Very few of the respondents had travelled to the north of the island to visit Jaffna and their parents' village, due to the dangerous situation, and therefore found it difficult to relate and therefore, maintain links. To some, both in the UK and Sri Lanka, Jaffna represents the conservative and what they consider backward nature of some of their parents' ideas and strict attitudes. Thus, they are reluctant to visit the area that symbolises these restrictions. The second generation also had very limited knowledge of the property and land their parent's currently own or have lost in the conflict. Unlike the second and third generations of other ethnic minority communities in the UK, the second generation Sri Lankan Tamils are unable to visit their family home or land and this can also add to the severing of emotional and practical links. The British interviewees were also asked to reflect on whether they thought their parent's would return to Sri Lanka at some point, the idea Ballard termed 'the myth of return'⁵.

All of the participants agreed that the older generation, including their parents would want to return to Sri Lanka eventually, however due to the conflict in the near future this seems impossible. From the responses gathered of the middle class, educated second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK it suggests that the myth of return within this community may disappear with the second generation. However, this does not rule out the possibility of future generations striving to move back to the country of their family's origin.

⁵ The notion of migrating and settling in another country but leaving ones 'heart' in the country of origin. As mentioned in the Channel Four Documentary 'Immigration: The Inconvenient Truth'
<http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/dispatches/immigration+the+inconvenient+truth/1933847> (Accessed 19/04/08)

In terms of transnational links, practically these are limited for the second generation. The participants do visit Sri Lanka to see family, and some have friends there, but for most these trips are infrequent. Although most are highly qualified and earning good salaries, none of the participants were sending money back to family in the form of remittances to Sri Lanka. The responsibility for this still remained with their parents of the first generation. As mentioned previously the tsunami did increase second generation involvement in fundraising and the sending back of money to charities on the island. However, this has now slowed and an important question highlighted in the analysis is that once the first generation are gone will their children continue to send money back to Sri Lanka and will new transnational links emerge? This will only be answered in time.

Some members of the first generation apparently continue to fund LTTE activities in Sri Lanka, while the middle class, educated second generation are far more reluctant. The young professionals are distancing themselves from the illegal activities of the terrorist group and have no identification with the cause. Therefore, as the second generation distance themselves from the reasons to send remittances back to Sri Lanka and practical links erode will transnationalism become redundant, the idea I have termed in this thesis ‘transnational redundancy’? Or, will emotional ties begin to strengthen, as is the case with some other ethnic minority communities in the UK?⁶

When questioned about their own desires to migrate most of the participants were content to stay where they were. Some of the participants in Sri Lanka had considered moving to get away from the troubles, however none were actually at the point of migrating. All of the UK interviewees wanted to stay in Britain and for most this was due to the high standard of living. Many Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka still move abroad for university, and some choose to settle where they study. This has apparently led to a form of ‘brain drain’ whereby educated, professional Sri Lankan Tamils leave the country, and few educated Tamils remain to engage in social, political, legal and economic conflict resolution.

Lastly, the analysis focused on the idea of ‘home’, where the participants considered their home to be and what the term meant to them. A couple of interviewees were clear that the UK felt like home, emotionally and practically. However, although most felt Britain to be home, they also felt some allegiance to Sri Lanka. One participant highlighted that by not being able to say he is English meant that he felt excluded from part of what it means to be British. Yet, the same interviewee was clear that he was happy in the UK and had no intention of moving

⁶ For example many of the younger generation in the Indian and Pakistani communities in the UK are actively seeking emotional and practical links with the country of their parent’s origin and frequently return to their parents childhood homes where family often remain.

to Sri Lanka, illustrating the ongoing complexities of national and ethnic identity for the second generation in the UK.

This thesis has studied the experiences of young middle class Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka, comparing their attitudes, opinions and everyday lives to second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK. The study has considered how these two similar, yet different groups construct their identities through cultural practices, religious beliefs and everyday social encounters. The research has also highlighted how the migratory experience of the first generation to the UK has influenced the rituals and traditional practices of the children of the second generation today in terms of marriage, religion and language. Lastly, the thesis focused upon the transnational nature of migrant communities and the extent to which practical and emotional ties may change in the future with the second, third and subsequent generations.

9.3 Agenda for Future Research

Literature and studies concerning the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation are limited⁷ and the decision to look at both ends of the migratory journey is also unique. Throughout the study it became increasingly apparent that there are many new and different directions that research in this area could take in relation to the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation in the UK and also some of the emerging themes and ideas raised in this thesis.

Firstly, a comparative study of second generation Sri Lankan Tamils in other diaspora settlement countries, like Canada, the US and Australia to those in the UK would further contribute to an understanding this groups experiences on both a global and national level. Do the middle class second generation in other diaspora countries maintain links with Sri Lanka, is the idea of ‘transnational redundancy’ as highlighted in this thesis only applicable in the UK and how do these individuals construct, balance and maintain their ethnicity, citizenship and nationality? The notion of ‘transnational redundancy’ also requires further detailed exploration in relation to the British second generation and the way in which transnational links have altered, eroded and even disappeared. Simply put, how distanced emotionally and practically have the second generation become from the country of origin Sri Lanka? How will this impact on the ethnic and national identities of subsequent generations born and raised in the UK? Related to this, can we successfully adopt Levitt’s (2001; 2003; 2004)

⁷ Throughout the doctoral research I have attempted to identify work that focuses specifically on the Sri Lankan Tamil second generation. This is not to say that such work in the UK does not exist, however it illustrates that there is a definite gap in research on this group.

definition of the second generation⁸ and if so, how far can this idea be expanded? Further analysis of both these concepts would add rich and interesting developments to the existing work on the second generation both in the UK and internationally.

Moving focus to the British Sri Lankan Tamil second generation further work is needed in the area of education and the middle class Sri Lankan Tamil second generation. Highly successful at school, college and university, the group appears to have been over looked in terms of their propensity for academic achievement. Yet, these educational sites form an important part of how young middle class Sri Lankan Tamils construct their identities. The value placed upon educational success by parents and the community as a whole both in Sri Lanka and the UK, the pressure to achieve and an embedded strong work ethic has led to most young middle class Sri Lankan Tamils being highly successful. Often educated at prestigious private schools and universities this group are given every possible opportunity to perform well through to adult life. Women are also expected to be well educated, however this is more complex as educational success and therefore, careers, are beginning to feature more as an element of dowry rather than a feminist move to equality.

Also lacking is research on the housing, employment and experiences of racism not only the second generation experience but also the Sri Lankan Tamil community of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds.

Finally, research is needed that explores the re-engagement of the younger generations both in Sri Lanka and the UK with conflict resolution. Many young, educated Tamils leave Sri Lanka for improved education, better employment prospects, safety and an improved standard of living. In the UK many of the second generation actively distance themselves from the conflict, therefore how then can we engage the second generation with events in Sri Lanka, would their involvement be beneficial and could they help bring the Sri Lankan conflict to resolution? This would be a complex, yet valuable piece of research to undertake in a move towards bringing peace to the island.

⁸ Levitt's ideas are highlighted in Chapter 4.5. The section also outlines Levitt's own thoughts on possible future research on the second generation and can also be considered in conjunction with this section.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Traditional Practice and Culture

- 1.) Can you tell me some things you do in your life that are cultural?
- 2.) Did your parents teach/pass on the cultural aspects of your life?
- 3.) Do you think there is a difference between your parent's cultural life and your own?
- 4.) Will you be passing these traditions onto your children? Is that important to you?

Marriage and Relationships

- 1.) Are you married? If yes, when did you marry and how did you meet your partner?
- 2.) If no, do you want to get married and if so how would you find/choose your partner?
- 3.) Can you tell me about the dowry system in Sri Lanka?
- 4.) Have you ever had a girl/boyfriend? If yes, how was this viewed by your parents/friends/wider Tamil community?
- 5.) What types of marriage do Tamils in Sri Lanka/UK generally have? (Forced, arranged, negotiated or love)
- 6.) Will your parents be involved in your choice of marriage partner? If so, how and why?
- 7.) How important are marriage brokers in Sri Lanka/UK?
- 8.) How would people react if you married someone of a different ethnicity/religion?
- 9.) Are Tamil marriage practices cultural, religious or both?
- 10.) Can you see marriage practices changing in the future? How?
- 11.) What, if any, expectations will you have of your own children regarding their marriage and choice of partner?

Religion

- 1.) Do you have any religious belief? What religion are your parents and family?
- 2.) Are you a practising Christian/Hindu?
- 3.) How important is religion in your life?
- 4.) How closely is your religious and cultural life linked?
- 5.) Is there a difference between your parent's cultural life and your own?
- 6.) Is religion an important part of your identity?
- 7.) As a Christian is it difficult maintaining your cultural life as it is closely linked to Hinduism?
- 8.) As a Hindu does it make it easier maintaining the cultural parts of your life?
- 9.) Are there differences between the Christian and Hindu Sri Lankan Tamil communities in the Sri Lanka/UK?

Transnational Links and Migration

- 1.) Do you have family/friends that have migrated and settled abroad? (Sri Lankan Interviewees)
- 2.) If so, where are they and when did they move?
- 3.) Why did they leave Sri Lanka?
- 4.) Why did your parents leave Sri Lanka? (British Interviewees)
- 5.) Do they still own property in Sri Lanka?
- 6.) Do they visit Sri Lanka often?
- 7.) Do you think that they will return to Sri Lanka permanently? What do you think about that?
- 8.) Do you keep in regular contact with them? In what ways do you contact each other?
- 9.) Is there a lot of contact between Tamils in Sri Lanka/UK and those that have settled in other countries? Why is this?
- 10.) Has the Tsunami increased contact?
- 11.) Do you want to migrate and settle in another country? Why/Why not?
- 12.) If so, when do you hope to move?
- 13.) What things would make settlement easier?
- 14.) Would you be happy if your children were born and raised in another country?

Identity

- 1.) Do you have a clear/strong Tamil identity? Why/Why not?
- 2.) What activities define your identity?
- 3.) Is ethnicity the main part of your identity? Why/Why not?
- 4.) Has your identity ever changed? If so, why?
- 5.) Does anything apart from ethnicity mark your identity?
- 6.) Do you have a class/caste identity?
- 7.) Can you tell me about your friendship network? Who does it include?
- 8.) Are your friends linked to your identity? If so, how?
- 9.) Do you feel British? (British Interviewees)
- 10.) Do you speak the mother tongue? Why/Why not?
- 11.) If so, does it help you to maintain your identity?
- 12.) If not, how do you feel about this? Does it upset you that you will not be able to pass it onto your children?

Second Generation in the UK

- 1.) Do you think that those born in the Sri Lanka/UK face the same cultural and social pressures that you do? If so, what are these and why? If not, why?

- 2.) Can you think of any problems Tamils in the UK might have concerning their identity? (Sri Lankan Interviewees)
- 3.) The second generation in the UK often talk of how they think that their peers in Sri Lanka have less restrictive cultural and social lives. From your own experience do you think this is true? Why/Why not?
- 4.) Why do you think the second generation in the UK feel this way?
- 5.) What is your view of the lives of the second generation in the UK? (Sri Lankan Interviewees)
- 6.) What is your view of the lives of young Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka? (British Interviewees)
- 7.) Are there any myths in Sri Lanka of how the second generation abroad behave? (Sri Lankan Interviewees)
- 8.) Do you think that Tamils in the UK will eventually lose their ethnic identity?

Is there anything more you would like to add or any questions you would like to ask me?

Appendix B

British Interviewee Data

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Nationality	Religion	Ethnicity	Occupation	Marital Status	Religion of Parents	Ethnicity of Parents	Location of Interviewee	Languages Spoken
1	F	28	British/ Sri Lankan	None	Tamil	Accountant	Single	Hindu	Tamil	Colombo/ London	Tamil/ English
2	F	30	British Asian	Christian	Tamil	Accountant	Single	Christian	Tamil	London	English
3	F	20	British	Hindu	Tamil	Student	In a Relationship	Hindu	Tamil	Wales/ Leeds	English
4	M	24	British	Hindu	Asian	Student	In a Relationship	Hindu	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English
5	F	21	Sri Lankan (U.K Resident)	Christian	Sri Lankan	Student	In a Relationship	Christian	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English
6	M	30	British	Christian	Asian British	Management Consultant	Single	Christian	Tamil	London	English
7	M	27	British	Hindu/ Christian	Asian	Art Gallery Director	Single	Hindu/ Christian	Tamil	London	English
8	M	24	British Sri Lankan	Hindu/ Christian	Mixed Race	Managing Director of CollarJ Records	Single	Hindu/ Christian	Tamil	London	English
9	M	31	British	Christian	Sri Lankan	Property Developer	Single	Christian	Tamil	London	English
10	M	23	British	Hindu	British Asian	Student	Single	Hindu	Tamil	Leeds	English
11	M	21	British	Hindu	Sri Lankan Tamil	Student	In a Relationship	Hindu	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English/ Tamil
12	M	24	British	None	Tamil	Programmer	Single	Hindu	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English
13	F	21	British	Christian	Sri Lankan	Student	Single	Hindu/ Christian	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English
14	M	23	Sri Lankan	Christian	Sri Lankan	Student	Engaged	Hindu	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English
15	F	21	Sri Lankan	Christian	Sri	Student	In a Relationship	Christian	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English/

16	F	25	British	Hindu	Lankan	Asian	Doctor	Relationship In a Relationship	Hindu	Tamil	London/ Leeds	Tamil
17	F	31	Sri Lankan	Christian	Sri Lankan	Sri Lankan	Research Assistant	Single	Christian	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English
18	F	29	British	Hindu	Sri Lankan Tamil	Sri Lankan Tamil	Science Teacher	Single	Hindu	Tamil	London	English/ Tamil
19	F	26	British Sri Lankan	Christian	Asian	Asian	Account Manager-Marketing	Single	Christian	Tamil	London	English
20	F	21	British Sri Lankan	Christian	Sri Lankan	Sri Lankan	Student	Single	Christian	Tamil	London/ Leeds	English

Appendix C

Sri Lankan Interviewee Data

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Nationality	Religion	Ethnicity	Occupation	Marital Status	Religion of Parents	Ethnicity of Parents	International School	Languages Spoken
1	M	21	Sri Lankan	Hindu/Buddhist/ Atheist	Tamil/Sinhala	Student	Single	Mixed	Tamil/Sinhala	Yes	Sinhala/English
2	F	25	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Import and Export	Married	Hindu	Tamil	Yes	Tamil/Sinhala/ English
3	F	20	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Student	Single	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English
4	F	20	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Student	In a Relationship	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/English
5	F	24	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Student	Single	Hindu	Tamil	Yes	Tamil/ English
6	F	26	Sri Lanka/ British	Hindu	Tamil	Microbiologist	Single	Hindu	Tamil	Yes	Tamil/ English
7	M	23	Sri Lankan	Christian (Converted)	Tamil	Student	Single	Hindu/ Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English
8	M	26	Sri Lankan	Christian/ Hindu	Tamil	Analyst	Single	Hindu/ Christian	Tamil	Yes	Tamil/ English
9	M	29	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Marketing	Single	Hindu	Tamil	Yes	Tamil/ English
10	M	34	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Television	Married	Hindu	Tamil	?	English
11	M	22	Sri Lankan	Christian (Converted)	Tamil	Education	Single	Hindu	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
12	F	22	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Programming	Single	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
13	F	30	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Project Coordinator	Single	Hindu/ Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ Sinhala/ English
14	M	24	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Tennis Coach	In a Relationship	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
15	M	27	Sri Lankan	N/A	Tamil	Finance	Single	Unknown	Tamil	Yes	English
16	M	24	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Tennis Coach	In a Relationship	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English
17	M	22	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Student	In a Relationship	Unknown	Tamil	Yes	Tamil/ English
18	F	17	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Student	Single	Christian	Tamil	No	English
19	F	27	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Lecturer	Married	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
20	M	24	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	I.T Manager	Single	Hindu	Tamil/ Indian	Yes	Tamil/ English
21	M	19	Sri Lankan/ Canadian	Hindu	Tamil	Student	Single	Hindu	Tamil	Yes	Tamil/ English/ Spanish
22	F	27	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil (Indian)	Programme Officer	Single	Hindu	Tamil/ Indian	No	English/ Tamil/ English/ Tamil/

23	F	34	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Database Officer	Single	Hindu	Tamil	No	Sinhala
24	M	28	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Unknown	Single	Hindu	Tamil	Yes	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
25	M	14	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Student	Single	Christian	Tamil	No	English
26	F	24	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Secretary	Single	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
27	M	21	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Banking	Single	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
28	F	25	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Executive	Single	Hindu	Tamil	No	English/ Tamil
29	M	31	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Finance Analyst	Single	Christian	Tamil	Yes	English
30	M	32	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil (Indian)	Finance Corporate	Single	Hindu	Tamil (Indian)	Yes	English/ Tamil/ Sinhala
31	F	30	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Customer Relations	Engaged	Christian	Tamil	No	English
32	F	24	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Accounting	Single	Hindu	Tamil	No	English/ Tamil/ Hindi
33	F	25	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Accounting	Single	Hindu	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English
34	F	23	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Therapy Secretary	Single	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
35	F	31	Sri Lankan	Christian	Tamil	Therapist	Single	Christian	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
36	M	26	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Coordinator	Single	Hindu	Tamil	No	Tamil/ English/ Sinhala
37	F	29	Sri Lankan	Hindu	Tamil	Accounting	Single	Hindu	Tamil	Yes	English/ Tamil

Appendix D

Sri Lankan Fieldwork Fundraising Activities

2005- Sri Lankan Fieldwork Fundraising Event, Leeds (£400)

Organised a Sri Lankan themed party night for friends and family at a bar in Leeds city centre, including a raffle with prizes donated by Morrison's, Sainsbury's and WH Smiths. Each person gave a voluntary contribution towards the fund.

2005- Sri Lankan Fieldwork Fundraising Event, The Grove School, East Sussex (£400)

Visited my secondary school in Hastings and gave a talk to the students about Sri Lanka and my research. The school held a non-school uniform day and the profits were split between a charity in Sri Lanka helping in the aftermath of the tsunami and my own fieldwork fund.

2005- The Isabel Blackman Foundation Bursary, East Sussex (£500)

Small charity who support the advancement of education and social well being in particular by the provision of scholarships and awards for teachers, graduates and students.

2005- British Sociological Association Small Grant (£250)

Awarded as a contribution to my fieldwork accommodation costs in Sri Lanka.

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