The Craft of Belonging: Exploring the Resettlement Experiences of Young Tamil Survivors of Sri Lanka's Civil War in Australia

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Abstract

Belonging and memory, shaped by social and political conditions of civil war and forced migration, are the central themes of this thesis. I explore the life stories of thirty-six young Tamil people who arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s at the height of Sri Lanka's civil war. The thesis demonstrates that life story, in its depth and richness of human experiences, is useful for examining Tamil people's constructions of belonging over their life course: escaping civil war and persecution, rebuilding a sense of home in a new land, and reconstructing connections to the homeland in a post-war context. They do not simply choose to belong or not belong. Instead, young Tamils craft strategies and coping mechanisms that emphasise ongoing processes of belonging, against social and governmental structures that reinforced their marginalisation. In doing so, their resettlement experiences complicate scholarly assumptions of the 'successful' Sri Lankan Tamil migrant in Australia.

The study collects insights into how young Tamils skilfully challenged their marginalised status, as subjects who have fled persecution in the homeland and as migrants of colour in the new land, thus articulating multiple ways of belonging in a multicultural Australia that is closely guarded by white Australians. It enables Tamil people to give meaning to their lives and explore and challenge their histories and cultures which have been repressed in Australian society.

The analysis shows that belonging, as personal and political, was crafted by Sri Lankan and Australian nation-states through political projects that undermined Tamil people's persecution in the homeland and claims to refugee status. Against state crafts however exist the memories, both individual and collective, of Tamil people that reinstate their persecution, thus providing evidence of the enduring memories of war in resettlement. In rebuilding a sense of home in Australia, Tamils remember the continuities of homeland practices, such as religion and language, that reproduced their belongingness across lands, albeit in fragmented ways. At the same time, they recalled experiences of intergenerational tensions, racialised school spaces, and intra-community struggles that unravelled a key tension in their lives: to what extent did the homeland in civil war affect their resettlement experiences and which social and political conditions shaped them?

The thesis focuses on how Tamils remembered growing up in Australia. Remembering, I demonstrate, is key to understanding processes of belonging and is always under

construction. Hardships of forced migration and resettlement were central in young Tamil people's lives, they use these memories to *craft* belonging, in which their agency defines the essence of being displaced as young forced migrants. The memories form part of a broader story of how one group of migrants' determination, strength and resilience has generated insights into the enduring past – and serves as a reminder of the complexity of resettlement amidst the estrangement of forced migration as a young person.

Declaration

(i) This thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the preface;

(ii) Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and

(iii)The thesis is fewer than the 100, 000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices. Footnotes are included as part of the word limit.

Preface

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List of Abbreviations

ESL English as a Second Language

HSC Higher School Certificate

IPKF Indian Peacekeeping Forces

LGBTQI Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex

LTTE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

SBS Special Broadcasting Service

SHP Special Humanitarian Program

TCC Tamil Coordinating Committee

TELO Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation

TLS Tamil Language School

TRC Tamil Resource Centre

TRO Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation

TULF Tamil United Liberation Front

TYO Tamil Youth Organisation

VCE Victorian Certificate of Education

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INTRODUCTION

At this time of renewed assertion from the Australian Government that Australia remains 'the most successful multicultural society in the world',[1] it is important to interrogate the supposed 'successful' resettlement story of Sri Lankan Tamils who were among the first migrants to arrive after the end of the White Australia Policy in the 1970s.[2] When compared to Canada and Western Europe, the scholarship and public discourse portrayed Tamil people who arrived in Australia as professionals who achieved upward economic mobility.[3] In this depiction, the Australian nation-state is tolerant and inclusive, and this has further legitimated and enhanced narratives of how Sri Lankan migrants successfully belonged *to* their new country.[4] However, this narrative does not highlight the challenges that Tamil people faced as they were reconciling experiences of war and constructing a sense of home in Australia. This thesis seeks to complicate understandings of Sri Lankan migrant experiences in Australia, by exploring the resettlement of young Tamil forced migrants who fled Sri Lanka's civil war in the 1980s and 1990s.[5] I demonstrate how young Tamils crafted a sense of belonging *in* Australia on their terms that bring to relief their life stories of war, survival and resilience.[6]

In this thesis I show that young Tamil forced migrants, as subjects of Australia's successful multiculturalism narrative, were marginalised in their status as non-white migrants: they were required to integrate into Australian society. The object, in Australia, was its 'inclusive exclusion' – the nation-state's inclusion of anyone served the exclusion of non-national

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[1] Australian Government, 'Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful,' Australia's Multicultural Statement, 2018. Accessed on December 15, 2018. https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/Statements/english-multicultural-statement.pdf.

[2] Australia has a long-held tradition of resettling Tamil people from Sri Lanka since at least the 1960s. The Eliezer family appear to be one of the first to permanently resettle in Australia in the late 1960s. James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*: *The Story of Australian Immigration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35; Ranee Eliezer, *Conquering Scientist – A Biography of Emeritus Professor Christie J. Eliezer AM 1918-2001* (Victoria: La Sha Prints, 2012).

[3] Manohari Velamati, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Migration and Settlement: Time for Reconsideration,' *India Quarterly* Vol. 65, No. 3 (2009), 285; Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera,* 15.

[4] Palitha Ganewatta, 'Australia,' in *The Encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora,* ed., Peter Reeves (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2013), 164; W.S. Weerasooria, *Links between Sri Lanka and Australia: A Book about the Sri Lankans (Ceylonese) in Australia* (Colombo: Sri Lankan Government Press, 1988); Rodney Arambewela and Cedric Forster, *Glimpses of Sri Lankan and Australian Relations: Commemorative Volume to Mark Sri Lanka's 50 years of Independence and Diplomatic Relations with Australia* (Victoria: Committee for Sri Lanka, 1998).

[5] The thesis conception is attached with the ARC Laureate Fellowship Project 'Child Refugees and Australian Internationalism: 1920s to the Present' that is led by Professor Joy Damousi.

[6] Mary Hawkins et al., 'Introduction,' in *Identity and Belonging,* eds., M. Hawkins et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1-4.

modes of identity and belonging.[7] Multiculturalism embraced cultural differences for the *nation's sake*.[8] By examining processes of belonging in more agentic terms, the thesis complicates Australia's multiculturalism.[9] Following Vikki Bell, it begins with the premise that one does not simply belong to the world or any group within it.[10] In migration studies belonging is concerned with how self-identification is sustained through complex incorporations to place.[11] But in the same way that Lyn Abrams challenged us to think about the role of memory as being key to our identity,[12] this thesis challenges us to think about belonging as a complex process that is connected to the past, individual and society, and contexts that go beyond migrant/nation-state dichotomies. The term *'craft'* is meant to capture these complexities of belonging in resettlement.[13]

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[7] Stephen Turner, '"Inclusive Exclusion': Managing Identity for the Nation's Sake in Aotearoa/New Zealand,' *Arena Journal* No. 28, (2007), 87-106.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Keith Jacobs, *Experience and Representation: Contemporary Perspectives on Migration in Australia* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011); David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 185-1939* (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2012).
[10] Vikki Bell, 'Performativity and Belonging: An Introduction,' in *Performativity and Belonging*, ed., V. Bell (London: Sage, 1999), 1-10.
[11] Vikki Bell, ed., *Performativity and Belonging*; Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space and Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Christina M. Getrich, 'Negotiating Boundaries of Social Belonging: Second-Generation Mexican Youth and the Immigrant Rights Protests of 2006,' *American Behavioural Scientist* Vol. 52, No. 4 (2008), 533-556; Maurice Crul and Jens Scheider, 'Comparative Integration Context Theory: Participation and Belonging in New Diverse European cities,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 33, No. 7 (2010), 1249-1268; Marco Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework,' *Geography Compass* Vol. 4, No. 6 (2010), 644; Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 19; Floya Anthias, 'Belongings in a Globalising and Unequal World: Rethinking Translocations,' in *The Situated Politics of Belonging*, eds., Nira Yuval-Davis et al. (London: Sage, 2006), 19; Tuuli Lähdesmäki et al., 'Fluidity and Flexibility of "Belonging": Uses of the Concept in Contemporary Research,' *Acta Sociologica* Vol. 59, No. 3 (2016), 233-247; Ann-Dorte Christensen, 'Belonging and Unbelonging from an Intersectional Perspective,' *Gender, Technology and Development* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2009), 21-41.
[12] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2016), 82.
[13] I borrow the phrase, 'craft of belonging,' from a symposium I attended on May 17-18, 2018 at the University of Oxford where I was undertaking a student fellowship at the Refugee Studies Centre. The symposium was titled, 'Crossing Borders/Crossing Disciplines: Rethinking Inclusion, Exclusion, and Human Mobility.' It was held at the Nazrin Shah Auditorium at Worcester College, Oxford. The 'craft of belonging' session I attended was chaired by Nicholas Van Hear and TORCH Migration and Mobility Network and the Oxford Migration Studies Society. I drew inspiration from the session, which had covered a variety of topics related to migrant belongingness in different social and political contexts in the UK and Europe. While the topics covered in the session were broad, Van Hear drew attention to the multifarious landscapes of belonging and human mobility as constantly shifting sites and boundaries across global, national, and local scales: What are the various scales and moments at which inclusion and exclusion appear? Who includes and who excludes? Where do processes of inclusion and exclusion take place? What effects do they have on individual, regional, national or international levels?

The craft work of belonging provides a framework that can expose how young Tamil people have navigated their lives amidst existing boundaries of belonging. In the thesis I identify and explore key boundaries in which young Tamils negotiated their belonging: in the Australian Government's identification of Tamils as migrants rather than refugees – despite Tamils fleeing due to war and persecution; in the Sri Lankan Government's constructions of young Tamils as a threat to the nation-state; in formal structures of Tamil cultural spaces such as Hindu temples and Tamil Language Schools; in school spaces, in which pressures for educational success combined with social exclusion and family violence had produced traumatic experiences; and in gendered spaces of Tamil political organising. The thesis shows how young Tamils crafted a sense of belonging in these spaces over the life course, in ways that challenged *and* reinforced the power dynamics of those spaces.

In the thesis, I examine their memories in order to demonstrate how young Tamils have crafted a sense of belonging. As a social construction, I follow Nira Yuval-Davis's view of belonging as being both personal and political, drawing attention to a fundamental point that individuals and groups can *do* belonging in several ways.[14] Here belonging refers to 'practices, experiences and emotions'.[15] I advance these understandings of belonging by shedding light on the role of memory in processes of belonging. If memory as representations of the past is crucial to understanding the process of 'becoming' or 'being' someone – a 'Tamil' for example, then I suggest that memory is important for also understanding belonging processes. In the thesis, belonging and identity are viewed as interrelated concepts.[16] Like identity processes, the craft of belonging has no endpoint: it is the skilful, conscious, and at times unconscious, practice that captures the precise as well as imprecise assemblages of migrancy.

The process of belonging – experienced both as a sense of self and social standing, in terms of being socially valued or being excluded due to a given attribute of accent, ethnicity, race or being a refugee – have a significant impact on the resettlement experiences of young forced

[14] Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,' *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. 40, No 3 (2006), 197-214.
[15] Floya Anthias, 'Thinking through the Lens of Translocational Positionality: An Intersectionality Frame for understanding Identity and Belonging,' *Translocations: Migration and Social Change* Vol. 4, No. 1 (2008), 8.
[16] Paul Jones and Michal Krzyżanowski, 'Identity, Belonging and Migration: Beyond Constructing "Others",' in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, eds., Gerard Delanty et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 38-63.

migrants.[17] A sense of belonging is crucial to the subjective social status of young forced migrants who, by definition, have been cast out of their homeland, where belonging – to family, community and country – is threatened.[18] Thus, establishing a sense of belonging in resettlement is critical for their wellbeing.[19] However, in resettlement young forced migrants must locate themselves in a constantly changing cultural space, yet try to find security in spaces of their own, albeit fractured, families and communities.[20] Against these challenges exist their transitions from childhood to adolescence and adulthood.[21] Therefore, prioritising the voices of young people can open up discussions of belonging: how it takes place, what it can reveal about society and what it means to resettle in a new land.[22]

The thesis set out to explore a series of questions: How did young Tamils craft a sense of belonging in their resettlement? How did the different intersections of age, class, gender and legal status shape young Tamils' processes of belonging? How did they construct the civil war in the homeland, both through lived experiences and family stories? How did they build a sense of home in resettlement? How do they cope with the difficulties of their past? How do under-represented groups within the Tamil community such as Tamil women, become involved in political organising that is a male-dominated space? In what ways do childhood experiences shape their current lives and aspirations for the future? These questions are underpinned by the main conceptual question of the study: what is the role of memory in young Tamil people's constructions of belonging? In examining the role of memory, the thesis seeks to understand how young Tamils perceived their sense of belonging within their

[17] Ignacio Correa-Velez et al., 'Longing to Belong: Social Inclusion and Wellbeing Among Youth with Refugee Backgrounds in the First Three Years in Melbourne, Australia,' *Social Science and Medicine* Vol. 71, No. 8 (2010), 1399-1408.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Maryam Kia-Keating and B. Heidi Ellis, 'Belonging and Connection to School in Resettlement: Young Refugees, School Belonging, and Psychosocial Adjustment,' *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry* Vol. 12, No. 1 (2007), 29-43; Kate O'Sullivan and Louise Olliff, 'Settling in: Exploring Good Settlement for Refugee Young People in Australia.' Policy Paper (Melbourne: Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, 2006).
[20] Min Zhou and Carl L. Bankston III, *Growing up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998); Charles Watters, *Refugee Children: Towards the Next Horizon* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008); Jill Rutter, *Refugee Children in the UK* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 1999).
[21] Correa-Velez et al., 'Longing to Belong,' 1399-1408.
[22] Mark Brough et al., 'Young Refugees Talk about Wellbeing: A Qualitative Analysis of Refugee Youth Mental Health from Three States,' *Australian Journal of Social Issues* Vol. 38, No. 2 (2016), 193-208; Jens Qvortrup et al. eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Allison James and Alan Prout, eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, second edition (London: Falmer Press 1997).

social constructions of school, family, and wider society. These questions ultimately prompt an enquiry into the newcomer in society, by examining how the Tamil adult remembers.

Memory as Methodology: The Adult Remembering the Young Person

In the thesis, I foreground the role of young Tamil people's past – lived experiences, family stories of war and memories of resettlement – to examine their belonging processes. For young Tamil people, belonging processes began in Sri Lanka where they fled due to war and persecution. However, the homeland entwined with their lives in the new land. The older Tamil generation was committed towards ancestral places, such as Jaffna, through cultural activities that not only constructed a sense of belonging to particular groups but created boundaries between them.[23] For example, as Thanges Paramsothy argued, *ur* (village) associations perpetuated caste hierarchies in diaspora contexts.[24] At the same time, outside of formal boundaries of belonging there existed subjective views about home and belonging that often entailed a 'sense of possibility' about expectations and aspirations for their future.[25] Thus, memory in the thesis is used to examine the temporal and spatial dimensions to belonging processes.

The thesis presents an exploration of how young Tamils who resettled in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s crafted a sense of belonging. In the absence of sources composed by young Tamils such as letters and diaries, I draw on the memories of thirty-six interviewees who were interviewed for this study. Their memories are not meant to be representative; it is concerned with impressions of the past that have been collected and preserved.[26] In this sense, the interviews of the study show how the 'present' that *makes* the 'past'.[27] Each interview was a rich description of one young Tamil person's life that began in Sri Lanka.[28] At the same time, there were similarities in their memories of the past, such as a collective

[23] Thanges Paramsothy, 'Caste within the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora: Ur Associations ant Territorial Belonging,' *Anthropology Matters Journal* Vol. 18, No. 1 (2018), 51-82.
[24] Ibid. I will return to a discussion of *ur* in chapter 4.
[25] Sharika Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House: Civil War in Sri Lanka* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 90.
[26] Lynn Abrams, 'Memory as Both Source and Subject of Study: The Transformations of Oral History,' in *Writing the History of Memory*, eds., Stefan Berger and Bill Niven (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 89-110.
[27] Leyla Neyzi, 'Gülümser's Story: Life History Narratives, Memory and Belonging in Turkey,' *New Perspectives in Turkey* Vol. 20 (1999), 1-26.
[28] Mary Chamberlain, 'Diasporic Memories: Community, Individuality, and Creativity – A Life Stories Perspective,' *The Oral History Review* Vol. 36, No. 2 (2009), 117-187.

sense of hatred towards the Sri Lankan nation-state that resulted in their forced migration.[29] For example, as part of a Tamil diaspora community with a shared past and their responsibilities to that past.[30] However, Tamil adult reflections of their childhood will never equate to children's own experiences; rather the interviewees revealed their past in ways that were meaningful to them in the present.

With older adults, who are the usual subjects of life story studies, recollections of the past tend to be located in their formative period of youth. However, as Leyla Neyzi's work on refugees showed, the past for young people gains significance primarily in terms of the present.[31] Since memory tends to work this way as well, focusing on young people is useful for exploring how the past operates in and for the present.[32] The people I interviewed resettled recently – in the 1980s and 1990s. Their recollections of the past are shaped by their current lives and aspirations for the future. Thus, as Luisa Passerini and Alessandro Portelli have demonstrated, memory is more than a storage space of facts; it gives meaning to pasts.[33]

However, the work of scholars such as Marianne Hirsch has shown how the past lives in the present.[34] Hirsch's concept of postmemory is useful for highlighting intergenerational returns to traumatic knowledge which I explore in chapter 6 of the thesis to construct Tamil women's experiences of Sri Lanka's civil war.[35] The Tamil women's traumatic memories of the past were entangled in their everyday lives. Their memories highlighted young Tamil people's unreached childhood aspirations such as safety and stability, but also their hopes and desires

[29] This is not to suggest that Tamil collective memories of persecution under the Sri Lankan nation-state is only in relation to the 1983 and post 1983-period. As Laavanyan Ratnapalan argued, it is necessary to consider the complex relationships between historical events in Sri Lanka prior to 1983, across generations, and over time, in response to political changes. I refer more explicitly to the Tamil massacre in 1983 as it was a key historical event that culminated in the forced migration of several interviewees of this study. Laavanyan M. Ratnapalan, 'Before and After 1983: The Impact of Theorising Sri Lankan Tamil Migration History around the 1983 Colombo Riots,' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* Vol. 37, No. 2 (2014), 281-291.
[30] Bahar Baser and Ashok Swain, 'Stateless Diaspora Groups and their Repertoires of Nationalist Activism in Host Countries,' *Journal of International Relations* Vol. 8, No. 1 (2010), 37-60.
[31] Neyzi, "Gülümser's Story,' 1-26.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Luisa Passerini, 'Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism,' *History Workshop Journal* Vol. 8, No. 1 (1979), 82-10; Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different?,' in *The Oral History Reader*, eds., Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, third edition (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 48-58.
[34] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997); Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
[35] Ibid.

for the future.[36] In this way, the thesis argues that memory as a methodology is key to showing the multiple ways that young Tamil people crafted ongoing processes of belonging.

Furthermore, people's constructions of the past are tied to the communities in which they are embedded.[37] The memories and memory work in the thesis offer insights into a 'dynamic' Tamil diaspora community.[38] I take Steven Vertovec's understanding of diaspora as a 'social form', 'type of consciousness', and 'mode of cultural production',[39] and treat the concept as a 'category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group',[40] to capture the variegated landscape of the Tamil diaspora.[41] The personal memories in the thesis can be embedded within a collective Tamil memory of war and resettlement, in which resettlement is characterised as negotiating Tamil values of family, language, religion and education while striving to navigate a new social world. These negotiations were evident when interviewees repeatedly stated phrases such as, 'I was torn between two cultures and it was so hard.'[42] In this extract from one interviewee, Nivetha's, interview, she repeated that resettlement sometimes felt more difficult than their lives in Sri Lanka:

> I was really angry with my mum because in Colombo I had such a free life. I really had the freedom in Colombo. We had these fates, friends and suddenly to just pack up and leave all that and then to start school here was just a nightmare. It's a totally different lifestyle. That was just the start. I got really frustrated with my mum because she brought me here but wasn't ready to live life the Australian way. But then in my mind I already decided that I wouldn't do anything against my mum's wishes, I started to balance life.[43]

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[36] Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995); Michael S. Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History: Essays on Living with the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
[37] Rachel Seoighe, *War, Denial and Nation-building in Sri Lanka: After the End*. Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 13.
[38] Luxshi Vimalarajah and R. Cheran, 'Empowering Diasporas: The Dynamics of Post-war Transnational Tamil Politics.' Berghof Occasional Paper No. 31 (Berlin: Berghof Peace Support, 2010).
[39] Steven Vertovec, 'Three Meanings of "Diaspora", Exemplified among South Asian Religions,' *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* Vol. 6, No. 3 (1997), 278.
[40] Rogers Brubaker, 'The "Diaspora" Diaspora,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 28, No. 1 (2005), 13.
[41] Ann-Belinda Steen, *Varieties of the Tamil refugee experience in Denmark and England* (Copenhagen: Minority Studies, 1993); Christopher McDowell, *A Tamil Asylum Diaspora: Sri Lankan Migration, Settlement and Politics in Switzerland* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1996); Øivind Fuglerud, *Life on the Outside: The Tamil Diaspora and Long-Distance Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999). Amarnath Amarasingam, *Pain, Pride and Politics* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015).
[42] Interview with Nivetha. Melbourne, August 10, 2016.
[43] Ibid.

Revealingly, personal memories of the past often collapsed into collective experiences at key moments in the interviews, for example when interviewees recalled collective childhood experiences in Sri Lanka, such as Nivetha's use of 'we' that put into perspective their intergenerational tensions in resettlement. Another recurring theme from interviews was how memories of the past gave meaning to the present such as in the adoption of more open and flexible parenting styles. At several points throughout his interview, Rajiv explained that he tries to communicate more with his children 'so that they don't go through the same things', when he explained the traumas of being bullied at high school:

> If you tried to explain to them (parents) that you were being bullied [at school] and you didn't want to go to school back home [in Sri Lanka] then that's normal because bullying at school is normal, kids are troubling each other that's normal you tell the teacher and get over it. Here they didn't take any action or consider it a serious matter, but it is serious. Trying to explain to the parents it's hard because they've never grown up here.[44]

What Rajiv considered a 'normal' collective Tamil experience of bullying in Sri Lanka is contrasted to his individual experience in Australia. However, untangling the individual memory from collective memory is almost impossible because memory, as Jeffrey Olick argued, is 'social' in the sense that there is: 'no personal memory outside of group experience and that does not take some stand on 'official' and 'unofficial' collective versions.'[45]

The aim of the thesis is not to debate individual and collective memory, instead, I seek to identify and inquire into how the individual and society are interlinked processes.[46] Indeed, personal memories are shaped by powerful collective myths, traditions and narratives.[47] For most of my interviewees, their recollections of rebuilding a sense of home in resettlement were tied to cultural memories of Tamil language and Hindu religious practices and their negotiations of that cultural memory, as explored in chapter 4 of the thesis.[48] A powerful connection to Tamil culture surrounds this war generation, albeit in fragmented ways that

[44] Interview with Rajiv. Sydney, December 11, 2015.
[45] Jeffrey K. Olick, 'Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,' *Sociological Theory* Vol. 17, No. 3 (1999), 346.
[46] Ibid., 333-348.
[47] Rafael Samuel and Paul Thompson, *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 1990).
[48] Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 1-9; Marianne Q. Fibiger, 'Young Hindus in Denmark and their Relationship to Tradition and Collective Memory,' *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration* Vol. 5, No. 2 (2010), 24-32.

sustained their sense of belonging to a Tamil diaspora community. In Sabesan's memories, individual and collective experiences had crafted his way of life:

> For me the Tamil culture is the way that we live here so for me and how I try to live in Australia is to take what is practical from the Tamil culture and mix it with the Australian lifestyle. For example, a lot of my dad's side of the family have been in Australia for about the same time as us so I've been taught how to respect by dad's older brothers, so I would call them *periyappa* – I don't call them by their names.[49]

As Sebesan highlights, the individual experience is often part of a collective experience crafted over time. Resettlement in Australia in interviewees' memories is a period in which they had to negotiate belongingness between the self and society in a new land while remaining aware of their position as outsiders. Tamils from Sri Lanka were a relatively new immigrant group in Australia in the early 1980s with little influence or impact to bring about much research analysis.[50] The following decade, however, would produce a highly fragmented community rather than a unified, homogenous one that called for new conceptualisations, new focus areas and community involvement.[51]

Young Tamils in Sri Lanka: The War Generation

The civil war in Sri Lanka lasted twenty-six years from 1983-2009, however persecution against Tamil people can be traced to Sri Lanka's post-independence period from 1948.[52] Indeed, persecution against Tamil people continues almost ten years after the end of the war.[53] The intensification of armed conflict in Sri Lanka during the 1980s and 1990s,

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[49] Interview with Sebanesan. Sydney, May 20, 2016.
[50] Tania De Jong, *Complexities of the Sri Lankan Migrants in Australia* (Victoria: Slam Publishing Service, 1987); Sisiri K. Pinnawala, 'Sri Lankans in Melbourne: Factors Influencing Patterns of Ethnicity.' PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 1984.
[51] Siri Gamage, 'Curtains of Culture, Ethnicity and Class: The Changing Composition of the Sri Lankan Community in Australia,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1998), 37-65.
[52] Sri Lanka has been ruled by three different colonisers: Portuguese (1505-1658), Dutch (1658-1796), British (1815-1948). Ambalavaner Sivanandan observed that when Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948 it did so on the back of Indian nationalist struggles. Hence, it did not go through its own processes of nation building and this became the trappings of its characteristic democracy superimposed on a feudal infrastructure. Consequently, power remained at the hands of the feudal elite, the landed aristocracy, in this case the majority Sinhalese powers. The first Government under Sinhalese authority implemented a range of measures that disenfranchised Tamils across the island, thus setting the pattern of Tamil subjugation: 'racist legislature followed by Tamil resistance, followed by conciliatory Government gestures, followed by Opposition rejectionism, followed by anti-Tamil riots, instigated by Buddhist priests and politicians, escalating Tamil resistance, and so on.' Ambalavaner Sivanandan, 'Ethnic Cleansing in Sri Lanka,' *Race and Class* Vol. 51, No. 3 (2010), 61-62.
[53] Seoighe, *War, Denial and Nation-building.*

particularly in the North and East, resulted in the forced migration of hundreds of thousands of Tamil people to neighbouring countries, such as India, but also to Western countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Australia, the United States, France and Switzerland.[54]

During the same period, there was an exponential increase in human displacement that resulted in a dominant organisational focus on the politics of movement and young people: in 1988 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) formulated specific guidelines for recognising the needs and protections for young people affected by war and persecution.[55] A year later in 1989, the UNHCR created the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which became the most widely ratified human rights treaty, including in Australia in 1990, that recognised young people as independent agents with distinct preferences and rights. In practice, however, it remains difficult to locate descriptions, discussions or understandings of young Tamil forced migrants as historical agents within these international developments.[56] The focus on bureaucratic interventions has made it more prevalent for Tamil people in refugee circumstances to be approached not as historical actors with an agency but as mute victims.[57] In the thesis, I show how bureaucratic interventions have effectively produced a Tamil collective distance to the refugee label. In some ways, it did not matter how young Tamils identified themselves, however, for the Australian nation-

[54] The Tamil massacre in 1983, although not the first, became a defining historical moment for Tamil migration out of Sri Lanka and began more officially the beginning of the civil war between the Sri Lankan Government and Tamil armed separatist groups. From 1983 onwards, Tamil people began resettling in Australia under various migration streams, not only as humanitarian entrants. By 1997, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs in Australia had listed Tamil migration as one of the highest in New South Wales. This however included Tamil people not only from Sri Lanka, but South India, Malaysia, Singapore. Nevertheless, the period following 1983 remains significant in Tamil forced migration histories. Stanley J. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and The Dismantling of Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 112; James Jupp, *Immigration* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991); Dinuk Jayasuriya and Marie McAuliffe, 'Placing Recent Sri Lankan Maritime Arrivals in a Broader Migration Context,' Irregular Migration Research Program Occasional Paper Series 02/2013 (Canberra: Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013), 15; Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 'Population Flows: Immigration Aspects' (Canberra: Australian Government, 1997).

[55] UNHCR Guidelines for Refugee Children incorporated aspects of different global humanitarian developments including international norms relevant to the protection and care of refugee children, executive committee conclusions, and technical guidance from UNHCR's Working Group on Refugee Children, insights from NGOs and UN specialised serviced and agencies. UNHCR, 'Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care' (Geneva: UNHCR, 1994), 70.

[56] Jason Hart, 'Locating Young Refugees Historically: Attending to Age Position in Humanitarianism,' in *Generationing Development: A Relational Approach to Children, Youth and Development*, ed., Roy Huijsmans (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 35-57.

[57] Liisa H. Malkki, 'Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization,' *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 11, No. 3 (1996), 377-404.

state was already using the figure of the child to maintain its colonial legacy of whiteness that silenced the experiences of non-white children. I will return to this shortly.

Research into young Tamils from Sri Lanka offers an important contribution to studies of young forced migrants in that it genuinely engages young people's knowledge rather than adult-centred views of war and resettlement. During the early stages of civil war in the 1980s, the scholarship portrayed young Tamil people as still being trapped in a racist educational system and denied economic mobilities that reinforced their 'frustrations' with politicians – both Tamil and Sinhalese.[58] Early scholarly investigations that incorporated young Tamils affected by war such as Daya Somasundaram's *Scarred Minds: The Psychological Impact of War on Sri Lankan Tamils* (1998) or Stanley J. Tambiah's *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (1986) were motivated by the dialectic relationship between victimisation and armed resistance, between 'innocent' and 'armed militant'.[59] In public discourse young Tamil people were viewed as vulnerable and lacked the developmental maturity to cope with stressors of war including recruitment into armed militancy, and thus they needed to be protected from harmful (adult-instigated) activities.[60] While debate exists about what constituted agency in response to both institutionalised and everyday power structures in Sri Lanka's war context, in the thesis I am interested more in how the agency of the individual embedded in their socio-political contexts.

However, any attempt to build an overall picture of young Tamils in Sri Lanka must consider the Tamil world views within which their wolds circulated.[61] As Sharika Thiranagama argued, 'Tamil militancy and relations within the movement are not examples of Tamil society as a whole.'[62] In contexts of war, young Tamil people were required to be *menmai* (greatness) and be supportive of the Tamil liberation struggle, for example, Margaret Trawick's *Enemy Lines: Warfare, Childhood, and Play in Batticaloa* (2007) captured their collectivism that was tied to the Tamil liberation struggle and achieving educational success

[58] Ambalavaner Sivanandan, 'Sri Lanka: Racism and the Politics of Underdevelopment,' *Race and Class* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1984), 1-37.
[59] Daya Somasundaram, *Scarred Minds: The Psychological Impact of War on Sri Lankan Tamils* (New Delhi: Sage, 1998); Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide.*
[60] Hanne Beirens, 'UNHCR and the Military Recruitment of Adolescents,' in *Years of Conflict: Adolescence, Political Violence and Displacement*, ed., Jason Hart (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 147-149.
[61] Joke Schrijvers, 'Fighters, Victims and Survivors: Constructions of Ethnicity, Gender and Refugeeness among Tamils in Sri Lanka,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 12, No. 3 (1999), 307-333.
[62] Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House,* 213.

while maintaining family values of reputation, gender and generational power relations.[63] However, it was the seminal socio-historical work of Thiranagama's *In My Mother's House* (2011), published after the end of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009, that reproduced the voices of young Tamils – in their negotiations of 'Tamilness', which in the late 1980s and 1990s became a period of personal and political crisis.[64] My thesis differs from Thiranagama's focus on the ways belonging to armed militant groups remade and transformed young Tamil people from different backgrounds into a collective group with shared goals.[65] I am more interested in situating young Tamil people who did not enter movements. Why do fragmented and vague experiences – personal and family stories – of a distant past continue to be given significance in the life stories of young Tamils who resettled in Australia? This is a key question which I will be exploring.

Socio-historically Constructing Young Tamil Forced Migrants

In comparison to studies of young Tamils in Sri Lanka, scholarly interest in young Tamil forced migrants who resettled in Western countries such as Australia is a recent development. While young people and their resettlement experiences were previously lumped with adult experiences, there has been a relatively recent emergence of critical historiography that focuses on young people.[66] However, like any social group, young people's voices need to be heard, not least because their experiences are useful for informing work done in different disciplines such as law and social policy.[67] To overlook the resettlement experiences of young forced migrants is to overlook the historical record that is crucial to predominantly migrant nations such as Australia where marginalised groups such as Tamils from Sri Lanka remain under-examined.[68]

Charting young Tamil people's resettlement experiences and their sense of belonging in Australia, as the thesis seeks to do, constructs young people not biologically but socio-

[63] Margaret Trawick, *Enemy Lines: Warfare, Childhood, and Play in Batticaloa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
[64] Thiranamaga, *In My Mother's House*, 201.
[65] Ibid., 41-76.
[66] Joy Damousi, *Memory and Migration in the Shadow of War: Australia's Greek Immigrants after World War 2 and the Greek Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[67] Jason M. Pobjoy, *The Child in International Refugee Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[68] Paul L. Arthur, ed., *Migrant Nation: Australian Culture, Society and Identity* (London: Anthem Press, 2018).

historically.[69] In the specific context of Tamil migration, historians have been more concerned with adult conceptions of young people than with young people themselves, although this is changing.[70] However, there is still a tendency to separate histories of young Tamils, which deal with their actual experiences in the past, and social constructions of their experiences in the past, which deal with ideas that circulated in their worlds that are equally important.[71] A more productive way is to approach studies of young peoples and ideas related to them within interdisciplinary perspectives.[72] Allison James and colleagues understand the young person as 'being', that is, as 'a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences – in sum, as a social actor.'[73]

Thus, I view the young Tamil person as not marginal to society and awaiting integration as adults, but as a constant component across space and time, thus supporting a key contention of the thesis: continuity and change are crucial elements to understanding commonality but also the diverse social space of young Tamils.[74] At the same time, their lives have been clearly structured by adult institutions and discourses.[75] Thus, the thesis considers experiences and ideas related to young Tamils resettled in Australia's multiculturalism era, as a way to contribute to the broader scholarly agenda that seeks to understand young people's experiences within a globalised world.[76] Crucially, the thesis identifies the knowledge, skills and roles that young Tamils 'should' have acquired and which were viewed as being 'natural' in certain contexts, such as school. Some interviewees experienced conflict with dominant constructions of young people not only in their new society but *within their* Tamil diaspora community.

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[69] William A. Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, second edition (California: Pine Forge Press, 2005). Philippe Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood* is cited in scholarship as a formative social history for understanding childhood as a socio-historical construction. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*: *A Social History of Family Life*. Translated by Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1965).
[70] Murugar Gunasingam, *Diaspora Tamils from Sri Lanka: A Global Study* (Sydney: MV Publications, 2014).
[71] Ibid.
[72] Allison James et al., 'Theorizing Childhood,' in *Childhood: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, ed., Chris Jenks (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 138-160.
[73] Ibid, 148.
[74] Allison James and Adrian L. James, *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 70-74.
[75] Allison James and Alan Prout, 'Heirarchy, Boundary and Agency: Toward a Theoretical Perspective on Childhood,' in *Sociological Studies of Children*, eds., Nancy Mandell and Anne-Marie Ambert (Connecticut: JAI Press 1995), 81.
[76] Louise Holt and Sarah L. Holloway, 'Editorial: Theorising other Childhoods in a Globalised World,' *Children's Geographies* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2006), 135-142.

Social constructions of young Tamils relate to multiple historical contexts as Tamil survivors of civil war, migrants of colour in a postcolonising nation-state, and a new generation navigating multiple social and cultural intergenerational tensions within an increasingly transnational Tamil community.[77] Even though they are physically distant from Sri Lanka, young Tamil people play an active role in sustaining Tamil culture by participating in activities such as Tamil language classes, song, dance and drum classes that constitute regular Tamil identity learning.[78] Writing from the Australian context, Nirukshi Perera coined this 'Tamil Weekends' to capture not only the myriad of Tamil activities intensively fitted into weekends but to show how young people imagined a Tamil community as one in which they belonged.[79] A study of young Tamils in Canada complicated the intensity of this belonging, by identifying competing belonging processes across Tamil and Western cultures.[80]

Furthermore, young Tamils are constructed within collective aspirations for maintaining strong intergenerational relationships.[81] Tamil family life has revolved around the Tamil child, as scripted from ancient Sangam period literature relating to Tamil ways of life.[82] During the civil war, the Tamil child was central to modern representations of warfare

[77] Athithan Jayapalan, 'Politics of Primordial Loyalties and its Transnational Dimensions: Tamilness as Pan-ethnic and Supranational,' *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* Vol. 17, No.2 (2017), 251.
[78] Stine Bruland, 'Nationalism as Meaningful Life Projects: Identity Construction Among Politically Active Tamil Families in Norway,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 35, No. 12 (2012), 2134-2152; Ann R. David, 'Performing for the Gods? Dance and Embodied Ritual in British Hindu Temples,' *South Asian Popular Culture* Vol 7, No. 3 (2009), 218.
[79] Nirukshi Perera, 'Talking Tamil, Talking Saivism: Language Practices in a Tamil Hindu Temple in Australia,' PhD dissertation, Monash University, 2017, 173-174; Thusinta Somalingam, 'Tamil Diaspora Schools – Ethnic-National Education in a Transnational Space,' *Transnational Social Review: A social Work Journal* Vol. 2, No.2 (2012), 33-39.
[80] Amarnath Amarasingam, 'Religion and Ethnicity among Sri Lankan Tamil Youth in Ontario,' *Canadian Ethnic Studies* Vol. 40, No.2 (2008), 149-169.
[81] Miriam George et al., 'Rather Than Talking in Tamil, They Should Be Talking to Tamils: Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee Readiness for Repatriation,' *Refugee Survey Quarterly* Vol. 34, No.2 (2015), 1-22; Siri Gamage, 'Adaptation Experience of Sri Lankan Immigrants and Their Children in Australia in the Context of Multiculturalism and Anglo-conformity,' in *Exploring Cultural Perspectives: Integration and Globalization*, eds., Anne Richardson and Michael Wyness (Edmonton: International Cultural Research Network Press, 2002), 3-29; Suresh Canagarajah, 'Language Shift and the Family: Questions from the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora,' *Journal of Sociolinguistics* Vol. 12, No. 1 (2008), 143-176; Vappu Tyyskä, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Families in Canada: Problems, Resiliency, and Intergenerational Solidarity,' *Family Science Review* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2015), 47-64; Suresh Canagarajah, 'Styling One's Own in the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora: Implications for Language and Ethnicity,' *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* Vol. 11, No. 2 (2012), 124-135.
[82] The Sangam period refers to an ancient Tamil period from 3rd century BC to 3rd century AD in modern day South India. Key Tamil literatures are believed to have emerged during this period that have shaped Tamil traditions, values and ways of life.

created by the LTTE.[83] The centrality of the young did not change in diaspora contexts. Young Tamils were made much of by their parents, and existing research generally points to realities of youth resilience, empathy and good relationships with parents that reciprocated traditional Tamil values.[84] However, in comparison to young Tamils who recently migrated, Tamils who have lived overseas for longer periods tended to experience greater intergenerational tensions that challenged their positionality and power within family and community spaces.[85]

Due to the profound unsettling of life due to forced migration and the impossibility of return due to ongoing violence in the homeland, young Tamils faced intergenerational tensions tied to competing values that mainly related to education, upholding cultural traditions and activities including traditional gender patterns.[86] On this last point, the intersections of gender and age call into question how configurations of power hierarchies (in different spaces) shaped Tamil belongingess that require further inquiry. Relatedly, this is important for contributing to studies that argue for gender as a key analytical dimension for examining Tamil women who produce a specific type of diasporic activity that is at once transnational and postcolonial.[87]

Young Tamils continuously reworked what it meant to be 'Tamil', framed as this is by historical narratives of war and forced migration.[88] While entering a new society as a young forced migrant offers new opportunities at life, it is important to consider how perspectives and attention to categories of age and gender can help complicate life trajectories, especially scholarly assumptions of Sri Lankan migration as 'successful'.[89] There remains very little

[83] Margaret Trawick, *Conflict and community in contemporary Sri Lanka: "Pearl of the East" or the "Island of Tears"?* (New Delhi: Sage, 1999).
[84] Tyyskä, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Families,' 47-64.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Shanthini R. Cowley-Sathiakumar, 'The Sri Lankan Tamils – A Comparative Analysis of the Experiences of the Second Generation in the UK and Sri Lanka,' PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 2008.
[87] Sivamohan Sumathy, 'The Middle Passage: Migration and Displacement of Sri Lankan Tamil Women of the Diaspora,' *Social Legal Review* Vol. 1, No.11 (2005), 11-29; Anuppiriya Sriskandarajah, 'Bounding Motherhood: The Case of Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in Canada,' *Women's Studies* Vol. 43 (2014), 911-929.
[88] Glynis George, 'The Canadian Diaspora and the Politics of Multiculturalism,' *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* Vol. 18, No. 5 (2011), 466.
[89] Oscar Curry et al., 'What Is "Successful" Resettlement? Refugee Narratives from Regional New South Wales in Australia,' *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* Vol. 16, No. 4 (2017), 430-448.

that is known about young forced migrant people's resettlement experiences.[90] Young people are only now becoming a subject of careful examination, as Paula Fass urged:

> We should begin by looking to the past in an effort to understand both the active roles that older children especially can play, and to understand just what children introduce into the migration calculus.[91]

As a contemporary phenomenon, the focus on young people in forced migration studies has become a burgeoning field of inquiry.[92] In Australia, the research focuses specifically on impacts of Government funded programmes including the education system,[93] well-being and mental health services,[94] as well as exploring their sexual health risks.[95] Notwithstanding the importance of this work, the thesis takes as its point of departure memory as a way of understanding specific historical periods and sociologies of forced migration. The existing research on Tamil people resettled in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s mirrors the breadth of topics covered in international scholarship such as language maintenance,[96] changing composition of the Sri Lankan community through culture, ethnicity and class,[97] identity and desire through South Indian films,[98] as well as their mental health needs.[99] This research points to the complex resettlement experiences of a Tamil community that continues to rebuild their lives in a new country and navigate multiple ways of belonging. However, in the

[90] Dawn Chatty, 'Researching Refugee Youth in the Middle East: Reflections on the Importance of Comparative Research,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2007), 267.
[91] Paula Fass, *Children of a New World: Society, Culture, and Globalisation* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 234.
[92] Niro Kandasamy, 'An Unequal Partnership: Resettlement Service Providers in Australia,' *Forced Migration Review* Vol. 54 (2017), 41-2.
[93] Louise Olliff and Jen Couch, 'Pathways and Pitfalls: The Journey of Refugee Young People in and around the Education System in Greater Dandenong,' *Youth Studies Australia* Vol. 24, No. 3 (2005), 42-46; Elizabeth Cassity and Greg Gow, 'Making up for Lost Time: The Experiences of Southern Sudanese Young Refugees in High Schools (Programs and practice),' *Youth Studies Australia* Vol. 24, No. 3 (2005), 51–55.
[94] Brough et al. 'Young Refugees Talk about Well-being,' 193-208.
[95] Celia McMichael and Sandra Gifford, 'Narratives of Sexual Health Risk and Protection Amongst Young People from Refugee Backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia,' *Culture, Health and Sexuality* Vol. 12, No. 3 (2010), 263-277.
[96] Sue Fernandez and Michael Clyne, 'Tamil in Melbourne,' *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2007), 169-187.
[97] Gamage, 'Curtains of Culture,' 37-56.
[98] Srilata Ravi, 'Tamil Identity and Diasporic Desire in a Kollywood Comedy: Nala Damayanti,' *South Asian Popular Culture* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2008), 45-56.
[99] Zachary Steel et al., 'Pathways from War Trauma to Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms Among Tamil Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Immigrants,' *Journal of Traumatic Stress* Vol. 12, No. 3 (1999), 421-435.

Australian context, aside from Perera's important socio-linguistic research,[100] our understandings of young Tamil people remain limited. Moreover, to my abilities I have not located any scholarship that explores in-depth Tamil people's resettlement experiences in Australia through their voices.

The Political World of Young Tamils who arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s

For interviewees of the study, arriving in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s was commonly described as a 'culture shock', as characterised by a key observation about their new resettlement setting from one interviewee: 'it was just one big migrant population.'[101] At the same time, their experiences indicated the hegemonic presence of Australian national identity – despite Australia undergoing a period of intensifying globalisation.[102] What emerged was a social climate that reinforced conceptions of a British heritage while at the same time championing multicultural diversity through a sense of belonging to a common national identity. In the 1980s, Government discourse on multiculturalism was a nation-building exercise.[103] As official public policy, multiculturalism encompassed Government measures designed for 'managing the consequences of cultural diversity in the interests of the individual and society.'[104] The implications of multiculturalism for the resettlement of forced migrants focused on processes of 'adapting', 'adjusting', 'integrating' and 'belonging'.[105]

Politically, multiculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s is closely associated with Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, who served as Australia's Prime Ministers (1983-1991 and 1991-1996, respectively). Both Hawke and Keating served as leaders of the Labor Party; their leadership is referred to as Hawke-Keating Government (1983-1996). This era in Australian politics is characterised by a 'managerial multiculturalism' that delivered administrative changes designed to reduce public provisions of migrant services and resulted in confusion and

[100] Perera, 'Talking Tamil'.
[101] Interview with Meera. Melbourne, October 23, 2016.
[102] Anthony Moran, *Australia: Nation, Belonging, and Globalisation* (New York: Routledge 2005), 49-86.
[103] For example, the Government developed a range of measures in response to its new multiculturalism agenda such as the Ethnic Affairs Taskforce of the Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs in 1982, Office of Multicultural Affairs in 1989, National Multicultural Advisory Council in 1999.
[104] Australian Government, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (Canberra: Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989), 1-2.
[105] Ibid.

mistrust of multiculturalism.[106] Moreover, support services were limited to specific situations of crisis and did not extend to normal practices such as the everyday needs of newly arrived school students.[107] For example, in the thesis I show that while English as a Second Language education (ESL) was available for newly arrived students, it had much less impact on students' social exchanges with teachers, peers or in parent-teacher interviews. It was not so much that multiculturalism amounted to nothing positive, rather that it powerfully suggested that multiculturalism as previously conceived was dead.[108] A managerialist multiculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s had distanced itself from the Malcolm Fraser Government-commissioned report in 1978, *Migrant Services and Programs*, which promoted a 'liberal multiculturalism'.[109] This report stated that successful resettlement of migrants was complex, a long-term process and required meaningful change by the host society, as well as the immigrant: 'its end point is the acceptance by and the feeling of belonging to the receiving society'.[110]

However, by the Keating Government years in the 1990s, meaningful social policy discussion about multiculturalism had been overshadowed by a zealous official discourse that celebrated cultural diversity.[111] It was able to do so in two respects. Firstly, in historical terms, it told Australian people that a shameful, racist past could be discarded within a multicultural frame. Secondly, in symbolic terms, it presented a harmonious image of Australian society that was tolerant and inclusive.[112] Ien Ang and Jon Stratton argued that the ideological project of multiculturalism produced a gap between official representations of 'multicultural Australia' and the contradictory everyday experiences and historical memories of its people.[113] By the late 1990s however, the continued effectivity of racialised discourses in the context of multiculturalism reproduced rigid binaries of 'white' versus 'Asian' and, as Ghassan Hage

[106] Laksiri Jayasuriya, 'Australian Multiculturalism Reframed,' *Australian Quarterly* Vol. 80, No. 3 (2008), 28.
[107] Deborah Mitchell, 'Family Policy,' in *New Developments in Australian Politics*, eds., Brian Galligan et al. (Melbourne: MacMillan Education Australia, 1997), 180-194.
[108] Lois Foster and David Stockley, 'The Rise and Decline of Australian Multiculturalism: 1973–1988,' *Politics* Vol. 23, No. 2 (1988), 1-10.
[109] Galbally Report, 'Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants, *Migrant Services and Programs*,' (Canberra: Australian Government, 1978).
[110] Ibid., 29.
[111] Ghassan Hage, 'Locating Multiculturalism's Other: A Critique of Practical Tolerance,' *New Formations* Vol. 24 (1994), 19; Ien Ang, 'The Curse of the Smile: Ambivalence and the "Asian" Woman in Australian Multiculturalism,' *Feminist Review* Vol. 52, No. 1 (1996), 36-49.
[112] Ien Ang and Jon Stratton, 'Multiculturalism in Crisis: The New Politics of Race and National Identity in Australia,' *TOPIA* Vol. 22, No. 2 (2006), 25.
[113] Ibid., 22-41.

observed, this placed 'Anglo-Celtic Australians in the position of power within discourses of tolerance.'[114]

Under the John Howard led-government (1996-2007), the model of multiculturalism was recast as constitutive of the Australian nation.[115] By December 1999, *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* had distanced itself from an 'access and equity' model and emphasised economic motivations for newly arrived migrants. In this context, the notion of belonging raises fundamental questions about the shifting meaning of identity, family, the influence of displacement, emotional attachments, and political boundaries articulated through national, ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations.[116] In response, scholars became interested in understanding the impacts of broader processes of multiculturalism and globalisation through a 'local' sense of belonging, that is, how migrants themselves felt about their new home.[117]

Belonging *to* Australia as a young 'Refugee'

The white nation fantasy of Australia was reinvented through multicultural tolerance that was the product of increased power for those already in control coupled with the resistance and struggle of migrant Australians.[118] Migrant belonging, however, was based on personal attachments to the fiction of Australia and the logic of capital that enabled dispossession of Aboriginal land.[119] In discussing Aboriginal-state relations, Joanne Faulkner has argued that Australia's settler-colonialism is shaped by a homelessness assigned to the other: 'native' and

[114] Hage, 'Locating Multiculturalism's Other,' 24.
[115] Jayasuriya, 'Australian Multiculturalism Reframed,' 27.
[116] Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Borders, Boundaries, and the Politics of Belonging,' in *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Minority Rights,* eds., Stephen May et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 214-230; Nira Yuval-Davis et al., 'Introduction: Situating Contemporary Politics of Belonging,' in *The Situated Politics of Belonging,* eds., N. Yuval-Davis et al. (London: Sage, 2006), 1-14.
[117] Val Colic-Peisker and Farida Tilbury, '"Active" and "Passive" Resettlement: The Influence of Support Services and Refugees' Own Resources on Resettlement Style,' *International Migration* Vol. 41, No. 5 (2004), 61-91; Ignacio Correa-Velez et al., "'We Are Not Here to Claim Better Services Than Any Other': Social Exclusion Among Men From Refugee Backgrounds in Urban and Regional Australia,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 26, No. 2 (2013), 163-186.
[118] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1999), 101.
[119] Peter Read foregrounds questions of belonging in a multicultural era, through the perspectives of different groups of people – young, old, migrants etc. Migrants interviewed for the book felt that they belonged in Australia because they had chosen to live here and contributed to the building of the nation with their labour. Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000).

'child'.[120] The forced removal of Aboriginal children, effected through a century (1869-1986) of official policy, symbolised Australia's constructions of racialised children as lesser people who were forced to assimilate into white society.[121] Their experiences bring to the foreground the different ways that the Australian nation-state was claiming an Australian identity based on white belongingness, and non-white foreignness.

Suvendrini Perera argued that Australia's recent histories of the treatment of asylum seekers through frameworks of exclusion and belonging must be understood in this context of exclusionary state discourses and political projects based on imperial histories 'within the torturous cartographies of empire'.[122] The colonial discourse that the Aboriginal child needs to be 'saved' and 'protected', but more importantly integrated into white society, brings to the fore two main points. Firstly, that the violent genealogy of Australian history means that the Aboriginal child is treated as a refugee in their land by the colonisers. Secondly, and for the specific purpose of this thesis, it brings together complex and layered geopolitical intermixing of two seemingly disparate categories: Aboriginal people and forced migrant people.[123]

Outside of the historical canon of 'official' silences of violent pasts, exist 'countermemory'.[124] The turn to memory studies in the late twentieth century has seen the proliferation of Aboriginal studies that trace silenced memories of Australia's racist colonial regime.[125] Listening to Indigenous people tell their life stories has been important for recovering childhood and family memories of dispossession and survival against state crafts of discrimination.[126] In a similar vein, I seek to demonstrate how Tamils decentred nation-based frameworks by approaching their lives in resettlement as profoundly localised,

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[120] Joanne Faulkner, *Young and Free: [Post]colonial Ontologies of Childhood, Memory and History in Australia* (London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2016), 51-78.
[121] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).
[122] Suvendrini Perera, *Australia and the Insular Imagination: Beaches, Borders, Boats, and Bodies* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 6.
[123] Joseph Pugliese, 'Geopolitics of Aboriginal Sovereignty: Colonial Law as 'a Species of Excess of its own Authority', Aboriginal Passport Ceremonies and Asylum Seekers,' *Law Text Culture* Vol. 19 (2015), 109.
[124] Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, 'Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction,' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* Vol. 28, No. 1 (2002), 1-19.
[125] Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, 'Memory and History in Twenty-First Century Australia: A Survey of the Field,' *Memory Studies* Vol. 6, No.3 (2013), 374-375.
[126] For example, Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2002).

transnational and intercultural. Their experiences of belonging speak to the powerful sense of emotional attachments, social locations and political values that shaped their lives in the past, present and aspirations for their future as young Tamils who learned to live *in* Australia.

Undertaking Minority Histories

Aileen Moreton-Robinson argued that a sense of belonging is felt by the non-Indigenous subject – the coloniser/migrant – and this is based on postcolonising mobilisations of ongoing dispossession of Indigenous people and denial of their rights.[127] Taking this point further, I argue that the life of a *young* forced migrant resettled in Australia exemplifies the conscious efforts of the nation-state further specifies that belonging. In the specific context of Australia, histories of control serve to perpetuate and regulate the 'new migrant' who is 'vulnerable', 'marginalised' and 'young' within normative frameworks of a carefully managed Australian border.[128] This indifference or negation of young Tamils forms part of a broader gap in understanding Australia's past.[129] Thus, unravelling repressed memories of the past can be a powerful tool that reconstructs the collective identity of marginalised groups and sheds light on historical injustices that continue Australia's postcolonising configurations of belonging.[130] In response, by focusing on the life stories of young Tamils resettled in Australia, the thesis seeks to demonstrate that belonging in Australia and the continuity which that concept implies adds weight to a thorny question: How do we handle or negotiate different versions of the past and its residue in the present, within a pluralist liberal democracy?[131]

According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'minority' pasts constitute those experiences of the past which are translated by the historian as 'inferior' or 'marginal' thus producing 'subaltern'

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[127] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'I Still Call Australian Home: Indigenous Belonging and Race in White Postolonising Society,' in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed., Sara Ahmed (New York: Berg Publishers, 2003), 23-40.
[128] Jordana Silverstein, "'I Am Responsible': Histories of the Intersection of Guardianship of Unaccompanied Child Refugees and the Australian Border,' *Cultural Studies Review* Vol. 22, No. 2 (2016), 65-89.
[129] Paul Arthur, ed., *Migrant Nation: Australian Culture, Society and Identity* (London: Anthem Press, 2018).
[130] Bain Attwood, 'In the Age of Testimony: The Stolen Generations Narrative, "Distance," and Public History,' *Public Culture* Vol. 20, No. 1 (2008), 75-95; Paula Hamilton, 'Sale of the Century?: Memory and Historical Consciousness in Australia,' in *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, eds., Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003), 136-152.
[131] Amanda Kearney, 'Present Memories: Indigenous Memory Construct and Cross-Generational Knowledge Exchange in Northern Australia,' in *Time, Media and Modernity*, ed., Emily Keightley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 165-183.

pasts.[132] The production of subaltern pasts relates not so much to challenging historical works that exclude minority groups, but to pasts that are incompatible with the historian's academic position.[133] Why? Chakrabarty argued that when we undertake 'minority histories' we fail to bridge the gap between two radically different experiences of historicity: between the historian who views her historical subject as an agent of action and the subject's historical interpretation of their beliefs and actions.[134] Consequently, what emerges is the development of 'good', not subversive histories.[135]

In more recent work, Chakrabarty argued that these resulting historical 'wounds' that undermine the subject's knowledge have been further entrenched by memory works that prioritise antihistorical constructions of the past by focusing more on the 'now'.[136] The 'antihistorical, antimodern subject, therefore, cannot be spoken of as "theory" within the knowledge procedures of the university.'[137] Chakrabarty acknowledges that it is not easy to walk out of the deep collusion between 'history' and modernising narratives centred around the nation-state.[138] Rather, the goal is to *think without centres*.[139] In light of Chakrabarty's various works, this thesis seeks to prioritise fragmentary and episodic insights from young Tamil people's lives that are suggestive of 'knowledge-forms that are not tied to the will that produce the state as the most desirable form of political community.[140] Through the thesis, I seek to present new representations of the past that reflect how academic historians in Australia can change the way they write minority histories.[141]

In recent years, Australia's forced migration histories have been democratised by memory work that emphasises diversity and recovers repressed histories.[142] In the studies, the past

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[132] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts,' *Subaltern Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1998), 18.
[133] Ibid. 22.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 40.
[137] Ibid, 41.
[138] Ibid.
[139] See for example, Minoru Hokari, 'Anti-Minorities History: Perspectives on Aboriginal-Asian Relations,' in *Lost in the Whitewash: Aboriginal-Asian Encounters in Australia, 1901–2001*, eds., Penny Edwards and Shen Yuanfang (Canberra: Australian National University, 2003), 85–101.
[140] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 41.
[141] See for example, Samia Khatun, *Australianama: The South Asian Odyssey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[142] See for example, Alexandra Dellios, *Histories of Controversy: Bonegilla Migrant Centre* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2017).

gains significance to the present. While this conclusion may not 'fit' Charkrabarty's calls for a different kind of history, the individuals who revealed their memories regarded themselves as crucial to asserting their knowledge as immigrants who survived war and rebuilt their lives in sometimes hostile situations in their new country.[143] Similarly, young Tamil people's experiences in the thesis represent 'minority histories', however, I delve deeper and explore the historical experiences of minorities within minority communities.[144] That is, the thesis not only prioritises memory and its ability to produce a decentred history but through this process emphasises the specific experiences of minority individuals, such as Tamil women and gay people, whose embodied heterogeneity demands exploration and representation.[145] In doing so, the thesis gains special significance in the lives of internal minorities, who tell their life stories with the hope of seeking equal treatment in the future. Their experiences contribute towards illustrating a more dynamic history of Tamil people who resettled in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s at the height of Sri Lanka's civil war.

Research Methods

The thesis uses a qualitative approach to explore diasporic memories of Tamil people's resettlement experiences.[146] Specifically, I draw on the life stories of thirty-six Tamil people to capture the kind of 'thick description' Clifford Geertz argued can reveal 'structures of significance' that constitute life stories.[147] That is, life stories were used to reveal the commonalities and individual experiences of the variety of Tamil resettlement experiences.[148] In short, 'it allows understanding of how moving matrices of social forces impact and shape individuals, and how individuals, in turn, respond, act and produce a change in the larger social arena.'[149] Ethics clearance was obtained from the University of Melbourne.[150]

[143] Damousi. *Memory and Migration*.
[144] Avigail Eisenberg and Jeff Spinner-Halev, eds., *Minorities within Minorities: Equality, Rights and Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[145] Ibid., 93-94.
[146] Mary Chamberlain, 'Diasporic Memories: Community, Individuality, and Creativity – A Life Stories Perspective,' *The Oral History Review* Vol. 36, No. 2 (2009), 117-187.
[147] Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,' in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, ed., Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 9.
[148] Steen, *Varieties of the Tamil Refugee Experiences.*
[149] Rina Benmayor and Andor Skotnes, 'Some Reflections on Migration and Identity,' in *Migration and Identity*, eds., R. Benmayor and A. Skotnes (New Jersey: Transaction Publications, 2005), 14.
[150] Ethics Application ID: 1544372.1

Life stories illustrated the fractures and coherences in Tamil people's experiences, of relationships and events in their past.[151] The method created enough space and time between myself as the interviewer and each interview participant, shifting between two different positions as the researcher and as a person who shares people's stories of the past and the present.[152] This approach enabled me to have in-depth conversations that led to new insights about Tamil people's life experiences including the different layers involved in the stories they told, such as their silences and emotions that would not be possible in other qualitative approaches.[153] Thus, the value of life stories is that it can bring 'life' to contexts in the past in which the self is both the storyteller and the stories that are told – the self becomes discourse.[154] As Marita Eastmond stated, the stories we collect are useful for negotiating not only what has happened in the past and what that means, but also for seeking ways of going forward.[155] To grasp Tamil people's experiences of belonging, not belonging and the levels in-between, I listened to their life stories and engaged with the context and depth that it required of me as the researcher. Following Eastmond, I argue that:

> We need to continue seeking ways of listening to and representing refugees' experiences, in their great diversity. This is particularly urgent as solidarity with refugees in their plight appears to be giving way to distrust in many parts of the world. As a result, refugees' stories are either not deemed relevant or credible or, increasingly, not heard at all.[156]

While the scholarship about Sri Lanka's civil war has developed immensely through discourse of 'memory', scholars have focused less on how Tamil people themselves remember that war and their resultant lives in a new land.[157] Scholars in the field mainly focus on memories of dominant groups, such as the Sri Lankan nation-state and Tamil

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[151] Paul Gready, *Writing as Resistance: Life Stories of Imprisonment, Exile, and Homecoming from Apartheid South Africa* (Lanham: Lexingtoon Books, 2003); James L. Peacock and Dorothy C. Holland, 'The Narrated Self: Life Stories in Process,' *Ethos* Vol. 21, No. 4 (1993), 367-383; Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Marita Eastmond, 'Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2007), 248-264; Rosemary Sayigh, 'Product and Producer of Palestinian History: Stereotypes of "Self" in Camp Women's Life Stories,' *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* Vol. 3, No. 1 (2007), 86-105.
[152] Halleh Ghorashi, 'Giving Silence a Chance: The Importance of Life Stories for Research on Refugees,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 21, No. 1 (2008), 117-132.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Peacock and Holland, 'The Narrated Self,' 367-383; Robert Atkinson, *The Life Story Interview*. Qualitative Research Methods Series 44 (California: Sage, 1998).
[155] Eastmond, 'Stories as Lived Experience,' 251.
[156] Ibid., 261.
[157] Laavanyan Ratnapalan, 'Memories of Ethnic Violence in Sri Lanka among Immigrant Tamils in the UK,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 35, No. 9 (2012), 1539–1557.

political groups. The result is that the scholarship implicitly equates memory of war and forced migration to competing memories between dominant groups, thus neglecting crucial memories of minority groups such as young people. In the thesis, I use life stories to rethink memory hegemony in understandings of Sri Lanka's civil war and dislocation, by considering the multiple ways in which Tamil people who resettled in Australia constructed a sense of belonging over their life course. For each interviewee, memories of war lingered in the present.[158] But, like everything historical, Tamil people's memories were undergoing a constant transformation, in the sense that they were 'subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power'.[159] Each interviewee drew together fragments of memory in the historical archive of their lived experiences, but more prominently their family stories.[160]

The life story interviews with Tamil people were undertaken in various locations: homes, cafés, libraries and universities in New South Wales and Victoria where the interviewees currently reside. Interview participants were recruited through personal contacts, Non-Government Organisations (NGO), and a snowball sampling method which involved being referred to Tamils who led me to another interviewee and so on.[161] The interviews lasted up to three hours and included some repeat interviews that enabled either a continuation of their life stories or further probing into interesting themes that emerged from the first interview. Interviews were then recorded, transcribed, and analysed using a thematic approach. As the interviewer, I drew on my interview skills along with several years of working with marginalised groups in the NGO sector, as well as my bilingual skills (English and Tamil) to inform the interview process and make meaningful advancements of people's realities.[162] To this end, the life story interviews were viewed as a form of advocacy, empowerment and social justice for marginalised groups, for voices to be heard and people's experiences to be documented.[163]

It is here that I must acknowledge that it was a privilege to interview, analyse and present the experiences of Tamil people through their emotional and vivid life stories. I tread with care. I

[158] Selma Leydesdorff et al., eds., *Gender and Memory* (London: Routledge, 2017).
[159] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representations,' in *Black British Cultural Studies*, eds., Houston A. Baker Jr. et al. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 213.
[160] Hirsch and Smith, 'Feminism and Cultural Memory,' 1-19.
[161] Rowland Atkinson and John Flint, 'Accessing Hidden and Hard-to-Reach Populations: Snowball Research Strategies, Social Research Update (Guildford: University of Surrey, 2001).
[162] Yamuna Sangarasivam, 'Researcher, Informant, "Assassin," Me,' *Geographical Review* Vol. 91, No.1 (2001), 95-104.
[163] Sherna B. Gluck, 'Women's Oral History: Is it So Special?,' in *Thinking About Oral History: Theories and Applications*, eds., Thomas L. Charlton et al. (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2008), 115-141.

worked with the interview participants in ways that they felt comfortable. There were multiple firsts; for many, it was the first time that they had been interviewed for research; some had never recalled their life stories in any depth to anyone before the interview; for some, the process of recollection continued to bear an emotional reminder of a painful past. These insights and challenges are woven into the analysis throughout the thesis.

Interview participants were aged between 12 months to 17 years old when they arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. I interviewed sixteen women, nineteen men, and one transgender person. They have all spent most of their lives living in either New South Wales or Victoria. In this study, I do not compare the experiences of young Tamils in these states. Instead, I locate their experiences with the view that this is an introductory study into Tamil migration histories in Australia. Also, I interviewed two members of the Tamil community: one interviewee was a founding member of a prominent Tamil organisation in the 1970s, the Eelam Tamil Association, and the second interviewee was a Tamil language school principal in Sydney in the early 2000s. These two interviews have been used more as reference points as I felt the main analysis was about the thirty-six Tamils who shared their experiences of belonging.

In addition to conducting life story interviews, I also undertook archival research. I examined documents relating to the resettlement experiences of Tamil people at the following places: National Archives of Australia, Department of National Archives (Sri Lanka), and Refugee Studies Centre (University of Oxford). At the National Archives of Australia, I examined documents relating to the eruption of civil war in Sri Lanka and the arrival of Tamil people into Australia. These were mainly official correspondences between the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Ethnic and Immigration Affairs, and High Commissioners in Australia and Sri Lanka. Correspondences sent to the Department of Foreign Affairs included letters from Tamil people seeking refuge in Australia, letters by concerned Australian citizens who thought that the arrival of Tamil people would increase communal violence with Sinhalese residents, as well as advocacy documents and letters of recommendation by Tamil organisations calling on the Australian Government to recognise Tamil people were genuine refugees and in need of resettlement assistance. However, beyond the early periods of civil war in the 1980s and 1990s access to documents in the following periods was difficult to access, mainly due to the recent history which the thesis covers.

Internationally, I visited the Department of National Archives in Colombo where I accessed newspaper articles and Hansard documents relating to the formative years of the civil war and forced migration of Tamil people to gauge background information. Again, archives were limited, since much of the violence simply went unrecorded. I also briefly visited Jaffna library where I grasped more fully the significance of education to the lives of Tamil people.[164] At Oxford, I examined Non-Government organisational reports relating to the resettlement experiences of Tamil people across UK and Europe, towards accumulating international perspectives of Tamil resettlement experiences. Perhaps not central to the methods of the thesis, but my conversations with Tamil people at various conferences, for example in Toronto at the Tamil Studies Symposium in 2017, also helped me to interpret and present a more vibrant picture of how Tamil people in Australia constructed a sense of belonging. The thesis, therefore, is based on a range of sources, but always circulates around the thirty-six life stories of Tamil people resettled in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, and always interlinked with concepts of belonging and memory, complicating the interplay between the individual and the society in which they lived.[165]

Defining terms

In addition to concepts of crafting, belonging and memory, in the thesis I use the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' less than I use the term 'forced migrant'. I chose not to use to the term 'refugee' because it does not capture the agency that people have in deciding whether they currently see themselves as a refugee or former refugee – a topic I explore in detail in chapter 2 of the thesis. About this, the question of age becomes relevant. I use the terms 'children' and 'young people' interchangeably but use the term 'young people' when referring to the whole group of interviewees of the study. This is used to highlight the in-between spaces that the concept of 'young people' implies,[166] beyond numerical values that define 'young' as being under the age of 18 years old.[167] Finally, I acknowledge 'Tamil Eelam' as the specific geographical as well as a political term that indicates the geographical

[164] My conversations with librarians and observations of historical material inside the rebuilt Jaffna library reinforced the importance of cultural knowledge and heritage preservation for the Tamil people. In 1981, Jaffna library was burned by a Sri Lankan Government-led attack that destroyed vital Tamil historical scripts. V.S. Thurairajah, *Jaffna Public Library Rises from its Ashes*, first edition (Chennai: Mithra Arts and Creations, 2009).
[165] Atkinson, *The Life Story Interview.*
[166] Ala Sirriyeh, 'Home Journeys: Im/Mobilities in Young Refugee and Asylum Seeking Women's Negotiations of Home,' *Childhood* Vol. 17, No. 2 (2010), 214.
[167] Watters, *Refugee Children*, 7.

regions belonging to Tamils in Eelam,[168] however I use 'Sri Lanka' to reflect interviewees' self-identification.

Before presenting the chapter outline of thesis, in line with several feminist scholars of forced migration studies I must note the perspective that I bring to this research.[169] My curiosity about the experiences of young minority groups resettled in Australia emerged well before the study, mainly due to my position as a member of the Tamil community. I bring to the study my own experiences as a Tamil child refugee resettled in Western Sydney. I was born in Point Pedro, a small coastal village in North-East Sri Lanka during the civil war. My family were displaced on several occasions, including to India, and the targeted killing of my mother's brother by Indian Peace Keeping Forces in 1989 ultimately led to my family's forced migration. We arrived in Sydney in 1992 to unfamiliar surroundings where the people looked different and spoke another language, where my immediate realisation was that I did not belong. We were also strangers within a fragmented Tamil community of different castes, classes, and political views. I learned in Australia that I was a lower caste *Karaiyar* and that my father's involvement in the Tamil Coordinating Committee that aligned itself with the LTTE ideologies created additional layers of Otherness. As my parents strove to rebuild a new life for the family, it did not take long for the challenges of resettlement to become a normal part of everyday life. The pressures to succeed demanded the negotiations of multiple belongings to different people and places that became normalised, even expected. These negotiations were always tied to the past. I remember how my experiences were not unique. This study is an attempt to make sense of Tamil childhoods that were lived at the intersection of war and resettlement. It is as much about presenting our memories of belonging as it is about producing minority histories.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 demonstrates the process of belonging through the life stories of one young Tamil whose experiences as a gay Tamil person captures the complex processes of crafting belonging in a new land. Through the life stories of one individual, the chapter is used to trace how crafting constitutes multiple layers and intersectional experiences of marginality and resilience. Each layer is informed by the individual's practices and subjectivities that

[168] Kārttikēcu Intirapāla, *The Evolution of an Ethnic Identity: the Tamils in Sri Lanka c. 300 BCE to c. 1200 CE* (Sydney: MV Publications, 2005).
[169] Martha K. Kumsa, "'No! I'm Not a Refugee!' The Poetics of Be-Longing Among Young Oromos in Toronto,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 2 (2006), 232.

have been influenced by negotiations of competing cultural norms. In some ways, the chapter is used as a methodological standpoint for showing that life stories are a powerful form of representation. The continuity that the life story implies highlights an important point of the thesis: that the craft of belonging is a never-ending process, in which the past is always under construction.

Chapter 2 charts young Tamil people's migration to Australia. It explores interviewees' distance to the refugee label – despite having fled Sri Lanka due to civil war and persecution. I demonstrate the interrelatedness between individual and collective memory, by exploring Tamil identity construction and processes of belonging within that process. I shed light on the motivations of different actors that shaped Tamil collective experiences of forced migration to Australia. The chapter concludes by highlighting resistances to normative belonging processes and reinforcing the importance of memory in belonging processes. Chapter 3 continues the exploration of the resistance to that migrant label by exploring childhood memories of war and persecution in the homeland. Importantly, the chapter constructs the figure of the young Tamil person as a threat to the Sri Lankan nation-state, thus foregrounding repressed memories from the homeland.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 explore different aspects of interviewees' resettlement experiences that show how they constructed multiple ways of belonging in Australia in their journeys in becoming adults. Chapter 4 explores how the young Tamil people rebuilt a sense of home in their resettlement. There exists a tendency in the literature on forced migration to treat young people as if they were passive subjects who were either unable to forget the homeland or forget their past and rebuild a life in the new country. By way of challenging this understanding, I explore the ways that young Tamil people negotiated Tamil activities such as Tamil Language School and Religious practices that circulated their worlds by examining cultural memory. The chapter demonstrates how the interviewees of this study were re-traditionalising their connections to Tamil culture. Further, I show how processes of transnationalism assisted interviewees in connecting to a global Tamil community as they recognised their historically specific dislocation as Tamils from Sri Lanka.

While rebuilding a sense of home entailed negotiating competing cultures and values, for some interviewees recalling their resettlement conjured traumatic memories of difficult pasts entangled with their school experiences. Chapter 5 uses four case studies to demonstrate how memories of hardship such as family violence and bullying in school intensified their

exclusion in society. However, I have chosen to also shed light on the resilience that emerged in interviewees' constructions of their difficult past, by identifying their coping mechanisms and interviewees used to give meaning to their lives in the past, present and future. The chapter demonstrates that loss, suffering and exclusion have real consequences for young forced migrants who carry with them everyday traumas such as family separation due to civil war and family violence. The in-depth analyses of traumatic memories also provide insights into how the past enters Tamil people's sense of belonging in their current lives.

Chapter 6 brings together ideas of war and resettlement by foregrounding Tamil women's experiences of Sri Lanka's civil war. In doing so, I explore women's experiences in Tamil political organising and identify how memoryscapes of war are given new meanings that continue to complicate their sense of belonging in Australia. In particular, I use postmemory to show that the civil war may have ended in 2009; however, interviewees expressed a strongly felt injustice that Tamil people continue to face in Sri Lanka. Thus, the chapter shows how the past, present and imagined future are intertwined and are necessary aspects to understanding the resettlement experiences of young Tamils – as ongoing processes of belonging. The thesis conclusion chapter reinforces that constructions of belonging, within forced migrant life trajectories, are crafted by people's empowerment in their subjective views, interpretations, and identifications, against structures that reinforce their marginalisation. It also identifies areas for further research.

Altogether this thesis shows that resettlement is a complex process and that the craft of belonging has no endpoint. The chapters of this thesis do not reach a definitive endpoint. It has no neat 'conclusion.' The memory analysis is used to capture this continuity and show how young Tamil forced migrants incorporated elements of their homeland in their resettlement in ways that suited their lives in a new land. In this way, interviewees constructed their younger years as processes in which they learned to belong in Australia, weaving together the past and contemporary experiences to describe the joys and difficulties of movement and rebuilding life in a new community. Accordingly, this thesis contributes to historical understandings of civil war, forced migration and resettlement, and through engaging theoretical notions of belonging and memory, the effects of these processes on the life trajectories of young Tamil forced migrant people.

CHAPTER ONE: Crafting Belonging, Sabari's Life Stories: Demonstrating the Process of Belonging through the Life Stories of a Young Tamil Forced Migrant Resettled in Australia

In contexts of forced human movement, within one's homeland, or from the homeland to another country, the concept of belonging is recognised as being important in everyday life.[1] And, yet the simplicity of belonging, beyond its intuitive and common sense prose, has been challenged by social scientists who seek to answer what belonging stands for and how it is constructed.[2] Nira Yuval-Davis's widely adopted framework constructs belonging as being both personal and political, thus showing how individuals and groups can belong in several ways.[3] However, I would argue that in addition to the personal and political that constitutes dominant understandings of belonging we know very little about how belonging processes are constructed within the richness and depth that it carries of the past. In humanities perspectives of history and memory studies, understandings of belonging speak to critical issues, such as identity, community and home. These ideas concern the temporalities of human mobility and add to the messiness of the concept.[4] The temporal dimensions imply that the concept of belonging, by its personal and political nature, demands the incorporation of a more explicit connection to the past as part of its analytical framework.[5] In this chapter, I present the life stories of one interviewee, Sabari, to demonstrate processes of belonging related to the past that shaped the present, that is, how belonging feelings and political boundaries *become* productive crafts.[6] I use the rawness of the chapter to set the life story

[1] Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 'Introduction: Refugee and Forced Migration Studies in Transition,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, eds. E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5.
[2] Marco Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging: An Analytical Framework,' *Geography Compass* Vol. 4, No. 6 (2010), 644-659.
[3] Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,' *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. 40, No. 3 (2006), 197-214.
[4] Martha K. Kumsa, 'Between Home and Exile: Dynamics of Negotiating Be-longing Among Young Oromos Living in Toronto,' in *The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity and Belonging*, eds. Wisdom J. Tettey and Korbla P. Puplampu (Calgary: Calgary University Press, 2005), 175-203; Paul Scheibelhofer, 'His-stories of Belonging: Young Second-Generation Turkish Men in Austria,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2007), 317-330.
[5] Kathrine Bek-Pedersen and Edith Montgomery, 'Narratives of the Past and Present: Young Refugees' Construction of a Family Identity in Exile,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (2006), 94–112.
[6] Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, 'Metaphors of the Self in History: Subjectivity, Oral Narrative, and Immigration Studies,' in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed. V. Yans-McLaughlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 254-290.

analytical and methodological framework of the thesis in place and foreground the memory analysis that emerges in the next five chapters.

The singular focus on Sabari's life is not only to emphasise the 'story' side of belonging but to focus on symbolic strategies that address an individual's predicament in the present.[7] This is useful to unpack a forced migrant community's understanding of its sense of belonging.[8] As Marita Eastmond argued, life stories simultaneously exemplify historical accounts and dislocation.[9] Reading Sabari's life stories through his different positions in various social and cultural contexts illustrates the analytical use of the concept of belonging for examining the resettlement experiences of young Tamil forced migrants. The richness of life stories offered in the thesis is 'aimed at evoking images of a road intersection, with an intermediate or contested number of intersecting roads'–for thinking about historical divisions at any social boundary and location.[10] Sabari's life stories reinforce processes of belonging or *crafting*, between different intersectional experiences of marginality and resilience, each layer informed by specific individual practices, subjectivities and broader discourses informed by power relations. Thus, Sabari's life stories represent more than the idea of history as a place of belonging that creates a sense of community that is, in contrast, to present migratory feelings of loneliness, as Edward Said argued.[11] Rather, his life stories demonstrate the fluidity of the past that gives meaning to the present and future, that is, the craft of belonging. In doing so, Sabari's stories demonstrate the craft of belonging as a never-ending process, and the potential for reconstruction which that implies.

However, why have I chosen Sabari out of the thirty-five interviewees as the focus of the chapter? Sabari's experiences represented, more so than others, the complexity of growing up as a young Tamil forced migrant in Australia. Sabari offered insights in ways that other interviewees did not that related not only to his position as a gay Tamil man but as someone who had a deep passion for enhancing the vibrant cultural, social and political make-up of the ever-changing Tamil community in Australia. When I was introduced to Sabari in 2016 through another research interviewee, he was thirty-three years old and was working as a community worker in a local government area which had a high immigrant population. In his

[7] Marita Eastmond, 'Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2007), 248-264.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Nira Yuval Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Belonging* (Los Angeles, Sage, 2011), 6.
[11] Edward Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London: Granta Books, 1999).

spare time, he worked with other Tamils on a short documentary about the local Tamil community. He also regularly wrote blogs about his life and had a keen interest in pursuing creative art projects that involved displaying and conversing the community about queer elements of Tamil ways of life. It is, however, exactly this *public* and *social* character that made Sabari's life stories useful to focus on in the chapter. For Sabari, enhancing the Tamil community in Australia through diverse avenues is, at its core, shaped by his personal experiences of forced migration. His important public work is centred by an urgent need for, and attention to, the 'constantly evolving ways in which migrants make their own lives through stories.'[12] The questions in Sabari's life stories, therefore, are about why belonging is so pertinent and in what ways did it allow for expressions of intersecting resilience?

Thus, Sabari's life stories in the chapter do more than recite his experiences of civil war, forced migration and resettlement. Rather, they are presented in a raw and uninterrupted format to open the way to a multidimensional appreciation of the power that life stories contain as cultural, social, and psychological constructions.[13] The individual's stories move towards the radical re-writing of self and society as a 'basis of knowledge'.[14] The format and contents of the chapter are emboldened by Chandra Mohanty's call to present everyday experiences that are not only shaped by hegemonic discourses but resistances to those discourses – as a resource and confrontation of naturalised social arrangements.[15] In doing so, Sabari's life stories not only retell his migration experiences through his continuous voice from historical perspectives but engage the reader to imagine a different future.[16] In this way, I, as the author, do not speak for Sabari. Instead, the purpose of using his voice continuously in the chapter is to recognise that he, like all the interviewees of the study, in telling their life stories, assumed responsibility for how their belonging constituted an act of political agency. Their powerful texts are precisely the crafts of subjective resources that are needed to situate

[12] Alistair Thomson, 'Moving Stories: Oral History and Migration Studies,' *Oral History* Vol. 27, No. (1999), 36.
[13] James L. Peacock and Dorothy C. Holland, 'The Narrated Self: Life Stories in Process,' *Ethos* Vol. 21, No. 4 (1993), 373.
[14] Chandra T. Mohanty, 'Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,' in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra T. Mohanty et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 34.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Chandra T. Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,' in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra T. Mohanty et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 52-54.

experiences of dominance and resistance, within broader historical constructions, thus belonging.[17]

Sabari was born in Sri Lanka in 1983, in the North-East town of Point Pedro in Jaffna just under 400 kilometres from the capital city of Colombo. His family separated at the height of the civil war between the Sri Lankan Army and LTTE; he arrived in Australia in 1995 with his mother and brother and were later joined by their father. While he returned to Sri Lanka for twelve months in 2011, he had spent most of his life in Sydney where he currently lives with his partner. His connections to his family and Tamil culture have kept him tied and untied to the homeland. His life has taken different paths that speak to the dynamic negotiation of belonging and ideas of successful resettlement. Like the other Tamils I interviewed he is a survivor of war – a child who defied the Sri Lankan nation-state and lived. Sabari's memories of key moments in his life such as when he 'came out' and told family members about his sexuality speaks to interrelated themes of identity, sexuality, culture and belonging. His experiences were moderated within familiar and unfamiliar social spaces in which he reconceptualised new relationships of family, love and life as they unfolded over time. I focus on Sabari's experiences of navigating his sexuality as a young gay person, to draw attention to the everyday realities of young forced migrants living on the periphery of society across several different axes of differentiation and social exclusion. The chapter prioritises stories from two themes of Sabari's life that appeared decisive to shaping his selfhood, in turn, his memories of resettlement: gender and belonging. The remainder of the chapter presents the craft of belonging as seen in the life stories of Sabari.

Resettling

I knew we were going to come over to Australia. I was very confused as a child. My mum came with me and my brother, she left my dad behind…my dad kept working in Colombo so I guess….we moved here when I was eleven but my parents came apart so my mum came here with me and my brother to visit her brother and then she sought asylum because I guess this was 1995 when Point Pedro was under attack by the Government so my mum's house was repossessed by the LTTE…I don't know the details, like something was going on around there, there was stuff going on with the military and she felt unsafe living in Colombo as a woman who doesn't speak Sinhalese and stuff so she left with me and my brother here. Originally, I thought we were going on a holiday to visit our cousins and then my parents said

[17] Mohanty, 'Cartographies of Struggle,' 34-35.

we were going to stay here for a while and then I thought it was just a family reunion and I didn't realise till I was older the issues that my mum went through in terms of coming here and seeking asylum and then having to go to court and all that kind of stuff,[18] and then when she got asylum she sponsored my dad who came here.[19]

First, we lived with our uncle who lived in Erskine Park and then we moved to Homebush so I went to Erskine Park High for a couple of terms then my mum wanted me to go to a good school so she pulled me out and put me into Homebush Boys [High School] and because I was starting year seven I couldn't do the selective exam and they just thought Homebush Boys was the best school so they just put me there.

My mum tried to enrol me straight into Erskine Park High and they were like 'oh, it's for the benefit of your child that they go to an ESL (English as a Secondary Language) school,' and within a term of going to an ESL school I had proven that I could speak really well and I don't know if you know but the Sri Lankan education system is ahead of the Australian one so I spent year seven hanging around because everything I'd learnt in year six or year five in Sri Lanka we'd already learnt the things they were teaching here in year seven in terms of science and maths, all the concepts. I remember when I went to the ESL school I was embarrassed and I hated it because I used to be separate from the regular school and I used to think why do I have to go to this school when I know all the things these regular kids do?[20]

[18] By scholarly accounts, post-1983 Tamil migrants from Sri Lanka were mainly asylum seekers fleeing intensifying violence and armed conflict that targeted Tamils. However, the process for Tamils seeking asylum was made difficult by the fact that they were not recognised as UN Convention refugees, as I highlight in chapter 2 of the thesis. Amarnath Amarasingam and Tanuja Thurairajah, 'Migration, Mobilization, and Memory: The Sri Lankan Civil War in the Lives of Tamil Youth,' in *Children and Violence: Politics of Conflict in South Asia*, ed. Bina D'Costa (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 120.

[19] It is interesting to note here that these memories are 'learned' rather than remembered. Sabari learned of the family's experiences of seeking asylum in later years of his life. These learned memories are now used to fill gaps in his life stories, those 'facts' were placed in a sequence to indicate the significance of the legal process in seeking asylum. Moreover, the emotional attachments to that refugee label were absent. Rather, Sabari distanced himself from the legal processes of seeking asylum that showed how he constructed the asylum-seeker label as an intensely emotional journey of uprootedness and instability which he believed didn't apply to his forced migration experience.

[20] Sabari's educational experiences, of being mistakenly placed in ESL, pointed to the emotional memories of his resettlement experiences. The discretion of schools in allocating Tamil students to ESL classes resulted in emotional memories linked to frustration, embarrassment and confusion. For some interviewees the intensity of school was compounded by other distressing factors in their lives, such as violence at home and memories of civil war, which I explore in chapter 5 of the thesis. Sabari's experiences echoed the multiple sources of pressure that other interviewees of the study had faced in successfully navigating formal education spaces, which holds historical significance for

[At Erskine Park High] there were no other Tamil kids which is strange, I don't know why. I remember a couple of Indian kids, Eastern European kids. I'm sure there were African, Arab kids. I remember the kids that I befriended were Eastern European and African. It could be where I went to school maybe, somewhere near Seven Hills. There were no Sri Lankans. I got along well with them and then when I went to Erskine Park High, that was a really amazing experience. I really resented my mum after taking me out of it after two terms. So, Royal College is the most prestigious public school in Sri Lanka. I used to really hate going to that school because I got in based on merit and I felt like I had to really perform as a child, as many of our parents expect us to but I was a really bright kid, and I felt like my parents didn't love me if I didn't get top marks and didn't come top five or like you know didn't excel in my studies. Erskine Park High was the first time I was with kids who didn't give a shit about studying and because I was a nerd, so I still cared about studying so because I had learnt all the stuff, they had been teaching [but] I didn't study. I was always going to get at least a B so I learnt how to chew gum without getting caught, learnt how to graffiti without being caught, all these things that I couldn't imagine, it wouldn't even occur to me at Royal that you could…that these things were fun and learning to make friends who you were not competing with or out do and I was the only brown kid in my entire year and one of only two Sri Lankans in the entire school. I was happy and then my parents moved me to Homebush Boys and then it all fell apart because all of a sudden there were actually Sri Lankan kids, Tamil kids, the same kind of kids at Royal who were really competitive and always trying to outdo you, to get better marks.

Resettling

I'm gay and my sexuality has been a big part in the way I carry my identity and it's not confidential, my brother knows…I knew even in Sri Lanka I wasn't like the other boys and when I came here it became more obvious. By my mid-teens, I knew I was gay and you can imagine, by the time I came to Homebush Boys and you can imagine by the time I finished high school I came out to most of my friends ummm and so by Uni everyone knew, and I think it was a great shame for my brother. He was three years younger than me and I think for ages he was kind of embarrassed by it but what that meant was that I knew they never fully accepted me, so I never connected to the Tamil boys in the school. I connected more with the

Tamil people. Robert N. Kearney, 'Language and the Rise of Separatism in Sri Lanka,' *Asian Survey* Vol. 18, No. 5 (1978), 531-532.

East Asians, like the Chinese kids and East Asians because they didn't seem as hung up on sexuality and those things.[21]

I think my Tamil identity has always been a little fraught for me because one my name…they truncated my name, so it became xxx and xxx is a girl's name and the first school I went to was mostly white kids and they just turned xxx into xxx and I kind of stuck to it. And I was expecting rejection for my sexuality, so I thought being gay and Tamil could never come together so I distanced myself from my Tamil identity, so I didn't have the same views my Tamil friends had about being Tamil, very staunchly Tamil and maybe having Sinhalese friends but definitely not a Singhalese partner.[22] None of that really factored into me because

[21] Sabari constructed his sense of belonging through an in-group/out-group/internal-external dynamic. His sexuality was a barrier to his sense of belonging within familiar Tamil social spaces. At the intersections of sexuality and ethnicity, Sabari finds new belongings in new social spaces that enabled him to structure his life according to multiple differences. Bethan Evans, 'Geographies of Youth/Young People,' *Geography Compass* Vol. 2, No. 5 (2008), 1676.

[22] During the interviews, Sabari's description of his relationship with a Sinhalese man in Colombo evoked understandings of interracial relations, ethnic conflict, homosexual emancipation, and nation. These themes run deep into Tamil culture in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Tamil novelist Shyam Selvadurai's works provide a literary focus of the subjectivities and social critiques articulated by Sabari: *Funny Boy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994), *Cinnamon Gardens* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1998), and *Swimming in the Monsoon-Sea* (Toronto: Tundra Books, 2005). For example, in *Cinnamon Gardens*, set in 1927 – 28 Ceylon (under British colonial rule), Selvadurai foregrounds personal narratives in historical times during England's Donoughmore Commission that ultimately gave the Sinhalese community in Sri Lanka majoritarian power within a modern liberal democratic nation-state. The possibilities and limitations of universal suffrage were presented along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, and religion that had far reaching outcomes that continued to shape the island well into its postcolonial era. Although not overtly linked to the nation, the gay identity of one of the characters, Balendran, made another point that sexuality was important for imagining the Sri Lankan nation. For example, one of the Sinhalese characters, a friend of Balendran's, who played a role in the Ceylon National Congress that supported the Donoughmore Commission, exposed Balendran's sexual relationship with an Englishman. Balendran was socially isolated due to his sexuality and publicly confronted his friend. Balendran stated, 'you want power to do exactly what the British have done. Come in on your high horse, think you know exactly what needs doing, meddle in other people's lives, make decisions for them, because, after all, aren't you superior to them, don't you know what's best?' (p. 166). Here, sexuality should not only be a category in which the nation should be imagined and constructed, but also the boundaries for establishing norms of belonging and not belonging with these spaces. Moreover, in Selvadurai's novels the emotional challenges of being gay revealed a Tamil society that did not allow freedom of desire and love. In the memories of Sabari – the focus of the chapter – he interlinked the 'private' world of love that is not so private when the needs of family, class, ethnicity and nation take centre stage, just like the characters in Selvadurai's novels. However, in the realities of Sabari's world, the only way to keep the 'private' world 'private', as a matter of avoiding family and community crisis, was to hide his relationship with another man from his family. Upon reflection Sabari considered what may have happened had he told his family about his relationship. But he also recognised that his decisions to hide the secret were based on well-founded tensions that connected the private world to the homeland nation, that is, the past to the present. Heather Smyth, 'Indigenizing Sexuality and National Citizenship: Shyam Selvadurai's *Cinnamon Gardens*, *Ariel: A Review of International English*

I think I was more focused on my gay identity because that affected my day to day in terms of how I dated and how I perceived things and here I'm just a brown person. Here, no one on the street looks at me and says, 'I hate you because you're Tamil', it's 'I hate you because you're brown.'

Being Tamil wasn't that important to me, so when I moved to Sri Lanka [in 2011] I did try to seek out LGBTI Tamil people but even in Sri Lanka we were just really invisible. There's hardly any visibility, I mean there's like a handful but it's mostly Singhalese because I think in Sri Lanka, in Colombo, you have to be out and proud of economic privilege and a level of education, like English education. So, all the people I met were upper to upper middle class, well-educated and most of them were Sinhalese because with the Tamils most of them have left. But I had no issues with being in a relationship with a Sinhala guy. It would have been interesting if I had told my parents that he was my boyfriend to see how they would react. At one point, I remember my mum would make these comments once in a while. I think they're pretty progressive but sometimes they would say really regressive stuff about caste, for example. So, I'm *vellalar*[23] and the Sinhala guy I was dating was *karaiyar*[24] from the

Literature Vol. 40, No.2-3 (2009), 1-22; Robert Aldrich, *Cultural Encounters and Homoeroticism in Sri Lanka: Sex and Serendipity* (London: Routledge, 2014), 191-217.

[23] The Tamils of Sri Lanka pride themselves on their cultural preservation of traditions, for example, in caste structures. The *vellalar* caste in the Tamil region of Jaffna in North of Sri Lanka dominated the region's land, economy, political affairs, educational opportunities, and employment during Dutch and British colonisation. By the 20th century, *vellalar* people in Jaffna emerged as the religious, political, and economic leaders for the entire Sri Lankan Tamil community. However, the Tamil separatist struggle in Sri Lanka from the late 20th century had presented an ambiguous cultural dilemma that sought to preserve *vellalar* supremacy but also raised concerns about the plight of *non-vellalar* Tamil caste groups including Jaffna's many untouchables. There are very few studies that explored how caste figured in the ideology of a Tamil diaspora, however it is recognised that the first, post-independence migration after 1948 were Tamil professionals and younger Tamils of *vellalar* caste who resettled in Western countries to pursue university education and employment. Sinnappah Arasaratnam, 'Social History of a Dominant Caste Society: The Vellalar of North Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in the 18th Century,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* Vol. 18, No.3 (1981), 377-391; Kalinga T. Silva, 'Caste, Ethnicity and National Identity in Sri Lanka,' *Sociological Bulletin* Vol. 48, No.1 (1999), 203; Bryan Pfaffenberger, 'The Cultural Dimension of Tamil Separatism in Sri Lanka,' *Asian Survey* Vol. 21, No.11 (1981), 1145-1157.

[24] The *karaiyar* caste referred to people living in the *karai* (coast or shore) and engaged in fishing activities. The *karaiyar* caste was one of the lower-caste groups. A combination of myths, caste-based tensions, colonisation and civil unrest have made more visible the traditional hierarchies in the Tamil community. Kenneth David, 'Hierarchy and Equivalence in Jaffna, North Sri Lanka: Normative Codes as Mediator,' in *The New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia*, ed. Kenneth David (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1977), 181-187; Bryan Pfaffenberger, 'The Political Construction of Defensive Nationalism: The 1968 Temple-Entry Crisis in Northern Sri Lanka,' *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 49, No.1 (1990), 78-96; Bertram Bastiampillai, 'Caste in Northern Sri Lanka and British Colonial Administrative Practice in the Mid-19th Century: Compromise and Expediency,' *Sri Lanka J.S.S* Vol. 11, No.1 (1988), 47-61.

fisherman caste and so my mum used to once in while talk about how *vellalars* have to marry *vellalars* and that's tradition and so some of my friends used to make fun of me and say that your parents won't accept him because you're not from the same caste. I never, I never told her, and I think if I had told her and they had an issue with the Sinhaleseness then I would probably manifest that but on a day to day it didn't really affect me, and he was obviously a progressive Sinhalese person. He didn't have hate towards Tamils.

Resettling

As an eleven-year old you can't figure anything out. It's only when I moved here, I started figuring everything out. At high school, I can't remember ever talking about Sinhala/Tamil because it was mostly Tamil boys who went to Homebush Boys, there were a couple of Sinhala boys, in fact ummm when I started at Homebush Boys they buddied you up and the guy they buddied me up with was a Sinhala guy and I remember him clearly but in school there was no animosity towards Sinhala/Tamil. It was only in Uni that I started discovering our political history and all that kind of stuff. I think I did go out seeking it because I remember I had a dilemma at Uni whether to join the Tamil society or the Sri Lankan society so obviously I was thinking about these things. And my best friend on my street was, this is in Sri Lanka, was a Sinhala guy and because my mum hadn't told us a lot of the trauma that she had experienced as a Tamil woman in Colombo and in Point Pedro but she had told us this story of the Sinhala landlord who had saved them so they had always brought us up… and because my dad was in Colombo forever, his best friends were Sinhalese. So, they had always told us that it's not the Tamils fighting the Sinhalese, it's a political struggle between two ideologies of…this nationalist wave and you know JVP,[25] and so many Sinhala people died in that and the LTTE had taken advantage of lots of people who were my family members. So, my parents were like we don't need to split the country in two we don't need to. So, I also adopted that over time and that helped me when I moved back to Sri Lanka in 2011 so I lived there for one whole year in Sri Lanka. So, for years even though my parents were very progressive, not that I'm saying I'm progressive too not being an LTTE supporter, but they were…while they didn't support the LTTE they still didn't support the Sri Lankan

[25] The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) is a communist and Marxist-Leninist party and political movement in Sri Lanka and were involved in two armed insurgencies against the Sri Lankan Government in 1971 and 1987-89. Bryan Pfaffenberger, 'Sri Lanka in 1987: Indian Intervention and Resurgence of the JVP,' *Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1988), 137-147; Mick Moore, 'Thoroughly Modern Revolutionaries: The JVP in Sri Lanka,' *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 27, No.3 (1993), 593-642.

Government. They didn't want me and my brother to go back so for years Sri Lanka was this mystical land that we were not allowed to go to, only my parents were allowed to go. They'd been a couple of times and we weren't allowed to go. So, in the 2000s I went to Kerala because my grandma used to tell me Kerala was like Jaffna and she was right my memories of Kerala were like my memories of Jaffna but it's not the same so...but it wasn't enough so in 2010 I went to Sri Lanka with these two girls who I went to Uni with and we had an amazing time. I stayed in Colombo and we went to all the tourist places.

In 2011 I quit my job and moved to Sri Lanka with the intention of learning to read and write Tamil, learning about my heritage but also learning Sinhalese and learning more about the Sinhalese people because I felt really disenfranchised. I had Sinhalese friends and my parents always said nice things about them saying they're not bad people it's just certain sections of them are bad just like certain sections of the Tamil community but I still felt….but when I read stuff about them I used to still feel this animosity and it used to really drive me crazy and I said no you have to go back and experience it for yourself…if you experience discrimination and you know the ugliness of being a minority and being oppressed you can come back and do something about it so I moved there and to be honest I didn't experience any discrimination, nothing bad happened to me, I had the most amazing experience and it was partly because on my second day of moving there I met this guy and within a couple of weeks we started dating and within a couple of months we started living together and then we were together for three years and we're still friends. He moved here and he hated it. He's Sinhalese and he comes from a well off family, very well politically connected to the point where I would go to a party and Mahinda Rajapaksa's[26] son would be across the room and it really messed up with my head actually because I've never had the opportunity to talk with someone about like…I remember telling my ex and he was really mad at me I just felt like

[26] Mahinda Rajapaksa, of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), served as the sixth President of Sri Lanka from 2005-2015. His political party, along with other Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists abided by an ideology that prioritised Theravada Buddhism which sates Buddhists as the chosen custodians of the island and must dominate the island. A key feature of the Rajapaksa Government was the extent to which family members were active in politics, thus having widespread power over the island. For example, Mahinda Rajapaksa's brother, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, was appointed the Defence Secretary in 2005 and played a pivotal role in the armed struggle, and his son Namal Rajapaksa was elected as Member of Parliament in 2010 and again in 2015 in the Hambantota District around 250 kilometres from the capital city of Colombo. Neil DeVotta, 'Sri Lanka: From Turmoil to Dynasty,' *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 22, No. 2 (2011), 130-144.

stabbing him (Rajapakse) and avenge all the bad things that had happened and I said if I didn't love you I would have done that.[27]

But what I experienced was really different because there are rich Tamils and rich Sinhalese who get on like a house on fire, they all hang out, they party, they drink, they even marry each other, they definitely date each other. It's the middle class and lower middle class that don't like each other and it was really eye opening for me and so I lived there for a year and nothing bad happened to me, there were little things I noticed for example because my ex is Sinhalese. When we were in a taxi we would be stopped, and they would check his ID and he wouldn't even check mine. But if I was with a Tamil relative, they would check mine because they would have to check everyone who was Tamil. It's like racial profiling.

I also got Dengue and almost died it was pretty bad, that was the only bad thing that happened till I fully recovered because I thought they'd (parents) have a heart attack. So they were looking for a blood transfusion because my situation had gotten that bad and I'm xxx and it's the rarest blood group, and they couldn't find a civilian so they had to contact the army…..and I had moment where I was like I don't want the blood of a soldier…I was pretty disgusted by that so I had all these internal dilemmas and to question the whole idea of a Sinhala identity and Tamil identity and how fractured it is and how Sinhalese people don't all get along and also trying to navigate my way around how Sinhala people who are deeply insecure about their own identity in Sri Lanka.

Identity is a very important thing to me. I'd question this issue around my name and how important your name is to your identity...am I less Tamil? I wish as a teenager I was proud to be the son of a refugee and be outspoken about it, I think as a teenager…I don't think I would change anything about my life. The thing about identity is how people attach themselves to a national identity or a cultural identity or linguistic identity to whatever too much without ever understanding what it means and I don't think any of us really know what it means to be an Australian, what is a Tamil? what is a Sri Lankan Tamilian? and I think we often use 'othering,' like I am this, relative to that person, so for example my Tamilness comes from saying Sri Lankan Tamils are generally better English speakers, more studious, we're not like

[27] This example, as well as Sabari's previous description of his thoughts about telling his family of his relationship with a Sinhala man, pinpointed the situational and contradictory codes of belonging among young diaspora Tamils who carried with them the burdens of an entrenched violent political history. The oppositional categories of belonging included self/other, insider/outsider, public/private, Tamil/Sinhalese, love/hate, individual/collective.

the Indian Tamils, like I used to tell myself all these things to kind of…because I didn't know myself what it meant to be Sri Lankan.

Creating New Family Spaces: Presenting as Gay

I didn't want to live at home because that would mean, and I don't think my parents would have kicked me out, but it would have made it so awkward day to day. I moved out of home. I don't remember exactly when I came out, I think I came out when I was 22, maybe like 3 or 6 months after I came out. I wrote a letter to my parents and I had posted it. My brother had already known that I was gay. I knew it would backfire more if he told them that I was gay because they would start to monitor him more. I sent them a letter and they did freak out. Initially they freaked out because when my mum got the letter, she thought it was a suicide letter. They really panicked and drove to my house that I was living in Enmore, then they calmed down and realised what it was, and they were angry and annoyed. My dad was pretty great in a weird way. He just asked me if there was anything physically wrong with me and I said no I'm physically fine, I'm just not attracted to women and then he said okay. And that was it. Whereas for my mum it was a huge deal, mostly because she thought I was a sexual deviant. She imagined that all brown kids don't have sex and don't do anything till they get married and she believed that for quite a while. She doesn't anymore because my brother has a girlfriend and they live together. In fact, this year, both my partner and I, and xxx and his partner got Christmas cards from our parents which is such a radical transformation to when I came out to them 10, 12 years ago. And they voted 'yes' for marriage equality and I don't know if you saw the stats for Western Sydney (WS) but most of WS voted no.[28]

[28] Sabari used his parents' 'yes' vote to highlight their 'official' acceptance of his gay identity. One could surmise that by contrasting his parents' 'yes' vote against the majority 'no' vote in the area, Sabari indirectly explained the transformation of his parents' actions towards creating new spaces in spite of the exclusion and marginalisation they may have faced in their immediate surroundings – a turning point in the son/parent/society relationship in Sabari's life. In 2017, the plebiscite to amend the *Marriage Act* to recognise that LGBTQI people would be equal under Australian law showed that the suburbs of Western Sydney pulled down the overall 'yes' votes in the state of New South Wales. It is not clear how many Tamils voted 'yes' or 'no', however given Western Sydney is home to high numbers of Tamils, they have been implicated in discussions about voter preferences. For example, in the electorate of Parramatta, where Sabari's parents and a high number of Tamils lived, 38% of the population voted 'yes' while 62% voted 'no' to marriage equality. The reasons for the high 'no' vote remained unclear, but views published in the media pointed to social pressures, religious ideology, and migration patterns that were not conducive to the values of the wider population. Another explanation was that the 'Yes' campaign focused less on Western Sydney and held onto a voter turnout campaign. This strategy placed less effort in changing minds in comparison to the 'No' campaign that saw the region as their core demographic. ABCNews, 'Results: Same Sex Marriage Postal Survey.' Accessed July 15, 2018, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-15/same-sex-marriage-

Some of my friends came out and then they went back into the closet because they had such a negative experience. But my parents were kind of strange in that they didn't stop talking to me or get angry, they were very sad, and they tried to overcompensate by talking to me more and doing things for me more. My dad even offered me money and said take some money and live overseas for a while and figure yourself out and if you want to be gay go and live this kind of gay lifestyle and I think he was hoping I could live it as a phase and come back whereas my mum was…I think she was just really upset because I was the good son and I didn't cause any problems and if I turned out this way and she thought that I had taken after her and I was this good Tamil person and I think it took a long time for her to understand that gay people are not deviants. In fact, till my current boyfriend I didn't think she understood that two men could understand each other. She thought it was some kind of friendship, she didn't understand the depth of the emotions and I think in fact my partner had sent me this message during this period when we were having a bit of a tough time and I was staying with my family for a couple of days for a bit of space. He'd sent me this long message and then I read it to my mum just to kind of give it context and I remember her saying…she was almost like gobsmacked, like 'no man would ever talk to you like that, you have to be really nice to him.' She was really shocked that he was talking to me in a really loving and kind way. I don't know what she thought gay relationships were. It's a strange space for me because I feel like I can never break up with my boyfriend, so it puts a lot of pressure on me now because she's accepted him and sees him as this great person and so if we have any disagreements or arguments then I might be the one at fault. He's a vegetarian, he's white and for ethical reasons he's a vegetarian so she makes vegetarian food, things like that. But when I first came out, I could never have thought any of this was possible. In fact, when I came out, I didn't tell them about relationships, dates, definitely no sex. I just said I was gay and that was it. My mum would just bring it up once in a while and say how painful it was for her to carry this and how upsetting it is when relatives ask about marriage, but we never talked about dates or relationships or anything.

I remember my mum being cool with gay people umm my dad is like a typical Sri Lankan Tamil who doesn't talk so you really have to talk to get an answer, so I don't know his opinions, but my mum would be like people have the right to be whoever they want. She used

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results-ssm/9145636#parramatta; Hussain Nadim, 'Why Western Sydney voted 'No'', *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 15, 2018; Rachael Jacobs and Denise A. Hamad, 'Why Western Sydney Voted 'No' to Marriage Equality', *Huffington Post*, July 16, 2018.

to say all these things, but it wasn't like that when her son came out, it was a big deal, she was mortified, she was heart-broken. Also my mum went to a convent ummm and I don't know if you know but in Point Pedro, post-colonial times were influenced by American missionaries and it was a cool thing to send your kid to convent and ummm so my mum was very…..so when we were kids we used to go to church and temple because even though we were Hindu we used to go to church because she had been indoctrinated into Christianity and she believed in Mary and….for ages my mum would only take us to church when there was no mass so I thought that was because she didn't want anyone else to find out.[29]

We grew up in Homebush, so we used to go to the Catholic church in Strathfield and my mum was very influenced by the sisters who told her that any kind of same sex is abomination, so she couldn't believe her nice son, not the trouble maker, but the nice son was the morally, was the wrong one. So, it was really traumatising for them at first, but they knew they couldn't change me, they couldn't ask me to get married, so they just left it and eventually they came around to accepting it when they met other people who were, as my mum put it, 'gay and nice'. I think I'm lucky and you know I've never met any other Sri Lankan my age who is openly, proudly gay.

My parents went on holidays and then I moved out and when they came back, I was out. Every time they go on a holiday, I'd get a tattoo, I'd do something because it's literally like the mice are free to go. So when I moved out it was very traumatic for my mum, she used to call me every day [asking] why did you move out? She would come to my house and she'd really look down on my living conditions so things like that, but this is the thing so I moved out of home, and my parents wanted me to move back home and then a couple of years after moving out of home I came out to my parents and it radically changed the way they saw me. They started investing a lot of time in me, they thought partly it was because they'd neglected

[29] Throughout my interviews, Tamil Hindus frequently recalled 'secret' memories when their parents took them to church. The notion of family and religion in the process of coming out has been studied in other contexts of men from South Asia that underscored their more problematic and challenging experiences compared to the experiences of white gay men. For example, one study that focused on gay men from India and Pakistan showed that they viewed their sexuality as a barrier to practising their cultural traditions and religion. Men from Hindu backgrounds said that their barriers to homosexuality would never have been accepted by their local Hindu and ethnic community. Eamonn McKeown et al. 'Discrimination and Desire: Experiences of Black and South Asian Gay Men in Britain,' *Culture, Health and Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care* Vol. 12, No. 7 (2010), 848-849; Dinesh Bhugra, 'Coming Out by South Asian Gay Men in the United Kingdom,' *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* Vol. 26, No.5 (1997), 547-557.

me, so they started coming to where I was living, they started having dinner with me, they were taking me out.

They thought they were trying to fix the problem, but they were nice about it, they were not saying we want you to change, we just want to spend time with you. It's funny that my sexuality was a barrier to my Tamilness but my sexuality was an aid or a catalyst for me to reconnect me to Tamilness because my parents started spending more time with me, my mum came out to me in a different kind of way, she was telling me stuff about my family, stories about our ancestry that helped me figure out my background, you know my grandma is an amazing woman. She doesn't know I'm gay, I'm sure she's figured it out because she used to fiercely defend my right to not get married in front of my relatives. She would tell me all these stories about her experience of growing up as a Tamil woman in Sri Lanka through colonial times, so I really re-connected to my family and to me my Tamilness is my family. To me my Tamilness is my family and yes my Tamilness is my family except when I meet people like xxx and xxx who are other Sri Lankan Tamils who I connect with…and politically speaking…I don't believe in Tamil Eelam and I don't believe in a separate state and I grew up in a family who also feel the same way, they believe in one Sri Lanka.[30]

When we got to the 10-year anniversary of me coming out my mum would sort of refer to this thing as 'you know all those years when you dropped this bombshell on me.' Very melodramatic way and always making it about herself and I would have pockets where she would say that I was so sorry that you would have to carry this yourself or once in a while she would say, 'I guess everyone deserves to be happy.' But like little snippets as well of mostly just being like, 'you've disappointed us,' and I think slowly I, for example played her this interview a couple of years ago with another Australian Tamil gay man and his white Australian partner. I don't know where they're from, maybe they're in Sydney, on SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) Tamil radio and she really liked that to hear it from a Tamil

[30] Sabari's views of not believing in the need for a separate Tamil state, Tamil Eelam, and supporting a unified Sri Lanka, were not uncommon views held by Tamils, both inside and outside of Sri Lanka. Instead, his views speak to the profound heterogeneity of Tamils' political beliefs. What is significant is that his belief of 'one Sri Lanka' emerged during the end of the war however he highlighted the temporality of these sentiments – 'I grew up in a family who also feel the same way'. The end of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009 brought remarkable visibility to the diverse political beliefs of Tamil diasporans and I explore these themes further in chapter 6 of the thesis, by focusing on women's experiences. Nicholas Van Hear and Catherine Brun, 'Between the Local the Diasporic: The Shifting Centre of Gravity in War-Torn Sri Lanka's Transnational Politics,' *Contemporary South Asia* Vol. 20, No.1 (2012), 67; Amarnath Amarasingam, *Pain, Pride and Politics: Social Movement Activism and the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Canada* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

man in Tamil she really heard it more than from me because I think she still thinks that because I turned more Australian that I turned out gay. But the transformational thing was do you remember a year and a half ago in Miami where there was a shooting in a club where there was this gay club? It was a guy I think he was a closeted gay guy, I think that's what the theory was, and it had nothing to do with Islam or religion, he was a frustrated gay man. He went and shot 20 something gay people dead and I remember my mum calling me and saying how atrocious it is that people could be so violent towards gay people and I remember getting really angry and she called me at work so I couldn't talk to her about it but I called her back the next day and I was really mean and I said:

> You know what that guy did is no different to what you've done to me for years, you've made me feel like I'm not, that I'm a bad person, that I'm terrible for being this thing and that I should be treated as less than equal and you are part of it.

She said, 'I never condone violence against gay people' and she was really upset about it and then she thought about it and then she called me back and said:

> You just don't know how it's like to be a mother and to have all of these traditions and values to be broken and then have to defend your child in front of all your relatives.

I kind of understood that point so I'd already started dating this guy and he had in fact already come to the house as a friend to help me move because I was moving houses and I think like a couple of weeks after what happened in Miami I told my mum 'you know that guy who came over a few weeks ago to help me move he's my boyfriend' and my mum said, 'yeah I know.' I don't know if she was just trying to have the upper hand by being cool about it. She said, 'I knew he wasn't a regular friend because of the way you were talking to him and the way you were around him,' and it's not that I was physically affectionate, but she could pick up from my energy I wasn't the way I am usually with my friends and then from there it was just regular conversations. Essentially, I talked him up, I made him into this hero which is now problematic because when he and I have arguments I built him up as this hero and my mum only sees that but that was the only way I could see to win her over. You have to sell your partner. In fact, I sold him the same way a Tamil heterosexual would sell their partner in terms of saying that he's really well educated, he's got a Masters [degree] and he won awards at Uni and he is an architect. I didn't tell them he's really bad with money! I just said he doesn't have a lot of savings but I said it's because architects don't get paid that well and I said he's clean, he keeps a good house and I kind of played on the things that my mum

looked down on like she always used to think I'm really messy so I would say that he was clean and I kind of had created this ying and yang, like we are kind of made for each other.[31] And as a result she's accepted him, I think also things like he's a vegetarian and for ethical reasons and this sounds really bad but his parents are divorced and he comes from a single parent household and my mum just feels sorry for people who come from a single parent household so for her she gives him even more credit as a well-adjusted adult.

My parents have accepted it and my mum asks me all the time and there's so much stigma in our community if you have a partner and you leave them. I think I was wise all those years when I didn't put a face and a name because I was so afraid. I also didn't want to validate what they believed which is that two men can't be together, that they can never make a relationship work. I kept my family life separate from my personal life. I think it helped, I have a friend now who moved from Melbourne to Sydney, is gay and he's much more connected to the community. For him I think it's hard whereas I think for me my parents were really anti-social they didn't go to all these functions and do all these things. I could just see my parents once in a while, visit them at home and go about my life. I didn't have to go to all of these functions and present my self. I think if I was a girl it would be really hard because moving out of home it would have been a lot more sensitive than a guy moving out of home.

I would have loved for them to be more cosmopolitan, but I have been working with my parents for years, especially my mum, I would take her to art exhibitions that I worked on, like projects, I took her to a *bharathanatyam* (classical Indian dance) performance that had some queer elements in it. I took her to see Peter Allen-the Boy from Oz, I take her to all these events and she's like, 'it's nice, it's interesting but that's there and I'm here.' She does that kind of thing, but I think I have tried and sometimes it does drive me crazy… I'm rediscovering my relationship with them [and it] is much better but at the same time it's like they're frozen in time.

[31] Sabari's strategies to gain his mother's approval was a main theme throughout his interviews. His mother, the more 'emotional' one out of his parents, symbolised the hopes, desires and expectations imparted on him as the 'good' son. Accordingly, he used his childhood memories to reconstruct his relationship with his boyfriend in a way that his mother would have approved, that is, by portraying his partner as being necessary to fill the voids in his life. This was a common reflection made by several interviewees who had reconstructed their lives in a way that their parents would 'approve', 'accept' or at the very least deem 'necessary' for their lives to be considered 'successful'.

In-between Social Spaces

When I was in high school, I didn't disclose to people that I was an asylum seeker, I don't even think the word existed back then. I definitely didn't call myself a refugee because I didn't want a pity party because I didn't want people to feel sorry for me. I also felt that it was a shameful thing, especially when you come from these uppity Jaffna Tamil families, *vellalars* from Point Pedro and they're like the most uppity because you have *brahmins* and then *vellalars* so I grew up in Colombo being told that I was from a higher caste, so sad and shameful.

I thought all Tamils were *vellalars* and I thought we were all superior to Sinhalese people and it's only in high school when I told my mum that my friends sister's getting married or something and my mums like you can never marry into that family because they're not *vellalars* and I remember thinking what! And for ages I also thought we were better than Indians because Indians were caste conscious and we were not and I thought all Tamils were like….in high school no one talks about caste and because of the way I was being brought up in Colombo, being told I was Jaffna Tamil, being told I was *vellalar* and we're intellectuals, you know this thing about Jaffna Tamils being smarter than others, especially people from Vadamarachchi.[32] So, I was very ashamed of telling people that I was a refugee then but at Uni it changed because as part of left wing politics being a refugee has so much social currency, people think you're cool and then I embraced it, but I still didn't use the word asylum seeker until recently, well until a couple of years ago with the whole boat saga and then I remember I always down played it.[33] I remember once when someone told me I should

[32] Vadamarachchi referred to the region in the North of Sri Lanka within the Jaffna district. The largest town in the Vadamarachchi area is Point Pedro.

[33] In 2001 over 100 boats carrying at least 5, 000 refugees from war-torn countries including Tamils from Sri Lanka arrived seeking asylum and refuge in Australia, the largest surge in people seeking asylum by boat on Australian shores in ten years. Under the Government of John Howard, the boats were rejected and were not permitted to land on Australian shores. In one incident that came to be known as the 'Children Overboard' crisis, an Indonesian fishing boat known as 'SIEV-4', that carried 223 passengers sank after being stopped by Australian officials who had attempted to return the boat back to Indonesia. Prime Minister Howard falsely claimed that the asylum seekers threw their infants overboard. Of the 353 asylum seekers who died, 146 people were children. Successive Government 'stop the boats' policies have resulted in the official rejection of asylum seekers by boat, even if they were found to be genuine refugees. Several scholars have noted that Government assessments of who is allowed into Australia were reinforcements of historical race anxieties about Australia's white colonial nationalism and its territories. The impacts of Government responses to asylum seekers highlighted further inconsistencies in official policy of multiculturalism that in people's everyday experiences presented asylum seekers as extreme 'others'. At a deeper level, the politics of not belonging reflected anxieties about undesirable migrants from the Global South. Tamils like Sabari felt a profound stigma associated to their former status as a non-white 'asylum seeker' that was

really use the word asylum seeker and speak about it and stuff like that and I remember telling them I don't know how it feels to be an asylum seeker because I was a kid and I wasn't traumatised by the experience so migration, my mum, my parents, they split in order to do so.

I had…come out to my school friends, some of them and by the time I started Uni more people had found out. In fact, I have a particular memory from UTS (University of Technology Sydney). I went to UTS but in my last year of high school I had come out to a few of my friends and one of them had gone around telling all these other people I was gay and I remember coming to orientation week at UTS and there was this Sri Lankan Tamil guy that I used to go to school with who was really drunk and he came up to me, it's a good story, and gave me a big hug and he said, 'I'm totally cool with it, I'm fine with it, I still respect you and care about you as friend,' and because there's been a gap of three months from when you finish school and start Uni it didn't quite occur to me what had happened so even after he left I couldn't quite figure it out and then it clicked. He was saying that he was okay with my sexuality. But there were other experiences where at Sydney Uni when I did feel ostracised and I could tell that people were laughing behind my back and making fun of me and there was also a bit of…because of how comfortable I was with men there were some straight men and especially South Asian men who usually can be a bit awkward towards women. At that age when they turn eighteen they start going to Uni and I think on some levels they resented me for that and I felt like they would make fun of me but I got enough of a connection from the South Asian women to feel like I kind of belonged.

'downplayed' in everyday life, to avoid the stigma associated to 'undesirable' and 'undeserving' segments of society. Sara Wills, 'Un-stitching the Lips of a Migrant Nation,' *Australian Historical Studies* Vol. 33, No. 118 (2002), 71-89; Suvendrini Perera, *Australia and the Insular Imagination: Beaches, Borders, Boats, and Bodies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); David Walker, 'Survivalist Anxieties Australian Responses to Asia, 1890s to the present,' *Australian Historical Studies* Vol. 33, No. 120 (2002), 319-330; Ghassan Hage, 'Multiculturalism and White Paranoia in Australia,' *Journal of International Migration and Integration* Vol. 3, No. 3-4 (2002), 429. As I write this chapter in August 2018 key national political issues continue to involve refugees: a senator in the Australian parliament used his maiden speech to call for a 'final solution' to argue that all Muslims should be banned from migrating to Australia, there remain constant reminders of asylum seekers suffering from indefinite periods held in Government-sponsored offshore detention centres in Manus and Nauru island, and in relation to Tamils – asylum seekers have been deported to Sri Lanka despite well-established fears of torture and persecution by Sri Lankan Government armed forces. These unfolding events provoke ongoing questions about race anxieties of national and cultural belonging and exclusion within historical ideals of a white Australia. They also highlight the temporal nature of 'otherness' that can have consequences for how young refugees such as Sabari might reconstruct their past to 'fit' the current political discourse. Consequently, their personal histories and experiences of seeking asylum may be suppressed, to avoid being marginalised and excluded at the everyday level.

I went to an all-boys school and it was already awkward for me to make friends with boys when I was at Uni and I definitely felt this pressure, this kind of courtship that was happening when I was in first year, first semester between like the brown guys and brown girls. There's always these awkward conversations then there's like giggling here and giggling there and I don't know why but when I finished school all my close friends didn't end up going to Sydney Uni, so I tried very hard to make a diverse group of friends, but it seemed my gay life was always outside of Uni. I went to queer club, queer society and I went there once and my experience was I walked in and it was highly political, highly policed around [an] identity that I couldn't relate to like there was this whole LGBTQI spectrum that I couldn't relate to, didn't know and didn't understand. There were two factions within the queer society trying to control the society based on ideology around what it is to be gay and what we should do with the society all this kind of stuff whereas I just wanted to go to a space where I could hang out with other gay people, and I felt really intimidated. I went with a friend of mine, an Indian gay guy I met online, and we were so freaked out by it that we left, and I never really engaged with it.

I was afraid if I told any of the brown kids at Uni that my parents would find out [that I'm gay] because I wanted my parents to find out, but I always felt very self-conscious because I couldn't determine how real they were with me because there were times when they were talking behind my back, gossiping behind my back so I felt really uncomfortable with the guys. So, I would go to Uni and I think I had a very low level of anxiety of running into these guys, what I would say to them and how I should behave around them, that I shouldn't be too feminine or I shouldn't joke about being gay so I kind of moderated my personality whereas with the girls I was a bit more open because I think being gay was like a catalyst for my friendship with them when this barrier or sexual awkwardness was taken away. But I didn't come out to them immediately. So, there were all these rumours in Uni about me that was going around in first semester, but I had only come out half way in second semester when I kind of hung out with people long enough and the question would come up.

It was a big deal for me because I had no example before me to kind of model myself around. I think it's the newness of it, the association of it to something that is bad. Well, I notice this about ethnic minorities, so in the gay community there's a lot of racism towards brown people, people from Asia and then within the brown community there's a lot of homophobia, not necessarily an overt, violent homophobia but there's a subtle undercurrent of disgust and disapproval and all that kind of stuff so it's really strange that within these ethnic

communities when they see more difference they want to push it out rather than embrace it. I think there's a lot of pressure, I felt like a lot of the brown guys were quite performative. They were trying to be really masculine and cool and get attention from the girls. It's a very unhealthy environment where they're trying to outdo each other and when they see someone like me who is gay it's an easy target because then they can shift the focus to someone like me and make fun of me.

Responsibilising the Self

I had this crazy idea which most brown kids don't have which is, it's just easier to lie to our parents and go about our lives and fake it till you make it. I felt that I had a good enough relationship with my mum that I needed to be honest with her and so I felt that burden of wanting to be honest and wanting to be true to myself, not entirely, like we come from cultures where you don't talk about sex and things like that but I thought my sexuality is beyond sex, it's my identity in terms of how I relate to the world and I felt the burden to do that and the responsibility and since then I thought it would be freeing. I thought it would be liberating but I don't think it is because now that they know I'm gay I feel this great responsibility to carry this gayness in a very positive way. So, I can't be seen to be promiscuous. I literally have to get it so perfect and so right so then it validates if I will be seen as a good person in the community and when kids who are in primary school and high school come out now, they might think of 'that old uncle.' So, I remember talking to my partner about this and I said:

> Even if things don't work out for us I'm just going to pretend I'm still with you because I want my parents to think that two men can be in love and together and same as two women so that way I create this, whether it's true or not, this positive outlook on gay relationships so that when one of my nieces, nephews or extended family members come out then the uncles and aunties would be like okay.

I came to terms with this quite recently since introducing my partner because without my partner all it is, is a word and a concept that your parents put to the back of their mind because you never see, they don't see me out at a gay bar or hanging out with my gay friends. But when you put a face to it and a personality to it then everything becomes around that I think.

There are gay men, for example who are in open relationships, multiple partners and are not always in monogamous relationships and even the idea of approaching that is such a mind

field and such a frightening thing for me because I feel like I need to emulate a heterosexual relationship to get it right, get it perfect in order to get approval so I think in that way I think it's actually not freeing at all, it creates more kinds of pressures. In terms of, for example my partner wants to have kids, but I know my mum doesn't want me to have kids because you know, again this could be what I started ten years ago, I have to do this whole round of work for another ten years.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the life stories of Sabari, a young Tamil person who grew up in Australia after fleeing Sri Lanka in 1995. Sabari constructs his sense of belonging through memories related to the homeland and new country and more specifically the (re)creation of new social spaces that problematised family and community relations. Sabari's memories reflected sharp contrasts across cultural, social and political lines in Australia and Sri Lanka that placed him on the periphery of society. He was forced to create new spaces, break with tradition and embrace his selfhood as a gay Tamil man – on his terms. Implicated in his processes of belonging was the resurfacing of other axes of differentiation such as caste and ethnicity that further highlighted the intersections of belonging. When the concept of 'arranged marriage' was only beginning to be challenged in the Tamil diaspora, the idea that a Tamil man could love another man was an unimaginable concept in the minds of Tamil people, not least a formative aspect in Sabari's life.

His experiences of belonging were located at the limits of Australia's multiculturalism that was reasserting its white-national values in which the exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers became normalised, even endorsed. While not overtly stated, Sabari's refugeeness, adolescence, gay identity and Tamilness were intimately connected to narratives of nation and belonging, both in Australia and Sri Lanka. At different moments in his life, Sabari created in-between spaces that resisted master narratives of belonging that excluded him within the nation and community.[34] *The private life, as Sabari's demonstrated, was never separate from the public spheres of society. At a time when Tamils were not recognised as a persecuted minority in Sri Lanka or as a refugee community in Australia, Sabari's memories represented the conundrums of young Tamils growing up as 'locals' and 'migrants', albeit in fragmented and contradictory ways. At the same time, Sabari signalled resistances to those labels that were not fixed identities within fixed places. Thus, his crafts of belonging*

[34] Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,' 197-214.

constituted belonging thresholds that were historical. This conceptualisation of belonging as a process that is tied to the past will recur throughout the rest of the chapters in the thesis. In the next chapter, I expand on Sabari's distance to the refugee label and his constructions of migrancy that was a common theme among interviewees.

CHAPTER TWO: 'I Couldn't Find Anyone Who Came as a Refugee': Reconstructing Tamil Forced Migration to Australia through Social Memory

In the life story interviews examined in this study it was clear that Tamil migration out of Sri Lanka was due to the civil war and Tamil people's fears of persecution. While some interviewees were more affected by civil war than others, the collective memory reinforced how the Sri Lankan Government targeted all Tamil people. However, as the interviews continued it emerged that several individuals did not identify with the 'refugee' label that reflected their *forced* migration out of Sri Lanka. They further distanced themselves from the refugee label by comparing themselves to Tamil asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat in more recent years. This prompted an inquiry into *why* there was a profound distance to the refugee label and whether this distancing meant that the interviewees had also distanced themselves from their past. In a similar way to Martha Kumsa, I noted that these memory spaces of refugee identity, the focus of this chapter, were dynamic and inextricably linked to other aspects of negotiating belonging in resettlement.[1]

In order to understand the contradiction between young Tamil people's distance to the refugee identity and recognition that they fled persecution, I turn to the role of memory as a central medium through which identities are constituted.[2] Memory is complex, particularly on questions like that of the role of memory in identity construction.[3] As Jeffrey Olick argued, it means realising that memory occurs at a variety of levels in society: 'public and private', 'tops of societies and at the bottoms', 'reminiscence and as commemoration', and 'personal testimony and its national narrative'.[4] Perhaps most importantly, it means recognising that memory, like identity, operates in ways that are both individual and collective and that this relationship is always changing.[5] In the chapter, I explore the role of memory in Tamil people's identity construction, by examining how individual and collective memories meet, within processes of belonging.

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[1] Martha K. Kumsa, '"No! I'm Not a Refugee!' The Poetics of Be-Longing Among Young Oromos in Toronto,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 2 (2006), 239.
[2] Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,' *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 24 (1998), 105-140.
[3] Jeffrey K. Olick, 'Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,' *Sociological Theory* Vol. 17, No. 1 (1999), 333-348.
[4] Ibid., 346.
[5] Ibid.

The chapter is primarily interested in the relationship between individual and collective memory. However, what will be evident in the analysis is that both individual and collective memory are interrelated: 'we can no more speak of the collective memory than we can speak of a presocial individual memory.'[6] Collective memory, as Maurice Halbwachs showed, is not a given but it is a socially constructed notion that individuals have constructed as part of groups and institutions in a society.[7] For example, as children within families, religious or school groups. Thus, individuals, being located in these specific group contexts, draw on that context to remember or create the past.[8] At the same time, we can understand collective memory in terms of the individual who claims their historical knowledge through personal, lived experiences that are expressed autobiographically.[9] Here, the 'site' or context of collective memory receives less attention, and the individual remembers as part of many collectives to produce histories in which they claim their historical subjects as part of their memories.[10] While recognising that these contestations between individual and collective memory exist, the chapter is more concerned with understanding these memory processes and their interrelatedness.[11]

The young Tamils of this study entered Australia under intense but opposing pressures in asserting their sense of self. Within Sri Lanka, their Tamil identity was a critical part of their lives, particularly for Tamil people in the North and East of Sri Lanka that is the traditional Tamil homeland. However, life outside of Sri Lanka pressed the young Tamils to integrate and adapt to Australian ways. In the in-between spaces, young Tamils negotiated and asserted their sense of self in ways that were uniquely theirs and different from their parents', from the homeland, and the wider Australian identity.[12] A deeper understanding of individual belongings, such as Sabari's life stories in the previous chapter, provide a more flexible framework for understanding the constructed nature of the processes associated with identity.[13] This framework allows us to examine belonging processes, which help situate

[6] Olick, 'Collective Memory,' 346.
[7] Lewis A. Coser, ed., *Maurice Halbwachs on Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Susan A. Crane, 'AHR Forum: Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,' *American Historical Review* Vol. 102, No. 5 (1997), 1383.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Olick, 'Collective Memory,' 333-348.
[12] Kumsa, '"No! I'm Not a Refugee!', 236.
[13] Paul Jones and Michał Kryżanowski, 'Identity, Belonging and Migration: Beyond Constructing 'Others', in *Identity, Belonging and Migration,* eds., Gerard Delanty et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 38-53.

'where' an individual positioned themselves during significant times of memory formation in their lives.[14] Identities are constructed and understood in multiple ways, both 'internally' – by individuals and externally – by the power 'other' thus showing how processes of belonging construct identity formation:

> We take different routes to our collective identities and understand them in very different ways; belonging shows how difference can be incorporated into one group. It is important to stress that belonging is not necessarily based on a distinction from a clearly defined 'other', as in the case to a greater degree with collective identities: on the contrary, individuals often express a sense of belonging with a 'other', while remaining outside the bounds of the group.[15]

If a central conceptual tool for analysing identity is memory, then, belonging processes are also constituted through memory work. In the chapter, I show how belonging processes at different levels of society have constructed Tamil identity formation and shaped collective Tamil migration experiences. It was not so much that discrimination experienced within the Tamil community had related to the refugee situation and to different waves of migration, as evidenced among other refugee groups.[16] Rather, it was the politicisation of the refugee label and the negativity attached to that label that had created divisiveness within society; policymakers constructed Australia as being under threat from refugees and 'queue evaders'.[17]

Sri Lanka's civil war created a felt community of persecution and injustice against Tamils in Sri Lanka despite individual distances to the refugee label. This, I suggest, is characteristic of young Tamil people who fled Sri Lanka due to war and persecution. As part of the war generation, the varieties of belonging processes show how young Tamils who carried with them different experiences related to their migration can end up with a sense of belonging that does not necessarily 'fit' with the collective Tamil identity. Thus, differences within the Tamil war generation are characteristic of a demarked generation, in which the memories of young Tamils symbolised the interrelatedness between the individual and collective memory that construct the Tamil identity in contexts of forced migration.

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 46.
[16] Fethi Mansouri and Melek Bagdas, 'Politics of Social Exclusion: Refugees on Temporary Protection Visa in Victoria' (Melbourne: Victorian Arabic Social Services, 2002).
[17] Glenn Nichols, 'Unsettling Admissions: Asylum Seekers in Australia,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 11, No. 1 (1998), 61-79.

A Note on Statistical Data Concerning Tamil Migration to Australia

The statistics relating to Tamil migration to Australia during the 1980s and 1990s remain unclear.[18] In 1991, the Tamil population was estimated to be 6,917 (18.7% of the Sri Lankan population in Australia).[19] In 1996, Tamil and Sinhalese were recognised as two of the less commonly spoken languages in Australia that showed large proportional increases (up 53% to 17,500 and up 53% to 14,700 respectively).[20] In 1997 Australia received 200 Sri Lankans arriving as 'spontaneous refugee arrivals/refugee recognition' and 300 'resettlement arrivals',[21] however it is unclear how many of these were Tamil. While Australia received 1,190 applications from Tamils seeking resettlement including 150 seeking refugee status, it rejected 1,460 applications.[22] That same year in 1997, the UNHCR estimated that the number of Tamils of concern in Sri Lanka had reached 200,000 people.[23] Nevertheless, Tamils arrived in Australia under various migration streams, such as the humanitarian and family sponsorship programs, including under the Special Assistance category that admitted Tamils in response to the intensification of violence in Sri Lanka in 1995.[24] It is also likely that in the mid-1990s Tamils comprised the high numbers of Sri Lankans initially arriving in Australia as temporary workers (on 457 visas) or students before applying successfully for permanent residency.[25]

Aside from these statistics, however, and as scholars of Sri Lanka agreed, it was difficult to capture statistically Tamil migration to Australia during the 1980s and 1990s, one reason could be due to Tamil peoples reluctance to acknowledge their persecuted status officially, at a time when political unrest in Sri Lanka was receiving worldwide attention.[26] It is also likely

[18] Palitha Ganewatta, 'Australia,' in *The Encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora*, ed. Peter Reeves (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2013), 163-164.
[19] The calculations were based on religion and showed that the Sri Lankan population was categorised in the following order: Burghers (47.9%), Sinhalese (26.2%), Tamils (18.7%), Muslims (7.2%). Siri Gamage, 'Curtains of Culture, Ethnicity and Class: The Changing Composition of the Sri Lankan Community in Australia,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1998), 41-42.
[20] Australian Bureau of Statistics. 'Population Composition: Languages Spoken in Australia.' 4102.0-Australian Social Trends, 1999.
[21] UNHCR, 'Refugees and Others of Concern to UNCHR 1997 Statistical Overview' (Geneva: UNHCR Statistical Unit, 1998), 62.
[22] The number of 'rejected' applications also included the outcomes of pending applications from the previous year/s. Ibid., 97.
[23] Ibid., 27.
[24] Ganewatta, 'Australia,' 163-164.
[25] Graeme J. Hugo, 'A New Paradigm of International Migration to Australia.' Paper presented at Population of New Zealand Conference, Hamilton: University of Waikato, July 1-2, 1999, 1-2.
[26] Ganewatta, 'Australia,' 163-164.

that a high number of Tamils arrived as 'skilled migrants'. Despite arriving as forced migrants, these individuals can also be considered refugees who fled the oppressive situation in the homeland and would otherwise not have left.[27] Within the official status of 'migrants' from Sri Lanka, young Tamils effectively symbolised the 'right' kind of future non-white adult citizen who could belong *to* Australia: one who would contribute to the demographic and economic needs of the country while being given the option to retain symbolic connections to their Tamil heritage such as Tamil language, song, dance, food and clothing in allocated spaces of culture. Their past would be discarded at the level of official responses to their unrecognised refugee status.

The Refugee Status Denied: Tamil Refugee Identity Constructed by Nation-states

The 1980s and 1990s were a critical period of anti-Tamil sentiment across Western states including Australia.[28] Tamil people's legal status in relation to 'refugee' and 'migrant' were under construction.[29] In the early 1980s, and especially in the aftermath of the Tamil massacre in 1983, Tamil people fled Sri Lanka to nation-states that were initially sympathetic to their plight.[30] Australia's response to Tamils has been assessed as 'striking a balance between humanitarian concerns, domestic political considerations and foreign policy' – in contrast to the treatment of Tamil asylum seekers arriving in the late 2000s.[31] Under the Labor Government of Bob Hawke, Tamil people's applications for protection were processed

[27] Sue Fernandez and Michael Clyne, 'Tamil in Melbourne,' *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2007), 170.
[28] Øivind Fuglerud, 'Ambivalent Incorporation: Norwegian Policy towards Asylum-Seekers from Sri Lanka,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 10, No. 4 (1997), 443-461.
[29] Nicholas De Genova et al., 'New Keywords: Migration and Borders,' *Cultural Studies* Vol. 29, No. 1 (2015), 55-87.
[30] For example, the Canadian Government allowed Tamil asylum seekers to bypass one or more stages of the refugee hearing process in the aftermath of the Tamil massacre in 1983. The United Nations estimated around 50, 000 Tamil refugees fled to Eastern Europe following the massacre. In West Germany, the open-door refugee policy enabled 23, 000 Tamil arrivals. K. Manoharan, 'Tamil Refugees from Sri Lanka (Ceylon)' (Oslo: PRIO, 1985), 35.
[31] In their critical analysis of migration policy related to Tamils arriving in Australia in the 1980s, Judith Betts and Claire Higgins argued that the beginning of Sri Lanka's civil war in 1983 and its end in 2009, despite falling under Labor Governments, had produced different policy responses. The Government's recent treatment of Tamil refugees seeking asylum involved intercepting boats at sea and sending Tamils back to Sri Lanka where they faced persecution from the Sri Lankan Government. In the late 2000s, there was visibly more public anti-asylum sentiment that influenced domestic policy issues. This coupled with the fact that the LTTE had been named a proscribed terrorist organisation had resulted in weakened international views for the Tamil plight including in Australia. Judith Betts and Claire Higgins, 'The Sri Lankan Civil war and Australia's Migration Policy Response: A Historical Case Study with Contemporary Implications,' *Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2017), 281.

inside Sri Lanka under the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) which by 1983 had been used to resettle refugees from other countries, such as Poland and Chile.[32] However, only a small number arrived in the first two years of implementing the SHP: just over 700 people.[33] Based on the archival information, it is not clear how many of these refugees were Tamil, as the Department of Foreign Affairs avoided being seen as supporting Tamils in the light of its growing relations with the Sri Lankan Government and responded to concerns raised by Sinhalese Sri Lankans living in Australia.[34]

State discretion became a widespread problem for Tamils seeking asylum across the world, as revealed in the few available NGO reports that focused on Tamils.[35] NGOs repeatedly made public statements to remind everyone that 'this matter is about refugees and not immigrants', in response to the public discourse that portrayed Tamils as 'particularly devious illegal immigrants'.[36] For example, in Holland in 1985 a new regulation known as RVVT (bed-bath-bread) was made especially for Tamil refugees.[37] In the UK, the Government discredited Tamil claims of asylum based on their manner of travel and arrival.[38] Furthermore, states

[32] DIEA, 'Annual Report 1982-1983.' Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1983.
[33] DIEA, 'Consolidated Statistics, No. 14. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing, 1986.
[34] Betts and Higgins, 'The Sri Lankan Civil War,' 279.
[35] Netherlands Institute of Human Rights, 'Ethnic Violence'; British Refugee Council, 'Tamils,' London: British Refugee Council, 1987; Asia Watch, 'Halt Repatriation of Sri Lankan Tamils,' New York: Asia Watch, 1993; Tamil Refugee Action Group, 'Tamils: The Right to Live,' Pre-Seminar Documentation, 1988; Tamil Information Centre, 'Refusing Sanctuary: Ethical Ambiguities in Refugee Determination and Repatriation of Tamil Refugees,' London: Tamil Information Centre, 1999; The Refugee Council, 'Sri Lankan Tamils, the Home Office and the Forgotten Civil War,' London: The Refugee Council, 1997; Priyambudi Sulistiyanto and Rosslyn von der Borch, 'Long Road to Jaffna: The Situation of Sri Lanka's Tamil Refugees,' Bangkok: Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific, 1991.
[36] British Refugee Council, 'Tamils', 3.
[37] Under this policy, Tamils were resettled in refugee camps with little freedom and were given limited supplies: 200 grams meat and 150 grams vegetables once every two days. Manoharan, 'Tamil Refugees,' 44.
[38] For example, on February 13, 1987, sixty-four Tamils arrived in Britain seeking asylum. After being questioned by British authorities, six were given temporary admission while 58 Tamils were returned to Bangladesh. In the House of Commons on February 17,1987 conservative backbencher Mark Carlisle asked the Home Office Minister to agree that the method of arrival of the Tamils was far more consistent with a deliberate attempt to avoid the immigration laws of the country. However, the Home Office later conceded that it incorrectly implied that the method of arrival discredited a person's claims for asylum. This judgement was confirmed on February 24, 1987 by High Court judges who reviewed the cases of the rejected Tamil asylum seekers. The case highlighted 'grave flaws' in Britain's immigration procedures that demonstrated a fundamental shortcoming in the legal system: the absence of the right to appeal. House of Lords, 'On Appeal between The Queen and The Secretary of State for the Home Department. United Kingdom Parliament, December 16, 1987; *The Times*, 'The Right to be a Refugee,' March 4, 1987.

resettled Tamils temporarily, for example under the 'B status' (in the Netherlands) or 'exceptional leave to remain' (in the UK) or with no designated legal status (in India).[39] While nation-states' temporary resettlement of Tamils is commendable, the precarity of Tamil refugee status remained a major barrier for Tamil people's permanent resettlement in countries of refuge. The states' precarity towards Tamils produced rhetoric of tolerance in both socially inclusive and exclusive ways.[40]

The continued arrival of Tamils to Western countries reflected the intensification of persecution and armed violence in the homeland and facilitated the increasing intolerance for Tamil refugees by host countries.[41] Perhaps one of the most famous illustrations of this was the 'Tamil scandal' in Denmark.[42] In 1987 the Danish Government under the leadership of Poul Schülter, member of the Conservative People's Party, sought to decrease the number of Tamil refugee family reunifications. While the Minister of Justice Erik Ninn-Hansen advanced to reject Tamil cases of family reunification, Danish law deemed his order illegal. The case gained national and international attention and eventually resulted in the dismantling of the Danish Government and the resignations of Ninn-Hansen, four civil servants in the justice ministry and Schülter. In 1995 Ninn-Hansen was found guilty of three cases of abuse of power, including misinforming the Danish parliament in relation to Tamil people's call for family reunification.[43]

In Australia, Tamils seeking protection were promptly stigmatised as 'economic migrants' rather than 'refugees' fleeing persecution. [44] Australia's immigration programme was geared towards achieving economic and demographic goals that welcomed the arrival of humanitarian entrants such as Tamils because they helped achieve national demographic targets.[45] Within the yearly quota of 12, 000 refugee intakes, and a contingency figure of 2,000, Sri Lankan Tamils were allocated spaces mainly in the 'other' category.[46] Thus,

[39] Nirmala Chandrahasan, 'A Precarious Refuge: A Study of the Reception of Tamil Asylum Seekers into Europe, North America and India,' *Harvard Human Rights Year Book* Vol. 2, (1989), 95.
[40] Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren, *Debating Diversity: Analysing the Discourse of Tolerance* (London: Routledge, 1998).
[41] *Sunday Observer*, '1,335 Tamils will have to return home – Swiss backlash on the Refugees,' June 3, 1984; *The Sunday Times*, 'Denmark Refuses Asylum to Tamils,' October 30, 1983.
[42] Niels Reeh, *Secularization Revisited – Teaching of Religion and the State of Denmark, 1721-2006* (Cham: Springer, 2016), 157.
[43] *The Times*, January 12, 1993.
[44] By 1999 there were conservative estimates of just over twenty-two million refugees and others of concern to UNHCR from across the world. UNHCR, 'Refugees and Others of Concern,' 10.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 301

Tamils forcibly arrived as migrants in the context of Australia's economic rationalist approach to immigration (apart from the small proportion of humanitarian and family reunion entrants). This approach favoured younger immigrants with skills who had relevant work and educational experiences.[47] Thus, the case to resettle young Tamils had been made and it related less to reasons of war and persecution. Vitally then, Tamils fleeing Sri Lanka were embroiled in political processes of exclusion by their host country. Tamils were denied a sense of association to their status as refugees fleeing persecution, and as such their individual connections to the Tamil identity were blurred by the nation-state's constructions of their identity as 'migrants'.[48]

Young Tamil People Construct their Identity: 'I'm a migrant.'[49]

The memories of interviewees of this study revealed that there was a clear distance to the refugee identity that was tied to not only their legal status upon arriving in Australia but also their status as young Tamil people. Interviewees explained that arriving at a younger age meant that they had avoided receiving questions from authorities at the airport or in their new community about their legal status. In retrospect, however, they acknowledged that they had avoided using the term 'refugee', instead described the circumstances in which they had fled Sri Lanka:

> The people would ask why I came, and I would say because of the civil war but I would never use the word refugee. I just say my aunty sponsored me, but people would only ask me 'where are you from?' and 'how come you came here?'. If I came at this age, they might but they never asked me as a child.[50] (Jehan)

Here, the refugee label was not used to categorise migration experiences however it had shaped how interviewees had portrayed themselves to others: as not refugees. The child-self is constructed under a certain legal status and category (migrant) while carrying the experiences of another status – the refugee child. This further marks the initial stages of their distance to the refugee identity, where the young person manoeuvred themselves around that refugee identity, 'I just say my aunty sponsored me'.[51] It was a conscious decision to avoid being portrayed as belonging to a refugee group who needed to be protected from the nation-

[47] Roger Jones and Ian McAllister, 'Migrant Unemployment and Labour Market Programs,' Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991.
[48] Jones and Kryżanowski, 'Identity, Belonging and Migration,' 44.
[49] Interview with Dayan. Sydney, November 13, 2016.
[50] Interview with Jehan. Melbourne, February 21, 2016.
[51] Interview with Jehan. Melbourne, February 21, 2016.

state.[52] However, the legal status upon arrival as 'migrants' did not overshadow interviewees' vivid experiences of persecution. For example, one interviewee described arriving in Australia through family sponsorship; however he recalled in graphic detail his experiences of fleeing Jaffna:

> Through aunt's sponsorship we were able to come. At that time, it was a bit easier, we came here as migrants. I didn't know until she sponsored us. It was not that we didn't know, we had a destination to come to through the sponsorship, but the first time we left we were turned back so it was actually the third time that we were lucky to come. The first time we tried to come with all the war not exactly sure what the place was but we had to cross this big field and I do remember there was army on both sides of the field and if they felt like they would shoot someone and I actually saw I would have been a good 40 metres walking and they did shoot someone but obviously because I was walking with my mum she closed my eyes but that did happen. We were there for about a couple of days and we went across….and then were unsuccessful and it was the third time we got lucky.[53] (Daniel)

Despite the immense difficulties of escaping Jaffna, this interviewee did not associate to the refugee identity, instead preferring to identify himself as a migrant. However, some interviewees explained that the legal status was irrelevant to constructing the Tamil identity, as one interviewee put it, 'most of the Tamil people left because of problems of war.'[54] He continued, by emphasising that the identity of Tamil people who fled Sri Lanka speaks to a collective experience of persecution and marginalisation due to civil war:

> We had migrant visas, but we left because of the war. I really don't see any difference [between migrant and refugee]. It wasn't just me, my dad came first as a refugee or asylum seeker and he got his permanent residency. He left because of the war, we left because of the war, so by saying you come as an asylum seeker or refugee it doesn't make a difference because we all left because of the war. There are a lot of people, unfortunately it's one of those things where people differentiate themselves from everyone else. It's sort of a status thing, even when I was younger. We didn't really have a choice! Most of the Tamil people I know came for the same or similar reasons and left because of the problems of war.[55] (Jason)

[52] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* (London: Routledge, 2000).
[53] Interview with Daniel. Sydney, December 20, 2015.
[54] Interview with Jason. Melbourne, September 12, 2016.
[55] Ibid.

The intra-community segregations attached to the Tamil refugee identity were located within broader histories of negativity evoked by the refugee identity.[56] Another interviewee who arrived as an unaccompanied refugee minor reinforced this point when he raised his dislike at fellow members in the Tamil community who belittled Tamil refugees when they stated, 'we came on a skilled visa, these people came as a refugee'.[57] The individual memory that is distanced from the refugee aspect of the Tamil identity, I suggest, is also shaped by the current politics of Tamil migration to Australia.[58] At the time of conducting interviews between 2015 and 2017, Tamil asylum seekers continued to seek refuge in Australia by boat and received widespread media attention about their legal rights to have their refugee claims assessed.[59] Political responses positioned Tamil asylum seekers as a 'global and regional problem'.[60] The media frequently referred to them as Tamil 'terrorists who don't qualify for asylum'.[61] The Government responded with increased funding and screening processes to enhance Australia's border protection.[62] The negativity attached to the Tamil refugee label, especially since the end of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009, had implications for how interviewees located their memories, within specific historical experiences. For example, for one interviewee, the Tamil identity entailed specific historical experiences such as living as refugees in Tamil Nadu in South India:

> My dad came to Australia around 94, 95 so he then migrated everybody, the whole family because India wasn't…it's not for us…no matter how long you stay there you're never going to be a citizen. They're not going to allow other nationality people to become citizens. So, at the end of the day you will either be a refugee or a student there. We were there as students but were labelled as refugees because of the Indian Government.[63] (Rajiv)

[56] Kumsa, '"No! I'm Not a Refugee",' 240.
[57] Interview with Guru. Melbourne, June 14, 2016.
[58] Sue Hoffman, 'Looking Back, Looking Forward: Australia, Indonesia and Asylum Seekers 1999-2009,' in *Enter at Own Risk? Australia's Population Questions for the 21st Century*, eds. Suvendrini Perera et al. (Perth: Black Swan Press, 2010), 117-140.
[59] Ben Doherty and Paul Farrell, 'Detention of 157 Tamil Asylum Seekers on Board Ship Ruled Lawful,' *The Guardian*, January 28, 2015; Jewel Topsfield and Amilia Rosa, 'Stranded Sri Lankans Vow to Continue to Australia if Boat Escorted to International Waters,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 20, 2016.
[60] Minister for Home Affairs, The Hon Brendan O'Connor, 'Border Protection Command Intercepts Vessel.' Media Release, Australian Government, April 21, 2010, 1-2.
[61] Sally Neighbour, 'Tamil Tigers at the Front Door,' *The Australian,* July 16, 2010.
[62] Minister for Home Affairs, The Hon Bob Debus, 'New Measures to Enhance Australia's Border Protection.' Media Release, Australian Government, May 12, 2009, 1-2.
[63] Interview with Rajiv. Sydney, December 11, 2015.

Here, the Tamil identity is shaped by specific historical experiences of being recognised legally as refugees by the Indian Government that evoked the reality of belonging to a persecuted Tamil group. From July 1983 to December 1987 there were 134, 053 displaced Tamils in India.[64] However, it was difficult to ascertain accurate numbers because some people did not register, and it was easy to remain undetected with many displaced Tamils living outside refugee camps.[65] Nevertheless, Tamils who fled to India took refuge in the state of Tamil Nadu and were given legal refugee status, thus they were recognised not only within India but internationally as having fled due to persecution in the homeland.[66] In interviewees' constructions of their Tamil identity, it was clear that their dominant legal status as 'migrants' entailed more complex constructions of how they represented themselves as Tamil people resettled in Australia. Through their memories, the interviews represented diversities within the community, in which self-expression of historical consciousness became an expression of collective memory as persecuted Tamils in Sri Lanka, refugees in Tamil Nadu, migrants in Australia. Thus, the personal memories constructed a collective Tamil identity, 'not because it is exactly shared by all of the other members of the collective but because that collective makes its articulation possible.'[67]

Social Context of Tamil identity Construction in Australia

Despite the anti-immigration sentiment circulating the lives of young Tamils before they arrived in Australia, we must also critically locate their sentiments to the violent genealogy of the Australian settler colonial state that claimed an Australian identity based on white belongingness.[68] As Ghassan Hage argued, the racialised discourse of multiculturalism had represented strong associations between white Australia and mainstream Australia.[69] The

[64] Department of Rehabilitation. 'Information Handbook of Department of Rehabilitation.' Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 2005, 3.
[65] Asha Hans, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India,' *Refuge* Vol. 13, No. 2 (1993), 30.
[66] It's important to note the changing situation for Tamil refugees living in India. After the assassination of Indian president Premadasa on May 1, 1993, Tamil refugees in India were increasingly viewed as militants who needed to be deported instead of being viewed as refugees who needed protection. There was also fear among Indian politicians the Tamil militancy's ideologies would influence and produce insurgencies among Tamils living in South India. Hans, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India,' 30-32.
[67] Crane, 'Writing the Individual Back,' 1383.
[68] Perera, *Australia and the Insular Imagination: Beaches, Borders, Boats, and Borders* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 11.
[69] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1998), 20.

theme of acceptance that saw new migrants enter Australia pertained to positive 'anti-racist' values within multiculturalism, as Hage argued:

> If the white Australia policy and assimilation were about treating Australians from a non-English speaking background as outsiders, multiculturalism is about fully accepting them as Australians.[70]

While Australia became less white by the 1980s, due to global shifts in decolonisation, globalisation and economic necessity, it remained clear that its dominant institutions such as law and Government remained anglicised.[71] Australia continued to assert its right to choose who entered Australia – that is, who will be granted migrant status and who will be deemed 'illegal'.[72] Thus, the arrival of non-white migrants, including Tamils, had confronted the 'insular case' of Australia, shaped as it was by a racialised political and socio-geographical imaginary that made and unmade Terra Nullius.[73] The Australian nation-state had crafted a *foundational* politics of belonging. In this section of the chapter, I reveal processes of belonging at the level of Government and civil society that provide an 'unpacking' of Tamil identity, by focusing on the specific context of Tamil people's claims to refugee status in Australia. Through these processes of belonging, we can understand how Tamil identity formation operated in 'concrete' social contexts, within which young Tamils have positioned themselves in relation to their Tamil community and wider Australian society.[74]

On July 29,1983 the Australian Government cabled the Sri Lankan Government stating its concerns about the communal violence and the pressures this would place on Tamil migration to Australia.[75] The Australian Government further expressed the highly sensitive nature of its decision to implement the SHP that applied to all Sri Lankans; it carefully avoided explicit mention that the policy would target Tamils and that it would be limited to family reunions only:

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[70] Ibid., 102.
[71] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonising Society,' in *Uprootings/Regrounding: Questions of Home and Migration*, eds. Sara Ahmed et al. (Oxford, Berg, 2003), 23-40.
[72] Read, Peter, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000), 27.
[73] Ibid., 11.
[74] Jones and Kryżanowski, 'Identity, Belonging and Migration,' 44.
[75] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Communal Violence in Sri Lanka,' July 29, 1983, 1-3.

> We have consulted with the Department of Foreign Affairs on this issue and are mindful of the sensitivity of applying SHP criteria to the present situation in Sri Lanka. You will note that special consideration of any cases under the SHP has been limited to family reunion sponsorships.[76]

While Australian officials did not explicitly state that Tamils were being subjected to racialised violence in Sri Lanka or that the SHP anticipated mainly Tamil applicants, officials in Sri Lanka were frequently contacted for 'situation reports' about the Tamil plight.[77] That same day on July 29, 1983 Sri Lankan Government officials cabled officials in Australia and stressed the improved political conditions on the island: 'Government maintains that the security situation in Jaffna is quiet and that it has been so since the terrorist killing last weekend which sparked the current island wide ethnic violence.'[78] It was clear that both Governments avoided any formal acknowledgement that Tamils were subjected to racialised violence in their homeland.[79]

In response to discourses that denied Tamils their refugee status as being persecuted in the homeland, as early as 1982 concerned Tamils resettled in Australia had lobbied the Government to condemn the violence against Tamils in Sri Lanka and argued for their right to seek protection in Australia.[80] For example, in 1982 a Tamil doctor from Darwin lodged a petition to the Government to condemn discrimination and harassment faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka.[81] The petition was received in the Australian Parliament and claimed Sri Lankan Government forces had:

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[76] Ibid.
[77] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Sri Lanka: Communal Violence,' July 29, 1983, 3.
[78] Ibid.
[79] The evidence of Australia's acknowledgement that Tamils were subjected to racialised was limited to a few mentions in parliament, for example, Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives Official Hansard No. 140, February 25, 1985, 174, and Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates, Senate, Official Hansard No. 102, Thursday 5, 1984, 1312.
[80] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Department of Foreign Affairs, letter sent by Senator Ben Kilgariff to John Hodges, Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, June 11, 1982, 1-2; NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Department of Foreign Affairs, letter to Australian High Commissioner in Colombo, April 30, 1983.
[81] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1.

> Unleashed violence in the Tamil district of Jaffna, killing innocent people, set ablaze shops, homes and public library with historic Tamil documents, Tamil bookshops, newspaper offices and printery, presumably in an attempt to destroy Tamil identity and culture.[82]

This petition urged the Australian Government to raise the problem of human rights abuses of the Tamils at the next conference of the Commonwealth Heads of Government.[83] The Tamil doctor also drew attention to growing hostilities between Tamil and Sinhalese people living in Darwin however urged that the main priority was for Government to review its refugee programs and consider resettling Tamils on the grounds of their racialised discrimination.[84] The Sri Lankan High Commissioner of Australia had denied any instances of abuse faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka.[85] However, the plea for Tamils seeking refugee status in 1982 had coincided with Sri Lanka's Presidential elections and referendum that further tested the limits of Tamil people's belonging in their homeland.[86] Changing social and political conditions in Sri Lanka had produced several incidents of racialised violence against Tamils leading up to the Tamil massacre in July 1983, often in an environment that encouraged the violence.[87]

In response, Tamil diaspora organisations published reports that highlighted various forms of persecution faced by Tamils in their homeland, including child abuse and gender-based violence.[88] Moreover, thousands of Tamils in the diaspora held protests and raised funds for the 130, 000 Tamil refugees internally displaced due to the 1983 Tamil massacre.[89] Further, Amnesty International and the US State Department condemned the increasing human rights abuses committed against Tamils. However, the Sri Lankan Government continued to deny that brutality, instead stating that the human rights abuses were acts of 'interrogation' rather than conscious Government policy.[90] National newspapers in Sri Lanka echoed Government

[82] Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates, Senate, Official Hansard No. 91, September 18, 1981, 817.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Australian High Commissioner, Sri Lanka, letter to Department of Foreign Affairs, Australia, April 30, 1982, 1-2.
[86] C.R. de Silva, 'Plebiscitary Democracy or Creeping Authoritarianism? The Presidential Election and Referendum of 1982,' in *Sri Lanka: In Change and Crisis*, ed. James Manor (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 35-50.
[87] James Manor, ed. *Sri Lanka: In Change and Crisis* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).
[88] Tamil Rights Group, 'Assaults on Tamils,' Vol. 2, No1. London: Tamil Rights Group, 1982, 1-4.
[89] *The Times*, 'London Tamils pray for families in Sri Lanka,' August 15, 1983.
[90] Amnesty International Report, 'Sri Lanka: Current Human Rights Concerns and Evidence of Extrajudicial Killings by the Security Forces July 1983-April1984.' London: Amnesty Secretariat, 1984.

sentiments: 'ugly Americans do it again – US interference in Sovereign Lanka', thus attempting to further delegitimate Tamil people's refugee claims.[91]

Nevertheless, organisations such as Eelam Tamil Association (ETA) continued advocating for the Tamil refugee plight. Correspondence between the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka, Dennis Pereira, and Assistant Secretary at the Department of Foreign Affairs, C.A. Edwards, revealed apprehension about Tamil protestors in Australia.[92] On June 11, 1983 outside Sydney Town Hall during the NSW Labor Conference, a small group of around seventy-five ETA members protested emergency regulations in Sri Lanka that had killed hundreds of Tamils. Protestors called on Australia to cease sending aid to Sri Lanka as it repeatedly failed to reach Tamil areas.[93] In discussing the protest, the Sri Lankan High Commissioner explained to the Foreign Affairs official that the main aim of protestors was to create bad publicity for the Sri Lankan Government.[94] Pereira asserted that Tamil professionals in Australia were being coerced into paying money to local activists and their sympathisers, and this money was being passed onto the Middle East where military equipment was being purchased to support Tamil militant groups in Sri Lanka.[95] The Department of Foreign Affairs relayed the steady stream of letters from Tamil protestors to the Sri Lankan High Commissioner about the persecution of Tamils however an immediate response from the Sri Lankan High Commissioner failed to surface.[96]

Drawing on this example of Tamil protestors in Sydney in June 1983 illustrates the continuum between the legal, social and political processes that highlighted the complexity of constructing the Tamil refugee identity that influenced how Tamils perceived their legal status in Australia. Increased Tamil migration during this period was effectively constructed as being due to general political unrest in Sri Lanka, as opposed to racial persecution that targeted Tamils. The case for Tamil refugee status and explicit condemnation of Tamil persecution in Sri Lanka was weakened not only by foreign policy interests but also

[91] The article accused the US of interfering in Sri Lanka's politics following the second resolution by the Massachusetts State Assembly, in which it made clear its support for Tamil people in Sri Lanka as an oppressed group in Sri Lanka. *The Independent Sun*, 'Eelam's Fifth Column in Massachusetts: Ugly Americans Do it Again,' July 8, 1983.
[92] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Communal Situation in Sri Lanka; Tamils in Australia,' July 29, 1983, 2.
[93] Interview with Kumar, founding member of ETA. Melbourne, May 10, 2016.
[94] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Communal Situation in Sri Lanka,' 2.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

Australia's unique demographic position as having growing numbers of Sri Lanka-born Sinhalese and Tamil people.[97] These tensions would intensify in the following months and years, especially following the Tamil massacre in July 1983 when mobile gangs possessed electoral lists of Tamil businesses and residences and went on a rampage destroying them.[98]

The contestations related to granting Tamil refugee status – between Governments, concerned citizens, NGOs, and Tamils seeking refuge – were part of a wider narrative that projected a certain image of Tamils seeking refuge.[99] In Australia, from the outset in 1983, human rights abuses against Tamils were overshadowed by media reports of political developments in Sri Lanka that claimed: Government suspicions that the Tamil massacre in July 1983 was part of a foreign-inspired plot to overthrow it,[100] Tamil separatist movements could be forced underground and base its headquarters in London,[101] the Government was assisting the evacuation of Tamil refugees from the South to the North,[102] and that the LTTE were waiting for these refugees to return to the North before resuming their attacks on Government armed forces.[103] Thus, the early stages of Tamil grievances that followed the Tamil massacre in 1983 had been projected across Australian media as an internal problem within Sri Lanka, thus beginning the narrative of the undeserving Tamil refugee.

Ultimately, 'Tamil invasion' resulted in a 'press panic' that portrayed Tamils as a political and social 'problem'.[104] European newspapers portrayed Tamil arrivals as a 'torrent' and 'wave'.[105] In order to keep them (Tamils) out, nation-states needed to build barriers against

[97] Gamage, 'Curtains of Culture,' 42.
[98] N. Shanmugathasan, 'Sri Lanka: Racism and the Authoritarian State,' *Race and Class* Vol. 26 (1984), 1-94 (the whole issue discusses early periods of the civil war); Paul Sieghart, 'Sri Lanka-A Mounting Tragedy of Errors,' Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka in January 1984 on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists and its British Section, 1984; Timothy, J. Moore, 'Ethnic and Communal Violence: The Independence of the Judiciary: Protection of Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law in Sri Lanka - Fragile Freedoms?' Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka in June 1983 on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists. Sydney: Australian Section, International Commission of Jurists, 1983.
[99] Fuglerud, 'Ambivalent Incorporation,' 443-461.
[100] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Sri Lankan Warns of "Foreign Plot"', August 1, 1983.
[101] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Troops Fire at Mobs as Sri Lanka Jails Leftists,' August 1, 1983.
[102] *The Australian*, 'Marxists Blamed for Violence in Sri Lanka,' August 2, 1983.
[103] David Beresford, 'In Jaffna, They Wait for the Terror to Return,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 11, 1983.
[104] Tycho Walaardt, 'Patience and Perseverance: The Asylum Procedure of Tamils and Iranians in the Netherlands in the mid-1980s,' *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* Vol. 8, No. 3 (2011), 2-31.
[105] Ibid.

the 'flow' of foreigners.[106] The production, positioning and conditioning of tolerance of Tamil refugees exemplified a kind of 'technology of control' in a Foucauldian sense that sought to achieve control not through a concentration of power at the level of the nation-state, but rather through intolerance discourses disseminated across multiple levels of civil society, such as the media.[107] Thus, discourses of intolerance were heightened when political developments in Sri Lanka eased, such as the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord in 1987 which hinted at an improved political situation for Tamils.[108]

Similarly to the Tamil collective identity portrayed by powerful societal actors in Europe, my analysis of a major Australian newspaper, *Sydney Morning Herald*, revealed that Tamil refugees who arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s were projected as a 'flood', 'unregulated flow' and held 'bogus' claims of persecution. Thus, allowing Tamil people entry into Australia was compared to Canada's mistakes which would lead to 'immigration chaos', for instance.[109] Citing the arrival of 157 Tamils by boat to Canada, one article argued that they were not genuine refugees, and a similar fate was possible to Australia – 'on the horns of a dilemma deciding' who was a genuine refugee (and who was not).[110] However, not only were Tamils not recognised as a persecuted community, but the Minister for Foreign Affairs articulated the homeland they had fled as being in an 'almost' state of civil war.[111] Moreover, newspaper columns written by concerned citizens in Australia had reinforced anti-Tamil sentiments: '[Tamils would bring] Sri Lankan quarrels across in their luggage'.[112] Tamil people, therefore, were projected as one among several newly arrived refugee communities that harboured 'terrorists' and produced intra-community tensions.[113]

Consequently, the wider narratives in the Australian media during the 1980s and 1990s set the stage for public discourse that constructed the Tamil identity as being tied to the refugee status – as *undeserving*, including those who had successfully engaged Australia's protection

[106] Teun A. van Dijk, 'Semantics of a Press Panic: the Tamil "Invasion",' *European Journal of Communication* Vol. 3, No. 2 (1988), 182-183.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] David Jenkins, 'Unregulated Refugee Flow in our Achilles' Heel,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 26, 1990.
[110] Ibid.
[111] David Jenkins, 'Tamil Face Genocide, Says Leader,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 24, 1985.
[112] Kenneth Joachim, 'Listen to the Bells,' *Melbourne Herald*, August 3, 1983.
[113] Peter White, 'Migrants with Bigotry in their Baggage,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 14, 1986.

obligations.[114] Between 1986 and 1998 there were several reports of rejected Tamil cases and reports concluded that Tamil seeking refuge had entered Australia without temporary entry permits, despite the clear danger that faced them when they returned to Sri Lanka.[115] The focus of the stories, however, always projected national anxiety about the 'influx' of refugees.[116] While these related to Tamil asylum seekers, these dominant narratives, even as they reported the words and actions of Government officials, had an impact on the image of Tamils as not a refugee community, and therefore Tamil people as an exception to Australian refugee resettlement. The essence of the Tamil refugee identity, in other words, was *undeserving*.

Eelam Tamil Association and their Resistance to Nation-state Constructions of Tamil Identity

Tamil organisations, namely the ETA however vocalised the persecution faced by Tamils. Founded in 1978 by a group of Tamil migrants from Sri Lanka, ETA served the small yet growing Tamil community across Australia.[117] The organisation became a strong voice for the Tamil plight in the 1980s, especially from 1983 onwards. ETA conveyed its concerns to the Australian Government through letters, petitions and protests, thus becoming a collective voice for concerned Tamils living in Australia.[118] One interviewee vaguely remembered attending some of the protests organised by ETA in Melbourne that became part of his migration stories to Australia, that is, of knowing about the civil war and why his family had left Sri Lanka in 1984:

> I was about eight or nine. I sort of knew I guess that there was some politics involved because I remember…like this is before I knew why we left. in that city square like we used to go to city square a lot. We used to go there frequently for protests. This is back in the 80s when Premadasa was still president of Sri Lanka and whenever there was a visiting Sri Lankan dignitary there'd be like masses of Tamils protesting there and I remember once we went to probably the house of one of the ambassadors or something...this was ages ago…I've still got

[114] Klaus Neumann et al., 'Refugee Settlement in Australia: Policy, Scholarship and the Production of Knowledge, 1952−2013,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 35, No 1 (2014), 10.
[115] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Tamil Fails in Plea to Stay,' June 6, 1986; Ross Coulthart, 'Amnesty Attacks Aust Ruling,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 19, 1986; Daniel Moore, 'Judge Dismisses Tamils' Appeal for Refugee Status,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 27, 1987; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Mr Young and three Tamils,' January 7, 1988.
[116] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Mr Young and three Tamils,' January 7, 1988.
[117] Interview with Kumar, member of ETA. Melbourne, May 10, 2016.
[118] Ibid.

> these pictures, like I had no idea. I mean I knew it had something to do with us. So that's when my parents started recounting their experiences [of Sri Lanka].[119] (Param)

Despite the connection made between being Tamil and attending the protests, this interviewee was puzzled by his family migration journey, 'I've got to ask my dad this, somehow we didn't leave as refugees…we came as skilled migrants.'[120] Here, memories of migration emerged in spaces of ETA protests that challenged state narratives that denied Tamil people's claims to refugee status. ETA had protested against the treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka on several occasions, especially since the beginning of the civil war in 1983 and strongly resisted the Government's denial of Tamil refugee status.[121] For example on July 13, 1983, ETA sent a letter to Foreign Affairs 'desperately' requesting the immediate recognition of 'Tamils as refugees and urgent measures to safeguard the lives of Tamils.'[122] However, on August 1, 1983 Foreign Affairs concluded that:

> The present situation does not justify considering Tamils as having a prima face case for refugee status or accepting under Special Humanitarian Program simply on the basis of their ethnic origin. Moreover, refugee status can only be considered once the applicant has left his country of origin.[123]

This last point was reinforced when Tamil representatives met officials from Foreign Affairs on July 28, 1983 and were told that under the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is defined as a person who is outside his country of origin and is afraid to return to it.[124] Tamil people living in Sri Lanka, therefore, could not be considered refugees. The Tamil representatives then asked for a political act – to register the concern of the Australian Government and give special consideration to Tamil migrants.[125]

Any requests for action by the Australian Government in response to Tamil claims for refugee status were met with rigorous assessment, but more often than not were rejected on

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[119] Interview with Param. Melbourne, March 13, 2016.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Eelam Tamil Association, Foreign Affairs Ministerial Submission, 'Sri Lanka: Australian Interest in the Tamil communal problem'. July 13, 1983.
[123] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Sri Lanka: Australian Interest,' July 13, 1983. 1-2.
[124] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 1. Department of Foreign Affairs, Record of Conversation between Mr S. Thuraisingham, Mr D. Thampapillai (Tamil Eelam Association) and Mr C. A. Edwards, Mr. P.J. Coggan, Ms C. Tomkinson. 'Communal Situation in Sri Lanka: Requests for Australian Assistance, July 28, 1983, 1-4.
[125] Ibid.

the basis that claims for asylum were common to all Sri Lankans.[126] Tamil applicants seeking asylum in Australia included those who were working overseas on work contracts and had feared to return to Sri Lanka.[127] For example, on August 2, 1983 one Tamil who was employed in the United Arab Emirates was nearing the end of his work contract however feared returning to Sri Lanka and pleaded with the Australian Government to grant him asylum, 'please sir save my life through the help of Australian embassy in UAE'.[128] In London in September that same year, there were 100 applicants from Tamils seeking entry to Australia – the Australian Government had rejected about half, the rest were possibly eligible under SHP.[129] Only a small number of Tamil cases were approved under the SHP overall.[130]

At its core, the discourse of the Tamil refugee identity transcended Governmental relations and relayed fears of the known 'other' among the Sri Lankan community in Australia.[131] The meanings embedded in the identity created boundaries of exclusion that had attempted to construct a Tamil identity that repressed Tamil collective memories of persecution and suffering in the homeland. Thus, a crucial link between belonging and memory concerns how individuals can be implicated in processes of belonging by the powerful 'other' – in this case Governments. These 'official' processes of belonging that objectified Tamil people seeking asylum as undeserving were further strengthened by the 'emotional' concerns of Australian citizens whose agency further showed the extent to which belonging can be imposed by the other.[132] For example, on August 8, 1983 a Sri Lankan Burgher from Melbourne, Dr Quintus de Zylva, wrote to the Australian Prime Minister stating their concerns about 'violence amongst Sri Lankan people [who had] recently [arrived]'.[133]

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[126] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 4. Murugai Mahalingam, letter sent to C. Tomkinson, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Refugees and Asylum Section, November 3, 1983; Department of Foreign Affairs, 'SHP entry - Sivaranjan Thavathuray', October 19, 1983.
[127] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 4. S. Jatheendran, letter sent to W.G. Hayden, Minister for Foreign Affairs, September 15, 1983.
[128] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 3. K. Jayanathan, letter to Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Foreign Minister,' August 2, 1983, 1-4.

[129] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 4. Department of Foreign Affairs, September 13, 1983.
[130] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 4. Australian High Commissioner (Sri Lanka), 'Sri Lanka-Statistics', October 13, 1983, 2-3.
[131] Roger Zetter, 'More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalisation.' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2007), 185.
[132] Jones and Kryżanowski, 'Identity, Belonging and Migration,' 47.
[133] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 3. Dr Quintus L. De Zylva, letter to Prime Minister's Department, August 8, 1983.

Zylva claimed to represent concerns held by the majority of the Sri Lankan community (Sinhalese) that 'if there was any unbalanced intake of [Tamil] refugees this would alter what is presumably a reasonable balance of migrants who have settled in Australia particularly in Melbourne.'[134] Further, Zylva explained that the development of separate Tamil and Sinhalese organisations indicated increasing intra-community tensions that would intensify if Tamils were allowed entry into Australia.[135] The Government responded to Zylva's letter by reinforcing that its SHP program was not aimed at any particular group.[136] On August 26, 1983 the different groups – Sri Lankan Government officials, Dr Zylva, and Tamil representatives – met.[137] There is no indication in the archival records what this meeting entailed, only that according to the Sri Lankan official who attended, the meeting should not be discounted.[138]

At the same time, several organisations now claiming to represent Tamils in Australia lobbied the Government, calling for recognition of Tamil refugee status and related information about the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka.[139] ETA did not cease lobbying the Government as well; as violence against Tamils escalated in the homeland, the organisation was compelled to reinstate that Tamils were a persecuted group in their homeland.[140] On August 16, 1983 ETA sent a letter to Foreign Affairs highlighting the political violence inflicted against Tamils.[141] However, this time more explicitly pointed to the role of the Sri Lankan Government in contributing to that process:

> The humanitarian concessions given to the displaced persons, namely Tamils, is being made use of by members of other Sri Lankan communities, who have been totally unaffected by the

[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 3. Barbara Phi, Acting Senior Advisor, Community Development Branch. N.d.
[137] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 3. Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Sri Lanka: Communal Problem: Visit of Sri Lankan Deputy,' August 26, 1983, 2.
[138] Ibid.
[139] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 3. Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Sri Lanka-Special Entry Provisions,' August 17, 1983.

[140] Interview with Kumar, member of ETA. Melbourne, May 10, 2016.
[141] Attached to the letter sent by ETA are 'notes' about the situation in Sri Lanka that raised questions for the Australian Government: how was it monitoring the distribution of aid? how was the Government convinced that its aid money was not being used by the Sri Lankan army to purchase arms? And, relatedly, did the Government have sufficient information to be sure that Australian aid was not being used towards the persecution of Tamils? NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 3. ETA, 'The Need for Explicit Protections to Assist Refugee Tamils Under the Special Humanitarian Programme,' letter sent to DIEA, August 16, 1983, 1-3, 12-13.

> violence. The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs gave the concessions because of the violation of human rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka. But the members of other communities who enjoy the exclusive privileges offered by the Sri Lankan Government, are making use of these 'humanitarian grounds' to enter Australia for economic reasons…Although the Sri Lankan Government is anxious to portray a picture of normalcy, such a state will never prevail for Tamils…the Sri Lankan Government is in the process of taking over the properties and businesses of Tamil refugees.[142]

These sentiments were echoed by international organisations, such as the International Commission of Jurists that stated ethnic violence against Tamils in Sri Lanka amounted to a gross violation of Human rights, particularly the right to life and security of persons and property.[143] Within Australia, other NGOs such as the Australian Council for Overseas Aid condemned media reports on the civil war that failed to address the growing denial of human rights abuses against Tamils: 'civil violence in Sri Lanka clearly did not represent the wild acts of some 'extremists' but rather the culmination of the growing denial of human rights to the Tamil people of Sri Lanka.'[144] By 1984, Amnesty International maintained its request for Governments not to deport Tamil people back to Sri Lanka.[145]

The struggles that Tamil representatives faced in arguing for Tamil claims to refugee status must also be located within growing anxieties in Australia about the influx of refugee groups, including from Vietnam and Kampuchea.[146] The steady stream of Tamils, regardless of their legal status upon arrival, became topics of debate in parliament, and such instances produced the few moments of political acknowledgement in parliament about the plight of Tamil 'refugees' who needed to 'flee their country of birth because of religious or political persecution':

> It seems that what the critics of our immigration policy are saying is that, because in the last half of 1983, 40 per cent of total sponsorships under the family reunion program was from

[142] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 3. ETA, letter sent to DIEA, 'The Need for Explicit Provisions to Assist Refugee Tamils Under the Special Humanitarian Programme,' August 16, 1983, 1-3.
[143] NAA: A1838, 1690/1/18, Part 3. Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Human Rights: Sub-Commission 36: Sri Lanka,' August 22, 1983, 3.
[144] The Australian Council for Overseas Aid, Letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1983, 2.
[145] Amnesty International, 'Sri Lanka: Reports of Recent Violations of Human Rights and Amnesty International's Opposition to Refoulement of the Tamil Community to Sri Lanka.' London: Amnesty International Secretariat, 1985.
[146] House of Representatives Official Hansard, Mr Milton (Environment and Conservation) (Chairman). No. 136, May 2, 1984, 1625.

> Asia, we should discriminate against such applicants. In practical terms this means that one has to say to perhaps a Sri Lankan, who is probably a Tamil and whose family is suffering the racial violence that is going on in that country at this very time: 'No, I am sorry, your brother cannot migrate to Australia because here are too many of your people taking advantage of our migration program.'[147]

Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah described that in the relatively permissive environment of Western host countries, Tamil diaspora organisations were crucial for articulating Tamil grievances.[148] The organisations attempted to publicise the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka.[149] In the specific case of Australia, ETA was key in articulating that Tamils in Sri Lanka were fleeing due to persecution. However, it was clear from ETA's interactions with the Australian Government that the process of constructing the Tamil refugee had been displaced by a fractioning that was driven by the Government's need to manage migration and forced migration in particular.[150] While ETA recognised that Tamils remaining in Sri Lanka could not identify as refugees according to the UN Convention, their request to have the Australian Government label Tamils as refugees was a political one. It reflected not so much the global preoccupation with the 'refugee' identity which conveyed an undesirable image of destitution and an unwelcome burden.[151] Rather, the contested politicisation of the Tamil refugee status showed how both Sri Lankan and Australian nation-states had constructed a politics of belonging in which persecuted Tamil migrants who arrived during the 1980s and 1990s were excluded and simultaneously incorporated into the neutral category of citizen-migrant.[152]

The interactions between actors who negotiate processes of belonging, as highlighted above, is useful for showing how the notion of power was played out in the construction of a Tamil refugee identity. In the case of Australia, boundaries of belonging were maintained through settler-colonial mentalities that legitimated who belongs and who is the 'other' by targeting vulnerable groups in society.[153] An important reinforcement at this point is the extent to which different actors were involved in shaping the collective memories of Tamil migration

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[147] Ibid.,1626.
[148] Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah. 'Tamil Diaspora Politics,' in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, eds. Melvin Ember et al. (New York: Springer, 2005), 498.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Zetter, 'More Labels, Fewer Refugees,' 172-192.
[151] Ibid., 185.
[152] Roger Zetter et al. 'Immigration, Social Cohesion and Social Capital: What are the Links?' A Concepts Paper, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006.
[153] Stuart Hall, 'The Meaning of New Times', in *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990's*, eds. Martin Jacques (London: Verso, 1990), 116-134.

to Australia. For example, the ETA's interpretation of how Tamils seeking asylum *should* be treated by the Australian Government was based on their understandings of the civil war and how that impacted Tamil people as a matter of survival. ETA's advocacy in processes of belonging resisted Tamil identity as imposed by the more powerful 'other'.

At this level of belonging, then, there existed processes of belonging concerning the Tamil collective identity even before Tamils resettled in Australia. Indeed, some of the interviewees of this study highlighted the clear interrelations between the collective memory – that constituted the Tamil identity as loosely based on 'migrants' resettled in Australia – and their individual memory – as a 'refugee' – the individual experiences of war and resettlement experiences within specific historical experiences that reproduced a complex Tamil identity. I turn next to the life stories of one interviewee, Kumaran, whose memories are examined to show the interrelations between individual and collective memory in Tamil identity construction, within processes of belonging, that challenged dominant understandings of Tamil migration experiences and Tamil identity formation.

Kumaran: 'I Couldn't Find Anyone Who Came as a Refugee, [They] All Came as Migrants'

If we are to reckon with the complexities of the refugee label in the case of Tamil migration to Australia, we cannot simply assert fragmented political responses to Sri Lanka's civil war; we also need to reckon with the consequences of those processes.[154] The resettlement experiences of Kumaran revealed the impacts of political constructions of the refugee label within multiple historically specific struggles – not only within the wider Australian community but in the more intimate diasporic space of the Tamil community. The Tamil refugee identity not only created a sense of alienation at the level of states but had influenced how young Tamils such as Kumaran had experienced the nature of their migration, so they too politicised their own identities to reflect dominant discourses.[155] When Kumaran met other young Tamils, who had similarly left Sri Lanka due to the civil war, he observed that 'I couldn't find anyone who came as a refugee, [they] all came as migrants.'[156] His personal experiences as a 'refugee' were predicated on unavailable attachments to a Tamil community

[154] Mohanty, C. Talpade. 'Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,' in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. C. T. Mohanty et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 37.
[155] Zetter, 'More Labels, Fewer Refugees,' 187.
[156] Interview with Kumaran. Melbourne, September 10, 2015. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.

in Australia that presented as ‘migrants’. His experiences revealed that he had aspired to connect to the Tamil community through the lens of a common understanding of the Tamil identity as being constructed by the civil war, survival and forced migration. This self-understanding, at some level, was based on Tamil collective experiences of migration to Australia, in which Kumaran negotiated thresholds of belonging.

Kumaran was born in 1983 in Nagar Kovil in Jaffna, a main town in the North-East of Sri Lanka, where he lived until the escalation of armed conflict between the LTTE and Sri Lankan armed forces disrupted his childhood. The subsequent events transformed Kumaran’s life: in September 1995 Government airstrikes killed several family members including his younger brother; from October 1995 – February 1997 the remaining family left Nagar Kovil and became internally displaced in Udaiyarkaddu in Vanni; various family members left Sri Lanka including Kumaran’s older brother who resettled in Melbourne; Kumaran’s uncle arranged for him to be smuggled out of the country and on March 3, 1997 he had arrived in Sydney as a thirteen-year-old unaccompanied minor and was granted refugee status. He was held inside Villawood detention centre until May 1997, then he was flown to Melbourne where he was reunited with his older brother; they lived under the care of a guardian until the arrival of his mother, father and younger sister in 2000.

In recalling his early resettlement periods, Kumaran had crafted his sense of not belonging by identifying the implications of his refugee label within his new society:

> One of the biggest problems that I also faced was mingling with the Tamil kids because I was always very shy because I felt that I was an outsider. I think the language and just the…so English was the language that people generally communicated but that’s not it. It’s not just the language you know the kids who were growing up here had…you would say were more civilised than those who came from a village…you know that attitude…so I always felt like an outsider.

In these memories, the refugee outsider is constructed as a displaced person who could not belong. Kumaran’s response to ‘that attitude’ by other young Tamils reinforced how he had experienced his marginalised refugee identity within the Tamil community. Despite feeling excluded among ‘Tamil kids’ who made him feel like an ‘outsider’, Kumaran remained connected to the Tamil identity.

> While I was really uncomfortable getting along with other kids in this school, I wasn’t distancing myself from the Tamil identity. I also had this close relationship with ancient

> Tamils who have done much for the Tamil language… so I had read their stories and I loved them, so I was never distancing myself from the Tamil identity, but I just felt different from the other Tamils who were studying in that school.

In Kumaran's memories, his desire to remain connected to Tamil identity entwined with his longing to feel a sense of belonging as a Tamil refugee in his new society. This was a conscious decision during his early periods of resettlement and further highlighted the complexity of the Tamil identity as being personal and collective. Kumaran's experiences represented resistances to belonging thresholds imposed by the Tamil community. At the same time, the belonging thresholds of the Tamil community had failed to penetrate Kumaran's attachments to the Tamil identity, thus complicating the issue of collective constraints of memory and emphasised how different individual memories existed within the community.[157]

Throughout his resettlement, Kumaran's connections to Tamilness entwined with his attachments to a Tamil refugee identity in ways that collapsed the boundaries between conscious and unconscious processes of belonging. He was reunited with his mother, father, younger sister and brother in late 2000 when his school principal and school coordinator successfully lodged a family sponsorship visa on his behalf after doctors diagnosed him with depression. While recovering from depression and readjusting to a new family life in exile, Kumaran successfully entered Monash University on a scholarship to study a double degree in Science and Arts. During this period, 'old memories' of war had returned, thus reproduced the refugee label.

> I went to Monash Uni where they gave me a scholarship to study Science and Arts and after that while I was studying, I was still recovering from my depression. But while I was studying, I got exposed to political activism and the old memories started coming in and I wanted to be a voice for my people, so I started getting involved in activism.

Kumaran's political organising intensified in the early 2000s but especially during the final stages of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009. He began a radio show on 3CR, a community radio station in Melbourne, that covered social and political issues affecting the Tamil community in Australia.

> For the past few years I have been sharing my stories in various platforms and that…every time I go and prepare for new talks, I remember things, new stories. ABC did a small story of

[157] Jones and Kryżanowski, 'Identity, Belonging and Migration,' 49.

> me but it's mainly on my school bombing and my arrival to Australia. It's 6 minutes. You can't say much in 6 minutes. The refugee work nowadays is what I'm passionate about, I will just add one thing as well. I recently got married. The marriage itself kind of ties my past and present and the reason why I say that is because I work with a lot of refugees. I had a really bad struggle as a child and it's not an uncommon thing being from Sri Lanka.

Kumaran's proximity to the refugee identity manifested in different ways over his life course. In recalling early periods of resettlement, Kumaran identified that there was a clear distance to the refugee label among Tamils that characterised his state of being in exile: poor, separated from his parents and illiterate in English. In recalling more recent experiences of political activism, he re-located his proximity to the refugee label within a stronger, collective Tamil experience by stating that struggling due to war is 'not an uncommon thing being from Sri Lanka.' On the one hand, his political reactions to increasing numbers of Tamil asylum seeker arrivals has enabled him to resist, challenge and mobilise against hostile and marginalising policy environments in which the refugee label had historically operated for Tamils. It allowed him to reassert his childhood refugee experiences within the Tamil community, on the other. At the deepest level, Kumaran's connections to the refugee label demonstrated his belonging that was born of historical experiences and dislocation. Kumaran's process of belonging within history – a history of Tamil displacement, and state prejudice and denial of Tamil refugee status – implied a connection to Tamilness based on a denied common past than a common heritage.

> While I was working with refugees, I came to know this girl in a refugee camp in Tamil Nadu so last December I went to the refugee camp with myself and Trevor Grant who works with me here…we went to the refugee camp to get the stories of refugees and I ended up meeting her in person. She's Eelam Tamil and I got permission from the church and her mother on the 25th December and we got married on the 2nd January 2015. We actually met through the death of a Tamil refugee in Melbourne by the name of Leo Seemanpillai. She was from the same refugee camp as Leo. He self-immolated himself and died, I was by his bedside when he died.

Thus, when Kumaran found other Tamil refugees, the Tamil community became familiar, a connection that made the refugee identity both visible and consequential. The connections had demonstrated the politicisation of the Tamil identity, underscoring the enduring precarity and instability that category implies. A sense of being attached to collective victimisation emerged in Kumaran's memories of constructing his refugeeness that provoked his ongoing

commitment to refugee advocacy.[158] His individual memory within specific historical experiences forms part of the collective Tamil identity that brings to relief the ongoing plight of Tamils in the homeland and their collective suffering under the Sri Lankan nation-state. In this sense, Kumaran's personal memory is the mechanism through which collective Tamil experiences were being transformed to produce new thresholds of belonging that reproduced Tamil experiences in the past. As Roger Zetter argued, 'refugees are not always dependent victims of larger institutional powers outside their control.'[159] Kumaran's political engagement showed that he did not subvert or distance himself from the Tamil refugee identity, instead, he embraced its historical and political significance – despite its exclusionary and discriminatory consequences in his early resettlement period. In this sense, his individual memories became part of the collective memory of Tamil migration to Australia, in which the past shaped the present, and revealed the possibilities for imagining an alternative future. Kumaran's experiences had opened possible alternatives within the historical location of Tamil migration to Australia, one where Tamils were acknowledged and recognised by the nation-state as a refugee community.

Conclusion: **Conceptualisations of Tamil Identity and Social Memory**

Tamil migration to Australia shaped Tamil identity in ways that brought to relief the contestations between Tamil persecution and Tamil people's claims to refugee status. In this sense, their endings and beginnings contained multifarious constructions of the Tamil identity within their collective experience as migrants. While the 'refugee' label took more precedence as a legal category than a social one, it represented for interviewees beginnings and endings in the sense of Anna Arabindan-Kesson's articulations of moments that are 'always caught between remembering and forgetting'.[160] Arabindan-Kesson drew on photographs taken in exile as representations of both the desire for diasporic connection and its limits, of the migrant's narrative that must reconcile the contradictory experiences of being both in, and yet out of, place.[161] As a member of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora after 1983, Arabindan-Kesson ultimately argued that the story of forced migration is both acts of creation and 'real' events across multiple geographies, they are fragmented, reassembled over

[158] Mack, John, 'Nationalism and the Self,' *Psychohistory Review* Vol. 11, No. 2 (1983), 47-69.
[159] Zetter, 'More Labels, Fewer Refugees,' 183.
[160] Anna Arabindan-Kesson, 'Fragments of Memory: Writing the Migrant's Story,' in *Women and Migration: Responses in Art History*, eds. Deborah Willis et al. (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2019), 34.
[161] Ibid.

generations, and so, it is a different story for each person.[162] Fragmented memories however bring symbolic meanings to lives that have been dislocated, where beginning and endings co-exist.[163]

Young Tamils like Kumaran were discarded at the level of official responses to their unrecognised refugee status. However, the varieties of meanings contained in Tamil refugee identity showed the interactions between individual and collective experiences. At one level, Australian and Sri Lankan nation-states denied Tamil people's claims to refugee status. At another level, Tamil community organisations such as ETA resisted these constructions by advocating that Tamil people seeking asylum in Australia represented the persecution of Tamils in the homeland. At the individual level, there existed young Tamil people who were to some extent conscious that they were inserting their individual experiences into a collective Tamil experience, that of the migration processes of Tamil people. While refugee and migration labels have little meaning in themselves, the interviewees revealed the extent to which their memories aligned to collective representations of Tamil migration to Australia.[164]

The ideological phase that characterises the forced migration of Tamil people to Australia in the 1980s and 1990s is shaped by the dominant politics of Australian and Sri Lankan Governments – much more so than Tamil nationalism. The collective memory of young Tamils as 'migrants' and their distance from the refugee identity that carried specific experiences of persecution against Tamils in Sri Lanka, is indicative of the influence of dominant political discourse in the social memories of the Tamil community resettled in Australia. Whereas the civil war was not over for several years after the interviewees of this study had migrated, there can be no doubt that specific Governmental relations between Australia and Sri Lanka have successfully influenced the parameters of the Tamil identity – as not tied to a refugee status and overshadowed by a Sri Lankan identity – a term, to emphasise, which does not capture the specific geographical and political construction of Tamils from Tamil Eelam.[165] Since Tamil forced migration in the 1980s, both Australian and

[162] Ibid., 35.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Barbara Harrell-Bond and Eftihia Voutira, 'Anthropology and the Study of Refugees,' *Anthropology Today* Vol.8, No. 4 (1992), 6-10.
[165] Eelam is the Tamil word for the entire island of what is called Sri Lanka today. In 1972 Tamil people opposed the new constitution in which 'Ceylon' became 'Sri Lanka', thus the term 'Sri Lanka' is associated with the historical oppression of Tamil people. In recent years, the term Eelam has been used less due to its stigma attached to the Tamil armed liberation struggle. The term Eelam Tamil is

Sri Lankan Governments have successfully suppressed the Tamil refugee identity, in which Tamil people's experiences of persecution went unacknowledged. Consequently, the Eelam Tamil identity in Australia did not crystallise, nor had it been systematically articulated by the Tamil diaspora community. The term's fluidity in diaspora contexts, which has led to intra-community incoherence is inextricably connected to the fact that Sri Lankan identity was mobilised within Tamil people's forced migration processes in the post-1983 period in which Governmental actions influenced the Tamil collective memory.

Regarding Tamil migration to Australia, then, there is certainly a sizeable portion of the Tamil community who faced the consequences of its legal status as refugees, suffering from social exclusion within the Tamil community and from the wider society, of which contestations of the refugee label is only one such avenue. However, arriving under the official refugee status was difficult not just for young Tamils such as Kumaran (to say nothing of the ongoing treatment of Tamil asylum seekers who continue to be locked up in Australian detention centres), but for the legitimating narrative that Sri Lanka's civil war produced a mass exodus of Tamils. In this sense, the collective memory of Tamil migration to Australia as an outcome of civil war cannot be analysed separately from individual memory.[166] Thus, the Tamil identity is constructed by social memory that is constituted of both individual memory and collective memory.[167]

As the next chapter shows, rejecting the refugee label did not equate to forgetting the refugee-like experiences that led to interviewees' understandings of their forced migration. Interviewees recovered memories of being persecuted, their family responses to the war and their sense of belonging with fellow Tamils who suffered alongside them. A sense of collective Tamil victimisation remained significant in the memories of interviewees – as another type of resistance to the dominant construction of Tamil migration to Australia. While the level of exposure to persecution in Sri Lanka varied, it was clear that the civil war

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further diluted by the process of forced migration that brings with it new identities such as Tamil-Australian. Akazhaan, 'Eezham Thamizh and Tamil Eelam: Understanding the Terminologies of Identity.' Accessed on April 10, 2019. https://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=99&artid=27012&fbclid=IwAR0CIbPBSxRwbl7XRDuC6_dhFcJ6k-AR1Rd3nhLkNVtv-mLVkuffiGQmoKs

[166] Olick, 'Collective Memory,' 333-348.
[167] Ibid.

played a significant part in Tamil family decisions to migrate to Australia, thus recovering a sense of loss frequently found in exile stories.[168]

[168] Anh Hua, 'Diaspora and Cultural Memory,' in *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home*, ed., Vijay Agnew (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2005), 200; Arabindan-Kesson, 'Fragments of Memory,' 23-38.

CHAPTER THREE: Impossible Spaces of Belonging: Memories of War and Persecution in Sri Lanka

> 'Why are you here in Europe?' I asked. 'How many Tamils are there in Europe?' he replied. 'About 24, 000,' I answered. 'Then there are about 24, 000 reasons why I am here.'[1]

This chapter explores how interviewees carried with them memories of civil war that constructed a part of their resettlement and belongingness as Tamil *forced* migrants despite their distance to the refugee label. In arriving to Australia at a time when their war stories went unacknowledged by the new community, and in an era dominated by multiculturalism and the retention of 'cultural heritage' in the name of nation-building,[2] memories of war and persecution are significant.[3] As children growing up in war, interviewees revealed the ordinariness of their lives amidst the chaos of armed conflict. Their childhood memories of war reconstructed meanings of resettling as young forced migrants that illustrated the vicissitudes of diasporic life and migrating to Australia devoid of choice. The memories provide a crucial lens to Sri Lanka's civil war and help us recognise how young Tamils carried with them not only the burden of war-torn childhoods but the 'stickiness' of war memories that shaped their diasporic futures.[4] The memories of interviewees that I explore in the chapter become a search for understanding the meanings of childhoods lived in Sri Lanka's civil war in the 1980s and 1990s. However, what are the implications of focusing on the pre-migration context that produced such fragmented memories from disparate contexts within Sri Lanka? What kind of analysis is required to remain attentive to spatial dimensions of civil war while also perceiving common beginnings of belonging (and not belonging)? In bringing together childhood experiences from different districts of Sri Lanka, I seek to

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[1] Christopher McDowell, *A Tamil Asylum Diaspora: Sri Lankan Migration, Settlement and Politics in Switzerland* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997), 19.

[2] Following the Government-commissioned Galbally Report, 'Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants', the Fraser Government focused on improving the nature of migrant resettlement services such as ESL teaching, housing needs, translation services, recognition of overseas qualification, establishing ethnic services. Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), 'The Policy Context' in *Report on the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants*, chapter 1 (Canberra: Australian Government, 2003), 23–35. Accessed on January 10, 2018. http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/_pdf/chap01web.pdf.

[3] See for example the case of Greek Immigrants resettled in Australia. Joy Damousi, *Memory and Migration in the Shadow of War: Australia's Greek Immigrants after World War 2 and the Greek Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 83-108.

[4] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, second edition (New York: Routledge, 2004), 60.

advance spatial dimensions to interviewees' craft of belonging that form part of their resettlement stories of resistance and survival.[5]

The premise of the chapter is that space, as Doreen Massey argued, connects us to the simultaneity of multiple locations in which social interactions occur and must be embraced, thus understanding place as fluid, elastic and contingent.[6] As Massey argued, space is 'one of the axes along which we experienced and conceptualise the world'.[7] But space is not only about what emerges from social processes, it is also about how space affects those processes.[8] The homeland space is an historical location that reflects disintegrating political conditions – civil war can produce mass forced migration. At the same time, the diaspora space may provide new possibilities to revisit the homeland space through memory, leading to new knowledge, such as remembering and forgetting, about history and society. Constructions of belonging are intricately tied to memory, and in the chapter, I show that space plays an important role in that process. Through the visual and written memory work discussed in the chapter, space is used as a tool by interviewees to interpret the historical locations of war-torn childhoods. This follows Massey's call to understand space as a creative and participatory project which exists not just around us but within us.[9]

Politicising the Tamil Child in Conflict Spaces

The Tamil child during Sri Lanka's civil war occupied a complex position in relation to social constructions of childhood.[10] In the war zone in the North and East of Sri Lanka, children were viewed as subjects who needed to be healed from exposure to conflict,[11] were represented as peace zones to ensure there was access to health clinics,[12] were actors in Tamil armed struggles for a separate state,[13] and were used by the Sri Lankan nation-state to

[5] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2012).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 251.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Massey, *For Space*.
[10] Neloufer de Mel, *Militarizing Sri Lanka: Popular Culture, Memory and Narrative in the Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Sage, 2007), 163-167.
[11] For example, the Butterfly Peace Garden in Batticaloa in the East is an example of a garden centre that was established in 1977 to assist war-affected children through programmes modelled on encouraging children's playfulness.
[12] Margo Kleinfeld, The Political Utility of the Non-political Child in Sri Lanka's Armed Conflict, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 99, No. 5 (2009), 874-883.
[13] Jo Becker, 'Child Recruitment in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Nepal,' in *Child Soldiers in the Age of Fractured States*, eds. Scott Gates and Simon Reich (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2010), 115.

condemn the LTTE tactics of warfare.[14] At the same time, representations of Tamil childhoods, in memoirs for example, showed that children were taught by their parents to ignore the intensifying chaos surrounding them.[15] However, as Nelafour de Mel asked, at a time when adults themselves faced intense pressures, was children's protection even possible under the harsh conditions which children already laboured in both public and private spaces?[16]

Global developments of childhood recognised that children and young people had agency and power in their lives. In 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) created a new international framework for universal rights of humans under the age of eighteen. All member-states were required to present to the international Committee on the Rights of the Child approaches taken within their country that worked towards protecting the rights of the child. In 1991, the Sri Lankan Government ratified the CRC, and in 1992 it developed the Children's Charter that enhanced CRC principles, for example by developing the National Monitoring Committee which became a permanent body.[17] In 1994, following a CRC commissioned a study, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, the Sri Lankan Government capitalised on the UN's new emphasis on war-affected children by using Tamil children to appeal to States parties to declare the LTTE as a criminal organisation:

> They are already guilty of a war crime by their continued recruitment and employment of child soldiers in violation of the 'non-State actors' obligations set out in article 4 of the Optional Protocol.[18]

In 1998, the Government invited the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, to observe developments including in the North and East which encouraged the Government to highlight the LTTE's use of child soldiers.[19] The LTTE unsuccessfully attempted to defend itself including by mobilising support from the diaspora.[20] Jason Hart argued that this public discourse constructed the Tamil child soldier as being 'good' according to the LTTE on the one hand, and a mechanism that demonised the

[14] Kleinfeld, 'The Political Unity,' 879.
[15] Niromi de Soyza, *Tamil Tigress: My Story as a Child Soldier in Sri Lanka's Bloody Civil War* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2012), 35.
[16] de Mel, *Militarizing Sri Lanka*, 167.
[17] Government of Sri Lanka, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Second Periodic Reports of States parties due in 1998, 'Sri Lanka'. CRC/C/70/Add.17. (Geneva: United Nations, 2002), 4.
[18] Ibid., 40.
[19] Kleinfeld, 'The Political Unity,' 879.
[20] Margo Kleinfeld, 'Depoliticizing Space in Sri Lanka: The Discursive Utility of the Child During Times of War,' PhD dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2005.

Sri Lankan nation-state within universal child rights on the other.[21] However, in doing so, the Tamil child was simultaneously portrayed by Sinhalese nationalists as needing to be saved, and yet under suspicion for being a terrorist. As I show in the chapter, *all* Tamil children were subjected to nationalist gazes of terrorist, particularly children from the North. Thus, the CRC had limited effect for Tamil children in Sri Lanka where they lacked the social and political agency to actualise their aspirations, which were inevitably shaped by the realities of their everyday lives.[22] For example, it is possible that some young Tamils, at least during the early stages of the armed conflict, voluntarily entered Tamil militant groups, similarly to the complex motivations of Tamil women in combat.[23] In the context of war, did Tamil children have opinions of their own? Did children have agency in their everyday lives?

At the heart of the politicisation of the Tamil child is her witness to the war. The role that Tamil children played in bearing witness to Sri Lanka's civil war, especially those who migrated out of Sri Lanka abruptly, is still poorly understood. Although there has been much attention on Tamil child soldiers in the literature and international consciousness as cited above, these have failed to consider the powerful position of the child as bearing witness to war. In the chapter, the memories of interviewees are used as a source to illustrate the paradoxical tensions between the objective and subjective spatiality of conflict in their homeland: children pressured to take on adult responsibilities, witnessing the brutal violence of warfare, seeing the consequences of Government attacks on their friends and family, disruptions to crucial aspects of their everyday lives such as attending school, and creating meaning in displacement and journeys out of Sri Lanka.[24] Thus, reconceptualising Tamil childhoods requires an analysis that embraces the vicissitudes of Tamil childhoods in conflict spaces.

The civil war between the Sri Lankan Government and Tamil rebel groups officially began in July 1983 and lasted almost thirty years, however Tamil political grievances have persisted since Sri Lanka gained Independence from British rule in 1948.[25] By the mid-1980s however,

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[21] Jason Hart, 'The Politics of the "Child Soldiers,"' *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2006), 222.
[22] Ibid., 223.
[23] Nimmi Gowrinathan, 'The Committed Female Fighter: The Political Identities of Tamil Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* Vol. 19, No. 3 (2017), 327–341.
[24] Sharika Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House: Civil War in Sri Lanka* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).
[25] Laavanyan M. Ratnapalan, 'Memories of Ethnic Violence in Sri Lanka Among Immigrant Tamils in the UK,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 35, No. 9 (2012), 1539-1557; Kristian Stokke and Anne K.

armed conflict became increasingly normalised in the North and East of the island where Tamil youth rebel groups (mainly the LTTE) were fighting Government armed forces to establish a separate Tamil state. The armed conflict reached new heights in 1987 when Government armed forces launched 'Operation Liberation' – the first conventional warfare since Independence – to regain control of Vadamarachchi in the Jaffna region that was under the LTTE control; it was 'preparation for war'.[26] Since then, the effects of civil war have shattered communities on the island, destroyed physical and human infrastructures, produced intercultural tensions between majority and minority ethnic groups, and created insurgency groups who have turned from 'heroes' to oppressors.[27] The civil war ended in 2009 when Government armed forces defeated the LTTE and President Mahinda Rajapakse declared 'the whole country' was 'liberated' from 'LTTE terrorism'.[28]

The chapter unravels Tamil people's childhood memories of war that evoked realities of a life that began in Sri Lanka, under conditions of political conflict and persecution.[29] In presenting Sri Lanka of the 1980s and 1990s by drawing on children's experiences, it is crucial to highlight against a unified 'Tamil experience'.[30] Interviewees recalled their persecution to different degrees; some were more affected than others. The chapter is about that pre-migration experience that weaves together social and political developments at a time when

Ryntveit, 'The Struggle for Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka,' *Growth and Change* Vol. 31, No. 2 (2002), 295.

[26] In a letter to his wife, Lieutenant Commander Lucky Dissanayake described the situation on the ground as being 'on a scale I have only seen in films. There are about 5,000 troops, armoured cars, armoured vehicles, artillery etc. Yesterday the entire brigade had assembled for review by the General on the adjoining airfield. About 10-15 times bigger than any Independence Day parade, with fighter planes, helicopters, transport planes etc. As the troops in their full battle dress, camouflage, kept marching into the grounds, we in the hospital realized that this was history in the making. This was the first time ever in the history of Sri Lanka that a number of Brigades had assembled.' *Sunday Times Sri Lanka*, 'Operation Liberation One', June 28, 2009.

[27] Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House*, 2.

[28] Matthew Weave, 'Sri Lanka Declared End to War with Tamil Tigers,' *The Guardian*, May 19, 2009.

[29] The chapter does not seek to present a history of postcolonial Sri Lanka, as these have been exhaustively researched elsewhere by historians. For example, see Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Kingsley M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: C. Hurst and Co. 1981); Stanley J. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); William H. Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960).

[30] Ann-Belinda Steen, *Varieties of the Tamil Refugee Experiences in Denmark an England* (Copenhagen: Minority Studies, 1993).

Tamil childhoods were central to political projects of Sri Lanka – for both Tamil and Sinhalese nationalists.[31]

I begin the chapter by briefly describing British colonial rule (1815–1948) in Ceylon, as Sri Lanka was known then, for it united for the first time two Indigenous ethnic communities – Sinhalese and Tamils – previously separate, under a single administration, producing long-lasting grievances.[32] The grievances led to a civil war that ultimately constructed young Tamil people as a threat to the Sinhala-Buddhist Sri Lankan nation-state. I focus on the politicisation of the Tamil child by destabilising their construction as a national threat and in a perpetual state of victimhood. I do so by examining interviewees' experiences across different regions of the island (see Figure 1 below) where my interviewees were from – North, East, Colombo (capital city), and argue for spatial nuances to constructions of Tamil childhood in different contexts of Sri Lanka's civil war. I draw on interviews undertaken with twenty-four people who were born in the North, three people from the East, and nine people from Colombo. Within each of these locations occurred different political and social developments that produced prolonged and sporadic bursts of armed violence between the LTTE and Sri Lankan Government armed forces, which directly or indirectly interrupted Tamil children's everyday lives. However, the violence, I suggest, did more to these children, for it also brought the politics of belonging into their everyday lives.[33]

[31] Margaret Trawick, *Enemy Lines: Warfare, Childhood, and Play in Batticaloa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
[32] Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide*, 65-86.
[33] Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the politics of belonging,' *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. 40, No.3 (2003), 197-214.

Figure 1: Map of Sri Lanka. Source: United Nations, 2004

Early Tamil Grievances

Sri Lanka, located at the bottom of the Indian subcontinent, like several other nations in South Asia faced European and British colonial invasions.[34] Sujit Sivasundaram describes the relationship between coloniser and colonised in Sri Lanka as a process of 'recycling' and 'movement', where 'change is constant and every change is changed in turn'.[35] Sivasundaram traces the co-constitution of the Indigenous and cosmopolitan in Sri Lanka as permeable boundaries that signalled continuity and interchangeability.[36]

[34] For comprehensive studies on colonial rule in Sri Lanka see, Alicia F. Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka, 1780-1815: Expansion and Reform* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Chandra R. de Silva, ed., *Portuguese Encounters with Sri Lanka and the Maldives*. Translated texts from the Age of Discoveries (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon, 1658-1687* (London: University of London, 1956); Sujit Sivasundaram, Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
[35] Sivasundaram, *Islanded*, 12.
[36] Ibid., 14.

In this section, I briefly outline a few key developments that highlight conditions of post-Independence Sri Lanka, and more specifically its 'ethnic fratricide'.[37] Colonisation by the Portuguese (1505–1658) and Dutch expansion (1640–1796) in Ceylon had profound impacts on all minority groups in Ceylon that resulted in the depletion of resources and livelihoods. The Dutch governor of Ceylon in his final report for 1794 stated that 'the inhabitants of the Peninsula were at one time mostly "well-established" but were now mostly poor and getting poorer'.[38] In 1815 the British usurped the Dutch and defeated the last Tamil King[39] of Vanni (which later came to be comprised of Mannar, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, see Figure 1 above) to gain complete control of the island. Under British rule, Ceylon was united under one administrative rule that resulted in further depletion of social, economic and political structures.[40] During the process, western capitalist ideologies and policies encouraged Tamils to strive for excellence in education and employment in government offices.[41]

At the same time, Tamil elites who recognised weakening Tamil traditions and cultural values challenged British learnings.[42] As early as 1889, outcries of Tamil nationalism were illustrated over several Tamil newspaper volumes, as in *The Hindu Organ* newspaper article titled, *Thesapimanam* (Patriotism) which stated that:

> A person born and bred in a particular country and subject to the influences of that country should necessarily display patriotic feelings to that country. When such patriotism is absent, the country becomes defenceless and ruined…the country will be destroyed if necessary reforms are not introduced at the right time for its protection. The English, French, Germans, Americans, Japanese and others protect their countries like their own homes and the result is that these countries have developed and excelled in education, scientific research, industry,

[37] Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide*.
[38] Memoir of Van de Graaft, July 15, 1794, cited in Murugar Gunasingam, *Tamils in Sri Lanka, A Comprehensive History* (c. 300 B.C.-C. 2000 A.D.) (Sydney: MV Publications, 2008), 218.
[39] Pandara Vanniyan was the last Tamil King in the Vanni region (then comprising Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Polonnaruwa, Batticaloa, Ampara, Puttalam).
[40] A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka: the Sinhalese Tamil conflict* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1988), 3.
[41] During the British colonial period, Tamils enjoyed educational advantages that were similarly experienced by Sinhalese. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide*, 65-66.
[42] Tamil patriots including Arumuga Navalar (1822-79) and Kopay Sapapathy Navalar (1844-1903) were determined to improve the education of the younger generation through religious and linguistic advancement in the face of increasing Protestant missionaries. The Tamil scholars enforced social changes amongst Hindu-Saiva Tamils. Navalar achieved this by preaching and lecturing about the important interplay of religion and language for the future of Tamils. Wilson, *The Break-Up of Sri Lanka*, 27-28.

> commerce, agriculture, warfare, and (displayed their) courage, masculinity, victories, wealth as well as (shown in their excellence in) government, civilisation and other areas.[43]

Tamil concerns and aspirations were further fuelled in the 1920s by Sinhala dominance at the level of Government councils.[44] Sinhala organisations such as Ceylon National Congress, Ceylon National Association and Negombo Society, had promoted a constitutional reform that excluded Tamil representations in Congress.[45] In 1918, British governor William Manning had implemented a blend of communal and territorial representation so that British rule could suppress a nationalist consensus and retain power–the classic British imperial policy of 'divide and rule'.[46] Manning's masterful skills of political manipulation intensified Tamil and Sinhala tensions.[47] The sudden resignation of Tamil elites in the Ceylon National Congress threw the organisation into disarray and Manning seized these changes to exploit the Congress further.[48] At the same time, the Kandyan Sinhalese leadership also split. Both these organisations set up separate associations and failed to bring unity between Tamil and Sinhalese associations, further highlighting the detrimental effects of Western influences on the island. In 1923 the Ceylon Tamil League was formed to promote the union and solidarity of Tamil *akam* (land) stating:

> We object strongly to being bullied or terrorised, we object to being underdogs of anybody. We mean to make ourselves strong also to work for the common good.[49]

Tamil struggles were becoming unnervingly real in response to growing hostilities towards Sinhala domination over Tamil territories, political representations, traditions, cultures and

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[43] *The Hindu Organ*, 'Thesapimanam', September 11, 1898.
[44] Murugar Gunasingam, *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism* (Sydney: MV Publications, 1999), 212.
[45] Ibid.
[46] de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 390-396.
[47] In 1921, the ex-chairman of the Ceylon National Congress Mr. P. Arunachalam stated that 'the Sinhalese and Tamil political trouble is at present creating much turmoil among the Ceylonese…whatever view our informant may hold as to its wisdom or expediency and whether or not it is binding on others, to the unsophisticated mind there can be no question that these two gentlemen are bound by it, and ought to keep to it and use their influence with their followers to do likewise. But they have both repudiated it…is it any wonder that the Tamils refuse to trust the Sinhalese leaders of the Congress any longer and have decided to take independent action to safeguard their interest? My own duty is clear. I must stand by the pledge'. Kingsley M. de Silva, 'The Formation and Character of the Ceylon National Congress 1917-1919,*'Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* Vol. 10, No. 1 (1967), 93.
[48] de Silva, *A history of Sri Lanka*, 393-394; Kingsley M. de Silva, 'The Ceylon National Congress in Disarray 2: The Triumph of Sir William Manning, 1921-1924,' *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* Vol. 3, No.1 (1973), 16-39.
[49] Josiah. C. Wedgwood, *Speeches and Writings of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam*, Vol. I. (Colombo: H.W. Cave and Co. (n.d.)), 313-314.

social structures.[50] Tamil youth were formative in Tamil nationalist movements of the 1920s and 1930s, influenced by turbulent developments in the neighbouring Indian nationalist movement which was in turn influenced by events in Asia and Europe.[51] Their proximity to India and ties of language, religion and culture between people in Jaffna and India, especially South India, produced strong bonds.[52] Moreover, travel across the Palk Strait exposed Tamil youth to the rapidly growing Indian nationalist movement and freedom struggle.[53]

For the first time in their history, Tamils in Sri Lanka began to realise the importance of their religions, cultural, political and linguistic identities, and in doing so also expressed their opposition to Western and Sinhala dominance.[54] The unified administrative arrangements implemented by British colonisers instilled a power hierarchy that was not only detrimental to successive Ceylonese Governments, but Ceylon's treatment of minority groups, including Tamils. After Sri Lanka gained Independence in 1948, anti-Tamil sentiments began to materialise in Government policy, such as the *Ceylon Citizenship Act 1948* which excluded Estate Tamils, who constituted 12% of the population.[55] Shortly after, the Sinhala-Government implemented the *Sinhala Language Act 1956,* which made Sinhalese the official language of Sri Lanka.[56]

Tamil people lost their jobs due to lack of proficiency in the national language and protested their anger and frustrations,[57] which also represented concerns for Tamil children to learn the language of their parents.[58] Violent clashes erupted, for example on a train presumed to be carrying Tamil delegates to a meeting about the *Satyagraha* (sit-in protest).[59] Sinhala mobs derailed the train and attacked the passengers.[60] Reports of such incidents vary as do the

[50] Santasilan Kadirgamar, 'Jaffna Youth Radicalism: the 1920s and 1930s,' in *Pathways of Dissent: Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka,* ed. R. Cheran (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), 210-212.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Amita Shastri, 'Estate Tamils, the Ceylon Citizenship Acts of 1948 and Sri Lankan Politics,' *Contemporary South Asia* Vol. 8, No.1 (1999), 65-86.
[56] Hints of a linguistic nationalism became a driving force in the institutional decay of the island that also affected marginalised Sinhalese groups who anticipated socioeconomic upward mobility. Neil DeVotta, *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka* (California: Stanford University Press, 2004).
[57] Gunasingam, *Tamils in Sri Lanka*, 505.
[58] W. Howard Wriggens, 'Impediments to Unity in New Nations: The case of Ceylon,' *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 55, No. 2 (1961), 314.
[59] W. Howard Wriggins. *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960), 268-270.
[60] Ibid.

estimates of how many people were killed in the riots. However, the finer details were unnecessary as the chaos was everywhere on the streets – scattered dead bodies, houses set ablaze.[61] Law officers were powerless.[62] One Sri Lankan observed at the time that despite having heard about disasters overseas, including 'Australian settlers decimating Aboriginal people', Nazi gas chambers or tribulations of Jews in Israel, the violence on his doorstep remained a shock and unprecedented; 'it simply could not happen in Sri Lanka'.[63] These anti-Tamil riots in 1958 reflected the intensification of violence and illuminated Tamil peoples denied belonging within the polity.

Some Tamils sought better educational and employment opportunities overseas in countries such as Australia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.[64] Despite migrating to distant lands, Tamil forced migrants remained concerned and connected to their homeland.[65] Permanent Tamil resettlement in Australia did not occur in large numbers until the 1970s after the abolition of White Australia Policy. Nonetheless, young Tamils in Sri Lanka were particularly motivated to leave their homeland in response to their disadvantaged higher education opportunities that would later become one of the defining motivations in the Tamil armed struggle for separatism.[66] The 1958 anti-Tamil riots marked an important turn in Sri Lanka's postcolonial experience, for it revealed the vulnerabilities of a new nation and more specifically early grievances of a Tamil minority community that struggled to live under the control of successive authoritarian Sinhala-Buddhist Governments.[67]

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, anti-Tamil riots sustained and greatly influenced the forced migration of Tamil people, especially students and professionals who had migrated using their education and employment skills.[68] Since the 1977 anti-Tamil riots, in particular, Tamil youth began leaving the country for their survival because Government armed forces and police were targeting them.[69] Throughout the 1970s, the Government failed to guarantee

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Tarzie Vittachi, *Emergency 58': The Story of the Ceylon Race Riots* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1958).
[64] Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide,* 137.
[65] *Times*, 'London Tamils Pray for Families in Sri Lanka,' August 15, 1983.
[66] Stanley J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1992), 57.
[67] Ambalavaner Sivanandan, 'Sri Lanka: Racism and the Politics of Underdevelopment,' *Race and Class* Vol. 26, No.1 (1984), 1-37.
[68] Manohari Velamati, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Migration and Settlement: Time for Reconsideration,' *India Quarterly* Vol. 65, No. 3 (2009), 274.
[69] Ibid.

the social mobility of young Tamil people, as Tamil politicians repeatedly expressed in parliament into the 1990s.[70]

The Government's responses to Tamil youth had energised the insurrection of Tamil youth militant groups (later dominated by the LTTE).[71] Tamil political leaders struggled to contain the anger and drive of Tamil youth who were determined to achieve liberation through an armed revolt.[72] By 1983, the intensification of violence erupted in a civil war between Sri Lankan Government armed forces and the LTTE that lasted almost thirty years – one of Asia's longest-running civil wars. The Tamils I interviewed resettled in Australia at the height of the civil war in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly after the Tamil massacre in 1983 in Colombo.[73] It is this historical location of interviewees' memories that I turn to in the remainder of the chapter.

Northern Province

The Northern province of Sri Lanka had been a Tamil occupied area that was mainly under the LTTE control throughout the civil war until Government forces recaptured the area in 2009. The Northern province, or Jaffna, is the Tamil heartland and was considered by the LTTE as the capital city of the independent Tamil state. Apart from the LTTE several Tamil militant youth groups were resisting the Sinhala-Sri Lankan nation-state. However, the LTTE became the dominant military group.[74] In 1985 the first peace talks between the LTTE and

[70] Sri Lankan Government, Parliamentary Debates, Hansard Vol. 94 (1971-1972), 95, 879; Hansard Vol. 9 (1972-73), 89, 386-394; Hansard Vol. 99 (1995), 46; Hansard Vol. 75 (1991), 496, 907-909.
[71] Cheran, *Pathways of Dissent*, 33.
[72] *Virakesari*, 'Tamil Youth seek Liberation,' September 20, 1978.
[73] Department of Social Services, 'The Sri Lanka-born Community.' Australian Government, 2014, 1. Accessed April 15, 2017. https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-sri-lanka-born-community.
[74] Some of the other Tamil militant groups included Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO). Through a combination of indiscriminate violence against oppositional voices, undermining the rhetorical appeal of intra-Tamil competitors, and the intensification of Government attacks against Tamil civilians, the number of LTTE recruits increased – voluntarily and forced – transforming the LTTE from a small group of determined youth from a similar lower-caste background into a sophisticated, professional guerrilla force. The rise and dominance of the LTTE was also the result of its unique ideological platform that challenged existing caste hierarchies within their ideology of an independent Tamil state – a uniquely radical and nationalist ideology among competing Tamil militant groups. Nikolas Biziouras, 'The Formation, Institutionalisation and Consolidation of the LTTE: Religious Practices, Intra-Tamil Divisions and a Violent Nationalist Ideology,' *Religion and Ideology* Vol. 13, No. 4 (2012), 547-559; Anton Balasingham, *War and Peace: Armed Struggle and Peace Efforts of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (Mitcham: Fairmax Publishing, 2004).

Government failed.[75] In May 1987 'Operation Liberation' was carried out by the Government to recapture Jaffna from the LTTE militarily. The Northern province became a conflict zone, as Government aerial forces attacked civilians against the LTTE strongholds located in civilian areas. In June 1987, Indian Government air forces dropped food and other supplies across Jaffna, attempting to mediate peace talks between Government and the LTTE.[76] The LTTE regained control of Jaffna as Government troops retreated. By 1990 the LTTE established Government-like operations across Jaffna.[77] Throughout the 1990s, Government armed forces infiltrated and attempted to reclaim Jaffna and demobilise the LTTE; the intensity of fighting varied during these periods, ranging from the direct military operation, bombings, shelling, the LTTE counter attacks and civilian reprisals. For Tamil children living in Jaffna, their lives were now socialised in a war milieu with direct experiences of violence, family separation and emotions of terror.[78] Some carried with them traumatic experiences of social withdrawal, weakening school performances and mental trauma.[79]

Childhood, Exploration and Displacement

Twenty-four interviewees of the study were born in Jaffna and have only known a war-torn homeland. Their memories reinforce truths about the brutality of armed conflict in Jaffna, yet their memories were also juxtaposed against experiences of happiness that briefly suspended moments of hardship:

[75] In 1985 in the Thimpu talks, sponsored by the Indian Government, the Tamil Delegation (that included several Tamil groups including the LTTE) made clear their cardinal principles in a solution to the Tamil national question under four main recognitions: Tamils as a nation, existence and identification of homeland for the Tamils, right to self-determination of a Tamil nation, right to citizenship and rights of all Tamils (including Indian Tamils). While these demands went un-actioned, the talks continued to form the basis for successive negotiations between the Government and LTTE. Balasingham, *War and Peace*; MRN Swamy, *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2003).

[76] In Australia, members of the Sinhalese community protested outside the Indian High Commission in Canberra. They urged India to honour its international obligations and condemned South India's accommodation of the LTTE soldiers by providing training facilities and dropping supplies by air force. *Sunday Times*, 'Sinhalese Australians Protest in Canberra,' January 27, 1985; Bryan Pfaffenberger, 'Sri Lanka in 1987: Indian Intervention and Resurgence of the JVP,' *Asian Survey* Vol. 28, No. 2 (1988), 139.

[77] Kristian Stokke, 'Building the Tamil Eelam State: Emerging State Institutions and forms of Governance in the LTTE-controlled areas in Sri Lanka,' *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 27, No. 6 (2006), 1021-1040.

[78] *Sunday Times*, 'Our Children in a World Full of Violence,' October 50, 1983.

[79] Daya Somasundaram, 'Short- and Long-Term Effects on the Victims of Terror in Sri Lanka,' *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* Vol. 9, No.1 (2004), 215-228.

> Probably once a week we had to move away, leave school and all that which was fun at the time because as a kid you just enjoy not going to school. We moved to this place called Mannithala. It's sort of an island, it's away from town but probably 20 kilometres from town. You can go there by land, but we went there by boat, that's the quickest, that's where we normally go because it's away from the main area. At that time, it wasn't really known to any of the Government forces, nobody really knew it, it's a very small area. For me getting on a boat is always exciting regardless of what occasion it is.[80] (Jason)

Another interviewee explained that being displaced was enjoyable because her family rarely left their village:

> Kind of fun because it was like a parade and that was the time where because my dad really like kept to himself and didn't like us going around and all that kind of stuff so when we did get displaced temporarily you got to see everyone, play with them and in that kind of sense it wasn't too bad, but I do like remember things go off and hearing things, that was scary.[81] (Suji)

Another interviewee recalled 'good and bad times' inside a refugee camp in Vanni:

> It was an interesting exercise because it was a completely jungle area and we cleared everything. We dug a brand new well. It was a whole family exercise. We were the ones even putting the floor. I mean Tamil Tigers helped us, but it was a community exercise. There were elephants nearby. I remember the elephants came and knocked down the houses built nearby. It was good time and bad times. There were snake problems, so you would attack one snake and eleven snakes would turn up. Vanni was a completely wild area in those days…the army had taken over Jaffna, we were in here for the long haul.[82] (Kumaran)

What emerges from the above quotes were two different interpretations of the identity of Jaffna, each based on the socio-political conditions of the space as both home and war zone. As children, interviewees had associated being displaced within Jaffna to exploration: getting on a boat and going to an unknown island, leaving the village and seeing other Tamils, rebuilding makeshift homes in Vanni jungle surrounded by elephants and snakes. However, memories of being displaced were centred on the safety of being amongst not only their family but their wider Tamil community, as one interviewee stated, 'you got to see everyone'. Interviewees had constructed forced displacement in ways that collapsed the

[80] Interview with Jason. Melbourne, September 12, 2016.
[81] Interview with Suji. Melbourne, September 15, 2015.
[82] Interview with Kumaran. Melbourne, September 10, 2015.

private realm of their family with the broader Tamil community including the LTTE, thus beginning their belonging processes of negotiating place-based identities concerning their communities.[83] They constructed the Jaffna peninsula as safe and under attack, theirs and not theirs.

By highlighting the playfulness of being displaced, interviewees alluded to the impossibility of their childhoods in contexts of war that have become a natural way of processing painful experiences of re-experiencing family histories of suffering.[84] The theme of exploration constructed Tamil childhood aspirations to search for the unknown within the physical security of their homeland, its scents and atmospheres. The physical landscapes of Jaffna that interviewees mentioned – waterways, 'parade' like crowds of people, jungle forests – embodied their connections to *ur* (village) and town that remained strong despite frequent moves and the political chaos that surrounded them.[85] For them, Jaffna was where they were born and, crucially, where their lives would continue, frequented by disruptions. In their memories, interviewees had constructed their childhood in ways that affirmed their affiliations to a Tamil community. Indeed, it speaks to the imagined process of empathising Tamil futures, in Benedict Anderson's sense of the term.[86] What is also evident is that the politics of Jaffna had transcended the nation-state and penetrated Tamil childhoods that had concretised life as both peaceful and dangerous. In other words, being displaced regularly, 'once a week' and 'for the long haul', produced temporal and spatial articulations of marginalised Tamil lives in Jaffna. It is this connection to their community which enabled interviewees to exercise agency in considering joining Tamil armed struggles.

Joining the LTTE

War experiences of play and frivolity were less prevalent among interviewees who were considered to be youth (teenagers or soon approaching teenagehood) – a category that was central to Tamil goals of achieving a separate Tamil state.[87] While many Tamil people

[83] Hariz Halilovich, *Places of Pain: Forced Displacement, Popular Memory and Trans-local Identities in Bosnian War-Torn Communities* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).
[84] Merja Paksuniemi et al., 'Childhood in the Shadow of War: Filled with Work and Play,' *Children's Geographies* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2015), 114-127.
[85] Stine Bruland, 'Under the Margosa Tree: Re-creating meaning in a Tamil Family after War and Migration', PhD dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2015.
[86] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
[87] Sharika Thiranagama, 'The Self at a Time of War in Northern Sri Lanka,' *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 26, No.1 (2013), 19-40.

supported the goals of the LTTE, some did not show overt support. For example, one interviewee stated how his age status motivated his parents' decision to flee from Jaffna to South India as a young Tamil boy:

> In the 80s both sides were being forced to join the rebel groups. We are three brothers, three boys. It's pretty hard to survive there, either you had to move or join in the rebel's group. We almost got taken away but thanks to mum and dad they stopped it and that's the time we decided to go to India. Mum and dad decided that we are going to lose our kids, so we left.[88] (Rajiv).

Youth as a social category was central to not only visions of a separate Tamil state, but also the process for achieving that vision.[89] Young Tamils frequently witnessed the pain of being part of a marginalised group:

> When I was ten [years old] they had that *urrvalam* (protest) so it's a bit hard to ignore what's happening. In our area there was a guy who didn't eat, *saavum varrum unnaviratham endu* (fast unto death), and they'll have strikes. This was in the 80s and school was regularly cancelled, and you see army bullying people. They would just suddenly come and take the boys no matter whether they are involved or not. They would just take everyone.[90] (Nivetha)

Many young Tamils who joined Tamil militant groups in the 1980s were trained in South India in Tamil Nadu, which was undergoing its own social and political transformations of Tamil separatism and was viewed by Sinhalese political leaders as a potential threat to the integrity of Sri Lanka.[91] Essentially, Tamil youth in Jaffna were socialised within competing ideologies of legitimacy and injustices and many felt compelled to join Tamil militant groups and avenge their enemy in order to protect their families from real or perceived abuses.[92] Tamil children in Jaffna were frequently involved in events honouring and celebrating the LTTE soldiers as heroes who in turn visited schools spreading Tamil nationalism and the urgency for a separate Tamil state:

> There was obviously a lot of Tigers who came to the school and they do their speech and if you wanted to you could go along and at that time, I was definitely thinking about it – joining

[88] Interview with Rajiv. Sydney, December 11, 2015.
[89] Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House*, 187.
[90] Interview with Nivetha. Melbourne, September 14, 2016.
[91] Ambalavanar Sivarajah, *Politics of Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1996), 172.
[92] Jo Becker and Tejshree Thapa, 'Living in Fear: Child Soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka,' *Human Rights Watch* Vol. 16, No. 13 (2004), 4-6.

> the Tigers. It was more the motto of why they are fighting, fighting for the freedom of the people, those sorts of things and that time you get caught up with your friends. At that time none of my friends did elect to go and if someone did, I'm sure the others would have followed.[93] (Daniel)

Another interviewee described the everyday reality of living under the LTTE controlled areas:

> When the Tamil cadres die you see their funerals in the village so people talk about it and so you get to hear from that, so I had so many of my friends who would say 'yes' we should one day go join the Tigers to stop all this.[94] (Kumaran)

For interviewees, their childhoods in Jaffna can be understood as articulations of social relationships to ideologies of war and Tamil injustice that had real consequences such as the death of fellow Tamils. Belonging to Tamil nationalist projects, therefore, became a part of their aspirations as Tamil children in Jaffna. In reporting about the situation in Jaffna in 1993, Reverend Selvadurai Jeyanesan of the United Church reported that Tamil children joined the LTTE from the age of twelve, promoted through posters which encouraged them 'to fight, not think' and by their parents' tales of oppression.[95] Even though interviewees of the study had never joined the LTTE, their sense of agency in deciding whether or not to join the group highlighted the formations of their politicised collective identity as being Tamil. They recognised the injustices towards their community, 'one day we should go and join the Tigers to stop this' and revealed the collective 'we' in their intentions, 'if someone did [join], I'm sure the others would have followed'. One interviewee explained that he would have joined the LTTE had his father not migrated to Australia. His father was an electrician by trade during a time when electric power had been cut off in Jaffna to prevent the LTTE from rigging traps controlled by electric light switches.[96] He felt 'frustrated, angry' and stressed by the reality of war:

> It's not like I was hearing it from media…it really happened to me and we were one of the fortunate ones![97] (Jason)

[93] Interview with Daniel. Sydney, December 20, 2015.
[94] Interview with Kumaran. Melbourne, September 10, 2015.
[95] Louise Williams, 'Tamil Children of Jaffna are taught to fight, not think,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 17, 1993.
[96] *The New York Times*, 'Tamil Snipers Slowing Indian Advance', October 18, 1987.
[97] Interview with Jason. Melbourne, September 12, 2016.

Thus, children joining or thinking about joining the armed struggle had not only been exposed to Sinhala and Indian armed violence in Tamil areas, but they also recognised that the LTTE was targeted, that is, Tamils were being targeted. Stories of young Tamil soldiers, aged fifteen and nineteen, and the chief commander of Jaffna being twenty-eight years old, made headlines in the Western world, further problematising the image of Tamil civilian turned child soldier.[98] None of the Tamils I interviewed had joined militant groups; however as the quotes above indicated, the idea of joining was not dismissed. Once the LTTE became the dominant Tamil militant group from the mid-1980s onwards, forced recruitment became the new order in Jaffna.[99] By reaching children through the normative structure of school, the LTTE reached a higher number of children and appealed to people's morality and political identities. The school, as important sites for children's national identity formation,[100] was used by the LTTE to teach children in Jaffna about the urgency and necessity of fighting for national liberation. There are few statistics for Tamil militant recruitment during this period. However, some suggested that the peak years of recruitment were in 1984 and 1985 and that the number of military deployable Tamil youth in the North and East were around 44,800.[101] This increase was due to intensified fighting between the LTTE and Government armed forces after the Tamil massacre in 1983. The LTTE 'push' factors were contextualised within ongoing Government atrocities committed against Tamil people that left children exposed to the necessity of armed resistance.[102] Essentially, children choosing to take up arms were fuelled by several factors tied to Sinhala Government abuses and Tamil militant recruitment drives, but beginning with the fact that many were socialised into a place where violence and marginalisation was the general order of things.[103]

Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF), 1987-1990: Violence Escalates in Jaffna

[98] See for example, Richard M. Weintraub, 'Jaffna is Rebel Stronghold', *The Washington Post*, February 2, 1987; Rone Tempest, 'Terrified Tamil City Without Food, Electricity,' *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 1987.
[99] Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House*, 187.
[100] Bradley A. Levinson and Dorothy Holland, 'The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: An Introduction,' in *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practices*, eds., Bradley A. Levinson et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 1-56.
[101] 'Taraki' Dharmeratnam Sivaram, 'The Cat, a Bell and a Few Strategists,' *Sunday Times*, April 20, 1997.
[102] Daya Somasundaram, 'Child Soldiers: Understanding the Context,' *The British Medical Journal* Vol. 324 (2002), 1268-71.
[103] Daya Somasundaram, *Child Trauma* (Jaffna: University of Jaffna, 1993).

By the late 1980s, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Ghandi declared that Tamil aspirations for a separate Tamil state were no longer in the interests of India and declared a crackdown on Tamil militant groups in India.[104] Ghandi produced a more interventionist role in Sri Lanka and organised negotiations between the Sri Lankan Government and Tamil militant groups in 1985 and 1986.[105] However, the negotiations failed. Controversially, India proposed and officially arranged military interventions through the Indo-Sri Lanka Accords of 1987, between the Governments of India and Sri Lanka.[106] This led to the deployment of IPKF in the North and East of Sri Lanka, to disarm Tamil militant groups who saw the arrangement as a sell-out of their demands for a separate Tamil state. India sought to dismantle Tamil militants and establish various regions of local councils and have some authority over local affairs. Ultimately, the relationship between Sri Lanka and India during the civil war must be seen in relation to different historical development and different group motivations within each country, thus representing complex international relations.[107] The Tamil plight for equality in Sri Lanka affected India's domestic policies too, particularly in Tamil Nadu in South India.[108] There were fifty million Tamils living in South India who not only spoke the same language as Tamils living in Sri Lanka, but they shared the same ethnic origins and religion.[109] Tamils living in South India frequently lobbied and pressured their Government to intervene and take actions in Sri Lankan matters.[110]

However, Tamil organisations viewed these proposed local councils as being weak.[111] The IPKF clashed heavily with Tamil militants and civilians that led to disappearances and deaths,[112] creating resentment among all Tamil people towards Indian armed forces. India's attempts simultaneously legitimated Tamil causes and Sri Lanka's sovereignty that had, in

[104] V.K. Padmanabhan, 'Ethnic Question in Sri Lanka and the Politics of Tamil Nadu,' in *Sri Lankan Crisis and India's Response*, ed. V. Suryanarayan (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1991), 74.
[105] G. Palanithurai and K. Mohanasundaram, *Dynamics of Tamil Needy Politics in Sri Lanka Ethnicity* (Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 1993), 85-91.
[106] Ambalavaner Sivarajah, *Politics of Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1996), 170-87; Sankaran Krishna, *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the Question of Nationhood* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Amnesty International, 'Sri Lanka: Extrajudicial Executions, "Disappearances," and Torture, 1987 to 1990' (New York: Amnesty International USA, 1990).

effect, made their presence on the island difficult to assess and pointless at best.[113] One interviewee, Jason, recalled the effects of IPKF on his everyday life, but in the regular chaos of war a sense of routine had emerged within spaces of persecution. Jason was born in Jaffna and lived there until he was fifteen years old before migrating to Australia in 1996. His memories of civil war were vivid and captured realities of life in Jaffna and its enduring legacy in resettlement.

> One day we were all cheering for the Indian army to come there and they were supposed to be peace keepers and a couple of months later the same people were abusing everyone so a lot of round ups, people couldn't get out of their houses they had to move away. One particular incident I remember most because my younger sister was just born. She was only a week old and there was some round up thing and we had to get out of the house. No one was allowed to stay in the house, we all had to go to this oval, football ground so the whole village had to go there so they could go and search for any suspects or arms. I remembered this because my little sister she was just a baby, not even one week and we had to take her to this oval.[114] (Jason)

On that day IPKF did not find anyone with arms. However, under IPKF occupation Tamil children were frequently shot dead, or shipped off to the Booza camp in the South of Sri Lanka *en masse* in chains by army men.[115] An Amnesty International report stated that police interrogated young people on mere suspicion of Tamil militant involvement and some detainees have died of torture while in custody.[116] Recorded observations from Jaffna predicted that children's exposure during their formative years to insecurity, homelessness and violent deaths would permanently influence their development.[117] Jason remembered how round-ups by IPKF occurred around once a week and sometimes resulted in displacement. Between 1987–1991, Jason and his family moved in and out of Jaffna around fifteen times.

> We could see the planes dropping bombs from our house. It's very close by…not the next town but the town after. I started questioning it when I was seven. I wanted to know about these things and at the time some of my uncles were in the movement as well so then I got to

[113] Alan Bullion, 'The Indian peace-keeping force in Sri Lanka,' *International Peacekeeping* Vol. 1, No.2 (1994), 148-159.
[114] Interview with Jason. Melbourne, September 16, 2016.
[115] Somasundaram, 'Child Soldiers,' 1270.
[116] Amnesty International, 'Sri Lanka: Continuing Human Rights Violations' (London: Amnesty International Secretariat, 1989), 3.
[117] Rajan Hoole et al. *The Broken Palmyra, the Tamil Crisis in Sri Lanka, An Inside Account* (California: Sri Lanka Studies Institute, 1990).

> ask a lot more questions: why this? Why that? I didn't understand much at the time, they were just shooting everyone. That's how I knew, if you were a Tamil you were targeted, and I've seen that in front of my own eyes as a kid.[118] (Jason)

For Jason, IPKF occupation of Jaffna was a significant moment of change in his life as it symbolised his transition towards beginning to question the war in his homeland. Ultimately, IPKF failed to disarm well entrenched armed Tamil forces, particularly the LTTE that was supported by the Tamil community through provisioning of food, shelter and money.[119] The strength of the LTTE in Jaffna was unmatched by IPKF as Indian soldiers were left humiliated in defeat.[120] For Jason however the injustices brought by IPKF remained a painful reminder of the past and he uses his experiences as a tool to never forget: '*Maveerar Naal* (LTTE Heroes Day) was a religious thing for us, we go to it every year, even when I was younger I would go.' For Jason, his childhood experiences have become entrenched in memories tied to Tamil injustice that are reconstructed through annual *Maveerar Naal* commemorative events. Held each year on November 27, the event is an important part of Tamil diasporic life that demonstrates 'being there while being here'.[121] The aesthetic staging of Maveerar Naal comprising imitation cemeteries, solemn music, passionate dance performances and speeches, transcends the spatial distance from the suburbs of Melbourne where Jason resettled to the familiar space of Jaffna that reproduces *Maveerar Ilam* (Maveerar resting place).[122] However, stressing his attendance at Maveer Naal since he arrived in Australia in 1996, 'even' as a 'younger' Tamil, draws attention to how Jason's childhood experiences have shaped his present.[123] Through his memories, he emphasised that his connections to *Maveerar Naal* were not only tied to the LTTE but more specifically his role as witness to the atrocities committed against Tamils when he was a child in Jaffna.

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[118] Interview with Jason. Melbourne, September 16, 2016.
[119] This is not to suggest that there was complete support from Tamil civilians, however those living in coastal towns and Vanni were motivated by more reasons, such as their poverty, lower caste, lower class, proximity to Tamil bases located near the coast or in jungle regions in Vanni. For example, the issue of caste is sometimes associated to the LTTE who attempted to curb caste-based discrimination within the Tamil community. Thus, socio-cultural factors in which lower caste members joined the militant movements became a way out of the oppressive system. Margaret Trawick, *Conflict and Community in Contemporary Sri Lanka: "Pearl of the East" or the "Island of Tears"?* (New Delhi: Sage, 1999).
[120] Pfaffenberger, 'Sri Lanka in 1987,' 137-147.
[121] Stine Bruland, 'Being Here While Being There,' in *Objects and Imagination: Perspectives on Materialisation and Meaning*, eds., Øivind Fuglerud and Leon Wainwright (Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2015), 93-110.
[122] Ibid., 104.
[123] Doreen Massey, 'Places and their Pasts,' *History Workshop Journal*, No. 39 (1995), 182-192.

From Jaffna to Colombo

Although India withdrew its forces in 1990, the intensification of violence in the North continued to see Tamil people fleeing Jaffna throughout the 1980s and 1990s under difficult, almost impossible circumstances.[124] With the break-down of the Indo-Lanka Accord and the subsequent withdrawal of the IPKF the LTTE now spearheaded the Tamil liberation struggle which since 1990 had entered its new phase, 'Eelam War 2.'[125] Only certain parts of Jaffna provided access for Tamil civilians to flee the war zone, for example through Kilaly despite it being a dangerous sea journey that was constantly being attacked by Government armed forces. For example, on January 2, 1993 there was a combined operation by the Sri Lankan Navy and Airforce that killed dozens of Tamil civilians who were attempting to leave Jaffna. The Tamils had been shot and stabbed; some had been charred beyond recognition. The Sri Lankan Government denied the attacks, however a week later UNHCR had confirmed that more than forty persons had been killed in the attacks at Kilaly.[126]

There were not only physical but institutional barriers to escaping the armed violence in Jaffna. For example, the 'pass-law' prevented Tamils aged 10-25 years old from leaving their village unless they held a pass given by the LTTE. One interviewee recalled the difficulties of fleeing Jaffna, obtaining a visa and reuniting with her father who had migrated to Australia on a skilled visa:

> My sister was at an age where she had to get the pass to move around from Jaffna to move to Colombo so that was an issue, so we didn't really know when, but we knew eventually we would move and then somehow, we got the pass to move out of Jaffna in 1993. I think you just had to prove that you had to move. So, there was a general rule that if you were above 16 you had to get the pass, you had to have a good reason to leave Jaffna. This was more LTTE based, restrictions placed by LTTE. It was so difficult to get that exemption we were told by them not to tell anyone that we were leaving.[127] (Vithusha)

The pass-law was intended to prevent young Tamil people from leaving Jaffna and encouraged them to join the armed struggle.[128] The LTTE regularly deployed both boys and

[124] Tamil Eelam (Political Section), 'Blood on Water: The Kilaly Massacre' (Jaffna: Rajan Press, 1994), 9-11.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Interview with Vithusa. Melbourne, September 14, 2016.
[128] Pass laws (or exit passes) were required by Tamil people leaving LTTE's stronghold of Jaffna. Young men and women found it more difficult to obtain permission to leave Jaffna as the LTTE

girls in what was known as the 'Baby Brigade'.[129] Throughout the 1990s, an estimated 40 to 60 per cent of dead LTTE soldiers were children under the age of eighteen.[130] Tamil parents lived in fear that their children would be taken away and many took strategies that resisted the LTTE's forced child recruitment after 1990.[131] One interviewee had been strategically relocated to a different village by his parents to avoid being recruited into the LTTE:

> I moved to Vavuniya. I left first because they had a law in the Tigers area so if you're over sixteen you can't leave, you have to leave one person and the family had to be in the Tigers controlled area so before I turned 16 my mum took me to Vavuniya and left me there. I was living by myself when I was 14 or 15. It was lonely, I think that was the first time I did it, I had been writing letters to them (family).[132] (Suman)

In these memories, life in Jaffna was characterised by family separation and parents' fears of losing their children in battle.[133] It is not just that the spatial dislocation had reconstructed the individual's world. It had also created a historical world where young Tamil armed combatants became a more permanent feature of Tamil society in Sri Lanka. In comparison to childhood experiences of displacement described earlier in the chapter, approaching teenage hood in Jaffna in the 1990s had evoked a different reality for families: 'if you're over sixteen you can't leave'. Prolonged periods of cross-border and internal displacement became frequent after the Tamil massacre in 1983. Tamil children in refugee camps were particularly disadvantaged as they engaged in low-paid work,[134] often in seasonal agricultural activities for survival. There is very little statistical data available on the number of Tamil children displaced across Jaffna however many Tamil families were frightened to return to their homes due to fear of forcible recruitment into militancy, particularly involving their

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wanted to maintain its numbers. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 'Sri Lanka: Information on the Procedures and Conditions for Obtaining a Pass from LTTE,' to leave the Jaffna Peninsula, the appearances of such passes, the location of checkpoints on routes out of the peninsula, and whether these checkpoints are fixed or mobile, April 1, 1994. Accessed on February 20, 2019. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6aaed1f.html.

[129] N. Manoharan, 'Child Soldiers III:'Baby Brigades' of the LTTE' (Colombo: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, No. 1184, 2003).

[130] Ibid.

[131] Andrew Mawson et al., 'War brought us here. Protecting Children Displaced within their own Countries by Conflict' (London: Save the Children, 2000), 116.

[132] Interview with Suman. Sydney, December 14, 2015.

[133] Daya Somasundaram, *Scarred Communities: Psychosocial impact of Man-Made and Natural Disasters on Sri Lankan Society* (New Delhi: Sage, 2014), 266.

[134] Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, 'Sri Lanka Research Guide: Forced Migration Online,' 2004, 29. Accessed on September 12, 2018. http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/sri-lanka/fmo032.pdf.

children.[135] By 1995, the overall number of displaced Tamils within Jaffna had exceeded one million.[136] For example, in 1990 fighting between the LTTE and Government armed forces resulted in upwards of 500,000 internally displaced Tamil people in remote and distant places within Jaffna such as Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya.[137] For many of these Tamils, their goal was to leave Jaffna, however dangerous and impossible that journey presented. The following memories highlighted the traumatic events that were endured by people attempting to flee Jaffna and arrive safely in the capital city of Colombo to flee the country:

> We went by bus and then the bus broke down then we had to take a boat to somewhere, then we went to Vavuniya and then we had to line up for hours and hours to get a seat on the train so maybe not a few days…it took about three days so it was pretty hectic…I remember lining up and jumping when the tyres went flat…it must have been a tractor or something. So, in our case we came to Colombo and were there for about 6 years.[138] (Jeivan)

> First trial we went, and we got caught in the train near Vavuniya. They said the train tracks were burnt so we all had to jump out of the train, in the middle of the jungle, in the middle of nowhere and we were just running with our suitcases and we finally made it back to Jaffna by getting into a vegetable truck and went back. Second time we went again, some buses were burnt or something, again we came back. Third time we went, we made it all the way to Anuradhapura and finally we made it to Colombo. these things stay in your mind, it's not something that's going to go away but it's very frustrating.[139] (Nivetha)

Closely linked to these memories of displacement were collective experiences of discrimination that all Tamils from Jaffna faced as they fled their homes.[140] Memories of suffering were not only individual but collective memories that constituted the deeply ingrained political sentiment that no Tamils belonged in Sri Lanka. Thus, a major challenge for Tamil people from Jaffna was to not only arrive safely in Colombo, but to successfully

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[135] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Sri Lanka: Returns in the East but New Displacements in the North: A Profile of the Internal Displacement Situation' (Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council, 2008), 80. Accessed on September 15, 2018. www.internal-displacement.org.
[136] Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction/ Commissioner General of Essential Services, cited in Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Sri Lanka: Returns in the East but New Displacements in the North,' A Profile of the Internal Displacement Situation, 2006, 66.
[137] Norwegian Refugee Council/Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Profile of Internal Displacement in Sri Lanka,' 2005, 17. Accessed on September 14, 2018. https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/407e6e9c2.pdf.
[138] Interview with Jeivan. Melbourne, October 17, 2016.
[139] Interview with Nivetha. Melbourne, September 14, 2016.
[140] Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House*, 78.

receive visas or be smuggled out of the country, without being tortured, harassed or killed by Government armed forces or the police. One interviewee stated that he did not go to school in Colombo for around three years while the family waited for visas, 'we weren't sure where we were going to, where we were going to end up, we were in limbo'.[141] Some families further feared to send their children outside: 'If you happened to have a Jaffna ID (identification card) you were a prime suspect whatever happened.'[142] Tamil youth from Jaffna personified Tamil armed struggles for a separate Tamil state and became a serious target for Sri Lankan police in Colombo.[143] One interviewee was detained in police custody and was forced to sign a document stating he was a member of the LTTE and was attempting to smuggle arms into the country. He was eventually released after his father bribed the police. However, he was relentlessly hassled by police:

> Sometimes they would keep me there for one night and inquire me. I couldn't speak Sinhala, but I could sort of manage with English and I can only talk Tamil at that time, so it was very scary for my parents to keep me there and I was also very scared to go out as well.[144] (Guru)

His father eventually arranged for him to be smuggled out of the country and he arrived in Australia as an unaccompanied refugee minor in 1996. For Jaffna Tamils, seeking asylum overseas became their main priority. The large influx of Tamils in Colombo was noted by non-Government organisations from overseas that advocated for the resettlement of Tamils in safer countries.[145] Fleeing civil war is never an orderly process, and often the spaces occupied by forced migrants are spaces of confusion and social chaos, with chances of a positive outcome only slight.[146] In the case of young Tamils from Jaffna, their identities were highly

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[141] Interview with Jason. Melbourne, September 12, 2016.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Tamils in Colombo were regularly stopped and questioned by police: those without identification cards were arrested thus all households and hotel owners were required to register guests with the local police as a security measure. The dangers for Tamil civilians included arrest and detention for indefinite periods (often released through bribes with government officials), mistreatment in police custody, which was pervasive throughout Sri Lanka. Asia Watch, 'Halt repatriation of Sri Lankan Tamils,' Vol. 5, No. 11 (New York: Asia Watch, 1993), 11.
[144] Interview with Guru. Melbourne, September 14, 2016.
[145] As one Tamil diaspora visitor stated in the reports, 'in Colombo there are many displaced Tamils. There has been a large influx of Tamils in Colombo. Most people are staying with their relatives and friends who work in Colombo. It's just as bad in terms of displaced Tamils in Jaffna.' V. Varadakumar, 'Sri Lanka Visit Report, Director, Tamil Information Centre' (London: Tamil Information Centre, 1992), 19-22.
[146] Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase and Lynnaire Sheridan, 'Dispossession, Human Security, and Undocumented Migration: Narrative Accounts of Afghani and Sri Lankan Tamil Asylum Seekers,' in *Rethinking Displacement: Asia Pacific Perspectives*, eds., R. Gangulu-Scrase and K. Lahiri-Dutt (London: Ashgate, 2012), 251-274.

politicised and of central concern to both sides of the civil war. While several interview participants remained distant to the refugee label, their experiences unequivocally highlighted the dangers that they faced living in Sri Lanka as Jaffna Tamils. Young people were the face and function of armed conflict. The call to arms reinforced that children were both a part of Tamil goals and a mechanism to achieving it; the conflict revealed more starkly individual and collective obligations. And yet, in line with the findings of Sharika Thiranagama, the recollections of interviewees showed that individuals had heightened consciousness that acknowledged their position as historical and social agents.[147] While their experiences were traced to Jaffna as a war zone in the 1980s and 1990s, the personal memories of children reasserted the politicisation of the child and their witness to that war, thus opening up new spaces for understanding the conflict.[148] Children in the Eastern province shared these, but the landscape presented new complexities of living in multi-ethnic societies.

Tamils in the East

Sinhalese settlement in the East was a key point of difference in comparison to armed conflict in the North. The East coast region of Sri Lanka extends almost 100 miles from Valaichchenai in the North to Pottuvil in the South (see figure 1) and is divided into three districts: Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara.[149] The two Tamil speaking communities in the East Coast comprised Tamil Hindus and Tamil Muslims,[150] however the ethnic composition changed after Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. Since the 1950s, a significant Sinhala population was resettled in the East, for example under the Gal Oya peasant-colonisation scheme. This Sinhala settlement resulted in the creation of a new district, administered by a Government agent in the old settlement of Ampara.[151] As the Gal Oya project developed,

[147] Thiranagama, 'The Self at a Time of War,' 30.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Dennis B. McGilvray, *Crucible of Conflict: Tamil and Muslim Society on the East Coast of Sri Lanka* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 21.
[150] The Muslims in Sri Lanka are a mostly Tamil speaking minority group in Sri Lanka, but are grouped into two main ethnicities – Moors, and Malays. Their origins can be traced back to Arab traders. The growth of the Arab trade had increased commercial activities that strengthened the presence of Muslims in Sri Lanka. After the 15th century, with the dominance of Portuguese colonists in the Indian Ocean, the arrival of Arab traders ceased and were replaced by traders from South India who were mainly Tamil speaking. The Portuguese originally called Sri Lankan Muslims 'Moors' however this label remained and is now officially recognised as the ethnic title of the community. However, the Muslims of Sri Lanka have Arab, Persian, Dravidian and Malay ancestry however the Dravidian element has remained the dominant element due to centuries of heavy Indian influence. Ameer Ali, The Muslim factor in Sri Lankan Ethnic Crisis, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* Vol. 17, No. 2 (1997), 254.
[151] Ibid.

along with other large, internationally funded irrigation and peasant-settlement projects, the ethnic composition changed again. By 1981 there were 157,000 Sinhalese colonists compared to 23,000 Sinhalese in 1946.[152] The proportions were significantly altered to 41.5 per cent Muslims, 38 per cent Sinhalese, 20 per cent Tamils.[153] The Government found Sinhala settlers in the East to be valuable for undermining Tamil separatist movements; now Sinhala colonisation had clearer political aims.[154] After 1983 Tamils were gradually evicted from the area such as in 1984 when Sri Lankan Government armed forces attacked several villages around Kokilai demanding their eviction.[155]

For Tamil militants, the East was a more complex site for achieving a separate Tamil state due to its mixed ethnic population.[156] Their goals in the East were not only to fight Government armed forces but also to evict Sinhala settlers.[157] Consequently, the Batticaloa and Ampara districts, geographically juxtaposed and demographically mixed, became an unexpected crucible of ethnic violence particularly after the Tamil massacre in 1983.[158] Tamils in the East were exposed to more war trauma in comparison to Muslim and Sinhala communities.[159] However, in comparison to the North violence against Tamils in the East was gradual and did not escalate until 1985.[160] Nevertheless, experiences of displacement and survival dominated the memories of interviewees who were born in the East. The following experiences of one interviewee, Bairavan, echoed those of Jaffna Tamils however they also highlighted the unique ethnic composition of the East.

Bairavan

Before leaving Sri Lanka in 1996, Bairavan grew up in Ampara and recalled the riots in 1987 that resulted in the family's forced migration to Colombo. His family's house burned to the ground, and with only a 'handbag' they moved to Colombo in 1987.[161] Before leaving

[152] Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka*, 219-220.
[153] Chelvadurai Manogaran, 'Colonization as Politics: Political use of Space in Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict, in *The Sri Lankan Tamils: Ethnicity and Identity*, eds., C. Manogaran and Bryan Pfaffenberger (Colorado: Westview Press, 1994), 112.
[154] Channa Wickremesekera, *The Tamil Separatist War in Sri Lanka* (London: Routledge, 2016), 22.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid., 23.
[158] McGilvray, *Crucible of Conflict*.
[159] J. Perera, ed., *The Health of Children in Conflict Zones of Sri Lanka* (Hamilton: Centre for International Health and the Centre for Peace Studies/McMaster University, 1996).
[160] *The Australian*, 'Latest anti Tamil Violence claims 56,' May 20, 1985.
[161] Interview with Bairavan. Melbourne, June 14, 2016. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.

Ampara, Baraivan described living peacefully in a Sinhalese village while comfortably maintaining a sense of Tamilness:

> Ampara is full of Sinhalese people. My dad was working there, he was working in a sugar cane factory and my mum also was working there and so that's the only reason we were there. I actually studied in a Sinhalese school as well when I was little and then my dad wanted me to study in Tamil, so I had to travel about forty-five minutes to go to a Tamil school from where we lived. So, all my friends were Sinhalese.[162] (Bairavan).

His family home had been burnt down three times before the family fled from the East in 1987:

> We were lucky, we escaped every time. Sometimes if you are in the house, they would strap you with the furniture to a chair or something and they would burn the house. Some of my dad's friends passed away like that. They put them on a burning tyre because they've got nothing to do with the Government or the Tigers, it's because you're Tamil. You suffer and die, even children.[163] (Bairavan)

The juxtaposition of living peacefully among Sinhalese people, 'we didn't have any problem with anyone,' and being targeted by Sinhala mobs on multiple occasions, 'we lost the house, they burnt the house and only because we were Tamil,' highlighted another dimension of the civil war: class.[164] In Bairavan's memories of these riots, there is a clear distinction between Sinhala mobs who attacked the family house and Sinhala neighbours and school peers who were not the 'problem'. He recalled that for Sinhala mobs it was easy to attack Tamils, 'burning houses was like burning paper, it's easy for them.'

> There were Sinhalese people from the bush area they were uneducated and they were going through the villages and finding Tamil houses and burning and killing and all that and then we found out that they were doing it so we were hiding in another Sinhalese family's house – one of my dad's friend's house so we actually saw our house burning down. They're not the people from the village, these are people from the bush. They wanted us to stay but my dad wanted to leave, there was nothing left.

The sugarcane industry where Bairavan's father worked expanded in 1986 under the liberalisation policy that gave his father greater control of the plantations. However,

[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Tambiah, *Ethnic Fratricide*, 74-76.

successive violent bursts in the region made it difficult for Tamils like Bairavan's father to continue their livelihoods:

> He was one of the heads in the factory and they didn't like him being there because he was Tamil because these Sinhalese guys didn't want to work under him.

The East, like Jaffna in the North, can be understood as articulations of complex social relations. The overlapping social relations with Sinhalese people was a key theme in Bairavan's memories. Connections with Sinhalese people is itself formed through a longer history of Sinhalese settlement in the East. On the other hand, he identified having 'Sinhalese friends' at school while stressing that 'even children' died in Sinhala attacks against Tamils. At first, Sinhalese 'mobs' who attacked were different to the friends who saved his family from death however the impossibility of living amongst them emerged when he turned the attention to his father's work colleagues: 'they didn't like him being there'. The dislocation between social interactions with Sinhalese people in various contexts of school, work and neighbours in the East, is at least potentially falling into a generalised observation: interviewees had constructed their Tamil childhoods as almost impossible subjects of belonging in Sri Lanka. Throughout the 1990s, violent clashes targeting Tamil militants, Government forces, Sinhala civilians and Tamil civilians turned the East into conflict-ridden territory comparable to the North.[165] During the period, 6,000 young Tamil people went missing or disappeared.[166]

Soon after riots destroyed their house, Bairavan and his family moved to Colombo where the family was separated due to visa application processes; his parents went to Switzerland and he arrived in Australia as an unaccompanied refugee minor in 1996. Bairavan, like several interviewees, overshadowed his hardships in Sri Lanka by highlighting the successes in Australia in his professional and personal life – as a Tamil. In arriving in Australia with eighty-three US dollars, Bairavan relished the opportunities and supports given to him by the Government and various organisations. His survival and resilience are key tropes in his life stories. However, the theme of conflict in his homeland remains a key memory when he explained, 'I do a lot of charity work and support the people there. Over there the war is finished but the problem is still there.'

Colombo and the Tamil Massacre in 1983

[165] Wickremesekera, *The Tamil Separatist War*, 148-154.
[166] Sri Lankan Government, Parliamentary Debates, Hansard Vol. 104 (1996), 1358-1359.

I interviewed nine Tamils who were born and lived in Colombo under distinct circumstances that were different to Tamils from the North and in some ways to Tamils from the East: they lived in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, attended private and/or English language schools, at least one parent had speaking knowledge of Sinhalese, none of them recalled travelling to the North or East and they knew very little about Tamil-only places. Colombo is the capital city of Sri Lanka and forms part of the majority Sinhalese heartland; it is also home to high numbers of Tamils who had been living there throughout the 20th century.[167] Tamils in Colombo were mainly public servants, clerks and professionals.[168] Sri Lanka's national census in 1981 reflected the mixed ethnic demographic of Colombo: 78% Sinhala, 11.1% Tamil (Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils), 8.3% Muslim.[169] Growing up in Colombo in the mid-20th century, political scientist Ambalavaner Sivanandan described the cultural-religious-social plurality of the place as a type of 'mess': at home, he would pray to Hindu gods and sing *thevarams* (holy songs), and at school, he learned Catholicism. Hindus, Buddhists, and Catholics went to each other's temples.[170] However, it was more than a cultural contradiction, for a slum culture was juxtaposed with riches – the place was 'disjointed', 'disorganic', in terms of both culture and class, a systemic contradiction in many ways.[171] Sivanandan's experiences and observations of Colombo were amplified in meaning when the island subsequently disintegrated into social and political turmoil in the 1980s and constituted defining moments in the lives of all Tamils living in Sri Lanka and overseas.[172]

Targeting the Tamil business and entrepreneurial class the Tamil massacre in 1983 had affected all Tamil occupied areas on the island.[173] In public discourse, the massacre was

[167] Kumari Jayawardena, *Nobodies to Somebodies: The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka* (New York: Zed Books, 2002).
[168] Ibid.
[169] Department of Census and Statistics Ministry of Plan Implementation, 'Census of Population and Housing, Sri Lanka,' 1981, 3.
[170] Life Story Interview with Ambalavaner Sivanandan (1923-2018), British Library C464/76, 2010.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Tamils living overseas campaigned their respective Governments to introduce and allow Tamils to migrate under humanitarian visas. The period also marked the beginning of several Tamil organisations in the diaspora that helped provide initial resettlement supports such as housing needs, for example the Eelam Tamil Organisation as indicated in chapter 2.
[173] T.D.S.A Dissanayaka, T*he Agony of Sri Lanka: An in-depth account of the Racial Riots of 1983* (Colombo: Swastika, 1983).

described by some as a Holocaust[174] and genocide.[175] On Saturday 23 July 1983 the LTTE militants detonated a roadside bomb, attacked and killed around thirteen Government army men, in response to the killing of one their founding members and second-in-command, Charles Anthony alongside several LTTE soldiers.[176] The Sri Lankan Government returned the dead bodies of their soldiers to Colombo, where Sinhala citizens were outraged by the deaths. Beginning on Sunday 24th July 1983 Sinhala militants and mobs, backed by the Government, launched a pogrom against Tamils in Colombo that lasted several weeks.[177] Violent attacks by Sinhala mobs ripped through whole areas of Colombo that specifically targeted Tamil households and businesses, and up to 3, 000 Tamil people died.[178] In initial stages, eyewitness accounts revealed that Government police and army joined the riots against Tamils.[179] Some Tamils fled North, some stayed in hiding with the help of neighbours, more than 150,000 Tamil civilians fled the island seeking asylum in other countries including 30, 000 people who fled to India.

Interviewees from Colombo stated that up until July 1983 they had not been exposed to the civil war, some were unaware that there was intense fighting taking place in the North and East or vaguely recognised that there were 'troubles' in the North.[180] Indeed, their memories of the Tamil massacre in 1983 showed that no Tamils in Sri Lanka avoided armed conflict completely. Interviewees remembered being abruptly picked up from school in the middle of the day, staying quietly in dark rooms in their Sinhala neighbour's house, crouching inside the car, as well as catching glimpses of Sinhala mobs burning houses and shops. Each of their experiences in that moment of chaos was unique. Two types of memories emerged: collective markers of ethnicity – Tamil/Sinhala and class – poor/rich identities, or they described the violence as a brief yet 'thrilling' and 'serious' disruption to their lives. Often, the two types of recollections were intertwined.

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[174] Mathew Grenier, 'Protection Denied: Sri Lankan Tamils, the Home Office and the Forgotten War' (London: The Refugee Council, 1997), 4; N. Shanmugathasan, 'Sri Lanka: The Story of the Holocaust,' *Race & Class* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1984), 63-82.
[175] Kenneth Clarke, 'Genocide Horror Recounted by Tamil Refugees,' *Daily Telegraph*, May 30, 1985.
[176] *The Sunday Times*, 'Escaped Terrorist Hijacks Car,' July 17, 1983.
[177] Dissanayaka, *The Agony of Sri Lanka.*
[178] Tambiah, *Ethnic Fratricide*, 22-23.
[179] Grenier, 'Protection Denied,' 4.
[180] Indeed, the Sri Lankan Government had also censored media reports about war-torn areas in the North and East. Grenier, 'Protection Denied,' 9.

Like a force of nature leaving behind a trail of destruction, interviewees stated that the violence of July 1983 erupted from nowhere and had unexpectedly caused moments of panic and confusion for their family. In this concept of the past, all Tamils were targeted at random that fit into a wider historical narrative about Tamils being treated as second-class citizens in Sri Lanka. As adults retelling family stories, the memories comprised of lived experiences and family stories of survival that were passed onto them in their resettlement:

> They were just stopping cars along the way, they were checking ID and if you were Tamil that's it.[181] (Kiran)

> Government sanctioned the release of the electoral rolls. The mobs had all the electoral rolls and with Identity Cards you could see who was Tamil. It was very deliberate which is why it's such a scar and trauma for the Tamil community because they were targeted, it wasn't just an indiscriminate burning, they were really targeted.[182] (Santhi)

> The mob that had come from…made up of fisher people, like the fishing people near the beach they had come to the front gate and they were brandishing weapons.[183] (Ludishya)

According to some scholars, the frustrations of Sinhala mobs symbolised grievances of Sinhala people living in poorer areas of Colombo and faced disadvantages under liberalisation policies that intensified class inequalities and ethnic rivalries.[184] The expanding commercial sector was disproportionately populated by Tamils and Muslims who had historically dominated local and regional trade.[185] Most of the commercial activity was centred in Colombo, which also had the highest median personal income of any spatial zone in the country.[186] In this atmosphere of increased uneven competition, the Sinhala urban working class mobilised their grounds for economic grievances along ethnic lines.[187] The interviewees from Colombo felt a striking need to highlight that the Sinhalese who attacked

[181] Interview with Kiran. Sydney, November 10, 2016.
[182] Interview with Santhi. Melbourne, August 10, 2016.
[183] Interview with Ludishya. Melbourne, August 12, 2016.
[184] Newton Gunasinghe 'The Open Economy and its Impact on Ethnic Relations in Sri Lanka,' in *Economy, Culture, and Civil War in Sri Lanka*, eds., Deborah Winslow and Michael D. Woost (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 108.
[185] Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* (London: Routledge. 2009), 79.
[186] Ibid., 81.
[187] Ibid.

Tamils were different to the wider Sinhala community comprising their neighbours, friends and relatives – many ultimately had saved them from death.[188]

For interviewees, intersections of ethnicity and class were important in explaining the sudden eruption of violence as being unusual and otherworldly. This unusual and otherworldly event was described as a series of steps or processes undertaken in order to survive it: being picked up from school and taken to a Sinhala family friend's house, reuniting with family members inside a refugee camp, playing games inside the refugee camp to keep entertained, not returning home for a couple of weeks until the violence ceased. As adults retelling these family stories, the detail and focus of their memories are on how they survived and reached safety with the help of Sinhala friends, neighbours, relatives.

The specific targeting of Tamil people, houses and livelihoods distinguished these riots from previous ones.[189] Indicative of the political situation in 1983 was the complicity of the Sri Lankan Government in the Tamil massacre.[190] The actions of the Junius Jayewardene Government did little to develop Sri Lanka's democracy, pointing to a series of legislation which undermined Tamils, although intending to eradicate so-called Tamil terrorism.[191] Just one month after the massacre President Jayewardene enacted the Sixth Amendment which excluded the majority of Tamil people from the polity. Jayewardene later withdrew the amendment however he continued to make political blunders which included unsuccessful negotiations with politicians in Tamil political parties such as TULF and TELO, as well as denying Tamils in Jaffna the right to elect their chief minister.[192] Moreover, Jayewardene's political tactics of 'divide and rule' indicated a distorted understanding of Tamil people. He sought to divide TULF from Tamil militant groups and then destroy both, the former politically and the latter by military action.[193] In sum, the Government's goals appeared to deny Tamil citizens political representations and their right to belong in Sri Lanka.[194] Jayewardene had warned Tamil citizens that, under new legislation, anyone who refused to

[188] Two of my interviewees come from mixed-ethnic families; their father is Tamil and mother Sinhalese.
[189] *Shanmugathasan, 'Sri Lanka,' 66-67.*
[190] Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka*.
[191] Ibid., 216-19.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid., 212.

sign a declaration rejecting Tamil separatism could lose their houses, livelihoods and be barred from public examinations.[195]

The Sinhala 'mobs' who attacked Tamil people comprised not only people from poorer neighbourhoods, but strong-arm brigades and 'rapid-deployment forces'.[196] A Tamil father interviewed by the BBC explained that he had lost his son in the Tamil pogrom; he is testimony to the agony of Sri Lanka and its hopes after the massacre:

> Our own children are being persecuted in their own land. Where a Tamil youth is suspected, hounded, where do you think you can bring about reconciliation? Nobody could have suspected that my son could have been a terrorist.[197]

As I have discussed previously, children are significant in the Tamil world view.[198] Margaret Trawick observed that Tamil people love to decorate their walls with pictures of babies, worship child gods, and play with children, not so much because they believed children required this kind of attention, but rather because adults themselves enjoyed it.[199] Tamil children are taught from an early age, '*Matha Pitha Guru Deviam*' (mother, father, teacher, god),[200] which conceptualises adults as god-like figures. This Tamil and Sanskrit phase is commonly taught to Tamil children in school to teach them to respect their parents and teachers who are viewed as the most significant adults in their lives. In return, the parents and teachers are expected to give strong guidance and support in children's lives. Trawick further argued that Tamil adults could not remember their childhoods and there was little emphasis on the emotional needs of children. Rather, children were encouraged to grow materially (clothes, jewellery, books, food, wealth).[201] In Sri Lanka's civil war, social constructions of the child radically changed to that of a political individual, as a threat to the Sinhala-Sri Lankan nation-state and as a vital asset to the Tamil liberation struggle.[202] Thiranagama noted that many children born in refugee camps had birth certificates that stated their place of birth

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[195] Nancy Murray, 'The state against Tamils,' *Race & Class* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1984), 104-5.
[196] Mervyn de Silva, 'Paradise and Hostage to the Past,' *Far Eastern Economic Review* (1984), 22-23.
[197] BBC, 'Siva's People.' Interview audio recording, 1984. T6832RC1, British Library.
[198] Margaret Trawick, *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
[199] Ibid., 215
[200] This is a Tamil and Sanskrit phase that translates to 'mother, father, teacher, god'. It is commonly taught to Tamil children in school to respect parents and teachers who are also viewed as living gods.
[201] Trawick, *Notes on Love*, 215.
[202] P.K.M Dissanayake, 'A Study of Social Consequences of Ethnic Conflict in the North-East of Sri Lanka,' Proceedings of the Second Academic Sessions (Matara: University of Ruhuna, 2004), 108-115.

as the refugee camp instead of the town name, making them a 'refugee forever'.[203] The frightening possibility that these children did not have *ur* (village) is further enhanced by the idea that they had an identity as 'displaced'.[204] They might return to their parents' *ur* but would not have any of the markers to show they have been raised there.[205] It could be further argued that this construction of 'refugee forever' transcended geographical boundaries when young Tamils left their homes and constructed new homes in their resettlement. The process of forced migration enabled Tamil adults to give meaning to their own lives.[206] In her study of Tamils after the pogrom in 1983, Vali Kanapathipillai found that a virtual reformulation of life took place at the level of the family and the concept of migration became central to this process:

> The entire relationship to the past was altered as one or the other family decided to migrate 'for the sake of the children'.[207]

Tamil families had internalised their racialised identities and children insisted that their parents not maintain the Tamil identity to avoid living with obvious cultural cues, as Kanapathipillai revealed of one Tamil parent:

> After 1983 the children were pestering us to change our names to a less Tamil sounding one, and also to get rid of the name board on out front gate.[208]

Conclusion

The chapter revealed glimpses into the diverse experiences of young Tamils within spatial contexts of civil war, emphasising that the social category of Tamil youth was a highly politicised one. I showed that a broader understanding of how Tamils left their homes in Sri Lanka constituted a variety of experiences tied to specific historical developments in the North, East and Colombo. For Tamils from Colombo, the riots in 1983 were transformative in terms of the civil war in Sri Lanka, but for interviewees from the North their childhoods had always been shaped by war; indeed they had envisioned no alternative past or future. Each of these spaces of memories had collapsed the politics of belonging with their everyday

[203] Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House*, 176.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Stine Bruland, 'Nationalism as Meaningful Life Projects: Identity Construction Among Politically Active Tamil Families in Norway,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 35, No. 12 (2012), 2134-2152.
[207] Vali Kanapathipillai, 'July 1983: The Survivors Experience,' in *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, ed., Veena Das (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 342.
[208] Ibid., 337.

life.[209] I argued that the political conditions of the island had constructed their childhoods as 'a refugee forever'.[210] At the same time, interviewees of the study had constructed their childhoods as belonging *in* Sri Lanka, rather than *to* Sri Lanka. In revealing fragmented memories of their homeland, they did not try to present a 'complete' picture of their childhoods in Sri Lanka at the height of the civil war. Instead, the homeland was comprised of different histories, social interactions and temporal connections that they carried with them in the present, thus crafting their individual and collective experiences as a part of a dislocated Tamil war generation. Thus, the chapter moved towards the observation that young Tamils were more than passive subjects amidst a history of calamities. In the next chapter, I move the discussion to examine how these individuals began rebuilding their sense of home in resettlement.

[209] Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,' 197-214.
[210] Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House*, 176.

CHAPTER FOUR: Cultural Memory and the Intimacies of Constructing Home in Resettlement

I now move from memories of war and persecution in Sri Lanka, where belonging as a young Tamil person equated to life-threatening consequences, to the ways that young survivors remembered their realities of building a sense of home in Australia. These next three chapters will explore different aspects of their day to day life in resettlement that constructed their multiple ways of belonging as Tamil-Australians. Thus, the remainder of the thesis seeks to demonstrate more clearly how interviewees crafted their belonging as survivors of Sri Lanka's civil war and how resettlement negotiated this belongingness. In this chapter, I examine how interviewees constructed a sense of home which is crucial for young forced migrants to achieve predictable social relationships and stability after periods of chaos.[1] Existing understandings of home, within forced migrant life trajectories, have generally focused on adults,[2] and less on young people's experiences.[3] The chapter adds to this body of literature by exploring the resettlement experiences of a small group of Tamils resettled in Australia as young people in the 1980s and 1990s.

Concepts of home are central to all actors in diaspora communities, for they are premised on the fact that they cannot return to their homeland due to fear of persecution making constructions of home in exile both necessary and complex.[4] For the Tamil diaspora, young

[1] Josée Arschambault, '"It Can be Good There Too': Home and Continuity in Refugee Children's Narratives of Settlement,' *Children's Geographies* Vol. 10, No. 1 (2012), 35-48; Mano Candappa and Itohan Egharebva, 'Negotiating Boundaries: Tensions within Home and School Life for Refugee Children,' in *Home and School: Regulation, Autonomy or Connection?* ed., Rosalind Edwards (London: Routledge Falmer, 2002), 154–169; Peter H. Hopkins and Malcolm Hill, 'Pre-flight Experiences and Migration Stories: The Accounts of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children,' *Children's Geographies* Vol. 6, No. 3 (2008), 257–268.

[2] Farida Fozdar and Lisa Hartley, 'Housing and the Creation of Home for Refugees in Western Australia,' *Housing, Theory and Society* Vol. 31, No. 2 (2014), 148-173; Ravinder Sidhu and Sandra Taylor, 'Educational Provision for Refugee Youth in Australia: Left to Chance?' *Journal of Sociology* Vol. 23, No. 3 (2007), 283-300.

[3] See for example, Jen Couch, 'A New Way Home: Refugee Young People and Homelessness in Australia,' *Journal of Social Inclusion* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2011), 39-52.

[4] Nathalie H. C. Nguyen, *Memory is Another Country: Women of the Vietnamese Diaspora* (California: Praeger, 2009); Shahrzad Mojab, 'Gender, Nation and Diaspora: Kurdish Women in Feminist Transnational Struggles,' in *Muslim Diaspora: Gender, Culture and Identity*, ed., Haideh Moghissi (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 116-132; Anh Hua, 'Black Diaspora Feminism and Writing: Memories, Storytelling, and the Narrative World as Sites of Resistance,' *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2013), 30-42; Celia McMichael, 'Memory and Resettlement: Somali Women in Melbourne and Emotional Wellbeing,' PhD dissertation, University of Melbourne, 2003.

people were central to community projects of home-building.[5] In Australia, the older Tamil generation echoed the institutional developments in other countries and targeted the younger generation through Tamil Language School (TLS), Hindu prayer spaces and free religion classes, and youth organisations.[6] In doing so, young Tamils recognised the political significance of constructing a sense of home that preserved Tamil culture.[7] For example, youth organisations such as the Sydney University Tamil Society (SUTS) demonstrated new ways of institutionalising home-building: assisting Tamils in Sri Lanka and Australia, while organising themselves in ways that were less prone to divisiveness and were more cosmopolitan.[8] The generational transmission of homeland values and cultures had constructed a Tamil diaspora that on the surface appeared 'successful',[9] exemplifying what Edward Said described as the unique pleasure of the exile condition in which 'there is a sense of achievement in acting as if one were at home wherever one happens to be'.[10]

However, processes of constructing home at the level of everyday life were difficult and contingent, for example on financial resources and family support. One interviewee who arrived in Australia as an unaccompanied refugee minor explained that a lack of resources

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[5] Victoria Mason, 'Children of the "Idea of Palestine": Negotiating Identity, Belonging and Home in the Palestinian Diaspora,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2007), 271-285; Nirukshi, M. Perera, 'Talking Tamil, Talking Saivism: Language Practices in a Tamil Hindu Temple in Australia,' PhD dissertation, Monash University, 2017.

[6] Joshua A. Fishman, 'Language Maintenance, Language Shift, and Reversing Language Shift,' in *The Handbook of Bilingualism*, eds., Tej K. Bhatia and William. C. Ritchie (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 416; Nirukshi Perera, 'The Maintenance of Sri Lankan Languages in Australia: Comparing the Experience of the Sinhalese and Tamils in the Homeland,' *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* Vol. 36, No. 3 (2015), 297-312; Prema Kurien, 'Becoming American by becoming Hindu: Indian Americans take their place at the Multicultural Table,' in *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the new Immigration*, eds., R. Stephen Warner, and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 37-70.

[7] Sheetal L. Challam, 'The Making of the Sri Lankan Tamil Cultural Identity in Sydney,' Masters thesis, University of Western Sydney, 2001, 30.

[8] Established in 1991, the Sydney University Tamil Society (SUTS) was one of the more successful youth organisations that engaged numerous community projects for Tamils in Australia and Sri Lanka. For example, in 1997 SUTS compiled and distributed the 'Yellow Guide', which was for Tamils, by and of Tamils in Sydney that contained information about available Tamil resources in Sydney: accountants, lawyers, marriage brokers, tutors, astrologers, associations, calendar of Tamil events and festivals, and Tamil shops. Not only supporting the local community, university associations were also actively involved in fund raising programs such as the Uni-Fund Project, which funded Tamil students in Jaffna by providing equipment for student laboratories, textbooks, computers and funds for overseas studies. Ibid., 31-32.

[9] Palitha Ganewatta, 'Australia', in *The Encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora*, ed., Peter Reeves (Singapore: Editions Didier, 2013), 164.

[10] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2000), 186.

and access to supports significantly undermined her sense of home. In response, she actively reconstructed home through ensuring that her children engaged in Tamil cultural activities:

> I really liked music, I wanted to learn music very badly but financially I didn't have the support to do so. Who was going to take me to classes and back? Everything that I liked such as music, I try to teach my kids, including Tamil. Because I don't want to see them only speak English at my old age, I would feel very bad. I struggled here having come here without knowing English. I don't want an elderly person to not talk to my kids because they can't speak in Tamil. The things we couldn't do, we do it through our kids. We feel very happy to see that happen.[11] (Thurga)

These decisions to organise one's life around children is central to Tamil belief systems but also revealed ways that Tamil forced migrants chose to imbue meaning in their resettlement through memories of the past.[12] This raises important questions about constructing home that require further attention: What is the role of memory in how Tamil forced migrants constructed stories of home? Who had access to resources to build home (and who didn't)? How did the different positionalities, such as age, class, gender, and legal status, shape specific locations from which young Tamils constructed home in diaspora settings? My contentions in the chapter are two-fold. Firstly, building a sense of home for interviewees in the study was an ongoing process that was constructed through, and in, movement.[13] Experiences of dislocation and processes of resettlement underpinned their memories of building a sense of home. Secondly, and relatedly, constructions of home were driven by negotiations of cultural traditions that interviewees not only identified but recognised as an integral part of their lives. In terms of cultural traditions, I focus specifically on how interviewees gave meaning to language (Tamil) and religion (Hinduism) that were central aspects of Tamil childhoods. I use the concept of cultural memory to examine how Tamil language and Hindu practices reflected a collective Tamil memory of the past on the one

[11] Interview with Thurga. Melbourne, July 13, 2016.

[12] Valli Kanapathipillai, 'July 1983: The Survivors Experience,' in *Communities, Riots and Survivors*, ed., Veena Das (New Delhi: Oxford University, 1990), 342; Stine Bruland, 'Nationalism as Meaningful Life Projects: Identity Construction Among Politically Active Tamil Families in Norway,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 35, No. 12 (2012), 2134-2152.

[13] Ala Sirriyeh, 'Home Journeys: Im/mobilities in Young and Asylum-Seeking Women's Negotiations of Home,' *Childhood* Vol. 17, No. 2 (2010), 213-227.

hand and its implications for the individual who negotiated that memory on the other.[14] It is with this memory work that I begin the chapter.

Cultural Memory and the Politics of Constructing Home

Jan Assmann remarked that 'cultural memory is a collective and social achievement', insisting that it is not a passive process but is constructed through active remembering.[15] Cultural memory can refer to objects, social interactions and stories shared by people, such as the transmission of religious myths, or it can refer to institutions and material structures, such as temples, and monuments.[16] In short, 'cultural memory is about identity constructing and identity maintaining.'[17] Cultural memory is used in the chapter not only to show that memory is maintained through cultural formations (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (practices and observations),[18] but that the process of remembering is also political. For young Tamils growing up in exile, a key way that cultural memory was made possible was through the work of Tamil community elites who developed mechanisms that preserved values from the homeland, its physical location, history, and culture.[19]

A significant component of this work involved the transfer of Tamil cultural symbols, practices and meanings onto the next generation – the group that is the focus of this study.[20] Exploring the outcomes of the transfer process, as I seek to do in this chapter, enabled a deeper level engagement of the ways in which interviewees belonged to a Tamil community to weaken their sense of dislocation in a new setting.[21] Both the individual and their society turned to the archive of cultural traditions, that is, the symbols, myths, and images, that lived or were reactivated in their memories – 'memory has a cultural basis and not just a social one'.[22] Thus, for post-1983 Tamil migrants in particular, constructions of home in exile amounted to: stronger community ties that sustained homeland values, the institutionalisation

[14] Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, translated by Rodney Livingstone (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 1-9.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Agnes Heller, 'Cultural memory, Identity and Civil Society,' *International Politics and Society*, Vol. 2 (2001), 139.
[18] Jan Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,' New German Critique, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* No. 65 (1995), 129.
[19] William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return.' *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1991), 83-99.
[20] Bruland, 'Nationalism as Meaningful Life Projects,' 2134–2152.
[21] Susannah Radstone, 'What Place is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies,' *Parallax* Vol. 17, No. 4 (2011), 109-123.
[22] Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory,* 7-8.

of resources and support services to serve the rapidly growing Tamil community, and shifting allegiances to a transnational Tamil community that had a responsibility to continue cultural and political networks.[23] In doing so cultural formations maintained pre-migratory cleavages along the lines of caste, class, gender, village or town of origin, education, and religion, as well as legal status.[24]

Hybridity or in-betweenness was central to processes of cultural memory that imbued meaning into the lives of forced migrants.[25] For adult Tamil forced migrants, the process of being and acting 'hybrid' captured their connections to a Tamil homeland and shared exclusion from the host society.[26] The hybridity that characterised a young Tamil forced migrant therefore also produced more than one sense of home, and connections to more than one homeland.[27] It was evident that Tamil cultural memory was embedded in the flow of everyday communications such as Hindu religious festivals, Tamil Language Classes (TLS), watching Tamil movies, learning classical Indian music, speaking in Tamil with relatives resettled in other countries, and return trips to Sri Lanka for weddings and family functions. The basis of cultural memory implies that these Tamil activities are characterised by their distance from the everyday – that the cultural core does not change with the passing of time.[28] The Tamil activities listed above seek to replicate life from the homeland, albeit modified by the course of the war.[29] For example, one interviewee recalled experiences in Sri Lanka when he had to ride a bicycle to generate power to play music for a puberty ceremony in the village:

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[23] Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, 'Tamil Diaspora Politics,' in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, ed., Melvin Ember et al (New York: Springer, 2005), 492-500.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Thomas Lacroix and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'Refugee and Diaspora Memories: The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 34, No. 6 (2013), 684-696; Helen Taylor, 'Refugees, the State and the Concept of Home,' *Refugee Survey Quarterly* Vol. 32, No. 2 (2013), 130-152.
[26] Øivind Fuglerud *Life on the Outside: The Tamil Diaspora and Long-Distance Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 178-179; Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, 'The Migration-Development Nexus: Sri Lanka Case Study,' *International Migration*, Vol. 40, No.5, (2002), 283-307; Stine Bruland, 'Underneath the Margosa Tree: Re-creating Meaning in a Tamil family after War and Migration,' PhD dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), 2015.
[27] Radstone, 'What Place Is This?', 109-123; Anne R. Peterson, 'The Locations of Memory: Migration and Transnational Cultural Memory as Challenges for Art History,' *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2013), 121-137.
[28] Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,' 129.
[29] Asha Hans, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India,' *Refuge* Vol. 13, No. 2 (1993), 30-32.

> You would sit on a bicycle and someone would connect a small motor and we get the generator power through that and we listen to news and all the other things. If someone has a puberty ceremony, we will stand on a bicycle and ride and that's how we play the music.[30] (Kumaran)

For another interviewee, memories of Sri Lanka were about the Tamil language as much as the war:

> My memories of Sri Lanka are about the culture and the food, the relatives around you and you can speak your own language because it's your mother tongue so no matter what it's your mother tongue and you always feel better but of course the place is also traumatic because of the civil war in Sri Lanka. It traumatised everyone.[31] (Rajiv).

Indeed, for several interviewees, their memories of resettlement revealed passionate views about their 'mother tongue', as another interviewee also stated, 'I'm a firm believer in keeping your mother tongue.'[32] The common pragmatic imperative in the Tamil language among interviewees was clear: it was visible, clear in meaning, easily expressed and felt, without interfering in other aspects of life.[33] Many interviewees recognised that their conscious engagement with language and religion in their resettlement was fluid, changing and a generally positive affirmation of the older generation's active efforts to maintain continuities of homeland values in resettlement.[34] Even though interviewees left Sri Lanka at a young age and did not return, they were raised in settings that referenced an imagined Tamil homeland – ideologically, materially and effectively each day.[35] They were socialised directly and indirectly into cultural fields that were disjointed and fragmented and were part of the processes that sought to resolve them.[36] The flow of everyday communications that constructed cultural memories in diasporic contexts, then, pointed to another important point: the '*locatedness* of engagements with memories on the move.'[37] That is, cultural memories that 'travelled' across borders, thus, transcended nation-state boundaries and instantiated

[30] Interview with Kumaran. Melbourne, September 10, 2015.
[31] Interview with Rajiv. Sydney, December 11, 2015.
[32] Interview with Jeivan. Melbourne, October 17, 2016.
[33] Herbert J. Gans, 'Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1 (1979), 9.
[34] Jacob Pandian, *Caste, Nationalism and Ethnicity: An Interpretation of Tamil Cultural History and Social Order* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1987), 1-18.
[35] Peggy Levitt, 'Roots and Routes: Understanding the Lives of Second Generation Transnationally,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 35, No. 7 (2009), 1225-1242.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Radstone, 'What Is This Place?,' 111.

locally, in a specific time and place.[38] Focusing on the precisions of local 'events' or activities, and relations between events can help to engage cultural memories that are hybridised, complex and multiform.[39]

In this chapter conceptions of cultural memory are used to examine constructions of home that enable us to explore and assess the 'locatedness' of memories on the move, in diaspora settings. Thus, I locate constructions of home within poststructuralist perspectives that move away from home as a fixed site, towards stressing the role of movement in constructions of home.[40] The emphasis on 'routes' instead of 'roots' remains a key demonstration of this shift.[41] For young forced migrant people, a sense of home is situated within stories of movement across their ancestral homeland and resettlement homeland, within different and often competing generational, ideological and moral reference points, including those of their parents and grandparents, and within their personal conceptions about home.[42] Their aspirations and constructions of home are tied to negotiating the older generation's concepts of their ancestral homes and creating their own set of complex practices in which they strike a balance, albeit tenuous, that give meaning to their changing lives.[43] In the following sections of the chapter, I use cultural memory to examine how interviewees constructed a sense of home as they resettled in Australia. The examples bring to light the ways in which cultural memories in resettlement became increasingly complex and ongoing. This also revealed how young Tamil people strategically positioned themselves within their wider Tamil and Australian communities in order to belong.

Tamil Language and Hindu Practices as Cultural Memory: Constructing Home in Exile

In Sri Lanka, the Tamil language and Hindu religion were unique to Tamil people, thus becoming focal points for persecution against them.[44] The act of both 'purifying' Tamil and maintaining its status as the main language in Tamil areas of the North and East was

[38] Ibid., 117.
[39] Ibid., 118.
[40] Sara Ahmed et al., eds., *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (Oxford: Berg, 2003); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993); James Clifford, 'Travelling Cultures,' in *Cultural Studies*, eds., Lawrence Grossberg et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 96-116.
[41] Levitt, 'Roots and Routes,' 1225-1242.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Robert N. Kearney, 'Language and the Rise of Tamil Separatism in Sri Lanka,' *Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 5 (1978), 521-534.

recognised as vital to the community's ideological and psychological makeup.[45] Indeed, the community is named after its language that further illustrates this point. The Hindu religion is equally important to historical understandings of Tamil survival in Sri Lanka, for example, Tamil scholars such as Arumuka Navalar famously revived Hindu traditions that had been weakened under three centuries of European colonisation. This was further evident in armed conflict when displacement disrupted people's temple visits that emerged in childhood memories of lost connections to their *ur* (village).[46] The freedom to learn and practice Hinduism were also crucially symbolic to Tamil ways of life in diaspora, for example through the distribution of diaspora Tamil Hindu magazines, such as 'Kalasam' that reconnected young people to the homeland.[47]

In E. Valentine Daniel's extensive ethnographic study of Tamils, *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way*, *ur* is a spatial term that is person-centric.[48] It can translate to the English word *home* (place-based home), or one's *real* home, that is, 'the place whose soil is most compatible with oneself and one's ancestors'.[49] The *ur*, I suggest, that goes beyond person-centric concepts of the home also represented cultural memories of Tamilness. For Tamils, regardless of where they live in the world, I suggest that their *ur* also relates to cultural memory, for it is the process by which one actively preserves the cultural values of one's ancestors. The *ur*, as not only a place and space but as identity construction, is the imagined homeland for maintaining distinct Tamil practices, such as Hindu rituals and freely practising the Tamil language, as well as maintaining social order through caste conscious interactions.[50] For Tamil refugees, as Sharika Thiranagama observed, *ur* is a frequently used

[45] Suresh A. Canagarajah, 'Dilemmas in Planning English/Vernacular Relations in Post-Colonial Communities,' *Journal of Sociolinguistics* Vol. 9, No. 3 (2005), 418-447.
[46] Sharika Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 161.
[47] Kalasam, published in the UK, contained a children's section in the form of a pull out, 'sirruvar kalasam' including short stories, competition entries, children's drawings, as well as 'Ulaga Neethi' (World Justice). The sections have answers to questions that young Tamils might have that their parents might not be able to answer, such as 'why do Hindus have so many gods?' and 'why do hindus worship lord ganesha? Why first as well?' Usually sections are in Tamil and English but more often in English. The intention was for children to pull them out, save them and eventually bind them into a booklet. '[I]t is our desire to increase the number of pages in children section from 8 to 12. This depends on the enthusiasm the children show. In this special issue we have increased the number of pages to 12. We wish to know the views of children and parents on this matter'. Kalasam, 'Siruvvar Kalasam,' Aadi-Aani-Puradathi. Ilford: Kalasam, 1996, 17.
[48] E. Valentine Daniel, *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 67.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Thanges Paramsothy, 'Caste within the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora: *Ur* Associations and Territorial Belonging,' *Anthropology Matters* Vol. 18, No. 1 (2018), 1-23.

Tamil word, for it evoked nostalgic connections and shifts in their cognitive and contextual spatial orientation.[51]

In diaspora contexts, Tamil people recreated a sense of *ur*, both in private and public realms of exile life, such as through *ur* associations.[52] For the younger generation however, *ur* is less tied to person-centric concepts of home and moved towards more communal understandings of belonging to a Tamil community, as one interviewee stated, 'I'm Tamil-Australian, that's how I identify myself.'[53] Thus, while they identified the significance of maintaining some aspects of home such as practising religion and language, other aspects such as caste were less significant to them:

> I don't think the younger generation really cared [about caste]. That's one of those things that's not good about our culture, but it's there. It's part of the culture. I didn't come across it.[54] (Jason)

Based on the interviews, it was clear that memories of resettlement were not only social but cultural. Writing from the context of second-generation Tamils living in Denmark, Marianne Fibiger called this process of weeding out elements that seemed contradictory to their lives as a 're-traditionalisation' process because they do not reject cultural memory, but their relation to tradition changes.[55] Thus, negotiations of Tamilness become contested mainly among the younger generation.[56] One interviewee touched upon the difficulties of re-traditionalising when he volunteered at a Tamil political organisation and questioned its engagement strategies with Australian society:

> Their challenge was to try to engage the Australian community and so I went to some of these meetings and I suggested, have you engaged with the Australian community? And you need to do things at their level so Australian people are going to participate. You can't keep having Tamil functions in Tamil because you're so proud of your language and not use any English.[57] (Mathan)

[51] Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House*, 151-152.
[52] Paramsothy, 'Caste within the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora,' 1-23.
[53] Interview with Jason. Melbourne, September 12, 2016.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Marianne Q. Fibiger, 'Young Hindus in Denmark and their Relationship to Tradition and Collective Memory,' *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration* Vol. 5, No. 2 (2010), 27.
[56] Fibiger, 'Young Hindus in Denmark,' 24-32.
[57] Interview with Mathan, Sydney, June 12, 2016.

This quote underlined that while being part of a Tamil community through engaging in Tamil political organisations was important, using the Tamil language at public events was recognised as weakening political outcomes that were tied to their Tamil background – linked to history, religion and language. That is, re-traditionalisation processes of engaging the Australian community were viewed as necessary to enhance the Tamil background and cultural memory that was threatened by civil war. Thus, connections to Australian society were viewed as *useful* to advancing the Tamil plight in Sri Lanka and became part of Tamil identity construction in resettlement. This also highlighted intergenerational and gender dimensions of Tamil organisational spaces that became sources of tension for young people:

> It was very much a paternal system. The older uncles did what they wanted to without real rhyme or reason.[58] (Mathan)

In these interview excerpts, practices of re-traditionalisation that involved multiple negotiations, with the older generation and Australian society, for instance, were expressed through personal strategies and thought-processes that justified actions of resistance to the social norms. However, the resistance was achieved in ways that did not reject the Tamil identity; rather it changed its meanings to suit interviewees' constructions of a home in a new land. For example, some interviewees stressed the importance of the Tamil language to their lives. The Tamil language was a functional aspect of everyday life that enabled young Tamil people to connect with family, friends and relatives. Most of the interviewees further recognised the significance of Tamil language practice to maintaining their Tamil heritage, as one interviewee stated, 'it's how we work, who we are…it's hard to explain.'[59] At the same time, they rejected the institutionalisation of the Tamil language through TLS that they described as being a 'waste of time'.[60] Similar thought processes accompanied interviewees' experiences of visiting the Hindu temple – an activity that was described as being crucial to their Tamil identity and yet, remained a contentious site:

> I understand the ritual thing that's involved in being a Tamil Hindu. There is over doing it when I have to go to the temple for six hours and stand there watching tens of litres of milk that's just come out of a cow that's been processed, transported hundreds of kilometres, sat in

[58] Ibid.
[59] Interview with Sebanesan. Sydney, May 20, 2016.
[60] Ibid.

> a shop, bought, opened and poured straight down the drain. It shits me, it really annoyed me![61] (Praveen)

At the same time, interviewees continued visiting the temple as they were growing up in Australia and focused their attention on other aspects, such as socialising with friends that reaffirmed their desires to be around other Tamils, as another interviewee explained:

> Temple was more for socialising for me growing up with a lot of other friends. We were going to the Murugan temple. I think I would just walk into the temple with my parents and pretty much just walk out so I've never been a religious person. It was more for socialising. It was important to be around people who speak Tamil.[62] (Suthan)

These are examples of how young Tamils who resettled in Australia constructed a sense of home by remaining connected to their Tamil ways of life thus preserving cultural memory, while simultaneously changing the meanings contained in that memory. By identifying the significance of Tamil language and religion that were crucial to their everyday lives in exile, interviewees were able to craft their re-traditionalisation of Tamil activities to construct a sense of home. In other words, the reinvention of cultural memory was a combination of a critique of the older generation's relation to traditions that were carried over from the homeland and an adaptation of cultural memory within their new setting.[63]

Personalising Cultural Memory: Resisting the Institutionalisation of Tamil Culture

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Tamil diaspora invested financial and cultural resources in institutionalising Tamil activities for the next generation. The most prominent of these was TLS. Out of the thirty-six interviewees of this study, twenty people had attended TLS, three had completed the school, and one took 'Tamil Continuers' as a subject in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). In addition to teaching Tamil language skills, TLS aimed to teach ethnolinguistic Tamil values such as respect for elders, obedience and discipline, thus becoming symbolic sites of Tamil cultural memory.[64] In Australia, Sri Lankan TLS began in the 1980s and operated every Saturday for two to four hours across

[61] Interview with Praveen. Melbourne, August 9, 2016.
[62] Interview with Suthan. Sydney, March 12, 2016.
[63] Fibiger, 'Young Hindus in Denmark,' 27.
[64] Giuseppe Burgio, 'When Interculturality faces a Diaspora. The Transnational Tamil Identity,' *Encyclopaedia Journal of Phenomenology and Education* Vol.2, No.44 (2016), 112.

metropolitan cities in mainstream schools.[65] TLS actively represented spaces that had been designed specifically for younger Tamils to practice *being* Tamil by learning the Tamil language in a monitored environment. Ultimately, TLS exemplified what Assmann defined as cultural memory – where practices specific to a group are communicated to the next generation thus maintaining collective memory regardless of place and space.[66] The institutionalisation of Tamil language then was central to the Tamil diaspora community's cultural memory and their construction of home in a new setting.

Interviewees remembered how their parents had enrolled them in TLS with the same effortless direction as they did when they were enrolled in mainstream school. Thus, the Tamil language was identified by interviewees as being not only an important identity marker for their parents but for the wider Tamil community. For two interviewees, attending TLS was a family exercise that reinforced TLS as a normative space of growing up in exile as Tamils:

> We went with our extended family. They were second cousins. We all went together, and it was just down the road and my mum and my grandfather were one of the teachers.[67] (Mathan)

For this interviewee, memories of attending TLS were located within family experiences of resettlement in which he used the language to highlight the disengagement of his parents with their new society:

> I think my parents are really conservative and when they came here, they only really associated with other Tamil people even though we were one of the first families to come and we sponsored a lot of other families. But we only associated with other Tamils, so my parents had no non-Tamil friends. Zero, except our neighbours who were Greek.[68] (Mathan)

Consequently, the purpose of learning Tamil became entwined within generational gaps in which the older generation had failed to argue for the need to institutionalise Tamil language convincingly:

[65] The growth in numbers is partly due to growing numbers of student enrolments and educational demands, including greater attention on students taking 'Tamil continuers' as a subject in their year 12 final school exams. Perera, 'Talking Tamil,' 174.
[66] Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 105.
[67] Interview with Mathan, Sydney, June 12, 2016.
[68] Ibid.

> I think that's probably one of the downsides in that it's very authoritarian and nothing was really explained why.[69] (Mathan)

The unachieved desire to understand the significance of learning Tamil in resettlement in formal spaces had real consequences for student retention, for soon after enrolling in TLS several interviewees described that they felt disengaged to it. Unable to conform to unstructured teaching styles and unconvinced by the broader purpose of the institution, interviewees felt an emotional distance to TLS:

> I went for two years. I hated it. I didn't like it. It was a waste of time.[70] (Sebanesan)

> There were more Sinhalese people than Tamil people [where I grew up in Colombo]. Because of that when I started Tamil school, I was put into a class with the really young kids who were in year 1 or 2 from public school, so you just didn't want to go.[71] (Kiran)

> We just didn't learn anything here. Honestly, we spent most of our time sitting in the corner pulling out ears and doing sit ups.[72] I learnt nothing in Tamil school. My mum just told my grandpa they don't want to come so they're not going.[73] (Praveen)

The above sentiments showed that interviewees had resisted the institutionalisation of Tamil language learning and consequently stopped attending weekly classes. This was due to a range of reasons including learning with younger students and unconventional teaching styles. Interviewees questioned *why* and *how* the institutionalisation of Tamil language would contribute to their resettlement and to a cultural memory that was tied to a homeland that they could not return. Despite questioning TLS as an institution, some interviewees drew on the unintended aims of TLS, such as fostering a sense of community, particularly in their status as newly arrived students. For example, one interviewee located TLS as a transitioning space into her new surroundings, one where she socialised with other young Tamils, albeit through fractured social relationships:

> I felt more confident in Tamil school compared to the regular school up to some time and afterwards I felt less confident there as well. I think with my brothers they kind of didn't want to do it because they were quite young as well, so it was easier for them maybe to adapt

[69] Ibid.
[70] Interview with Sebanesan. Sydney, May 20, 2016.
[71] Interview with Kiran. Sydney, January 10, 2016.
[72] This form of punishment, known as *Thoppukaranam* in Tamil, requires the individual to hold his/her ears with hands while squatting. It holds ancient religious significance and occurs when devotees pray for forgiveness.
[73] Interview with Praveen. Melbourne, August 9, 2016.

> whereas I grew up in Sri Lanka until I was about 10 or 11, so it was a bit harder for me to adapt.[74] (Hereni)

This interviewee did not completely reject TLS as a cultural institution. Instead, TLS was used to demarcate the challenges of resettlement, whereby the interviewee 'felt more confident in Tamil school' than a mainstream school. However, the social interactions within TLS eventually evened out across the two school experiences, thus reinforcing the insignificance of it for 'adapting' into the new environment. Furthermore, some interviewees constructed TLS less as 'cultural' memory and more as a 'political' memory as it had enabled social interactions among young forced migrants who had witnessed civil war and felt determined to advance the Tamil plight from Australia. For example, one interviewee linked TLS to establishing strong friendships with other Tamil students and discovered that they shared common grievances through personal stories of war and political organising:

> I had a good circle of friends. Once we started Tamil school I met a few good friends who wanted to give something back home so I think it was because we wanted a better place but then at that time it was more about giving back…even me I didn't fully understand what was happening at the time. Only after I came here, they attacked the international airport, so it was a big thing for people, but my understanding was very limited. It was big change in terms of political and now looking back I didn't really understand it. I wasn't able to take all that in because my understanding of the purpose of the war was very limited.[75] (Suthan)

It is important to note that these social interactions occurred outside formal learning spaces of the classroom, such as during break times, as well as before and after classes. For this interviewee, TLS had provided a sense of familiarity and continuity in unfamiliar and discontinuous spaces of the resettlement setting.[76] The TLS space reproduced a sense of home that was linked to his Tamil identity which contained a strong political element to it. While his understanding of the war was 'very limited', what emerged were the diasporic connections that were committed to the Tamil plight in Sri Lanka.[77] His location in Australia, in a 'better place', did not deter the collective determination to 'give something back home':

[74] Interview with Hereni. Sydney, September 12, 2016.
[75] Interview with Suthan. Sydney, March 12, 2016.
[76] Monika Hess, and Benedikt Korf, 'Tamil Diaspora and the Political Spaces of Second-Generation Activism in Switzerland,' *Global Networks* Vol. 14, No. 4 (2014), 419-437.
[77] Peggy Levitt and Nina G. Schiller, 'Conceptualizing simultaneity: a transnational social field perspective on society,' *International Migration Review* Vol. 38, No. 3 (2004), 1002-39.

> We started helping Tamil Youth Organisation (TYO), Tamil Resource Centre (TRC). There were people who came before me who just wanted to do something, get involved. I was able to get to know organisations and meet new people. I think going to Tamil school, meeting those new friends and then from there all that started.[78] (Suthan)

Most TLS's had engendered a clear set of values to preserve a specific cultural memory that tended to be distant from the politics of being Tamils from Sri Lanka.[79] However, some community leaders who were responsible for institutionalising Tamil culture in diaspora contexts had been criticised for being caricatures of 'violent [Tamil] terrorists' and attempted to ensure continued sponsorship of the Tamil liberation struggle.[80] To be sure, several Tamil organisations in Australia that promoted 'Tamilness' were seen to be influenced by the LTTE.[81] For example, in 1997 a new TLS was founded in Western Sydney under the directive of the Tamil Coordinating Committee (TCC) which aligned itself with the LTTE. This was evident when students attending the school had participated in several Tamil community programs, including the LTTE commemorative events that exposed students to the political significance of Tamil – as a language and identity tied to persecution and the Tamil liberation struggle.[82] While the cultivation of politicising Tamil language was evident in some TLSs, most of these institutions distanced themselves from political affiliations.[83] One interviewee confirmed this when she said:

> They were more just into speaking Tamil and things like that. I found that Tamil schools tended to stay away from the political side of things.[84] (Janeeta)

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[78] Interview with Suthan. Sydney, March 12, 2016.

[79] This was not the case across all diaspora contexts. For example, in Switzerland TLSs distributed history books that contained concise information about the history of Tamils in Tamil Eelam in order to explain the current situation. The books called on young diaspora Tamils to 'recognise that the most important aim in our lives as well as any human life is the pursuit of freedom'. It was a compilation of historical facts about Eelam Tamils, persecution against Tamils by Sri Lankan Government injustices and the vital role of young people in the fight for freedom particularly in diaspora contexts. Student Organisation of Liberation Tigers (Swiss Branch), 'Tamil Children March towards Tamil Eelam,' Siva Printing Services (1995), 3.

[80] Sonia N. Das, 'Between Convergence and Divergence: Reformatting Language Purism in the Montreal Tamil Diasporas,' *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* Vol. 18, No. 1 (2008), 10-11.

[81] Interview with Praba, a former TLS principal. Sydney, May 14, 2016. The interviewee revealed that the influence of LTTE could be seen in several Tamil organisations and not only TLS. However, this did not prevent Tamils from participating in cultural and linguistic activities which had the potential to nurture their cultural heritage in the next generation.

[82] Students at the TLS would perform at LTTE commemorative events, in which students recreated war scenes however the performances varied from year to year. Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Interview with Janeeta. Sydney, September 18, 2016.

Despite the efforts of community leaders to suppress the politics of Tamil language learning, the quotes above indicated that TLS was a significant source of political mobilisation among some young Tamils, 'meeting those new friends and then from there, all that started.' What emerged was the complex formation of cultural memory by young Tamils who were subjected to more than the official transmission of Tamil language.[85] Contrary to the intentions of the TLS as preserving Tamil culture, the institution acted as the bridging space for young Tamils who carried with them stories of war in their resettlement. The official transmission of Tamil language kept the reference to Tamil culture at the more general level of cultural memory.[86] The interviewees' simultaneous experiences of resisting the institutionalisation of Tamil language and embracing its alternative meanings constructed a sense of home that showed how cultural memory was changing in relation to the individual and their circumstances.

Interviewees had inserted political dimensions into Tamil culture that reflected their historical position as *forced* migrants who had fled Sri Lanka's civil war. In doing so, their subjectivities revealed a curiosity about the borders that continued to exist in cultural institutions and were re-erected as they became part of new memory-communities.[87] In a similar way to experiences in TLS, Hindu temples imbued meanings for interviewees that showed how they re-traditionalised religious traditions by inserting the political. The relationship between politics and religion in exile has led to an intense rivalry between secular and Hindu Tamil organisations, and especially during the final stages of Sri Lanka's civil war. At a protest in early 2009, Tamil political organisations approached the Sydney Murugan temple to distribute leaflets about an upcoming protest to which they were refused permission by temple committee members who had deemed the act against the temple's

[85] Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'Transnational Childhood and Adolescence: Mobilising Sahrawi Identity and Politics Across Time and Space,' *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 36, No. 5 (2012), 875-895.
[86] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,' *New German Critique* No. 65 (1995), 125-133.
[87] Aleida Assmann, 'Transnational Memories,' *European Review* Vol. 22, No. 4 (2014), 546-556.

values.[88] Protestors resumed their efforts outside the temple on the roadside and later continued their activist work at another Hindu temple.[89]

What was clear during these periods was that there were groups of Tamils whose views of religion and politics contained the same meanings projected in the homeland: that the oppressed Tamil identity in Sri Lanka included the oppression of its associated religions. Tamil protestors challenged temples as Tamil cultural institutions by questioning the values of Tamils who prioritised religion over political action, as one interviewee recalled:

> In my head it's always like you weren't there at the protests. I hated it, I hated the idea of going [to the temple], no one even understood why they were going to certain things, doing rituals. I would ask her [mother] and she'd be like 'I don't know'. Even now, the other day I asked her about something and she's like I don't know…are you joking? So, I go to the temple now because the architecture is beautiful, and I understand it's a part of my identity and culture, so I go to be part of that.[90] (Bhoomi)

Here, the preservation of cultural memory was tied to belonging to a Tamil Hindu community while remaining critical of its meanings and influences on advancing political agendas, as this interviewee stated, 'you weren't there at the protests'. That diaspora Tamils who were committed to the Tamil plight adopted non-traditional forms of religiosity that involved new forms of spirituality is a common observation by scholars.[91] However, this study shows that interviewees' political belonging was being reconstructed by a new generation of young Tamils whose cultural memory was being transformed.[92] This did not mean that there was a disregard for what constituted 'real' Hindu religion and religious actions but does require recognising that the resulting distinctions were not inherent properties of the religion.[93] Thus,

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[88] Interestingly, it was in 2009 that the Sydney Murugan Temple constitution made its exclusions legally binding and also banned alcoholic drinks, drugs, smoking, non-vegetarian foods, gambling, and 'activities purporting to be of political context and/or political implications' that may be considered inconsistent with the 'noble objects' of the temple. Sydney Murugan Temple, 'Constitution of the Saiva Manram.' 2009, 9-10.

[89] Tamil Justice, 'Youth have moved to Durgai Amman Hindu Temple near Lidcombe.' January 31, 2009. Accessed on May 16, 2018. https://tamiljustice.wordpress.com/2009/01/31/youth-have-moved-to-durgain-aman-temple-near-lidcombe/

[90] Interview with Bhoomi. Sydney, January 23, 2017.

[91] Amarnath Amarasingam, 'Religion, Politics, and Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka and the Diaspora,' in *Religious Radicalisation and Securitisation in Canada and Beyond*, eds., Paul Bramadat and Lorne Dawson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 201-228.

[92] Amarnath Amarasingam, 'The Cultural, the Nominal, and the Secular: The Social Reality of Religious Identity Among Sri Lankan Tamil Youth in Canada,' in *Atheist Identities-Spaces and Social Contexts*, eds., Lori G. Beaman, and Steven Tomlins (Cham: Springer, 2015), 69-85.

[93] Ibid.

religious sites as cultural memories were not only about the preservation of Tamil Hindu identities in exile but *why* certain memories had been prioritised over others and under what political conditions. In doing so, the simultaneous processes of remembering and forgetting, ignoring and marginalising remained highly political, and were mobilised by certain sections of the community to illuminate their vision about the homeland and their reconstruction of a sense of a home in exile.[94]

Locating Refugeeness in Hindu Practices

The question remains: why did some interviewees engage Hindu religious spaces consistently in their resettlement? Because religion constituted not only a cultural memory to an imagined Tamil homeland but held a special significance at a point in time in people's forced migration experiences when belonging to a new society seemed impossible. For one interviewee, Thurga, ritualistic practices of going to the temple on Fridays, attending festivities and praying at home every day, were central to her experiences of coping with the anxieties of being separated from her mother and struggling to 'fit in' to her new school and surroundings.[95] Thurga was born in Jaffna and arrived in Australia as an unaccompanied refugee minor in 1990 at the age of fourteen. She lived with her uncle's family in Melbourne until she was reunited with her mother and siblings five years later. She had turned to religion to help her maintain a positive image of her new home in her letters of correspondence with her mother who remained in Sri Lanka:

> I would always pray inside for everything to turn out good. I think that has helped me a lot, my belief. My faith in god has helped because I couldn't really tell my mum about my troubles and make her feel sad either.[96] (Thurga)

When describing the hardships of resettlement, Thurga repeatedly stated, 'I would pray.' While she briefly mentioned her religious experiences in Sri Lanka as an everyday part of life, these sharply contrasted to the urgency and description of practising religion in her resettlement. Thus, practising religion during her younger years was not so much a continuation of cultural values from the homeland.

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[94] Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies,' 83-99; Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'Refugee and Diaspora Memories,'685.

[95] For example, Elżbieta M. Goździak, 'Spiritual Emergency Room: The Role of Spirituality and Religion in the Resettlement of Kosovar Albanians,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 15, No. 2 (2002), 136-152.

[96] Interview with Thurga. Melbourne, July 13, 2016. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.

Rather, practising religion was necessary to manage the traumas of her forced migration experience that gave her a sense of stability, safety and hope. Thurga's stories revealed her sense of agency when she recreated a sense of home through attachments to metaphysical beings that she used to relay her feelings, desires and hopes for the future. Thus, the Hindu temple she visited in Melbourne symbolised her strength – not only hers but the whole Tamil Hindu community's resilience:

> I would go with them to the temple, my uncle and them would go to the temple very regularly. It was built in 1994 when they had the *kumbabishekam* (temple synergising ceremony). Before that it was in a tent inside a warehouse and they would do the pooja there. Every Friday we would go to the prayer, we would all make some food and share that because during those days there was no-where else that people could meet as a group. It is not like now. Back then I used to fast as well for *Kanthashasti, Navarathiri* (religious festivals), and because of that I think I've come this far in life, it gave me self-control through the belief in god. (Thurga)

The inescapability of civil war that shaped Thurga's resettlement produced a sense of belonging to religious beliefs and practices that were shared by the Hindu community but were equally private:

> I was alone when growing up. I'm very much a believer in god. I go to the temple, I fast, even when I go to school I'd fast. I grew in our culture in these ways. I followed it because I didn't want to go off track once I had come over here. My mum had struggled to bring me up and I didn't want to stray off track. I prayed to god and I have created my own path. I didn't think to look at other people or follow what others did. I always believed by faith in god would take me in the right paths. Sometimes I would cry because I wouldn't know what to do. I wouldn't be able to tell which is the right path because I came at such a young age you know. Now I don't feel the pain but back then it was hard, and I could never cry in front of others either. (Thurga)

Despite highlighting how 'far in life' she had come, Thurga's memories of religion emphasised how the specific experience of fleeing civil war intertwined with her experiences of religion while she was growing up in Melbourne. Moreover, it highlighted the significant implications of forcibly migrating during transitional life stages that stand for a different form of connection to a transnational Tamil identity, one where practising faith replaced the stability and predictability of feeling safe and being guided by adults. In these contexts of disruption in Sri Lanka and unfamiliarity of Australia, the interviewee is estranged in the sense of having encountered something familiar yet still feeling threatened, an instance of

what cultural theorist Homi Bhabha referred to as the dismal state of the postmodern sense of belongingness and 'home'.[97] That is, the sensation of unhomeliness, which captures the state of experiencing 'in-between' spaces that reinforced the sense of *not* belonging, that your home is not yours, as Bhabha puts it:

> In that displacement the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.[98]

The 'unhomely' experience of religious connections that appeared in Thurga's interviews, indeed other interviewees and particularly those who had faced extreme hardships, revealed the 'holes' in society within their social locations as young forced migrants. Their memories of religion appeared in life stories of displacement – as shelter from the pain of loss and separation from the homeland. It is not so much that their memories highlighted the lack of 'home'. Rather, the emergence of religion in recollections of hardship reinforced the vision of the divided and disoriented world in which the private and public became a part of each other.[99] The 'unhomely', as Bhabha posits, is the result of repression, in the sense that the blurring of private and public boundaries is beyond one's control but not beyond accommodation.[100]

Just like Bhabha's articulation of the unhomely, Thurga's resettlement experiences picked up on the complexities of reconstructing home in exile. In recalling acts of praying at home, visiting the Hindu temple, and observing Hindu rituals, Thurga constructed highly symbolic cultural memories of religion at the interstices of national borders and the politics of being a young Tamil refugee. Her specific experiences of religion can be extracted to highlight the multiple layers of references to religion as a key formation of transnational cultural memories: to the ravages of civil war in Sri Lanka, to the unfamiliar territory of Australia, to the nexus between exile and Tamil culture, and the personal memories and movement between different cultural spaces that represented ongoing movements in resettlement. What emerged were different cultural-historical contexts across lands that young Tamil forced migrants navigated. Moreover, the reference to religion as being key to reconstructing a sense

[97] Homi Bhabha, 'The World and the Home,' *Social Text* No. 31 (1992), 141-153.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 150.
[100] Ibid.

of home in resettlement revealed how cultural memory is more complex through different social and political positionings.

Re-traditionalising Tamil Culture

Although some interviewees resisted *how* the older Tamil generation had institutionalised Tamil language and Hinduism, the institutional preservation of cultural memory was itself not controversial. By contrast, language and religious practices were more problematic for young Tamils in their everyday lives as they engaged in a new society. Interviewees described frequently arguing with their parents about the Tamil culture and its limitations for young people, particularly for Tamil girls. Here, I focus on the family house – a private Tamil space for constructing home that fostered the continuation of Tamil culture through mundane activities such as eating traditional foods with one's hands, listening to Tamil radio, and watching Tamil films.[101] The house, however, was more than just a physical space that allowed interviewees to practise being Tamil; it was also a place where one felt a sense of safety and belonging without fear of being killed or subjected to internal displacement or discrimination, thus becoming a place where one felt at home.[102]

Furthermore, interviewees revealed how the family house also produced gendered constructions of Tamil culture. In comparison to Tamil women, Tamil men had recalled fewer difficulties negotiating cultural barriers in their everyday lives that was a result of their socialising outside of school hours and on weekends. The lingering asymmetrical time pattern in the Tamil house – where young girls were expected to spend more time at home than boys – reinforced patriarchies within Tamil cultural values.[103] Gendered constructions of a Tamil consciousness are emplaced where Tamil communities live; cultural conventions of *adakkam* (modesty) and *odukkam* (poise) were critical to preserving cultural memory in resettlement.[104] These conventions remained at the core of cultural memories that authenticated Tamil women as guarantors of the purity of the Tamil identity, even while the body is moving through time and space.[105] Tensions about gendered cultural conventions

[101] Amarnath Amarasingam, 'Religion and Ethnicity among Sri Lankan Tamil Youth in Ontario,' *Canadian Ethnic Studies* Vol.40, No.2 (2008), 149-169.
[102] Karen F. Olwig, 'Narratives of the Children Left Behind: Home and Identity in Globalised Caribbean Families,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 25, No. 2 (1999), 267-284.
[103] Neloufer de Mel., *Women and the nation's narrative: gender and nationalism in twentieth century Sri Lanka* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2001), 217.
[104] C.S. Lakshmi, 'Bodies Called Women: Some thoughts on Gender, Ethnicity and Nation,' *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 32, No. 46 (1997), 2953.
[105] Ibid.

were often exacerbated at stages in the interviewee's life when she had gained confidence and stability and desired socialising outside of school hours. For example, one interviewee, Bhoomi, rejected cultural conventions as a teenager and communicated her anger and frustrations at her parents:

> I was rejecting my identity and culture because of the strictness my parents had enforced on me and at high school…I kind of rejected the Tamils in my high school and I wanted to be with a very white crew and then fought the entire high school because I wasn't allowed to go to any of the sleep overs and that, so I would be crying the whole time…I would fight a lot, I wouldn't wear the *pottu* (dot placed on lower centre of forehead), I cut my hair a lot as soon as I could, as soon as I finished school I cut my hair because my dad wanted me to have really long hair.[106] (Bhoomi)

Here, competing cultural identities became entangled and dislocated in ways that challenged gendered Tamil traditions. Thus, Bhoomi's resistance to wearing the *pottu* and cutting her hair short became symbolic of her distance to Tamilness. However, for Bhoomi her connections to Tamil culture took new turns when she became politically active and returned to Sri Lanka in the early 2000s to assist injured the LTTE soldiers with her father:

> All the people that I knew but didn't really hang out with when I was younger because I was trying to be white, suddenly the community became really important to support the trauma of the war because my father was there during the war. That sort of started the integration back in the Tamil diaspora community in Australia. (Bhoomi)

She recalled a conversation with her friend that remained an important trigger for the transformation:

> I remember this distinct conversation I had with my friend who was white. We'd moved out of home and we were living together and I said something to her, 'I wish I was white' and she was so disgusted that I'd said that, 'I actually can't believe you just said that, that is such a terrible thing to say', and I was like 'but I do'. That stuck, sticks in my head because that was the year I went back to Sri Lanka, in the cease fire period and that was the start of a massive transformation for me and six years later no four years later when I went to Sri Lanka on my last trip I was a totally different person, my identity, my culture, to the point now where I completely reject white culture and reject being white, I have no interest in being white, or

[106] Interview with Bhoomi. Melbourne, January 23, 2017. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.

> integrating into white Australia so I've completely gone around and being Tamil is the most important thing to me right now. (Bhoomi)

Bhoomi's constructions of home are closely tied to her sense of belonging to Tamilness – on her terms. These memories are located at the interstices of her 'wish' to be 'white', and her transformation – 'being Tamil is the most important thing to me right now'. Home and belonging, then, are not only tied to her present and future but the critical interludes of the past that have shaped her subjective views. Bhoomi reconnected to the Tamil community and embraced its culture, however this time she re-traditionalised Tamil culture to suit her feminist outlook and independence. This was evident when she described her wedding arrangements: she had a Hindu wedding and tying of the *thaali* (gold chain that signifies marriage) ceremony, however, decided against having a legal ceremony. The arrangements reflected how she reinforced Tamil cultural norms on the one hand and rejected Western norms on the other in striking contrast to her views of culture during her younger years:

> What does it mean to be wear *panjabis* [cultural outfit] and sarees and *pottus* and long hair and following culture and tradition? There are parts of it that I have rejected. We did a little *thaali* ceremony because neither of us believed in marriage. I find it really outrageous and controlling and all of that ownership of women but for my mum and dad it was too much to push them. I understand why it's important for them. It took us fifteen minutes. We went to the temple and we tied the *thaali*, we're not going to get legally married and my parents are fine with that so that was my compromise, how I wouldn't compromise my Tamil identity and still maintain my values which are very very highly feminist. (Bhoomi)

This negotiation of Tamil traditions offers a key example of the ways that Tamil women in the study re-traditionalised Tamil cultural norms. In the example above, the Hindu marriage ceremony is followed through to satisfy the parents because 'it's what's important to them'. By prioritising the values of parents, the interviewee reached a compromise between her Western feminist ideas and her parents' Hindu values. In this process of comprise, Bhoomi shifts towards re-traditionalising Tamil Hindu culture to show that religious memory was preserved but, on her terms, – in relation to her sense of self and parents' values. In this sense, Hindu temples across Australia comprised more than religious festivals and rituals.[107] They became storage units for memory that held different meanings for each person. At the

[107] Ethnic Minorities Action Group, 'Emerging Communities Emerging Needs' (Sydney: Ethnic Communities Council of NSW Inc., 1996).

broadest level, religious memories signified the continuation of a culture that created a sense of belonging and transcended history to remain valuable for the present, as Assmann argued:

> Memory enables us to live in groups and communities and living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory. This connection between memory and belonging is not only a matter of self-regulating...It is also a matter of political institution or fabrication. Both remembering and belonging have normative aspects. If you want to belong, you must remember.[108]

From this perspective, it is notable that Bhoomi echoed the views of other interviewees who highlighted the political nature of cultural institutions. However, these memories contained deeper implications, for example maintaining relationships with parents as indicated above. It is further notable that Bhoomi did not compromise her Tamil identity and still maintained a unique personal identity. However, it is also important to recognise that her decision to have a *thaali* ceremony that symbolised her marriage related to the textualisation of tradition that was seen in contrast to more fluid and unexplored aspects of tradition, 'what does it *mean*' to wear cultural outfits and have long hair? she asked. By highlighting her feminist Tamil identity, she gave a clue as to how cultural memory might imbue different meanings for the individual as they question the survival of Tamil culture in resettlement.

The Future of Tamil Culture is through the Family

Family memory lay at the heart of constructing home for interviewees who reflected on their personal and collective experiences of growing up in Australia as part of a Tamil community. Their future-oriented memories indicated that family as a site of Tamil culture and memory was significant. In comparison with the institutionalisation of cultural memory, social interactions among family were recognised as core strategies for maintaining Tamil culture, especially in order to communicate with parents who were not fluent speakers in the English language:

> My future girlfriend or partner – I would want to be with someone who can speak in Tamil. I think I would feel comfortable being with someone who can speak in Tamil. I think if you can speak Tamil you know the culture as well. It's a weird thought but if you know how to speak Tamil you understand the culture as well. It's how we work, who we are, it's hard to explain. You don't know everything, but you know about religion and culture. I would definitely want

[108] Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory,' in *Cultural Memories: The Geographical Point of View*, eds., Peter Meusburger et al. (London: Springer, 2011), 23.

> my kids to speak Tamil, but I wouldn't expect them to read or write but I would definitely want them to try and speak Tamil so that they would be able to speak to my parents who don't speak English.[109] (Sebanesan)

Often, these types of comments were followed with reflections about the current state of family interactions that foreshadowed the 'successful' continuity of Tamil language maintenance, for example by referencing the actions of children in the present:

> I've got a nephew who calls me *maama* [uncle-mother's brother], he's four years old. It comes down to how you're brought up, your parents' culture.[110] (Sebanesan)

Thus, expressing current and future intentions to cultivate Tamil language were closely tied to reconstructing a sense of home in dislocated spaces of resettlement, where the past needed to be maintained through language – as a way of preserving the Tamil identity and as a way of giving meaning to life, 'your parents' culture'. These generational reconstructions of language in resettlement, through social interactions and influenced by the Tamil language, demonstrated how family memory, as a communicative and cultural memory, was being transmitted across generations.[111] Interviewees frequently followed with comments about the challenges that lay ahead with these types of reflections and anticipations for the future, particularly concerning negotiating family relationships:

> I want to make sure that if I have kids that they can speak the language, they can understand it and this is where I'm like, how am I going to do this and be different to what happened with my family? How am I going to make sure that the cycle doesn't happen? Which is going to be quite interesting and challenging.[112] (Bhoomi)

In this sense, families served as a kind of 'switchboard' between individual and collective memory practices.[113] Family interactions intersected, fed and drew on negotiations of cultural memory, thus becoming memory paradigms in themselves.[114] Family memory emerged as a framework of communicative remembering (through social interactions, and family histories) that were translated into understandings about cultural memory. That is: culturally available

[109] Interview with Sebanesan. Sydney, May 20, 2016.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Astri Erll, 'Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies,' *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* Vol. 42, No. 3 (2011), 303-318.
[112] Interview with Bhoomi. Sydney, January 23, 2017.
[113] Erll, 'Locating Family,' 303-318.
[114] Ibid., 312.

narratives and images were refracted by family remembrance – as well as vice versa, family memories were translated into cultural memory.[115]

While interviewees did not necessarily identify themselves as being fluent in the Tamil language, they reinforced the necessity of their 'roots' to sustaining connections to a Tamil cultural identity. In expressing their desires to teach their future partners and children the language, they stressed the personal relevance of crafting a sense of belonging to their ancestral heritage that they would be cultivating themselves in the future. In doing so, they demonstrated how cultural memory worked in their forced migration life trajectories – by reconstructing the past in contemporary situations:

> I think it's important because they may not speak it but at least they understand it…My eldest who he doesn't speak it…there's words that he says, and we keep reminding him you've got to speak Tamil and I think he understands completely. We try our best and yeah in terms of values you know we try to pass on as much as we can, either wearing traditional clothes or going to a special occasion like a wedding, church, temple. They don't go to Tamil school at the moment because they're too young.[116] (Deven)

In the examples above, the projection of Tamil language as necessary to bridging gaps across generations appeared as an aspiration. However, the quote above also indicated the challenges of language maintenance that constituted Tamil identity making, an attempt which leads to a great amount of work on the part of parents – to 'keep reminding' their children 'you've got to speak Tamil'. As has already been discussed, the push and pull of Tamil activities and conventions while growing up in exile, the changing perspectives, are all connected to cultural memory.[117] However, as Agnes Heller argued cultural memory is more than the negotiation between value and interest, passion and calculation, past and future, it is also about a life with cultural memories and a life without them:

> Since civil society is not only the heterogenous mosaic of a variety of different, sometimes even colliding and hostile cultural memories, yet [it is] also a heterogenous mosaic of activities and group formations in no need of cultural memories, the choice is not as simple as it seems.[118]

[115] Ibid., 312.
[116] Interview with Devan. Sydney, January 15, 2016.
[117] Agnes Heller, 'Cultural Memory, Identity and Civil Society,' *International Politics and Society* Vol. 2 (2001), 143.
[118] Ibid.

If cultural memory is, essentially, identity constructing and identity maintaining, how will young Tamils who fled Sri Lanka construct themselves and their communal affiliations to a Tamil community in the future? There appears to be no definitive answer. We cannot remember ahead as Heller warned.[119] We can, however, revisit past cultural formations in the present to understand if communities can function without cultural memory, limited to 'short term future-oriented activities and to short term memory,' that is devoid of archive and institutions.[120]

Moving Beyond the Family: Transnational Cultural Memory and Tamil Films

One indication of how cultural memory might be played out in the future is by turning to the increasingly transnational or global Tamil identity that has been cultivated through Tamil films.[121] This regular home-building practice was not only important to enhancing family relations among interviewees but further showed that they connected to a global Tamil identity and community, thus evincing the *transnationalisation* of cultural memory.[122] The transnational in turn extends the concept of cultural memory which is situated within the realm of traditions, transmissions and transferences.[123] Transnational cultural memory refers to how memories break out of the 'container of the nation-state' due to global processes, such as the connective era of digital technologies, and new transnational actors and networks that are reshaping the global world from multiple directions.[124]

The hybridity, in-betweenness and fluidity that constituted the complexities of belonging to multiple cultures underline the importance of transnational cultural memory to young Tamil people's resettlement experiences as forced migrants. It is precisely by recalling how interviewees engaged with home-making practices that we can understand the negotiations, struggles and resilience that was involved in crafting belonging over their life course. For interviewees in this study, consuming Tamil films represented positive practises of constructing a sense of home in their resettlement. The act of watching Tamil films had provided interviewees with an amicable space in which 'family time' and 'Tamil language'

[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Selvaraj Velayutham, ed., *Tamil Cinema: The Cultural Politics of India's Other Film Industry* (London: Routledge, 2008).
[122] Radstone, 'What Place Is This?', 109-123.
[123] Aleida Assmann, 'Transnational Memories,' *European Review* Vol. 22, No. 4 (2014), 546-556.
[124]. Ibid.

intertwined in diasporic spaces that reproduced harmonious Tamil rhythms of social life.[125] In consuming Tamil films during their early resettlement periods, young Tamils had crafted novel Tamil spaces and a sense of home:

> Movies were one thing that kept the Tamil and culture in because when I was young, I used to watch it a lot with my parents. Movies is…it keeps the family together sort of thing as well. You get to watch it with your family otherwise you don't get to spend much time with your family and also the language as well, it keeps you tied to your language, so you don't forget it. I don't watch it as much as I watched it before, except at my parent's house. I liked all of Rajini's movies. I used to dress like him, a lot of his movies, also I used to like watching Vivek comedy, Vadivel stuff. We go to Tamil school every Saturday and we would go to the shop after that [to rent Tamil films].[126] (Jehan)

As this quote indicated, Tamil films became historical interpretations of boundedness and safety for Tamil families where the imagined worlds of a 'Tamil' homeland were preserved in the domesticated space of a new home. Moreover, the experience of watching Tamil films was situated within a global Tamil community that reflected a rich Tamil cultural history and the success of the South Indian Tamil film industry as India's second main film industry behind Bollywood.[127] By the 1990s, new and young actors entered the Tamil film industry, some of whom became key icons of Tamil culture such as Rajinikanth and Kamal Hassan, and their films perpetuated not only representations of new themes such as modernity and global consumerism, but as well the differences and nuances between what makes Tamil films *Tamil*. That is, 'the use of Tamil generated a symbolic, embodied and effective connection to a global 'Tamilness and Tamil identity'.[128] It was not so much the stories of films that were remembered by interviewees.[129] Rather, it was the symbolic actions of actors that young people had embodied as part of crafting a sense of belonging to a transnational Tamil culture:

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[125] Saulo B. Cwerner, 'The Times of Migration,' *Journal of Migration Studies* Vol. 27, No. 1 (2001), 17-30.
[126] Interview with Jehan. Melbourne, July 17, 2016.
[127] Velayutham, ed., *Tamil Cinema.*
[128] Ibid., 'Introduction,' 6.
[129] Interestingly, Tamils' experiences of watching Tamil films did not include memories of watching Tamil films about Tamils in Sri Lanka and more specifically the war which they escaped. The inclusion of war films may have resulted in different findings that speak to the complexities between Indian Tamil films, Sri Lankan Tamils, war and displacement. This absence however could be due to the overwhelming lack of clear depictions of Tamils from Sri Lanka in Indian Tamil films. Maya Ranganathan, and Selvaraj Valayutham, 'Imagining Eelam Tamils in Tamil Cinema,' *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* Vol. 26, No. 6 (2012), 871-881.

> Rajinikanth movies – he was my favourite at the time and my parents also liked him. We would watch his movies on VHS on the VCR so that was a weekly occurrence where we would go down to the spice shop and flick through the book and borrow it. We didn't have much money then so we would borrow one movie a week and sit down and watch it together. As a kid some of my friends used to tease me because I used to learn and say lines from the movies with other Sri Lankan Tamils and I think after a while I thought it was embarrassing but till about year three I didn't really care, I didn't think about it. I don't think I'd have this much Tamil if I hadn't watched them so movies were a big part of my life when I was growing up with Tamil I think because I wanted to understand the movies, but I had a basic understanding of Tamil, so the movies definitely helped push through to the next stage.[130] (Devan)

During these periods in the 1990s, Tamil films could be rented out at spice shops for a couple of dollars thus making them a popular choice of entertainment for Tamil families. The entertainment that movies provided created a natural and safe connection to Tamilness, as the interviewee above stated, 'it was a big part of my life when I was growing up.' It was not until the early 2000s that Tamil films began showing in cinemas in metropolitan cities across Australia when film marketers recognised the potential income from expanding local audiences and strategised for the cyclical downturns in audiences for popular Bollywood films.[131] In their late teenage years, interviewees had described going to watch Tamil films in cinemas. These were gendered acts that traced how and when transnational cultural acts were consumed, in which Tamil men described watching films more frequently than women due to their increased freedoms. Nevertheless, Tamil films became highly influential in the mediation of cultural flows in the diaspora context.[132] For Tamil people, Tamil films sustain a complex relationship between their native language, social environment and their cultural practices. As a cultural practice, Tamil films were embedded in the everyday praxis of identity, culture, homeland and resettlement that simultaneously demarcated and intensified ideals of consuming Tamil in non-Tamil spaces. Tamil films represented transnational cultural memories that constructed a cultural sanctuary in the lives of young Tamils, thus

[130] Interview with Devan. Sydney, January 15, 2016.
[131] Adrian Athique, 'Watching Indian movies in Australia,' *South Asian Popular Culture* Vol. 3, No.2 (2005), 121-122.
[132] Ranganathan and Velayutham, 'Imagining Eelam Tamils,' 871-881; Srilata Ravi, 'Tamil Identity and Diasporic Desire in a Kollywood Comedy: *Nala Damayanti* (2003),' *South Asian Popular Culture* Vol.6, No.1 (2008), 45-56; Chitra Sankaran and Shanthini Pillai, 'Transnational Tamil Television and Diasporic Imaginings,' *International Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol. 14, No. 3 (2011), 277-289.

becoming a spatial and temporal practice of language that was rendered safe and comforting. The humour, harmless repetition of actions and predictable film scripts became safe markers of Tamil belonging that provided motivation for interviewees to preserve Tamil cultural memory in unconscious ways.

Continuities of Tamil language through watching Tamil films, therefore, reflected the different ways that people explained their adolescent experiences of Tamil language in a new land, their sense of belonging and attachment to a global Tamilness, thus demonstrating what Clifford Geertz:

> The general strength of such primordial bonds, and the types of them that are important, differ from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time. But, for virtually every person, in every society, and almost at all time, some attachments seem to flow from a sense of natural, some would say spiritual, affinity than from social interaction.[133]

It was clear that the interviewees of the study had highlighted the 'natural' flow of interacting with Tamilness through Tamil films: as an assertion of belonging in and to an imagined global Tamil community, its people and heritage, thus affirming 'the home as a community of language, culture, and customs…[that] fends off exile, [and] fights to prevent its ravages.'[134] Through the process of watching Tamil films, the preservation of Tamil language revealed changing contemporary contexts in which interviewees were giving cultural memory a new relevance. In constructing a particular memory of the homeland, an attempt is made to control the future identity of a community.[135] In this sense, interviewees constructed a sense of home through watching Tamil films that represented the preservation of transnational memories of Tamil culture: first in the mode of the transnational circulation of South Indian Tamil films whose teachings acted as archival pillars for preserving a Tamil cultural identity, and second in the mode of actuality, whereby individuals expressed their interpretations and relevance of language dissemination in resettlement that suited their lives in a new setting.

Conclusion

In the chapter, I used the concept of cultural memory to explore how Tamils in this study reconstructed a sense of home in resettlement, by focusing on their experiences of language

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[133] Clifford Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution,' in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa,* ed., C. Geertz (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 109-110.
[134] Said, 'Reflections on Exile,' 173-86.
[135] Jordana Silverstein, *Anxious Histories: Narrating the Holocaust in Jewish Communities at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 154.

and religion. An important insight to be gained from using cultural memory is that home itself is culturally mediated and it is shaped by a variety of symbols, semiotic vehicles and devices.[136] The chapter explored how cultural memory was shaped by Tamils who resettled in Australia as young people, both about and in contradiction to their family, Tamil community and to the broader Australian society. The process of negotiating cultural memory was ongoing; while some interviewees viewed it as a hindrance during their early resettlement periods, they eventually developed ways to negotiate that hindrance, thus retaining its potential as a resource in their resettlement.[137]

Furthermore, the institutionalisation of Tamil culture was simultaneously resisted and embraced, but it was also evident that the meanings of places such as TLS and Hindu temples were changing. For example, this did not mean that the significance of Hindu temples was weakening, rather the resettlement experiences of interviewees suggested that new memory communities were challenging the memories of religion and culture that was attached to temple practices. Interviewees questioned Tamil symbols of culture towards creating their understandings of Tamil systems – as Tamils dislocated from the homeland, as people exposed to other cultural influences, as members of a minority community in the homeland and resettlement setting. In this sense, their responses to symbols of cultural boundaries can be described as negotiations of Tamil belonging that demarcated themselves and their peers – to themselves, to the wider Tamil community, to the broader Australian society.[138]

This does not mean that emotional attachments to a sense of home always conjured positive feelings of warmth and comfort, nor did it mean that home referred to specific places and territories. Indeed, in the chapter, home and, accordingly, to belong meant unravelling memories of migratory mobilities from different positionings, for example as refugees, young people, and women. The process of re-traditionalising Tamil culture indicated that some Tamil women were actively reconstructing their role in Tamil communities, for instance. From these perspectives, cultural memory was negotiated between personal and collective understandings of what it meant to maintain Tamil values over time and craft a sense of belonging through those values.

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[136] Jens Brockmeier, 'Remembering and Forgetting: Narrative as Cultural Memory,' *Culture and Psychology* Vol. 8, No. 1 (2002), 15-43.
[137] Fibiger, 'Young Tamils in Denmark,' 24-32.
[138] Celia McMichael et al., 'Negotiating Family, Navigating Resettlement: Family Connectedness amongst Refugee Youth with Refugee Backgrounds Living in Melbourne, Australia,' *Journal of Youth Studies* Vol. 14, No. 2 (2011), 191.

The analysis indicated two important dimensions to understanding belonging in resettlement. First, there was the conceptual dimension – as being tied to not only their early years in Sri Lanka but also their aspirations as a young Tamil person who had agency and who was part of an increasingly global Tamil community. This conceptual dimension suggested that a significant aspect of young Tamil people's sense of belonging was tied to an imagined Tamil homeland that was both specific to Sri Lanka and an expanding global Tamil community, regardless of the depth of these connections. That Tamils only highlighted the importance of spoken Tamil language through the act of watching Tamil films, rather than learning to read or write Tamil within formal learning spaces reinforced this point. Secondly, the social and cultural dimensions referred to how Tamil boundaries were made and unmade, how spaces and places were imagined, contested, and embraced or resisted. Young Tamils pointed to the permeability of their belongingness and its contingency on ever-changing contexts and subjective views.

CHAPTER FIVE: Memory and Trauma in their Journeys in becoming Adults: Exploring Repressed Memories Entangled in School Experiences

This chapter moves the discussion to examine the intense emotional work that interview participants experienced in rebuilding their lives in a new land and in the act of crafting belonging, by focusing on their traumatic experiences entangled in school experiences.[1] Interviewees' emotions encompassed both social and intersubjective realms that defined the 'contours of the multiple worlds' that they inhabited.[2] The significance of revealing their emotional school experiences is in showing how dislocation reproduced identities and ways of belonging against competing cultures and societal expectations.[3] In the chapter, I focus specifically on traumatic memories tied to school experiences and explore how interviewees remembered multiple stressors in their resettlement: bullying, family violence, war-related memory and family separation. Recalling their hopes as children help to identify institutional and private spaces in which they aspired to have agency and control in their lives. I use four case studies in the chapter to demonstrate that trauma experiences were not homogenous and continued to shape interviewees' lives in the present and their outlook for the future, thus demonstrating the temporality of belonging processes.

The existing research on school experiences of young forced migrants has focused on the effects of war-related trauma on subsequent adjustments as well as post-migration stressors that add to trauma and in turn diminishes school success.[4] Several recent studies showed that positive educational experiences are critical for minority groups for a range of well-established reasons, including restoring social and emotional healing,[5] cultural recognition,[6]

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[1] Zlatko Skrbiš, 'Transnational Families: Theorising Migration, Emotions and Belonging,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 9, No. 3 (2008), 231-246; Maruška Svašek, 'On the Move: Emotions and Human Mobility,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 36, No. 6 (2010), 865-880.
[2] Sara Ahmed, 'Collective feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others,' *Theory, Culture and Society* Vol. 21, No. 2 (2004), 25.
[3] Paola Boccagni and Loretta Baldassar, 'Emotions on the Move: Mapping the Emergent Field of Emotion and Migration,' *Emotion, Space and Society* Vol. 16 (2015), 75.
[4] Mark K. Brough et al., 'Young Refugees talk about Well-being: A Qualitative Analysis of Refugee Youth Mental Health from Three States,' *Australian Journal of Social Issues* Vol. 38, No. 2 (2003), 193-208.
[5] Margaret Sinclair, 'Education in Emergencies,' in *Learning for a Future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries*,' eds., Jeff Crisp et al. (Lusane: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Publications, 2001), 1-83; Praveena Gummadam et al., 'School Belonging, Ethnic Identity, and Psychological Adjustment Among Ethnic Minority College Students,' *The Journal of Experimental Education* Vol. 84, No. 2 (2016), 289-306.
[6] Amanda Keddie, 'Pursuing Justice for Refugee Students: Addressing Issues of Cultural (mis) recognition,' *International Journal of Inclusive Education* Vol. 16, No.12 (2012), 1295-1310.

and social inclusion and wellbeing.[7] To understand the resettlement experiences of young forced migrants we must have a 'clear sense of refugee trauma as having its origins in the intersection of history, social structure and biography – an intersection that does not cease when refugees leave their homeland.'[8] Thus, in contexts of forced migration, trauma emerges in temporal ways that constitute a mix of painful experiences in the past and present, and anxieties about the future – a complex nexus of individual emotion and broader social and political forces.[9] However, in order to understand this continuum of trauma that 'travels' over the life course, we must pay further attention to the individual's voice and their surroundings.[10]

Trauma, according to Duncan Bell, 'implies a breakdown of both meaning and trust – in a world that has been shattered, overturned'.[11] Exemplifying this process, one interviewee, Aranya, stated that 'I had no control over my childhood until the day I left home and even after I had no control over my future.' For Aranya, the world and her position within it were characterised by severe instability and a lack of control. When young forced migrants tell stories about disruptions to their lives, they recall their experiences in a manner most conducive to them.[12] This is because memory is a dynamic process in which individuals and their subject positions vary. In the chapter, I explore the specific dynamism of trauma that *interferes* with memory.[13] How adults recall traumatic experiences from childhood can reveal internal workings of memory, such as forgetting, silences and body language that may reveal their coping mechanisms in the present.[14] Prevalent ideologies of childhood can also

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[7] Ignacio Correa-Velez et al., 'Longing to Belong: Social Inclusion and Wellbeing Among Youth with Refugee Backgrounds in the First Three Years in Melbourne, Australia,' *Social Science and Medicine* Vol. 71, No. 8 (2010), 1399-1408; Loshini Naidoo, 'Developing Social Inclusion through After-School Homework Tutoring: A Story of African Refugee Students in Greater Western Sydney,' *British Journal of Sociology of Education* Vol. 30, No.3 (2009), 261-273.
[8] Beryl Langer, 'The Continuing Trauma of Refugee Settlement – The Experience of El Salvadorians,' in *Hope After Horror: Helping Survivors of Torture and Trauma*, ed., Peter Hosking (Sydney: Uniya, 1990), 69.
[9] Mark K. Brough et al. 'Young Refugees talk about Wellbeing,' 3.
[10] Janice H. Goodman, 'Coping with Trauma and Hardship among Unaccompanied Refugee Youths from Sudan,' *Qualitative Health Research* Vol. 14, No. 9 (2004), 1177.
[11] Duncan Bell, ed., 'Introduction: Memory, Trauma and World Politics,' in *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship Between the Past and Present*, ed., D. Bell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 8.
[12] Goodman, 'Coping with Trauma,' 1177-1196.
[13] Bessel A. van der Kolk, 'Developmental Trauma Disorder: Toward a Rational Diagnosis for Children with Complex Trauma Histories,' *Psychiatric Annals* Vol. 35, No. 5 (2005), 401–408; Gadi Benezer, 'Trauma Signals in Life Stories,' in *Trauma and Life Stories*, eds., Kim L. Rogers et al. (London: Routledge, 1999), 29-44.
[14] Goodman, 'Coping with Trauma,' 1177-1196.

influence these mechanisms that are important to recovering from that traumatic past.[15] However, at its core, trauma memories are about internal struggles, as well as external struggles of the self's desire to confront the self who was wounded.[16]

However, the incomprehensibility of the traumatic event/s that occurred in the past, as Cathy Caruth has argued, is paradoxically tied up like traumatic memory – as 'the inability to have access to it.'[17] By bringing together psychoanalytic, literary and Holocaust historical studies in the 1990s, Caruth and other scholars such as Michael S. Roth, have complicated how to examine memories of trauma, cautioning against over-emphasis on the individual or advancing ideological agendas within historical contexts.[18] A key aspect of these complexities lay in understanding how affected individuals and communities constructed their trauma within specific histories. In the chapter, I examine traumatic memories related to interviewees' school experiences in their resettlement within the hostile climate of Australia's multicultural era. How did trauma manifest in interviewees' memories? How did they cope with difficulties from their childhood? How do they interpret their experiences? The chapter contributes to the growing body of scholarship that explores trauma experiences among young forced migrants as they navigated school.[19] As Jay Winter writes from the perspective of international politics, 'trauma time is today's time'.[20] Remembrance will entail nothing gentle and have no redemptive element to it, and a great deal of anger.[21] The representations of voices of those whose lives have been scarred therefore constitute the new set of memories circulating our understandings of contemporary historical times.[22]

The chapter is structured around four case studies of interviewees whose experiences of school in Melbourne and Sydney revealed life stories of trauma, anger, redemption and recovery: Aranya, June, Rajiv, and Thurga. While they resettled in different states, there were

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[15] Kate Douglas, *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma, and Memory* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 108.
[16] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).
[17] Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 152.
[18] Michael S. Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History: Essays on Living with the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
[19] Andrés J. Pumariega et al., 'Mental Health of Immigrants and Refugees,' *Community Mental Health Journal* Vol. 41, No. 5 (2005), 581-597.
[20] Jay Winter, 'Notes on the Memory Boom: War, Remembrance and the Uses of the Past,' in *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship Between Past and Present*, ed., Duncan Bell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 72.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

no clear differences between the two cities. Each of their experiences is different and reveals the multiple ways that school experiences became sources for trauma. Before I present the case studies, the chapter begins by identifying sources of anxiety and tension that emerged as common themes among all interviewees in the study.

Common Challenges in School: Sources of Anxiety and Tension

For young Tamil people, like most young migrants, one of the first possibilities for crafting belonging in their new society occurred when they started school.[23] While school for many Australian-born children provided opportunities to easily craft that belonging, for young people who arrived in Australia as forced migrants, school intensified their exclusion and marginalisation.[24] Considerable research has shown strong associations between school belonging and academic outcomes, school retention, and wellbeing.[25] Beyond subjective perspectives, structural aspects of the school environment also shaped traumatic experiences in school.[26] During the 1980s and 1990s, ongoing debates within Australia about refugees and non-white migrants were strengthened and given a platform by the media.[27] For example, public debates about 'political correctness' had invoked an all-encompassing expression for the denigration of marginalised groups including refugees.[28] Indeed, there were wide sections of the Australian community who recognised the benefits and realities of an increasingly multicultural society. However, contestations about race and legal status reinforced the hostile environment in which young forced migrants had entered. Thus, exclusionary practices both at the level of students and schools as well as the wider Australian society functioned to undermine the resettlement experiences of young forced migrants. For example,

[23] Maryam Kia-Keating and B. Heidi Ellis, 'Belonging and Connection to School in Resettlement: Young Refugees, School Belonging, and Psychosocial Adjustment,' *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry* Vol. 12, No. (2007), 29-43.
[24] Sandra Taylor and Ravinder K. Sidhu, 'Supporting Refugee Students in Schools: What Constitutes Inclusive Education?' *International Journal of Inclusive Education* Vol. 16, No. 1 (2012), 39-56; Tania Ferfolja and Margaret Vickers, 'Supporting Refugee Students in School Education in Greater Western Sydney,' *Critical Studies in Education* Vol. 51, No. 2 (2010), 149-162.
[25] Correa-Velez et al. 'Longing to Belong,' 1399-1408; Clemence Due et al., 'Experiences of School Belonging for Young Children of Refugee Backgrounds,' *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist* Vol. 33, No. 1 (2016), 33-53.
[26] Halleli Pinson et al., *Education, Asylum and the 'Non-Citizen' Child* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[27] Ien Ang and Jon Stratton, 'Multiculturalism in Crisis: The New Politics of Race and National Identity in Australia,' *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol. 2 (1998), 22-41.
[28] Pal Ahluwalia and Greg McCarthy, '"Political Correctness': Pauline Hanson and the Construction of Australian Identity,' *Australian Journal of Public Administration* Vol. 57, No. 3 (1998), 79-85.

certain labels, such as 'migrant', caused curiosity and bullying by school peers as interviewees stated:

> When I went to school people didn't know I had white hands inside because they thought it was black inside as well because they had never seen black people. One of the kids asked me, 'do you bleed black?'[29]

> To my mum, to all the parents back then the only concern was studies. All you had to do was get A pluses and you'll be fine. It doesn't matter if you're getting bullied or getting hurt.[30]

> [School peers] asked, so which boat did you come in? which language centre did you go to?[31]

Labels infused the worlds of interviewees and their daily interactions and became sources of anxiety in their lives, thus reproducing power imbalances between certain groups that made it difficult to negotiate cultural differences or acknowledge that they existed.[32] Such hostile environments forced young Tamils to craft their ways of survival that recognised their 'outsider' label and the need to challenge meanings associated with that label. Cross-cultural student relationships were essential for interviewees to survive their racialised school space, for instance. One interviewee stated her efforts to engage with the only other student who interacted with her:

> I remember there was a Cambodian girl and she was in a similar boat, she didn't know how to speak English either and we just sort of spoke in our own, whatever we could understand, play tennis or something during breaks.[33] (Seetha)

While research has pointed to 'acceptance' or negotiation of differences at the everyday level, as Amanda Wise reminded us, exchanges do not necessarily mean building friendships, but they can also mean 'recognition or acknowledgement of otherness in situational specificity'.[34] As the above quote suggested, some student interactions at school emerged out of desperate circumstances such as language barriers that needed to be overcome to avoid prolonged social isolation in school.[35] Further, the quote identified a key source of anxiety among

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[29] Interview with Jehan. Melbourne, February 21, 2016.
[30] Interview with Varuni, Melbourne, March 15, 2016.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ash Amin, 'Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity,' *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* Vol. 34, No. 6 (2002), 967.
[33] Interview with Seetha. Melbourne, April 20, 2016.
[34] Amanda Wise, 'Everyday Multiculturalism: Transversal Crossings and Working Class Cosmpolitanisms,' in *Everyday Multiculturalism,* eds., Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 35.
[35] Pumariega et al., 'Mental Health of Immigrants and Refugees,' 581-597.

interviewees: English language skills.[36] The consequence of not knowing English was severe, as some interviewees recalled not being placed in ESL school that left them unable to communicate with their peers, teachers or understand the learning material that left them powerless daily.[37] The same interviewee identified the lack of agency contained in the process when she said:

> I was in grade 6, the end of primary school. I know a lot of kids when they come from there to here and they got put in a language school to learn English. For some reason they thought that we were young enough to not have to go to language school but I did not know a word of English other than numbers and they just throw you in there and you didn't really get a say or anything and you just had to learn as you went and at that age kids can be horrible.[38] (Seetha)

The lack of English language skills became key sources of anxiety and distress among interviewees in addition to added pressures such as lack of access to homework assistance, family separation, and family violence. Furthermore, some interviewees carried with them vivid memories of the civil war; some had not been to school for days due to being displaced from their village, others did not attend for months when they migrated from Jaffna to Colombo and waited for visas. Nevertheless, their determination to succeed was constructed in terms of their parents' decisions to provide them with better educational opportunities in Australia:

> A lot more students in Jaffna were getting a lot higher marks and they were taking numbers by region so it meant that you had to work a lot harder if you were in the Tamil regions to get into Uni and a lot of the exams were delayed or schools were shut down for extended periods when the war was happening so it was a lot of uncertainty that they had to work and study through and they didn't want that for us or even the risk of that for us.[39] (Kaushal)

This quote must be contextualised within Tamil politics in Sri Lanka, whereby education was at the centre of Tamil people's lives and their restrictions to accessing education in the 1970s were instrumental in producing Tamil collective anguish about the injustices of the Sinhala-

[36] Robyn Iredale and Christine Fox, 'The Impact of Immigration on School Education in New South Wales, Australia,' *International Migration Review* Vol. 31, No.3 (1997), 660.
[37] Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 'Schools Resourcing Task Force. Funding for English as a Second Language for New Arrival Students. Discussion Paper Vol.8, No.2 (2006), 354-364.
[38] Interview with Seetha. Melbourne, April 20, 2016.
[39] Interview with Kaushal. Sydney, July 15, 2016.

Sri Lankan nation-state.[40] In addition to the armed violence, the lack of educational opportunities for young Tamils continued to be a key driver for Tamil people's forced migration in the 1980s and 1990s.[41] In their resettlement, interviewees expressed tensions produced by their parents to stay loyal to Tamil values on the one hand that were tied to the historical significance of education, and gain educational success in their new environment on the other.[42] These tensions were also evident in other refugee communities, for example among Somali families parents often questioned their children's school practices that challenged their cultural values.[43] For some interviewees their experiences in school were remembered as a site of distress that exacerbated their low self-esteem and confidence:

> Kids were picking on you and bullying was always a problem, especially when you're from a different place. I still feel sometimes that my self-confidence is really low because of going through that… A lot of the time you wouldn't even understand what they would try to say but it was picking, kind of like, you feel like they're talking about you. You just feel different. It wasn't just at primary school, even after you learnt the language and you sort of got onto high school and everything, it still wasn't quite the same because your parents have their own expectations of how you should be and that's completely different, it's a fight between two different cultures.[44] (Nivetha)

In addition to cultural tensions, young Tamils found themselves in situations where family relationships, family conflict and domestic violence had travelled from Sri Lanka to Australia. One interviewee, Aranya, described how her family relationships reached breaking point and she was forced to move out of home at the age of sixteen in order to survive.

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[40] Santasilan Kadirgamar, 'Jaffna Youth Radicalism: The 1920s and 1930s,' *in Pathways of Dissent: Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka*, ed., R. Cheran (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009), 212; A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: It's Origins and Development in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Hurst and Co., 2000), 171; Daya Somasundaram, Tamil psychologist and researcher, in a lecture given at the University of Jaffna in 1993, identified some of the most common problems faced by Tamil students that eroded earlier motivations to study: repeated changes in schools due to displacement; unavailability of class rooms due to destruction or use as military camps; uncertainty about national exams; lack of quiet and lighted environment for learning; irregular attendance due to transport difficulties and disturbed situation; students being detained, shot dead, conscripted, recruited, indoctrinated or impelled to become involved in political activities, seeing fellow peers emigrate; curtailed freedom of movement; lack of opportunity to pursue higher education; refugee children without uniforms and exercise books. Daya Somasundaram, 'Child Trauma', Dr. Arunasalam Sivapathasundaram Third Memorial Lecture (University of Jaffna: Earalai Mahatma Pointing Works, 1993), 15.

[41] Amita Shastri, 'The Material Basis for Separatism: The Tamil Eelam Movement in Sri Lanka,' *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 49, No.1 (1990), 56-77.

[42] Pumariega et al., 'Mental Health of Immigrants and Refugees,' 581-597.

[43] Monamed H. Kahin, *Educating Somali children in Britain* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 1997).

[44] Interview with Nivetha. Melbourne, September 14, 2016.

Aranya then faced challenges and griefs associated with her new environment that converted to crises while she was completing high school. The strain of such family disharmony intensified in situations where the family continued to stay together, as in the case of another interviewee, June, whose experiences demonstrated the gendered dimensions of family conflict that became a significant source of anxiety and distress in achieving educational success. Thus, for some interviewees school was a source of trauma that linked to personal and political histories involving already substantial violence, loss and grief. It is further noteworthy that there were no Tamil community supports that were available to newly arrived young people to assist them in navigating the school space. The Tamil parental generation did not recognise or support the school needs of their children – despite encouraging and retelling family histories of forced migration that reinforced the importance of education to their lives.[45] For the remainder of the chapter, I explore how the challenges that interviewees faced in school produced a heightened desire to strive for belonging, by focusing on four individuals. The memories of these four interviewees are used to show that difficult school experiences have shaped their resilience and the meanings that they give to their journeys in becoming adults.

Aranya: 'School was my saving grace. You can say this girl is alive and talking because of school'

Trauma in Aranya's life began in Sri Lanka and continued when she migrated to Australia as a ten-year-old in 1997. Only ever referred to in her interviews as 'personal issues' or 'personal reasons', the traumatic events in her life had been mainly 'closed off'.[46] Despite the silence, Aranya's life stories were replete with narratives of suffering. She was born in Batticaloa, in the East of Sri Lanka. Her mother committed suicide when she was a child and her father subsequently remarried a Sinhalese woman. Aranya had to adjust to having a stepmother whom she described as being 'vicious'. The changes included transferring from a Tamil school to a Sinhalese school halfway through grade one. However, she described herself as an 'A class student'. In general, however, she had few memories of Sri Lanka.

> Mainly because of personal reasons my minds closed off a lot of things. Mainly just impressions of places, not really names or anything.

[45] These sentiments were expressed by interviewees. It is the beyond the scope of this study to explain why Tamil parents did not recognise the school needs of their children.
[46] Interview with Aranya. Melbourne, May 14, 2016. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.

Her earliest memories of resettling in Melbourne revolved around her school, and more specifically the social relationships, 'of bullying, funnily enough it was [from] Sri Lankan girls'. She explained that this was due to her being a new student.

> I'm a newbie, you're new to the school, you're new to the country, you don't know English, you're beneath us.

At the same time, she developed friendships through shared experiences of exclusion with other newly arrived students.[47] Her best friend was from Turkey.

> We didn't know any English, but we still managed to talk and laugh. After six months we were speaking like Aussies. English came that naturally to us.

It was not so much that Aranya was unable to communicate with most of the students in her class. Rather, dominant constructions of her childhood as a young forced migrant relegated her to school spaces that displayed cultural privilege towards English speakers.[48] This was further evidenced when she stated being excluded by 'Sri Lankan girls' whose actions indicated the cultural dynamics of schools as a corollary of disadvantage, whereby *all* students positioned themselves in relation to global inequities that often produced forced migration.[49] For Aranya, the consequences of being a new migrant reinforced her marginalised status not only to the other students at her school but in the ways she constructed her position as a newcomer in society.

Family conflict further intensified Aranya's social isolation in school. Shortly after the family had resettled in Melbourne, her brother moved out of home, and she stated that he was 'getting into a whole heap of trouble'. In elaborating on the consequences to the disintegration of the family unit, she added that he was currently addicted to drugs and gambling thus capturing the continuity of that past. Aranya's parents had created a childhood environment where she was intensely monitored and unable to be free.

> My self-esteem due to personal reasons was very low, my confidence was very low, so I never felt comfortable with my own people… So even then, going back to my personal reasons I wasn't allowed to socialise, I wasn't allowed to have friends. You would see all

[47] Phillip Anderson, 'You don't belong here in Germany…': On the Social Situation of Refugee Children in Germany,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 14, No. 2 (2001), 187-199.
[48] Damien W. Riggs and Clemence Due, 'Friendship, exclusion and power: A study of two South Australian schools with New Arrivals Programmes,' *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* Vol. 35, No. 4 (2010), 73-80.
[49] Julie Matthews, 'Schooling and Settlement: Refugee Education in Australia,' *International Studies in Sociology of Education* Vol. 18, No. 1 (2008), 31-45.

> your friends go out and talk to each other, sit in a group, I wasn't allowed to do that. I had to stick by my parents so all of that made for a very different experience. So, my interaction with other people was nil, zero because I did not interact. It gradually did change.

Her concepts of childhood involved having a level of freedom that was unavailable to her and had affected her psychological state.[50] Her forced isolation had a cumulative, deleterious impact on her social experiences in school.[51] She became depressed and feared her parents. At this point in her life stories, the experience of being excluded by many of her peers at school became overshadowed by the physical and psychological pain she suffered at home. She remembered the school as a site of survival. Her disbelief that she survived is further testament to this.

> My dad stalks. He would actually stalk me to make sure I went to school. I liked school, it was better than being at home. I hated holidays, that meant I had to stay at home, and I did not enjoy anything of staying at home. My childhood was a lot of physical abuse, so that meant it was better to stay at school than at home. I never thought I would get to thirty [years-old], despite having kids and everything it was a lot of struggle to keep living and as I said one of the reasons I'm still here is because of school. It was one of my only constants, it didn't matter which school. It was one of my daily constants that would keep me going from day to day, make me wake up the next day, look forward to the day.

The safety of being at school gave Aranya minimal contact with the outside world. Her voice trembled at times during the interview, her pitch turned quiet and she mumbled.[52] The traumatic past lingered in the present. The events themselves, however, were significant, and her close guarding of them was part of the presence and normalisation of isolation and pain. Aranya's experiences of school revealed how highly regulated her life was by the strict standards of her parents, thus evidencing the idea that school spaces can never be neutral and determined how individuals could move (or not move).[53] In the case of Aranya, the school space itself reinforced her marginalisation as a young forced migrant who was not fluent in the English language, and yet, it became her 'saviour', kept her 'sane'. This was particularly evident when she repeatedly juxtaposed her home life and school life.

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[50] Rosario Ceballo et al., 'Community Violence and Children's Psychological Well-Being: Does Parental Monitoring Matter?', *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* Vol. 32, No. 4 (2003), 586-592.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Benezer, 'Trauma Signals,' 29-44.
[53] Sarah L. Holloway and Gill Valentine, 'Sociology and the New Social Studies of Childhood,' *Sociology* Vol. 34, No. 4 (2000), 763–783.

> School was my saviour. It kept me sane. I needed school, otherwise I wouldn't have survived this long. The school was my relief. I loved studying, but more than the studying it was just me. I had a lot going on in my life, a lot of negative stuff. Being at school was the only positive thing.

She recalled how the physical and psychological abuse became intolerable: 'it got so bad I was contemplating suicide. It was either that or move out at sixteen'. She moved out of home and described how it had transformed her into a 'totally different person'. She described forgetting the traumatic events and shifted the narrative to strategies of survival.

> I have a bad habit of forgetting the bad. I kind of want to see the positives. I've struggled heaps, you can probably tell from the way I talk. I've been hurt by so many people. I'm more of an optimist than a pessimist.

Her memory interludes tied to the present.

> I just turned thirty [years-old] two months ago, and it was a long, long road, from being a shy and self-conscious teenager at sixteen with no freedom, no friends, nothing to who I am today, it was a long road. If I was to tell you my experiences, you would run away so I won't. Mine is a bit darker.

Her interpretation of these critical temporal connections between her past and present had produced two themes. Firstly, even though she had suppressed childhood trauma experiences, she used those adversities to develop coping strategies such as 'forgetting the bad' and seeing the 'positives'. This did not mean that she had forgotten the past. Indeed, she recognised that she had been 'hurt by so many people'. Rather, her childhood aspirations of freedom, safety and a strong sense of self have been achieved, thus allowing her to reconstruct the childhood traumas in the light of her survival and reaching her thirtieth birthday. The second theme located her specific actions of moving out of home as a break from cultural norms.

> From a cultural perspective, stereotyping the Sri Lankan girl – she has to be home until she gets married. In a stereotypical manner, if you come to a Sri Lankan family the girl would be expected to stay at home with her parents regardless of the age, until she's married. It was a big difference for me.

She pointed to gendered constructions of Tamil childhoods in which girls were expected to perform dual agendas of socialisation, both at home and at school.[54] Girls were expected to

[54] Swarna Jayaweera, 'Gender, Education, Development: Sri Lanka,' in *Gender, Education and Development: Beyond Access to Empowerment*, eds., Christine Heward and Sheila Bunwaree (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1999), 173-188.

be passive, modest and obedient in both settings. In Sri Lanka, such passivity and 'femininity' underscored the contradictions of growing up in a society where the absence of overt gender discrimination was juxtaposed with gender role assumptions based on presumed gender differences.[55] Aranya's traumatic experiences were mounted against internalised gendered social behaviours such as low levels of self-confidence and feeling inferior to boys, being restricted in her physical mobility and social interactions. Her experiences also pointed to the patriarchal nature of the violence she had faced at home. The 'big difference' of moving out of home at the age of sixteen reinforced how prevailing cultural assertions were blind to childhood abuse by family members – the outcome that a Tamil girl had left the family home was, as Aranya described, an absurd action. However, in her memories of moving out Aranya not only challenged cultural norms but she simultaneously reasserted herself as a 'Sri Lankan', suggesting that her actions did not distance her from that cultural identity.

> Being a Sri Lankan had nothing to do with my sanity, my sanity came first. If my sanity broke and I did kill myself there would be one less Sri Lankan. I'm still Sri Lankan. What I do does not define who I am. I was born in Sri Lanka therefore I am Sri Lankan. My parents are Sri Lankan therefore I am too.

While her identity remained 'Sri Lankan', she was rejected by the community when she stated that she had gained 'the black cross for leaving home'. But her identity was destined for complexity. She was brought up by her Sinhalese stepmother but had identified that her parents were Sri Lankan Tamil (referring to her Tamil mother) however her father converted from Hinduism to Buddhism soon after arriving in Australia. She concluded that at the age of twelve she understood 'religion is just man made'. Her memories of childhood were focused elsewhere, the trauma had set her apart and forced her to 'mature very early' at school, as she repeatedly stated, 'I had a lot of personal issues, so I had to grow up fast'. She became increasingly unrelatable to her school peers.

> They didn't understand it, mainly because that's not what their childhood was like. They had all the freedom. I'm a very independent person. I'm very self-sufficient. I can do things for myself. Emotionally as well I didn't ask anyone. If I needed the moral support, I would have asked for it.

[55] Ibid.

The strength she described above related to her physical, emotional and psychosocial wellbeing. She reconstructed her memories of hardships in ways that highlighted her resilience, as being 'independent' and 'self-sufficient', for instance. Her memories reconstructed periods of her childhood when she had no agency, by connecting them to the subsequent journey of survival that she had created for herself. In doing so, her agency and control were central in her memories of school as a survival mechanism. For example, when she described how she coped, she began by stating that the teachers at her school were her role models. However, while describing this process, she concluded by stating that she 'didn't look up to [teachers] so much'. Instead, she centred her narratives on personal strategies of survival.

> I was about 11 when I decided what I wanted to be like, how I wanted to live my life, not even a teenager. I tried to study people. A good example is my brother. When he left home, I was only eleven. I looked at him and said to myself I'm going to be the total opposite to who he is, as a person, in character. I've always had my set of rules and values that I follow and that's how I do things. It's a self-discipline thing, not so much disciplining others. I think it's because I'm so internally focused. I've never really looked up to people. I didn't look up to teachers.

Nevertheless, her school teachers were remembered as key figures who had attempted to ease the suffering in her personal life, despite it not being part of their 'set role, their job description'. However, limitations of the school space were contained within Aranya's conceptions of school as the 'saviour'. As she stated, 'school was my saving grace. You can say this girl is alive and talking because of school'. The only adults that repeatedly appeared in her memories – her parents and school teachers – were juxtaposed and revealed her childhood aspirations of belonging that were based on safety and compassion.

> Childhood is affected by personal choices and the decisions of the adults at that point in time and how it affects your upbringing, my outlook to things is totally different in a sense that I look at things differently because of my experiences. A lot of my childhood depended on other people's behaviours. I had no control over my childhood until the day I left home and even after I had no control over my future.

The traumas of Aranya's childhood remained a significant part of her adult life – literally and figuratively. The memories of Sri Lanka and growing up in Australia were at once repressed and visible. At the time of interviewing her in 2016, she was studying to become a teacher,

with a focus on psychology and literature. Her childhood trauma and experiences at school had motivated her decisions as an adult.

> It's an effort to understand the consequences of what others have done that's altered my life. My mum committed suicide when I was at school, so in an effort to understand how her mind might have worked and alter my life, and other people's thoughts and feelings, especially a child's life. I think my love of words comes from the fact that I wasn't given the right to words as a child. I wasn't able to speak my mind or express myself.

In her memories of trauma, Aranya chose not to escape from the psychological burdens from her past that robbed her of a childhood. Instead, her educational aspirations in the present served as a connection to that difficult past and continued the journey of survival and resistance. The school remained a space for nurturing growth that provided her with safety, stability and predictability. As the main institution in contact with Aranya, the schools she attended failed to respond to the family violence adequately, however, in her memories, the school was a safe space – despite her also being unable to communicate or socialise with other students. The significance of a supportive school environment was not only a theme that was strongly interwoven in Aranya's memories, but it drew attention to the potential of school as a supportive environment for assisting children suffering trauma across multiple aspects of their lives.[56]

Rajiv: '[I] still wanted to go back because it's freedom [in Sri Lanka]. The only thing is that it's peaceful here'

Unlike in Aranya's life stories where the school was remembered as the 'saviour', for Rajiv the intense emotional upheavals had emerged and remained within the school environment. Rajiv's traumatic memories of his school experiences were traced to different geographical locations however the spatial demarcations of trauma were blurred when recollections of suffering become a consistent feature of his forced migration experiences. Rajiv was born in Jaffna in Sri Lanka and relocated to India due to the civil war in 1987 before migrating to Australia with his family as refugees. Rajiv's earliest memories of resettlement in Australia

[56] Kate O'Sullivan and Louise Olliff, 'Settling in: Exploring Good Settlement for Refugee Young People in Australia.' Policy Paper. (Melbourne: Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, 2006); Lyndal Bond et al., 'Changing Cultures: Enhancing Mental Health and Wellbeing of Refugee Youth People through Education and Training,' *Promotion and Education* Vol. 14, No. 3 (2007), 143-149.

constructed a longing to return to Sri Lanka despite its 'traumatic' conditions that made returning there impossible.[57]

> You always feel better there but of course the place is also traumatic because of the civil war in Sri Lanka. It traumatised everyone. We came across a difficult time to survive in those days.

To contextualise the above statement, Rajiv and his family fled Sri Lanka to India in 1987 at the height of armed conflict in Jaffna.

> It was another traumatising occurrence there as well. Even though they speak Tamil there it was a totally different experience as well during the school time. So, it was the same thing, so I was being bullied there as well because my Tamil was quite different to Indian Tamil, so they ended up traumatising me every single day. I used to hate going to school because of the bullying.

Asha Hans noted that the outcomes of Tamils displaced from their homelands during the 1980s and 1990s resulted in a reconfiguration of Tamil childhood.[58] On the one hand, children lived with the grief of family members left behind and the loss of support from extended families which young Tamils were used to, making them extremely vulnerable to psychological stress associated with shifting community dynamics.[59] Inside Indian-run refugee camps there were steady upward trends in teenage pregnancy, divorce rates and stress among younger Tamils, break up of families and challenges in child rearing that reflected the increasing social instability of living in exile.[60] It was evident that young Tamils were influenced by new pressures, norms and vulnerabilities due to their marginalised status in the homeland and resettlement, not dissimilar to experiences in other war contexts.[61] However, sociocultural continuities were maintained, which has been observed as a powerful articulation of a Tamil Sri Lankan nationalism.[62] Education became the most important factor in the lives of Tamils in exile, as a way to forge ahead and make social mobilisation possible in their new environments.[63]

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[57] Interview with Rajiv. Sydney, December 11, 2015. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.
[58] Asha Hans, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee Women in India,' *Refuge* Vol. 16, No.2 (1997), 3–9.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Kristen E. Cheney, "'Our Children Have Only Known War': Children's Experiences and the Uses of Childhood in Northern Uganda,' *Children's Geographies* Vol. 3, No.1 (2005), 23–45.
[62] Hans, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee,' 3-9.
[63] Ibid., 7.

Rajiv had arrived in Australia in 1990 with his mother, father and two younger brothers from India where he had been 'bullied' and regularly traumatised – for being a Tamil from Sri Lanka. He completed his final two years of high school in Sydney, where anxiety and abuse was perpetuated in his everyday school life. In Rajiv's memories, the traumatic events of civil war in Sri Lanka and displacement in India had continued his memories of suffering when he faced similarly violent environments at his new school in Sydney.

> In that time there was no Asian background people at all. Not a single student was Asian, it was pretty much only Australian culture and I struggled. One, because of the language and second, it was my colour. Everyone was bullying me at school because of those things. So, I wasn't doing very well in HSC [High School Certificate]-at one stage it was pretty much 'I don't want to go to school' because it was pretty much torture. Every day you would go to school and find out you're being bullied left and right. All the Aussie kids were bullying you because of your language and saying that you were Indian. Even though I was born in Sri Lanka I had a very strong Indian accent, so it was harder.

The trauma in pre and post-migratory experiences had affected Rajiv's mental health within the first years of his resettlement and therefore threatened his future.[64] This cannot be understood independent of the social and political environments.[65] In 1991 a *Report of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia* identified the widespread problem of racist attacks against non-white students.[66] In this report, students from non-white backgrounds, including forced migrants, expressed how they did not feel safe at school, were subjected to violent abuse and racial harassment regularly.[67] The findings reappeared across many research reports published throughout the 1990s that reinforced the hostile school environment that young Tamils had entered.[68] Indeed, enhancements and improvements to multiculturalism in Australia became a national agenda: in 1994 the National Multicultural Advisory Council was established, and in 1999 a new report, *Australian Multiculturalism for*

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[64] Langer, 'The Continuing Trauma,' 69-84.
[65] Sophie Yohani, 'Nurturing hope in refugee children during early years of post-war adjustment,' *Children and Youth Services Review* Vol. 32, No. 6 (2010), 865-873.
[66] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Report of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia' (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991).
[67] Ibid., 260, 349.
[68] For example, see Desmond Cahill and Angela Gundert, 'Immigration and Schooling in the 1990s.' Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing, 1996); Rogelia Pe-Pua, "'*We're Just Like Other Kids': Street-frequenting Youth of non-English speaking Background*.' Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing, 1994).

a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness, was launched and in response the Government developed its new multicultural policy, *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia*.[69]

Rajiv's school experiences supported the research that showed that the presence of strong anti-Asian sentiments was prevalent in all levels of society throughout the 1990s.[70] In recalling his experiences of being bullied and physically abused by other students at different schools, Rajiv's memories did more than map the trauma he had endured across multiple geographical locations. Rather, his memories pointed to social demarcations that constituted spaces of violence and exclusion that reflected the limitations and consequences of notions of fixed boundaries and nation-state interests.[71] Jindy Pettman's critique of notions of national security in 1992 re-imagined the world in other ways as a global web with movements of people, goods, ideas, and social relations that crisscrossed state borders, thus tracing beyond boundaries of the nation-state, examining links and social exclusions.[72] Pittman argued that state-making and nation-making limited the historical and global context that was changing, towards a 'world society, with vulnerable but growing global norms, rules and international organisations'.[73]

In his recollections of high school in Sydney, Rajiv demarcated the different points of neglect and exclusion within the school space that detailed his helplessness and the lack of control he had over his life.

> I was in year 12, I finally found one Indian friend who joined me in the same class. It was just the both of us and because we were both being cornered in the classroom surrounded by all Aussies and we were the only two brown people. We were trying to stand up for ourselves, but we couldn't and physically we couldn't defend ourselves because they were massive guys and it's so bloody hard, hiding against them. A number of times we'd complained to the principal, but they can't take any action because it's an ongoing thing. We can't force it as well and we couldn't tell our parents because they didn't understand because my dad hadn't been to school here so when you haven't been to school here then you don't know the system, so they can't guide you as well so it's pretty much just you.

[69] Department of Home Affairs, 'Australia's Multicultural Policy History.' Accessed on January 10, 2019. https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/about-multicultural-affairs/our-policy-history.
[70] Jan J. Pettman. 'National Identity and Security,' in *Threats Without Enemies,* ed., Gary Smith and St John. Kettle (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1992), 57.
[71] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005).
[72] Ibid., 53-54.
[73] Ibid.

Rajiv identified the adults in his life who failed to assist him, namely his school principal and parents. The lack of access to supports and cultural awareness had reflected the inescapability of the suffering he had endured, leading to the theme of: 'it's pretty much just you'. In particular, his experiences stressed that he had unsuccessfully attempted to seek help that reflected his experience as a new migrant and showed that his school experience in Sydney reproduced his identity as a young Tamil who struggled to feel a sense of belonging anywhere, both in his homeland and host countries. By the 1990s the New South Wales state Government developed an anti-racism policy and methods of addressing anti-social behaviour in schools, focusing on administrative responses to deal with racist incidents.[74] For Rajiv, the changes in policy had little effect. In his memories, the response that his new friend from India was also 'cornered in the classroom' had somewhat flattened his individual experiences of trauma, and more specifically the suffering he had carried with him from fleeing civil war in Sri Lanka and being displaced inside a refugee camp in India where he was bullied in school.

Instead, he revealed how little his new society had empathised with his 'refugeeness', but instead was more concerned with his status as a non-white outsider.[75] He positioned himself as an 'outsider' which he described as a common experience for all non-white migrants, regardless of their age, legal status, or occupation. Thus, in creating a more general level of otherness that applied to all non-white migrants, Rajiv drew attention to the inevitability of racial abuse that was demarcated through multiple social actors: students, teachers, school principal, parents.[76] The memories that articulated Rajiv's traumatic experiences of school captured the relational aspects of trauma experiences as well as the interrelatedness of wounding (actors) and wounding spaces (school).[77] The self, in Rajiv's memories, was constructed by the outcome of trauma spaces: the multiple points of exclusion that had 'cornered' him in school had also centralised his aspirations of belongingness, including his

[74] Christine Inglis, 'Multicultural Education in Australia: Two Generations of Evolution,' in *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education,* ed., James A. Banks (New York: Routledge, 2009), 115.
[75] Paul A. S. Ghuman, 'Acculturation of South Asian adolescents in Australia,' *British Journal of Educational Psychology* Vol. 70, No. 3 (2010), 305-316.
[76] Jonnell Uptin et al., '"It Felt Like I Was a Black Dot on a White Paper': Examining Young Former Refugees' Experience of Entering Australian High Schools,' *Australian Educational Researcher* Vol. 40, No. 1 (2012), 125-137; Kia-Keating and Ellis, 'Belonging and Connection,' 29-43.
[77] Kate Coddington and Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas, 'On Trauma, Geography, and Mobility: Towards Geographies of Trauma,' *Emotion, Space and Society* Vol. 24 (2017), 52-56.

visceral longings to return to a war-torn homeland, as an important historical piece of traumatic experience.

> Your identity is there, your heritage is there no matter what…even though you're a minority there. I still wanted to go back because it's the freedom. At least back home it's your own country so you can do whatever you like. The only thing is that it's peaceful here, that's the only thing.

The 'freedom' that he prioritised over 'peace' demonstrated how his trauma memories functioned across geographical locations, and periods, thus reconstructing his understandings of Sri Lanka's civil war and resettlement in Australia. While he did not describe the type or depth of physical abuse, he had faced in his new school in Sydney, the longing to return to a place of danger intertwined his everyday trauma with the impossibility of return. Uncontainable within one moment in time, one space or place, his trauma memories became fluid, permeable and were always under construction. How Rajiv dealt with the trauma of being a young Tamil and had associated his experiences to a wider community of non-white migrants is suggestive. He developed concerns for newly arrived migrants in ways that brought his specific experiences as a young Tamil into relief.

> Since I've been working in multiculturalism there's more respect. I'm really involved in a number of projects, such as the Pink Saree project which is for breast cancer awareness – that kind of thing helps me because at least I'm doing something for my community. When you see them it's like you've been through it and you think, well I'm not going to let my community go through the same thing that I went through. If I can help someone in any way, it's better. I'm trying to help others who are in the same situation by trying to encourage them.

In this arrangement of the past and present, Rajiv brings to relief the individuality of his prolonged suffering from childhood to adolescence. In doing so, the trauma that was mapped in his memory become less stable and out of place; trauma, after all, '*has no place*, neither in the past, in which it was not fully experienced, nor in the present.'[78] For Rajiv, his school experience became part of that construction of traumatic memories that reconstructed the past in the present – at the sight of newly arrived Tamils. Moreover, as a parent, Rajiv worked

[78] Cathy Caruth, ed., 'Recapturing the Past: Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed., C. Caruth (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 153.

through that difficult past by developing a stronger relationship with his sons, with the implication that the social situation in schools may not have changed since he attended.

> I'm now correcting myself to make sure my kids don't go through the same way. So, if there's a problem at school I ask him, 'have you been bullied at school?' I tell him if there is any bullying at school you have to tell me straight away. I try and communicate more with my kids, so that he doesn't go through the same things because we couldn't get that help as parents and now, I don't want to do the same thing.

Rajiv articulated that while he valued living in a multicultural society, he also recognised that there was a need to provide multiple forms of support to newly arrived migrants, for example, his involvement in community support projects and through his relationships with his son. The emphasis on these strategies in his current life allowed him to give meaning to the values of the school that aligned with his own experiences, thereby increasing his ways of belonging. In this sense, building a stronger relationship with his children through better communication and fostering and asking questions about school played an important role in Rajiv's life. It reflected his personal experiences and identities in the school, rather than mainstream identities of being a white-migrant student. This does not diminish histories of school experiences that Rajiv revealed through his life stories. Rather, the truth of telling a difficult story was evoked by his suffering.[79]

Thurga: 'I can't even think about it now. How did I survive?'

The difficulties of telling histories about young Tamil people's educational experiences lay in the complexity of their lives as forced migrants who carried with them lived experiences of war or learned about the sufferings of Tamils in their resettlement.[80] Some interviewees were more affected by their proximity to the war than others. In this case study, I focus on Thurga's school experiences that were shaped by her status as an unaccompanied refugee minor. While I explored Thurga's life stories in chapter 4 of the thesis, here I draw attention to her school experiences. Her unique experiences as an unaccompanied minor reflected the painful entanglement of being separated from her family and striving to achieve educational

[79] Ibid.
[80] Sarah Dryden-Peterson, 'Refugee Education in Countries of First Asylum: Breaking Open the Black Box of Pre-Resettlement Experiences,' *Theory and Research in Education* Vol. 14, No. 2 (2015), 131-142; Clemence Due et al., 'The Education, Wellbeing and Identity of Children with Migrant or Refugee Backgrounds,' Technical Report (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, 2015).

success in the absence of crucial supports that produced the theme of survival in her life: 'I can't even think about it now. How did I survive?'[81]

Thurga arrived in Australia in 1990 and lived with her uncle's family in Melbourne. Six months after she had arrived her aunty had also resettled in Melbourne. Despite being surrounded by relatives, Thurga described how the family dynamics had deepened her sense of isolation in resettlement.

> I don't know how to put it, my *chiththi* (aunty-mother's younger sister) was here but I wouldn't go tell her anything because I didn't want to cause any issues among the brothers and sisters. I would go see my *chiththi* but I didn't really speak to them about my uncle's family and I wouldn't speak to my uncle's family about my *chiththi's* family. Having come here, I wanted to bring my mother here and live with her, that was my sole focus. I didn't want to be causing issues by speaking about unwanted stuff with others and cause problems.

In order to avoid 'speaking about unwanted stuff' or cause problems among relatives, Thurga retreated from any potential confrontations with family members.

> Sometimes *chiththi* would tell me my aunty (uncle's wife) said something about me. I would tell her she must not have been serious, I would handle it in a way that won't cause any problems. Now I think back about how great I handled those situations.

Strategies of self-sufficiency were important for Thurga, for the everyday tensions in her family relationships was a constant reminder that she was separated from her mother.

> I always, I cry, and I write the letters from school. But I won't write anything that I am feeling bad and I'm crying about issues, because she also feels bad and she is very worried you know already. She left us, she always cares about everything even, even now.

When she arrived in Australia, Thurga only knew two words in the English language: 'yes' and 'no'. She described feeling helpless not only in terms of being unable to communicate with her peers but being the only Tamil in her grade that she contrasted to her children's experiences of being surrounded by other Tamil students.

> They just all the time were teasing me, I cried all the time. But I won't show in front of them. What can we do? There were no other Tamil people. Now, these days in my kid's school, if

[81] Interview with Thurga. Melbourne, July 13, 2016. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.

> you turn one side or the other our people are there everywhere. That time very few, I think I am the only one in that school.

This illustrated a common theme throughout the four case studies in the chapter about the nature of student interactions in which the lack of interaction and the sharp division was attributed by adults to the actions of the Tamil students, despite the relative lack of power these students had to socialise with their peers.[82] After a term of being harassed by her peers and unable to understand the learning material, Thurga spoke to her school coordinator and asked to be sent to ESL school.

> I went to the coordinator, the school coordinator. I said to her, 'I don't understand anything, can you please send me to a language school. Please, I need help.' So, I just told them that I didn't understand. They sent me to language school for one term.

However, the language barriers forced her to rely on her friendships with other migrant students, particularly to complete assignments. Of course, her desire to form friendships was very important to her resettlement and in doing so, she highlighted that she told her friends about her migration experiences.

> I told them everything. I see them every day, so they would ask me, how do you feel? Do you miss your mum? Are they [relatives] looking after you properly? I told them it's my age – to miss my family and also that they miss me a lot because they were in Colombo which is the capital city. Colombo is a different place to where we lived in Chavakachcheri.

The point here is that in the school where she was a minority, and where the cultural norms were oriented towards the dominant group, Thurga's experiences of family separation became formative to how she constructed herself to her peers. She recognised that she would be the 'failure' if she didn't integrate into the school.

> I didn't know anyone. They would smile, for the first couple of weeks I wasn't really interacting with people. Some people would come and see me and sit down next to me, they would say 'hi' but that's it. It was me who had to go and speak to them. What could I do? I didn't understand them, but I was at a dead end and I had to do something. So, when I spoke, they spoke back.

In some ways, self-sufficiency had become a type of by-product of the pain of being separated from her family and being unable to speak the English language. In short, the lack

[82] Riggs and Due, 'Friendship, Exclusion and Power,' 73-80.

of support networks in resettlement described her strategies to overcome them in neither positive nor negative terms. Her attempts to make friendships reflected her strength, but it also highlighted that she did not seek additional help. Her identity-work showed that she constantly negotiated her status as a student and unaccompanied minor. She recalled these challenges as part of a chronology of traumatic events over her life course.

> I would never wish for anyone else to go through what I went through: growing up without a dad from a young age, when you are growing up with the whole extended family, problems had arisen, the war and then moving here on my own. From there being excluded by kids at school. In the beginning I was all alone, I would come on my own and go back on my own, I did not know anyone.

Thurga was not reunited with her mother for another five years although they corresponded through aerogrammes. She was frustrated when her mother's letters were delayed in their arrival in Melbourne.

> If I don't get her letters, I feel like really mad, I don't show to other people, but I feel inside. My heart is like beeping like very fast and I don't work on anything you know even, even my studies, I don't work properly, my brain won't work.

While she was emotionally attached to her mother, there were clear barriers to that relationship due to the physical distance between them, and also she recognised that her mother would feel 'bad'. Thurga recognised the anguish her mother had experienced before she left Chavakachcheri in Jaffna where armed violence, artillery shelling, and mass displacements were commonplace in the 1990s. For example, in 1994, following the elections of a new Government that came into power on the platform of peace with the LTTE fighters, new military operations emerged and created a brutal and violent atmosphere for Tamil civilians that continued their exposure to prolonged armed conflict in their homeland. From Australia, Thurga was being informed about the war while other challenges of resettlement buried her. Often, the two sources of distress in her life were intertwined.

> My mum would write letters about the problems. My uncle was also in Sri Lanka so he would also speak about the problems there. I would pray for everyone and worry about them, because I knew there was problems. I myself was finding it hard to manage myself, so I really didn't know what to do about that. I would pick up my assignment and would go to the library crying.

Her circumstances as an unaccompanied refugee minor had completely overturned the intergenerational social structure of her family.[83] Her resilience and survival skills, however, were not only about individualistic orientations[84] but reflections of a Tamil collectivist society that prioritised family and community harmony.[85] By remaining silent about her struggles from her new home, Thurga maintained her goals to succeed at school and bring success to the family. However, her distress indicated how family separation had reconstructed ideas of 'family' that challenged and asserted emotional and spatial connections and discontinuities to the homeland and resettlement. On the one hand, Thurga's suffering was a testament to the 'very real' consequences of civil war in Sri Lanka in the 1990s.[86] On the other hand, the psychological distress in her school and the lack of resources that were available to her had ultimately constructed a constellation of traumatic nodes in her life that connected the civil war to her new home.

The psychological distress in Thurga's life became commonplace in her everyday life. For example, she described one time at school when she fell ill and was told by the school nurse to see a doctor. The nurse asked her for a Medicare (medical welfare) card. Having legally not been recognised as a refugee yet, Thurga was unable to access any welfare supports including a Medicare card. However, she managed to find a Tamil doctor who consulted her for free and said that she was feeling ill due to her 'thinking about something very serious'. Thurga's unexplained illnesses, head spins, frustrations and anxiety appeared to be directly connected to her post-migration stresses. Studies about the mental health of young forced migrants showed that those who had been separated from their families were more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression; however over time, the traumatic stress decreased.[87] While the research points to an inverse relationship between time since traumatic events occurred

[83] Cheney, 'Our Children,' 23-45.
[84] Anne S. Grønseth, 'Experiences of Tensions in Re-orienting Selves: Tamil Refugees in Northern Norway Seeking Medical Advice,' *Anthropology and Medicine* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2006), 77-98.
[85] Miriam George and Jennifer Jettner, 'Migration Stressors, Psychological Distress, and Family – a Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee Analysis,' *International Migration and Integration* Vol 17, No. 2 (2016), 341-353.
[86] Sharika Thiranagama, *In My Mother's House: Civil War in Sri Lanka* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 2.
[87] Trang Thomas and Winnie Lau, 'Psychological Well-Being of Child and Adolescent Refugee and Asylum Seekers: Overview of Major Research Findings of the Past Ten Years (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2002).

and stress symptoms, memory work shows that a difficult past can continue to linger in the present.[88]

Thurga's traumatic memories revealed her aspirations of family unification, access to resources at school and desire to maintain connections to Tamil language and activities.[89] In short, Thurga's family values emerged as remnants of her traumatic childhood memories and as another coping mechanism. For example, she explained that enrolling her children in TLS on weekends reflected her childhood struggles of being unable to communicate in English with older adults in Australia.

> I don't want them to only speak in English at my old age, I would feel very bad. I struggled here having come here without knowing English. I don't want another elderly person to not talk to my kids because they can't speak in Tamil.

How she described her children's current lives is suggestive of the total reconfiguration of childhood that has taken place in the next generation of her family.

> Now I will think, will my daughter be able to handle that? Because they haven't handled anything. They are growing up under our guidance. They don't find anything difficult, right. So, they don't know anything personally, right. That's the thing, because they were brought up here, they don't really have that personal struggle. Because we struggled hard, we are doing everything in the right way for them. Their life is totally different.

As such, the educational experiences in resettlement contained remnants of childhood suffering – of being a young Tamil subjected to violence in the homeland and being excluded and marginalised as an unaccompanied minor who had very few English language skills. Thus, achieving school belonging became vital in Thurga's aspirations for her children: 'the thing we could not do, we do it through our kids'. Her memories of childhood suffering remained central however in ways that reinforced her resistance and survival. In speaking about surviving the civil war and her resettlement, she stated, 'It's worth it you know. I came through all the hard parts, so I can survive anywhere'. She described being on the 'safe side'.

> He [Husband] is now working on a project at Waterloo/Cambridge railway system renewal. He went there to be the project manager, I told him to apply so that you can be happy. Even though we are separated for a while, I'm on a safe side and I'm with my mum and I don't

[88] Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*.
[89] Sue Fernandez and Michael Clyne, 'Tamil in Melbourne,' *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2007), 169-187.

> need to be worried about anyone. The house is my younger brother's, I don't need to be scared about anything. I don't need to worry about leaving my kids at the house and going. I'm on a safe side.

In examining Thurga's descriptions of being 'safe' and not 'scared', we can see important links between history and traumatic memory.[90] While the dominant theme in Thurga's life stories is bound up with traumatic memories of navigating school in a new land without having adequate English language skills, it is the meanings she gave about that space that shaped her histories of school belonging in Australia during the 1990s. It is impossible to understand her 'survival' without relating it to the fact that she represented resistance to children of white hegemony and as people who have been forced to become empowered by, and achieved their survival through, the centrality of their marginalised Tamil status in Australian society. School spaces, which were inadequately resourced to assist young Tamil forced migrants including those who came unaccompanied such as Thurga, actively reproduced social hierarchies based on legal status and ethnicity. Thurga's memories embodied Tamil resistance against white hegemony that guaranteed educational success within social power relations.[91]

In asking, 'how did I survive?', Thurga's traumatic memories drew us to the shifting contexts that affected the production, circulation and intensification of her traumatic experiences. While she struggled to complete high school, education was perceived as necessary to achieve success in resettlement. Through her memories, the powerlessness in the past was replaced by a sense of hope that she attached to her children's life trajectories. Importantly, the attention and support she provided to her children ensured that they were growing up with a close connection to being Tamil, its political significance and never to forget traumatic memories of survival. This was particularly important because unlike in other diaspora communities, there are very few avenues, institutions or initiatives that preserve histories of Tamil people's experiences of the civil war and their early resettlement experiences in Australia.[92]

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[90] Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History*.
[91] Kia-Keating and Ellis, 'Belonging and Connection,' 29-43.
[92] For example, in Melbourne, there is a Jewish Holocaust Centre that provides a space for housing exhibitions and library resources to create a memorial to the millions of Jewish people who were murdered between 1933 and 1945 (see, https://www.jhc.org.au/).

June: 'I didn't belong in so many ways and I just became this other thing to survive'

In the Tamil context, where familial values and community norms served as a strong protective and supportive layer for children growing up in exile, adolescents were expected to balance new social worlds while maintaining connections to their Tamil way of life.[93] As the experiences of Aranya, Rajiv and Thurga showed emotional upheavals had to be contained within intensive relations to not only their Tamil family but the Tamil community and wider Australian society. Individual expression, therefore, left some adolescents particularly vulnerable and made them more prone to traumatisation. In the final case study for the chapter, I focus on the life stories of June – a transgender Tamil person. June's life stories captured the intense contestations between the inner self and external environment that affected her vulnerability to trauma and were reproduced through memories of resilience and survival.

June was born in Jaffna in 1987 'right in the middle of the war'.[94] Her family relocated from Jaffna to Colombo when her father fled Sri Lanka to South Africa with the hope of eventually sponsoring the rest of the family there. June's father eventually sponsored them to South Africa however the family returned to Sri Lanka mainly for the children's education. June explained that 'all they [my parents] wanted was for me and my sisters to do really well.' Upon arriving in Australia in 1998 June's father was unable to find stable employment in Sydney and the family relocated to Cobar in rural New South Wales. The family lived in Cobar for around three years before returning to Sydney where she attended Homebush Boys High School. Educational achievement was a consistent topic of argument among her parents that became a key theme in June's memories of growing up in Australia.

> There would be awkward situations where I would be in the back of the car and I would be trying to crack jokes so that they don't kill each other, and I would go out of my way just to try and stop them from fighting. Now that I think about it, it gave me so much anxiety.

The accumulation of family conflict and physical abuse from her peers at school had produced a 'toxic environment' that prevented her from exploring her trans identity. She explained that she was

[93] Vappu Tyyskä, 'Sri Lankan Tamil Families in Canada: Problems, Resiliency, and Intergenerational Solidarity.' *Family Science Review* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2015), 47-64.
[94] Interview with June. Sydney, December 10, 2017. All of the interviews in this section from this interview.

> Everyday being called a faggot. If I wasn't getting [called] faggot I was getting called a black monkey. It was kind of like homophobia and racism.

She explained that the isolation she experienced at school had forced the repression of her trans thoughts. She was unable to resist or challenge the bullies at her school: 'I wouldn't have survived or be here today. I had zero chance.' June's exclusion at school reflected wider societal hostilities towards non-white migrants in rural areas. The media was especially effective in contributing to rural/urban binaries in which rural areas were portrayed as being more racist, violent and economically under-developed.[95] However, research at the time could not conclusively show that there were differences in racial discrimination between rural and urban areas.[96] The number of refugees resettled in rural towns across Australia increased from 5 per cent to 12 per cent from 1996 to 2009.[97] However, the increase is likely to have been higher given families such as June's arrived as skilled migrants. More broadly, however, since 1996 relocating to rural towns was a central element of the Australian Government's wider migration programme.[98] The key motivation of rural migration through State-Specific and Regional Migration (SSRM) programs was to address skilled worker shortages in those areas.[99] A Government-commissioned report by the University of Queensland, *Factors Influencing Skilled Migrants Locating in Regional Areas*, showed that while the policy was favourable among migrants, there were also significant numbers of migrants who had experienced poor public and community facilities, including schools.[100] In this report, migrant parents described educational experiences in rural areas as 'volatile' and that the general behaviour of students was 'dreadful' and produced 'discrimination at school'.[101]

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[95] Phil McManus and Bill Pritchard, 'Geography and the Emergence of Rural and Regional Australia,' *Australian Geographer* Vol. 31, No. 3 (2000), 383-91.
[96] Robert Stimson and Rex Davis, 'Disillusionment and Disenchantment at the Fringe: Explaining the Geography of the One Nation Party Vote at the Queensland Election,' *People and Place* Vol. 6, No. 3 (1998), 69-82.
[97] Adele Horin, 'Country Cousins Defy Redneck Label in Treatment of Refugees,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 10, 2010.
[98] Judith Griffiths et al., 'Factors Influencing Skilled Migrants Locating in Regional Areas.' Report prepared for Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Brisbane: The University of Queensland. 2010).
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., 20-27.

June's resettlement experiences in Cobar captured the psychosocial effects of living in hostile social environments.[102] For young forced migrants, *transitions* capture the internal processes that they must go through in order to come to terms with a new situation.[103] In June's case, transitional processes became significant to her schooling experiences such as developing from childhood to adulthood, integrating into an unfamiliar and highly racialised school community, and traumatic pre-migration experiences and exile-related stresses such as family violence.[104] June's memories showed that these transitions were still taking place and still being worked through, the kind of representation of what historian Michael Roth articulated as trauma's 'black hole'.[105] In June's resettlement, trauma revealed the borders of representation and experience through its intensity and through its command to pay attention to suffering, thus drawing the listener to the most dangerous aspects of feeling and thinking in the world.[106]

The daily stressors of living in Cobar had weakened June's educational outcomes, and this became another point of distress for her parents.[107] The family soon returned to Sydney. Despite the transition from a 'co-ed all-white school' in rural NSW to an 'all-boys school' at Homebush Boys High School in an urban setting, June's memories continued the theme of suffering and further qualified gendered aspects of her traumatic experiences in school. She described her same-sex high school as 'toxic masculinity, macho, homophobic'.

> I didn't belong in so many ways and I just became this other person to survive. I was working out, I started going to the gym, I started getting into fights. I literally had to become a Homebush Boy. How do I explain that I became a Homebush Boy? The pressure was to like cricket, play cricket. I'm not really into sport, I've always sucked at sport. But I always tried, and I had to do all that macho shit.

The difficulties of not belonging at school were echoed in the home environment. She was physically abused by her father who had 'severe anger issues', however, she simultaneously recognised that he had a 'traumatic past as a kid in Sri Lanka'. It is possible that her parents'

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[102] Lutine de W. Pastoor. 'The Mediational Role of Schools in Supporting Psychosocial Transitions Among Unaccompanied Young Refugees Upon Resettlement in Norway,' *International Journal of Educational Development* Vol. 41 (2015), 245-254.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History,* 103.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Janet Taylor and Dayane Stanovic, 'Refugees and Regional Settlement: Balancing Priorities.' Melbourne: Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2005.

exposure to civil war may have further contributed to her witnessing partner violence between her parents, and their physical abuse towards her that created a trauma-inducing environment.[108] In one instance, June recalled going to school to sit an exam with a bleeding nose due to her father's violent acts. She further noted the gendered nature of family violence in her household in which her sisters received less abuse compared to her when she had presented as a boy. Her social interactions at her high school reinforced the inevitable exclusionary labels attached to being a non-white newcomer in society, regardless of legal status or personal history that further echoed the experiences of the three other individuals focused on in the chapter.

> People were calling me FOB [fresh off the boat] except I had a much more bogan accent because I came from the country. They just thought I came from Sri Lanka. There were just a lot of migrant kids coming in and eventually I told my friend I used to live in a country town, and he was like 'what?' and he was like 'what this whole time I thought you were Fresh Off the Boat'. (June)

By the end of high school, June had been fighting with her parents consistently over her educational, religious and cultural makeup. Her memories of resettlement revolved around the continuous flow of hardships that she had faced at home and school. These entwined spaces of exclusion had repressed her ability to express herself and her transgender identity. At the start of 2016, June came out to her family and friends as a transgender person.

> These feelings were coming out, but I was pushing them away and I was getting more and more depressed and then one day I just broke down. I eventually told my sister and I started realising I was trans. In coming out to my parents, my Sri Lankan parents, the immediate feeling I had was like a black hole just emerging which was sucking everything into my chest and I couldn't breathe.

The suffocation she described was comparable to her childhood experiences of education. For example, in Sri Lanka, she recalled the moment her mother had locked her outside the house because she had not taken the notes down in class.

> I couldn't write the notes down on time and I was so scared. I've never been so scared in my life. She shut the door. I was outside, I thought I had literally been locked out. And then I just didn't feel anything at that point. I wasn't angry, I just couldn't feel anything. It was like

[108] Claudia Catani et al. 'Family Violence, War, and Natural Disasters: A Study of the Effect of Extreme Stress on Children's Mental Health in Sri Lanka,' *BMC Psychiatry* Vol. 8, No. 33 (2008), 1-10.

> losing all emotion. It was worse than being hit. But then eventually, like I just didn't move. And because I was going through all that shit, I couldn't even explore this whole trans thing, trans feelings that I had. Can you imagine what would have happened if I had told them in Sri Lanka?

The anxiety of coming out to her family and friends in 2016 is marked by the anticipation of a deeply wounding event. Instead of producing a coherent story her memory reverted the listener to childhood experiences. The suffocation of telling her parents that she was transgender is grounded in the impossibility of being unable to have expressed herself as a child.

> I remember he (father) flung the remote at my sister's head and it hit her. He hit them as well but not as intense as me, like he wouldn't punch them and break my nose.

The coherency of the memory further disrupted her stories of trauma when she paused and asked for some time before she could continue the interview – a key signal of trauma in life stories.[109] The silences, however, were not merely absences of information, and they further reflected the complex linguistic features of silence.[110] June's memory is not simply forgotten or not told, and it was reconstructed in the gaps of the interview. In some ways, the multiple minutes of silence throughout June's interviews reflected the constant pressures to forget and be silent throughout her childhood about who she was, where she came from, as well as her ambitions and desires. The silence, therefore, is not a denial of her past or what she decided to tell but, paradoxically, it was a construction of both the memory of the past and her voice in the present: a construction, that is, that she remembered, and tells of the past through her bodily actions. Here, the body remains associated with those memories that were too difficult to recall.

For June, connections between the body and traumas of family violence took on new meanings when considering the repressed state of her transgender identity since childhood. The bodily effects of her childhood were never dissociated from her body, for even after she had grown up, moved out of home, pursued her career ambitions, June had continued to face the physical intrusions of visceral traumatic memories.[111] The psychological effects of

[109] Benezer, 'Trauma Signals,' 29-44.
[110] Monisha Pasupathi, 'Telling and the Remembered Self: Linguistic Differences in Memories for Previously Disclosed and Previously Undisclosed Events,' *Memory* Vol. 15, No. 3 (2007), 258-270.
[111] Susan J. Brison, 'Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory, and Personal Identity,' in *Gender Struggles: Practical Approaches to Contemporary Feminism*, eds., Constance L. Mui and Julien S. Murphy (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 137-165.

childhood trauma remained painfully present. The bodily sense of self, as Susan Brison writes, becomes 'permanently altered by an encounter with death that leaves one feeling "marked" for life'.[112] The 'death' encountered by June is visible not only in the abuse she faced but in the impossibility of narrating her childhood without integrating the simultaneous experience of almost losing the transgendered self.

> I also realise I had no chance. I had zero chance. It's a miracle that I'm alive. I've had thoughts of suicide from Sri Lanka not even from the trans stuff just from all the other things, getting beat up with all the pressure, it's just so... When I came out, I did that because I wanted other queer people, trans people to…I don't want anyone to go through what I had to go through. That's how I feel about it and I try my best to be myself. I don't want to be anything else. I just want to be myself, just be open and even talk about my experiences, it's part of the reason why I'm here today.

In relaying her life stories through her traumatic memories, June highlighted the dependency of the self on others, the use of language to convey experiences and the pointlessness of doing anything else.[113] At the time of interviewing, June was also blogging about her resettlement experiences and focusing specifically on her transgender thoughts and childhood aspirations for a society that accepted differences.[114] The blogging became a creative assembling in which her past lived in the present and into the future, and she was able to pursue and validate her gender expression as a process that is never finished or pre-fixed.[115] The process of blogging can be seen as a historical archive that documented her suppressed experiences of refugeeness, Tamilness, adolescence, gender and family. It served as an example of what Sigmond Freud described as the significance of 'working-through' aspects

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[112] Ibid., 145.
[113] Ibid., 147.
[114] There are accounts of early European travellers being repulsed by the sign of Hijras (transgender people) across South Asia. Under British colonial rule in the second half of the 19th century, queer sexualities were criminalised across penal codes of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Section 377 of the penal code across these lands was an actual threat to alternative sexualities. For colonisers in Sri Lanka, heteronormativity was a key political agenda that criminalised alternative sexualities and denied these individuals civil rights. Muraj Michelraj, 'Historical Evolution of Transgender Community in India,' *Asian Review of Social Sciences* Vol. 4, No.1 (2015), 17-19; Andrea Nichols, 'Dance Ponnaya, Dance! Police Abuse Against Transgender Sex Workers in Sri Lanka,' *Feminist Criminology* Vol 5, No.2 (2010), 195-222.
[115] Shermal Wijewardene, 'But No One Had Explained to me Who I am Now…': "Trans" Self-Perceptions in Sri Lanka,' in *Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in a Globalising Asia*, ed., Sasika E. Wieringa et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 114-115; Andrew C. Farrell, 'Archiving Aboriginal Rainbow: Building an Aboriginal LGBTIQ Portal,' *Australian Journal of Information Systems* Vol. 21, (2017), 10.

of life that had been repressed.[116] Freud stated that the greater the resistance (or forgetting), the more extensively will the acting out (repeating one's experiences) replace remembering.[117] That is, the individual repeats their story instead of remembering, and repeats under the condition of resistance.[118] The resistance, however, in the case of June lay not so much in overcoming the resistance but in recognising that 'working-through' will always involve 'acting out'. Following Dominick LaCapra, Michael Roth affirmed that by understanding one's ambivalent connections to the past and how that individual critically engages with their past beyond simply reinforcing it, can show why acting out is necessary for that process.[119] June's memories, then, and her act of sharing her stories to different audiences allows her to repeat her difficult past over and over again. In repeating her experiences, she consciously and unconsciously 'acts out' her traumatic past not only for herself but for others: 'I don't want anyone to go through what I had to go through.'

Conclusion

I set out in the chapter to examine memory and trauma in school through case studies of four interviewees: Aranya, Rajiv, Thurga and June. Each of the case studies demonstrated that trauma in school was not a homogenous experience. Instead, multiple sources of trauma shaped their experiences of school such as civil war, family separation, family conflict and abuse, bullying at school, lack of teacher and parental support. Thus, the school space was not neutral. Instead it was shaped by a range of factors. At the core of the chapter, interviewees demonstrated that trauma in school manifested in different ways and these had been mainly silenced or repressed at the time. The main childhood aspiration was, therefore, control and agency in their lives. In their memories of trauma in school, interviewees had crafted belongingness and reasserted their agency through their life stories.

There were some key similarities across the four case studies, such as exclusion in school that emerged as a common experience for all non-white newly arrived students. These experiences must be located within the broader politics of multiculturalism, race and diversity that rendered interviewees' specific experience as young *forced* migrants invisible within

[116] Sigmond Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through: Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis, 2,' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated and ed., James Strachey Vol 12 (London: Hogarth, 1978), 146–56.
[117] Ibid., 150.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History*, 25.

their new society. We can return to Nira Yuval-Davis and her colleagues who argued for the importance of understanding gaps between migration and the politics of belonging.[120] This analytical focus is useful in understanding the gaps between school institutional structures and how they translated to students' educational experiences.[121] The research on refugee education in Australia has called for more holistic governmental approaches that considered individual and broader dimensions of inequality and disadvantage, such as changing pedagogical practices of teachers to make adjustment to refugee students, institutional resources to build students' competencies, increased funding and individual therapeutic interventions to assist students' psychological effects of displacement.[122] This chapter revealed a clear lack of support from schools to address the real needs of newly arrived migrants and their complex resettlement experiences that had significant implications for achieving educational success.[123] For Rajiv and June their connections to school as a site of stability and safety were completely disintegrated and weakened by daily stressors of violence from students and the complicity of staff at their school.

Trauma memory produced new understandings of historical contexts that have been under-examined, particularly related to the cultural dimensions of school experiences among young Tamils resettled in Australia. Aranya's memories indicated incomprehensible aspects of her past that pointed to hindrances caused by gendered and cultural norms that shed light on the importance of the self. By comparison, Thurga remained loyal to Tamil world views that helped her feel a sense of safety when she maintained relationships with relatives, even when she disagreed with them. Thurga used her experiences of family separation and distressing school experiences to ensure that her children understood the significance of learning and being Tamil in Australia that was tied to histories of war and forced migration, as well the challenges and rewards of resettlement. The underlying theme of the case studies presented in the chapter was therefore not only about the trauma entangled in school experiences, but also the experiences of survival and comprehending how that survival can confront our understandings of belonging as temporal constructions.

[120] Nira Yuval-Davis et al., *The Politics of Belonging* (London: Sage, 2006).
[121] Pinson et al., *The Education of Asylum-Seeking*.
[122] Matthews, 'School and Settlement,' 31-45.
[123] Karen Block et al., 'Supporting Schools to create an Inclusive Education for Refugee Studies,' *International Journal of Inclusive Education* Vol. 18, No. 12 (2014), 1337-1355.

CHAPTER SIX: 'Which category do we belong to?': Tamil Women's Experiences of Sri Lanka's Civil War and Belonging in Australia

During the early months of 2009, thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils, mainly youth, took to the streets of Australia to protest the Sri Lankan Government's final battles with the LTTE and the Tamil civilians who were caught in the crossfire in the tiny strip of land on the North-East coast of Sri Lanka.[1] By November that same year, two female Tamils in Australia had launched '300,000 Reasons', a global campaign to highlight the plight of 300,000 Tamils held in military-run camps in Sri Lanka. It was also not uncommon to hear Tamil women speaking on national radio on behalf of the Tamil-Australian community about the treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka. Today, Tamil women in Australia occupy diverse roles in Tamil political activities – as organisers, participants and speakers. Despite the historical roles that women have played in Tamil diaspora political organising, their connections to Sri Lanka's civil war have been unduly neglected in scholarship to the extent that, despite a growing body of research on Tamil diaspora political activism, almost none focuses explicitly on Tamil women's experiences within these critical interstices of diaspora-homeland.

A common response among female interviewees of this study, when asked about Sri Lanka's civil war and its end in 2009, is that while the war had ended, their homeland remained a site of confusion and alienation. The homeland appeared both familiar and unfamiliar, as the encountered reality of the post-war period differed from the enduring effects of war experiences. By contrast, then, was there an affirmation of host-land belonging? How does this kind of construction of the civil war occur? Can Tamil women of diaspora communities, who have been dislocated from their homeland for most of their lives, carry with them deeply felt memories of traumatic pasts that they have not always personally experienced, but so strongly identify with that it shapes their subjective views of war and belonging as adults? This chapter seeks to explore these questions, by focusing on Tamil women's reconstructions of Sri Lanka's civil war and their sense of belonging in the post-war period.

[1] This chapter has been published as a journal article: Niro Kandasamy, 'Memory and War: Tamil Women's Experiences of Sri Lanka's Civil War,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* December 2018. 10.1080/01419870.2018.1557727.

The Tamil diaspora's connections to Sri Lanka's civil war throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are well-established in the literature.[2] However, the connections tend to be explored in relation to specific events or broader social developments: for example, the final stages of the civil war in 2009,[3] and anti-Tamil riots in 1958,[4] or political connections that demonstrate transnational Tamil relations and solidify war-infused ethnic identities.[5] Memory and memory work, especially of minority groups within diaspora communities, are less publicised but significant, especially for understanding how the Tamil diaspora frames its understandings of Sri Lanka's civil war.[6]

In the chapter, I consider these gaps in relation to understanding how Tamil women reconstructed the civil war and crafted a sense of belonging as part of a Tamil diaspora community. This focus provides a new dimension to discussions about the Tamil diaspora which have not been incorporated in enough depth, showing the varieties of Tamil experiences of war.[7] It also contributes to Australian forced migration literature on gendered and generational experiences of civil war through questions of postmemory and lived experiences.[8] The chapter builds on feminist ways of knowing that highlight diverse imaginings that intertwine the political and personal, but in particular, relations between memory and temporal constructions of civil war.[9] Bringing a feminist mode of knowing is

[2] Sarah Wayland, 'Ethnonationalist Networks and Transnational Opportunities: The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora,' *Review of International Studies* Vol. 30, No. 3 (2004), 405–426; Camilla Orjuela, 'Distant Warriors, Distant Peace Workers? Multiple Diaspora Roles in Sri Lanka's Violent Conflict,' *Global Networks* Vol. 8, No. 4 (2008), 436–452; Luxshi Vimalarajah and R. Cheran. 'Empowering Diasporas: The Dynamics of Post-war Transnational Tamil Politics,' Berghof Occasional Paper No. 31 (Berlin: Berghof Peace Support, 2010); Monika Hess and Benedikt Korf, 'Tamil Diaspora and the Political Spaces of Second-generation Activism in Switzerland,' *Global Networks* Vol. 14, No. 4 (2014), 419–437; Amarnath Amarasingam, *Pain, Pride and Politics* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015).
[3] Daphne Jeyapal, 'The Evolving Politics of Race and Social Work Activism: A Call Across Borders,' *Social Work* Vol. 62, No. 1 (2017), 45–52.
[4] Laavanyan Ratnapalan, 'Memories of Ethnic Violence in Sri Lanka among Immigrant Tamils in the UK,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 35, No. 9 (2012), 1539–1557.
[5] Jeyapal, 'The Evolving Politics,' 45-52; Ishan Ashutosh, 'Immigrant Protests in Toronto: Diaspora and Sri Lanka's Civil War,' *Citizenship Studies* Vol. 17, No. 2 (2013), 197–210.
[6] Orjuela, 'Distant Warriors,' 436-452; Madurika Rasaratnam, 'Political Identity of the British Tamil Diaspora: Implications for Engagement,' in Diaspora Dialogues for Development and PeaceProject (Berlin: Berghof Peace Support/Luzeern: Centre for Just Peace and Democracy, 2011).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Joy Damousi, *Memory and Migration in the Shadow of War: Australia's Greek Immigrants after World War 2 and the Greek Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 198-221.
[9] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*; Kirrily Pells, 'Connective Memories: Reflection on Relations between Childhood, Memory and Temporality,' *Entanglements* Vol.1, No. 2 (2018), 97–

used to demonstrate a 'connective' approach to memory that is not only embodied, materialized and intersectional, but also offers a more dynamic lens for understanding how people mediate and translate memories from their marginal social and political positions and in relation to, and through, others.[10]

Memory and Post-War Sri Lanka

Indeed, examining memory in Sri Lanka's post-war context has become a burgeoning area of inquiry that focuses on a militarised past.[11] Rachael Seioghe illuminates state-sponsored efforts that forcibly suppress counter-memories of war through the physical destruction of graveyards and monuments that represented Tamil people's memories of war.[12] In response, a growing body of scholarship focuses on the different ways that Tamils memorialise the Sri Lankan nation-state's military defeat of the LTTE in 2009 and declared the end of a thirty-year civil war: as evidence of genocide,[13] as transnational actors seeking Tamil justice,[14] and the performativity of Tamil people driven by the LTTE dominance and their diminishing sense of identity, culture, and representation after the military defeat.[15] Such memory work correlates with arguments about the structural and cultural imperatives of connecting the political with the personal.[16]

101; Vijay Agnew, ed., *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Paola Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[10] Pells, 'Connective Memories,' 97-101.

[11] Neloufer de Mel, *Militarising Sri Lanka: Popular Culture, Memory and Narrative in the Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Sage, 2007); Suvendrini Perera, 'Remembering and Contested Patriotism: Embodied Practices of the Sri Lankan Nation-state,' in *Contested Spaces: Citizenship and Belonging in Contemporary Times*, ed., M. Thapan (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2010), 21–46; Amarnath Amarasingam, and Jennifer Hyndman, 'Touring 'Terrorism': Landscapes of Memory in Post-war Sri Lanka,' *Geography Compass* Vol. 8, No. 8 (2014), 560–575;
Ashutosh, 'Immigrant Protests,' 197–210; Rachel Seoighe, *War, Denial and Nation-building in Sri Lanka: After the End*, Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[12] Seoighe, *War, Denial and Nation Building.*

[13] Kumaravadivel Guruparan, and Sivakami Rajamanoharan, 'Four Years On, Genocide Continues off the Battlefield,' Open Democracy, 2013.

[14] Madurika Rasaratnam, *Tamils and the Nation: India and Sri Lanka Compared* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2016).

[15] Sharika Thiranagama, 'Muslims, Ethnicity and Minority Identity in Sri Lanka,' in *Politics and Religion in South Asia: Wither Secularism?* 'Purushartha' Series, 30, ed., C. Jaffrelot and A. M. Arif, 241–266. Paris: Editions de l'EHESS, 2012.

[16] Radhika Natarajan, 'Memories Engendered in Diaspora: Multivocal Narratives of Tamil Refugee Women,' in *Theorizing Social Memories: Concepts and Contexts*, eds., Gerd Sebald and Jatin Wagle (Oxen: Routledge, 2016), 184-207.

This analysis thus seeks to develop the relationship between the political and personal through discourses of memory. It draws on Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory',[17] alongside personal experiences, as expressions of reconstructing identities and belonging. Hirsch's concept of postmemory, of the ways that memories are passed on from one generation to the next, is used alongside personal experiences to show that Tamil women's memories of Sri Lanka's civil war were tied to not only the past but also their present and future. In the process, they navigated connections to a homeland that continues to exclude them as Tamils on the one hand and as marginalised subjects in a historically patriarchal Tamil society on the other. In turn, I develop the relationship between these arguments and represent Tamil women's resistances and ambivalences through their voices and actions that are mainly absent in the literature.

In some ways, it is unsurprising that there are very few Tamil studies that foreground gendered or generational diaspora perspectives given that the majority of studies have primarily focused on homogeneity within Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka. For example, where Tamil women are the focus they tend to be situated historically within patriarchal functions and ideologies of the LTTE.[18] Notwithstanding, scholars such as Nimmi Gowrinathan have challenged such interpretations.[19] Indeed, it is only recently and in response to the end of Sri Lanka's civil war that a space has emerged for scholarship that explores political and personal reflections of marginalised subjects within the Tamil diaspora that reinforce, expand, and at times question and challenge, taken for granted truths about Tamil diaspora connections to Sri Lanka's civil war.[20]

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[17] Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory,' *Poetics Today* Vol. 29, No. 1 (2008), 103–128; Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997); Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

[18] Radhika Coomaraswamy, 'Tiger Women and the Question of Women's Emancipation,' *Pravada* Vol. 4, No. 9, (2016), 8–10; Radhika Coomaraswamy, and Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham. 'Being Tamil in a Different Way,' in *Pathways of Dissent: Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka*, ed., R. Cheran (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), 107–138; Kim Jordan and Myriam. Denov, 'Birds of Freedom? Perspectives on Female Emancipation and Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,' *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol. 9, No.1 (2007), 41-62.

[19] Nimmi Gowrinathan, 'The Committed Female Fighter: The Political Identities of Tamil Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* Vol. 19, No. 3 (2017), 327–341.

[20] Madurika Rasaratnam, 'Political Identity of the British Tamil Diaspora: Implications for Engagement,' in Diaspora Dialogues for Development and Peace Project (Berlin: Berghof Peace Support/Luzeern: Centre for Just Peace and Democracy, 2011); Hess and Korf, 'Tamil Diaspora,' 419-437; Natarajan, 'Memories Engendered in Diaspora,' 184–207.

The chapter addresses these gaps by focusing on the sixteen Tamil women of the study to examine how they embody, mobilise, resist, and ultimately reconstruct memories of Sri Lanka's civil war. The chapter foregrounds postmemory and personal experiences as 'lived' connections to their homeland. Tamil women's experience also reveals the extent to which they have been influenced by social, cultural and political norms of the worlds they have inhabited, towards an understanding of why they constructed their memories in a certain way at a certain time. Centralising their voices is crucial for understanding how memory is tied to temporalities of constructing the civil war, but also what it means to be Tamil during critical periods in their lives and the lives of other Tamils.

For Kaushal, like many other Tamil women of the study who forcibly migrated to Australia as children, the civil war in their homeland is constructed through multiple memories including family stories of displacement, personal experiences of forced migration, emotional impacts of the final stages of war, return visits to Sri Lanka as 'tourists', ongoing anti-state narratives of Tamil persecution and the Australian Government's treatment of Tamils seeking asylum.[21] For each of the women I interviewed, memories of war lingered in the present.[22] But, like everything historical, Tamil women's memories of war were undergoing a constant transformation, they were 'subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power'.[23] In recalling their memories of war, each woman in the study drew together fragments of memory that were stored in the historical archive of their family stories and personal experiences. In focusing on postmemory and personal experiences of war, I argue for a focus on understanding how Tamil women construct the civil war. The multiple fragments of memories that were recalled by interviewees reveal multiple senses of self that were tied to the homeland and resettlement. The duality of embodying postmemory and personal experiences of war is a useful analytical starting point. Hence, next, I examine postmemory and personal experiences that serve to capture Tamil women's connections to Sri Lanka's civil war.

[21] Interview with Kaushal. Sydney, July 15, 2016.
[22] Selma Leydesdorff et al., *Gender and Memory* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017).
[23] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed., Padmini Mongia (London: Arnold, 1996), 225.

Postmemory and the War Generation

Counter-memories of Sri Lanka's civil war and its final stages in 2009 fiercely contest official state narratives about the military defeat of the LTTE terrorism.[24] Counter-memories of Tamil suffering, persecution, victimisation, as well as commemorative practices and new iterations of nationalism and identity expose the Sri Lankan nation-state's attempts to impose a collective memory on the one hand, and the forms of agency that characterise individual and collective Tamil experiences that resist state narratives on the other.[25] Here, I draw on Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory' which she developed to examine the memories of children of Holocaust survivors.[26] Postmemory signifies memories that the 'generation after', characterised by dislocation and belatedness carries, of the personal, collective and cultural traumas of the past.[27] However, postmemory does not simply refer to a linear temporal delay or a different location in the aftermath, as Hirsch reminds us 'post' is more than simple linearity.[28] Rather, it is about the structure and prevalence of intergenerational returns to traumatic knowledge and embodied experiences only through the stories, images, and behaviours among which that generation after growing up experienced.[29] These are effectively memories of memories.

Although mediated, filtered and re-presented postmemory is a powerful and significant form of memory.[30] On the one hand, it can reveal how those who lived through political turmoil and mass human rights abuses reconstruct and transmit their memories to the next generation and how the next generation receives and constructs their meanings about that past on the other.[31] Often the outcomes of memory passed on from 'those who were there' and 'those who came after' point to the deep embeddedness of the past and its ongoing presence in people's search for meaning, truth, identity and belonging.[32] As Hirsch argues, postmemory

[24] Seoighe, *War, Denial and Nation Building.*
[25] Ibid.
[26] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory,' 103–128.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Susana Kaiser, *Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the 'Dirty War'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
[31] Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarised Refugees* (California: University of California Press, 2014), 139-170.
[32] Kaiser, *Postmemories of Terror*; Craig Larkin, 'Beyond the War? The Lebanese Postmemory Experience,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 42, No. 4 (2010), 615–635; Joanna Kidman and Vincent O'Malley, 'Questioning the Canon: Colonial History, Counter-memory and Youth Activism,' *Memory Studies*. Advance online publication, 2018.

is about how the 'multiple ruptures and radical breaks introduced by trauma and catastrophe inflect intra-, inter and trans-generational inheritance'.[33] Thus, postmemory seeks to highlight distinct generational experiences of being attached and dislocated from the past.

Postmemory is visible in the lives of Tamils in the diaspora.[34] While the Tamil women of the study carried personal experiences of war and can be classified as the '1.5 generation', they also carry with them postmemories of war, of family stories from before they were born. These included parents' experiences of seeking shelter during armed conflict and the need to escape the conflict and rebuild lives in distant lands. Moreover, my interviewees also interpreted *how* these stories were told (or not told) to them. Kaushal, who I mentioned in the previous section, is a twenty-four-year-old lawyer living in Sydney. She migrated from Nawalapatiya in Sri Lanka to Sydney in 2000 with her family when she was eight years old. She recalls living a 'pleasant' childhood in Sri Lanka, while simultaneously recalling that her parents had 'kept me quite sheltered about the political situation.[35] I don't know a lot about the reasons why we moved here or much of the conflict'.[36] These opening sentiments in Kaushal's interview foreshadowed her parents' silence about family experiences of war.[37]

The sheltering and downplaying of the war by the older Tamil generation created feelings of disconnection, unawareness and confusion about the civil war in the next generation.[38] However, for many young Tamils like Kaushal, the older generation's attempts to 'protect' and 'shelter' them from the war simply motivated a deeper curiosity about that past.[39] Their curiosity was partly stimulated by the humanitarian catastrophe that unfolded in the final stages of the war. When Kaushal probed her parents during the final stages of war, she learned that before she was born in Nawalapatiya in 1992 her family were forced to leave their home in Jaffna in 1989 due to armed conflict between (IPKF) Indian Peace Keeping Forces and Tamil militant groups. Moreover, she described feeling startled by the humour

[33] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory,' 111.
[34] Stine Bruland, 'Nationalism as Meaningful Life Projects: Identity Construction among Politically Active Tamil Families in Norway,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 35, No. 12 (2012), 2134–2152; Alice Bloch, 'Talking about the Past, Locating it in the Present: The Second Generation from Refugee Backgrounds Making Sense of their Parents' Narratives,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 31, No. 4 (2018), 647–663.
[35] Interview with Kaushal. Sydney, July 15, 2016.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Nayani Thiyagarajah, "'I Can Hear Her Breathing….' Second-generation Sri Lankan Tamil Women Reflect on the 2009 Toronto Tamil Protests.' Masters Thesis, York University, 2015.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Interview with Kaushal. Sydney, July 15, 2016.

and ‘matter of fact’ nature of her parents’ telling of stories of war, such as the story of her father venturing outside of the bunkers under heavy shelling to bring back her mother’s shoes.[40] Kaushal’s response to her father’s humorous take on the story, ‘that’s not funny, you guys were getting bombed!’, indicates how memories of Sri Lanka’s civil war were being reinterpreted and reconstructed in the next generation.[41]

Kaushal’s connections to the war typify the experiences of a distinct generation of Tamils who are the focus of this study: those who were born in Sri Lanka and have very few or no lived experiences of war before migrating to another country, and yet, are aware of the war’s effects on their community, family and personal sense of loss and survival. What makes this generation unique, then, is that their postmemory is characterised not only by an attachment to, and dislocation by the war that they were exposed to from birth, but also their curiosity about their past and ability to mobilise themselves to change the course of their history. In relocating to another country, Tamil families focused on rebuilding their lives in a new home; elements of the war were suppressed, hidden and ultimately produced fragmented memories about a distant time and place. The final periods of war, as well as the post-war context, had revealed hidden family stories and new understandings of war, thus opening up new questions of home, identity and belonging tied to multiple spaces. For Kaushal, a sense of confusion ensued:

> Are you meant to be patriotic to Sri Lanka or are you meant to be patriotic to Tamil people? South Indian Tamil people? Which category do we belong to?[42]

The ambivalence at the heart of Kaushal’s question is closely linked to memories of the war that Tamil women like Kaushal carry with them. The liminal spaces between postmemory and personal experiences produced new forms of ambivalent belongings that further complicate the ‘post’ in postmemory which Hirsch reminds us is ‘more than a temporal delay and more than a location in an aftermath’.[43] The women of the study embodied a sense of responsibility, uncertainty and ambivalence about their sense of self and collective experiences of belonging to a global Tamil community. In this regard postmemory, personal experiences and the spaces in between can lead to a rethinking of Sri Lanka’s civil war

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.

through the voices of Tamil women whose sense of belongingness speak to increasingly complex diaspora-homeland connections in a post-war context.

Postmemory and the Communal Self

In early 2009, thousands of diaspora Tamils protested Sri Lankan armed forces' invasion of Mullivaikkal that resulted in multiple forms of campaigning.[44] Tamils in Australia took to the streets in heightened political fervour. A female spokesperson for Australia's Tamil diaspora demanded the Australian Government 'use…diplomatic power to push Sri Lanka to enter into a ceasefire'.[45] The Government showed some concern about the escalation of violence in Sri Lanka in 2008, it condemned the 'use of terrorist methods by the LTTE' as 'completely unacceptable.'[46] The Government's condemnation of the LTTE to terrorism was not completely unexpected, given that it was only a year earlier in May 2007 that three Tamil Australian citizens from Melbourne and Sydney were charged in Australia's first non-Muslim related terrorism charges.[47] Tamil women remembered the final stages of the war as a humanitarian catastrophe. Their memories speak to their role as 'witnesses' of the war that cannot be separated from their historical forms of individual and collective exclusion as

[44] Pippa Norris, 'Young People and Political Activism: From the Politics of Loyalties to the Politics of Choice?' Report for the Council of Europe Symposium, Strasbourg, November 27–28, 2003.
[45] Dylan Welch, 'Protest Closes CBD Block in Rush Hour,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 8, 2009.
[46] Australian Government, 'Australia Condemns Killing of Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister,' Media Release, April 7, 2008. FA056.
[47] On 1 May 2007, two Tamil men were arrested in Melbourne, followed in July by another Tamil man from Sydney. Parliament of Australia, 'Terrorism Court Cases.' Accessed on January 15, 2018. https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Browse_by_Topic/TerrorismLaw/Courtcases.
The men were charged by the Australian Federal Police with offences under the Criminal Code Act 1995 in relation to their connections to the LTTE. Evidence presented in the trial revealed that the prosecutions were made at the request of the Sri Lankan Government, however in 2009 the charges were withdrawn under the Criminal Code as the LTTE was not proscribed under the Criminal Code. Instead, the men were charged under the Charter of the United Nations Act 1945 in which the LTTE are listed as a terrorist organisation. The three men pleaded guilty and were sentenced to one two-year imprisonment, and two one-year imprisonments, respectively. The Tamil men were charged for being members of LTTE and providing them with support, including up to one million dollars. They were sentenced under the *Charter of the United Nations Act 1945*, in which the LTTE were listed as a terrorist organisation. The arrests demonstrated Australia's response to Sri Lankan secretary of Foreign Affairs Palitha Kohana who stated that up to thirty per cent of LTTE funds was funnelled from Australia. Victoria Sentas, 'Terrorist Organsiation Offences and the LTTE: R v Vinayagamoorthy,' *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* Vol. 22, No.1 (2010), 159.
While Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer dismissed that the funds amounted to thirty per cent, the Government condemned the LTTE; Australian Tamil representative bodies argued this would jeopardise future humanitarian efforts. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Australia Funding Tamil Tigers: Downer,' May 2, 2007.

Tamils.[48] For Keerthi, attending protests with her children had conjured memories of her own childhood experiences in Sri Lanka when the IPKF came in 1989 and interrogated her family:

> They would be violent, like they would come to our house once the Tigers [Tamil Tigers] had gone and interrogate my brothers by sending them down the water tank. If it gets serious, they would take my brother away near the temple next to our house and threaten him with death. They would hold all of us by the throat and threaten us, even me and my mum.[49] (Keerthi)

Keerthi emphasised that 'even' her and her mother were targeted by IPKF, underscoring the severity of political turmoil at that time.[50] Her personal experiences became testimonies of historical violence against Tamils in the homeland that reappeared in her memories during protests. In speaking about Sri Lanka in the post-war context, Keerthi's sense of belonging however complex a process is firmly tied to Australia.

> There is nothing to say and there is nothing new to do there. We went through hardship and left the place. All our assets are there, but if we go back now, no one would come looking for us. So, there is no use in going back, it would be just a waste of our lives only.[51] (Keerthi)

Here, the distinction between 'home' and 'away' does not completely hold, for Keerthi has to explain how she constructs her sense of belonging to a distant homeland. Keerthi locates herself against multiple social positionings – as a woman, young, Tamil, refugee. For some interviewees, family stories created a personal connection to collective experiences of anguish about the civil war. For example, Nivetha identified that her mother retold experiences of violence, and in particular, the Tamil massacre in July 1983 that culminated in the separation of the family. The family stories of the 1983 Tamil massacre were told in graphic detail:

> They were chopping people left, right and centre in 1983 in Colombo. Even my brother and sister were in Colombo. They all had to go and hide behind somewhere because they came looking for them with knives, just to finish any Tamil people off. But because the guy at the top of the street was a Sinhalese guy and he was very good friends with my aunty and uncle he stayed in front of the house and said there's no Tamil people there.[52] (Nivetha)

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[48] Daphne Jeyapal, 'Regarding the Protests of Others,' *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2016), 60-79.
[49] Interview with Keerthi. Melbourne, September 15, 2017.
[50] Bryan Pfaffenberger, 'Sri Lanka in 1987: Indian Intervention and Resurgence of the JVP,' *Asian Survey* Vol. 28, No. 2 (1988), 145–147.
[51] Interview with Keerthi. Melbourne, September 15, 2017.
[52] Interview with Nivetha. Melbourne, August 10, 2016.

The pre-migration context became a symbolic site of postmemory that was used to give meaning to their protesting during the final stages of war.[53] As Nivetha said, 'I fully support the Tigers for standing up. If they weren't there, we would have been wiped out so fast. I go for the *urrvalam* (protests) here, everything.'[54] The traumas of war including the final stages of the war in 2009 had represented a formative historical experience for these Tamil women as they simultaneously mobilised their Tamil communities through large political activism projects, and constantly navigated what it meant to be 'Tamil' in their personal lives and in the lives of other Tamils.[55]

Not linked to either the Australian or Sri Lankan state, the Tamil women became part of a stateless Tamil diaspora attached to their past as marginalised subjects embroiled in hegemonic power struggles.[56] In reconstructing narratives of Tamil victimhood, Nivetha positioned the LTTE as 'standing up' for Tamil people, otherwise 'we would have been wiped out so fast', thus supporting them was a matter of generational survival. In committing to Tamil solidarity movements, Tamil women stated they attended protests with their children but more meaningfully used these spaces to pass on life stories of childhood oppression. One interviewee, Rajani, identifies the importance of inter-generational war stories.

> We always tell my elder son, look, this is the place we were born, this is Jaffna, this is what happened here. We told him everything what happened here. Still he is too young to understand but he needs to understand.[57] (Rajani)

Thus, remembering the self in the past was critical to making sense of actions for political change and justice even after the official end to the war. These women had embodied sufferings from their past and parents' past thus beginning an intergenerational journey out of the darkness of silence.[58] They were reviving a 'whispered history' and a 'silenced identity'.[59]

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Tom O'Neill, 'In the Path of Heroes: Second-Generation Tamil-Canadians after the LTTE,' *Identities* Vol. 22, No. 1 (2015), 124-139.
[56] Bahar Baser, and Ashok Swain, 'Stateless Diaspora Groups and their Repertoires of Nationalist Activism in Host Countries,' *Journal of International Relations* Vol. 8, No. 1 (2010), 37–60.
[57] Interview with Rajani. Sydney, December 10, 2015.
[58] Nirad Pragasam, '"Tigers on the Mind": An Interrogation of Conflict Diasporas and Long Distance Nationalism. A Study of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in London,' PhD dissertation, The London School of Economics, 2012, 80.
[59] Hastings Donnan, and Kirk Simpson, 'Silence and Violence among Northern Ireland Border Protestants,' *Ethnos* Vol. 72, No. 1 (2007), 9–10.

Competing Memories: Intergenerational Challenges and Women in Tamil Political Organising

Even as postmemory and personal experiences of war are absorbed into the collective memories of exiled Tamils, these memories are continually contested and reinvented in diasporic contexts.[60] This was particularly evident when Tamil women entered Tamil political spaces that were sites of masculine ideals that reinforced historical and cultural norms. Some Tamil women pursued positions of leadership in political organisations and described their decisions as natural outcomes of their strong generational connections to the war. However, their experiences in Tamil organisations indicate tensions between the past and present that reproduced uneven power and gender relations. Janeeta's life stories demonstrate this point.

Janeeta

Shortly after she was born in Vaddukoddai in Jaffna in 1989 Janeeta's family relocated to Colombo where the family lived for the next five years before migrating to Australia as refugees.[61] She stated that she had no lived experiences of war but remained strongly connected to the violence in her homeland through family stories of survival, 'my parents didn't try to shelter me from the harshness.' In resettlement, Janeeta's parents' stories of experiencing violence often became the backdrop for hearing about intensifying violence in the homeland that strengthened her connections to a collective memory of Tamil suffering. For Janeeta, entering Tamil organisational spaces reflected the inescapable impacts of war on her sense of self.

> It made me really strong and as a woman as well because women, especially in the Tamil community don't really get involved in political activism, or organisations or ever take leadership in a political organisation and women that are young as well so I was often in situations where I was in meetings with middle aged men and me as like a 21 year old so it made me really assertive in terms of not letting go of my rights, just keeping shit together in that kind of situation which is really good.

However, her decision to enter Tamil organisational spaces highlighted barriers to political engagement due to her gender and age. These barriers provoked her recollections of women's

[60] Natarajan, 'Memories Engendered in Diaspora,' 184-207.
[61] Interview with Janeeta. Sydney, September 18, 2016. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.

historical roles as occupying lesser roles than men, for example at *Maveerar Naal* (LTTE Heroes Day). She questioned why women's presence was limited to holding flowers for 'memorial offerings'. By contrast, she noted that Tamil men occupied various roles including important roles as speech makers and hoisting the Tamil Eelam flag. This comparison fuelled her observation that women cadres in the LTTE identified themselves as equal to their male counterparts.

> It didn't really hit home what it meant. I didn't understand the cultural reasons for it that women don't traditionally do things like that but it also doesn't make sense to me because if you look at like the Tamil Tigers there are so many women leaders in there and there's literally no gender discrimination or difference in people or their ranks or anything like that so that was a bit confusing to me because we were both politically motivated for a similar struggle but our dynamics were so different to what we were trying to uphold. Politically we were fighting for a separate state which is what the Tamil Tigers were fighting for in a literal sense, but our dynamics were so different in the sense that we were still bound by cultural barriers which were still kind of broken down.

In Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, constructions of Tamil woman are implicated directly in the LTTE ideology.[62] Malathi De Alwis conceptualises women activists in the LTTE ideology as 'masculinised virgin warrior'; the woman is 'pure', 'chaste', and masculine – fighting for independence and self-determination as Tamil women where *Tamil* is always conceived in the masculine.[63] Indeed, some Tamil women in the LTTE agreed that they were underrepresented in the Political Wing but argued that things were changing.[64] Thus, some women combatants made explicit that their feminist aspirations were an integral part of the Tamil national liberation struggle.[65] They highlighted social restrictions such as being unable to freely ride their bicycles, be in public alone, and travel by boats; within the LTTE they had opportunities to do these things.[66] Janeeta's experiences in Australia cannot be compared to women's motivations in the LTTE. Instead, what emerges is a shared sense of agency that transcends distance and time. Janeeta described her sense of creative agency by highlighting the ingrained gender and age imbalances that she observed in her political engagements.

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[62] Coomaraswamy, 'Tiger Women,' 9.
[63] Malathi de Alwis, 'The Changing Role of Women in Sri Lankan Society,' *Social Research* Vol. 69, No. 3 (2002), 683.
[64] Miranda Alison, 'Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,' *Civil Wars* Vol. 6, No. 4 (2003), 47.
[65] Alison, 'Cogs in the Wheel,' 37-54; Gowrinathan, 'The Committed Female Fighter,' 327-341.
[66] Alison, 'Cogs in the Wheel,' 49–51.

However, her underlying motivations were tied to memories of war and self-determination that bridged gaps between her past, present and future. Her family stories and political developments were deeply entrenched in her sense of self and motivated her responsibility to pursue higher levels of political engagement, when she explained

> I'm actually really lucky because we haven't directly lost anyone in the war or in the line of fire so it's really…I think my mum's take and my family's take is that they were all political for Tamil rights and sovereignty. So, the Vaddukoddai Resolution which was the first time Tamil people said that they wanted to vote…that happened in my village. My parents were there, my grandparents were there, my whole family was there. They're the connections that I have, that my family has to the struggle.

The Vaddukoddai Resolution in 1976 was a historical moment for Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka that asserted a 'Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of Tamil Eelam based on the right to self-determination'. The resolution highlighted the intense resistance to the infiltration of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism in Tamil areas in the North and East. Janeeta's strong personal and communal connection to this memoryscape of Vaddukoddai as a physical site of historical significance connects her past to the present and future when she said

> I come from a generation that was brought here as children, but I was able to hold onto my culture or my people, my connection to my people and my roots but I think what would make me die happy would be to raise kids who think that way. Despite the fact that my kids will be born and raised in Australia and have no physical connection to Sri Lanka or the war, if I can build a generation of Tamil kids who knew what my generation has done I would be happy. So, I'll do whatever I can to contribute towards that. Because this isn't over. The political struggle started after 2009 and it doesn't have an end that's going to happen in the next decade or two and could potentially go beyond my life and into the next generation.

Here, memories from before her time not only hold significance to her ongoing connections to the war, but also fuel her political aspirations for the future. During the final stages of war, she was involved in the implementation of several political activities at the grass roots level, such as organising protests, designing t-shirts for protestors, making placards, and dance performances that recreated scenes of war. Even after the civil war officially ended, Janeeta continued her activism and participated in a hunger-strike in a solidarity campaign in Western Sydney that called on India and United Nations member states, including Australia, to support post-war investigations and UN-led referendum on establishing a separate Tamil

state.[67] In some ways, Janeeta's continued political activism embodied the words of the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, who in his final speech on 27th November 2008 praised the work of young diaspora Tamils for their role in the liberation struggle and called for their continued support, when he said:

> I would take this opportunity to express my affection and praise to our Tamil youth living outside our homeland for the prominent and committed role they play in actively continuing towards the liberation of our nation. Let us make a firm and determined resolution to follow fully in the past of our heroes.[68]

However, postmemory and personal experiences reveal multiple layers in Janeeta's political activism experiences. Although notions of freedom were connected to ideas of a separate Tamil state, Tamil Eelam, these connections were primarily attached to a particular land and its cultural tradition that did not include the desire to return once the war ended.[69] From one perspective, the relationship to the homeland is defined by a range of factors including liberal values, rights, claims and political affiliations that emanate from representative Tamil organisations.[70] From another perspective, connections to that homeland within critical diaspora activism spaces resulted from coming to terms with a racialised past that highlighted personal and collective experiences of suffering. Memories of the homeland, whether tied to family stories or memoryscapes of significant landscapes such as Vaddukoddai, constitute one layer. Tamil collective histories of Sinhala-Sri Lankan nation-state oppression tied to the LTTE ideology and the wider exile experience constitute another layer, while women's individual views and reinterpretations of the past, present and future constitute the third layer. Thus, postmemory, personal experiences and the liminal spaces in between disrupt discourses of a politicised Tamil identity that was transforming the final stages of the war and in the post-war context.

Remnants of War and the Emptiness of Home

[67] Students Protest Blog, 'Australian Tamil Youths still going strong while getting batted by the rain.' Accessed on January 10, 2018. studentsprotest.blogspot.com/2013/03/australian-tamil-youths-still-going.html. The experiences of war affected Tamils before, during and after the civil war continues to emerge as evidence of loss, survival and resilience. See, Adayaalam Centre for Policy Research, 'Stories of Resilience.' Accessed on October 2, 2018. http://storiesofresilience.com/.
[68] Vellupillai Prabhakaran, Speech given on Maveerar Naal November 27, 2008. Translated by Dineshan Thangavel. Accessed on January 15, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_I61PIfkggQ.
[69] Vimalarajah and Cheran, 'Empowering Diasporas,' 21.
[70] Ibid.

The Tamil women I interviewed revealed postmemories that were embedded in the family house in Sri Lanka. The family house was one of their earliest memories of Sri Lanka and the site of numerous family stories from before they were born. In the aftermath of the war, the family house became a memoryscape – a physical site of memory – that reinforced their disconnections and sense of home-lessness in Sri Lanka.[71] The physical structure of the house in the post-war context is symbolic of the emptiness that the women felt towards their homeland. Indeed, for some, the place has become a 'tourist destination'.[72] One interviewee returns to Sri Lanka each year, and her disconnections to that place remain strong.

> Sinhalese they can die for their country because they have everything they want, they have given nothing to us. Even if you go back, we are treated like second citizens. I go there every year because my husband has a sister there, but I treat Sri Lanka as a holiday destination like Malaysia or Singapore. I got not patriotism towards my country, there's not attachment after you see what they've done to the people.[73] (Meera)

For all of the Tamil women I interviewed, returning to the family house, in its dilapidated state, rests as an architectural marker and physical trace of the family's 'routes' and their history of migration.[74] The house, then, serves as a 'historical monument and point of departure' that is anchored in family stories of everyday life and sudden emigration, against the backdrop of political conflict – 'the concrete fact of what was left behind' and yet remains elusive in (re)imaginations of belonging.[75]

Despite the upsurge in return visits as well as an abundance of commercial buildings in Sri Lanka, war memories demarcate different topographies of survival and death, victory and defeat, power and weakness. The contrast of empty and dilapidated Tamil houses against the numerous guesthouses and hotels that have sprung up in recent years, require further inquiry into Sri Lanka's memoryscapes.[76] Ludishya recounted family stories and vague personal experiences of being permanently separated from her family house by 'Sinhala mobs' during

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[71] Toby Butler, 'Memoryscape: Integrating Oral History, Memory and Landscape on the River Thames,' in *People and their Pasts: Public History Today*, ed., Paul Ashton and Hilda Kean (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 223–239.
[72] Interview with Keerthi. Melbourne, September 15, 2017.
[73] Interview with Meera. Melbourne, October 23, 2016.
[74] Sumugan Sivanesan, 'The Jaffna Connection,' 2018. Self-Published Article. http://www.sivanesan.net/.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Sumugan Sivanesan, Movements of Minorities: AusLankan Struggles for Transnational Justice,' *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* Vol. 13, No. 2 (2016), 1–16.

the anti-Tamil riots in 1983.[77] After fleeing from rioters, Ludishya's family never returned to their house and lived with relatives and subsequently migrated to Perth in 1984.[78] She described that the 'large house [that] stood out like a sore thumb on this big road' in Dehiwala and that her father, a 'young Tamil businessman' had put in a 'lot of effort' and 'love' into building the 'dream house' only two years earlier.[79]

Not only the abrupt dislocation from the family house but being unable to return had produced enduring memoryscapes of family loss, as in one interviewee's family experiences when their grandfather passed away in Jaffna:

> He passed away in 2008 so, I didn't get to see him. The sad part was when he passed away my mum couldn't go because the A9 (road) was blocked and I don't think flights were running as well. She didn't get that closure. I saw for the first time how war impacted someone even though she lived away from the country. She didn't get to pay her last respects. Most of the time you don't know what's happening there. In a sense we were worse off because you had that anxiety of not knowing what was happening. It was quite sad. In the early 2000s we started calling them [grandparents]. They would come to a booth and then they got a home phone rather late. He was elderly, he just passed out on the spot. That was the first death in the family that I encountered as well, and we couldn't properly process it because we couldn't be there.[80] (Varuni)

As Varuni emphasised, a family death can turn a child's perception of war and its consequences on family relationships into memory more vivid and enduring, one where the pain and suffering after a loved one's death struggle to be processed or closed. Varuni arrived in Australia in 1994 and carried with her very few memories of Sri Lanka, thus relying on family stories. The passing of her grandfather in 2008 however produced memories that were both familiar and unfamiliar to her life stories: the memoryscape of the family house is unreached and added to her family stories that were continuously exposed to the vulnerabilities and insecurities of war. Another interviewee, Hereni who was born in Batticaloa in the East retells family experiences of displacement shortly after she was born in 1987.[81] The idea of 'moving houses quite a few times' including 'moving from Trinco

[77] Interview with Ludishya, Melbourne, August 12, 2016.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Interview with Varuni, Melbourne, March 15, 2016.
[81] Interview with Hereni. Sydney, November 18, 2016

(Trincomalee) to Batticaloa' became common family stories.[82] Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, violent clashes between Government armed forces and Tamil militants turned the East into conflict-ridden territory comparable to the North, as I highlighted in chapter 3 of the thesis. Hereni's postmemory and her personal experiences of these times are indistinguishable:

> I remember hearing helicopters and my uncle was carrying me. I remember it very vividly, I don't know if it was told to me a few times, I must have been really young then.[83] (Hereni)

The fusion of postmemory and personal experiences are instructive; the war is felt as a family story and as a lived experience. While Hereni does not make specific references to the perpetrators, she uses the family house as a site of instability that foreshadows their forced migration to Australia. The unidentified perpetrators reappeared in her experiences of protest at the end of Sri Lanka's war when she rhetorises, 'do I have to pigeon hole myself in one of these groups or can I just be Tamil?'.[84]

For another interviewee, Sinthuja, being Tamil in Sri Lanka signified exclusion and discrimination that were tied to a sense of home-lessness.[85] In her return visit to Sri Lanka during the ceasefire in 2004 she described feeling a sense of emptiness at the state of the family house while being subjected to the 'complete tourist experience', when she recalled:

> I went and stayed with a Sinhalese friend of mine who was working there and we went to these tourist places and it was during ceasefire time so I was willing to tell people that I was Tamil and I was pretending to be a Tamil from Jaffna, I was trying to get local rates. She took me to her family's ancestral home where her great uncle still lives, and I remember thinking this kind of profound sense of sadness that I didn't have that. The house that my grandma had lived in had been sold at some point and the people who bought it had changed it. None of the people they knew that they talked about when they were growing up, this aunty and that aunty, none of those people are there anymore. Some of them had a tragic end, some of them moved somewhere else and died.[86] (Sinthuja)

Such memoryscapes of home-lessness form another type of postmemory that reflect Tamil diaspora views of the homeland as a tourist destination that is becoming increasingly

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Interview with Sinthuja. Melbourne, January 15, 2017.
[86] Ibid.

unfamiliar and temporary. For Sinthuja, the emptiness of her ancestral home is strikingly contrasted to her Sinhalese friend's home. The absence of family members – either dead or living elsewhere – invites memoryscapes of home-lessness characterised by stories of loss and social exclusion. The unvisited house created further distance between Sinthuja and her homeland. She explained that she had not returned to Jaffna since the war ended: 'I'm quite apprehensive about it as well because I just don't think I'm going to get what I would like to get from that experience which might be that feeling of belonging or home'.[87] She is resigned, stating, 'which is fine in that sense Melbourne is my home, but it makes me really sad that there isn't a place where I can be like this is where we're from'. In the post-war context, the physical structure of the family house which may or may not be standing is unimportant. Instead, the family house lay in the compression of the past and present in which the civil war had created the 'death' of not only the family house but one's connections to the homeland. As a social worker, Sinthuja meets and works for Tamil refugees seeking resettlement assistance that reminds her of the war and loss of homeness. For her, the post-war context is not only about that past, but its implications for the present:

> It is not just about the decimation of the Sri Lankan Tamil culture or history and I think that's where it's such a challenging thing for me to get my head around, but like what does that mean now?[88] (Sinthuja)

Sinthuja is frequently confronted by the outcomes of war and dislocation in her work assisting Tamil refugees that have left her searching for answers:

> My dad's always been very proud that Sri Lanka has a very high rate of literacy and I have clients who are 30 years old and have never been to school not even primary school, and I'm like how did this country go from 100% literacy to a thirty-year old not having ever been to school you know? Those kinds of things make me really sad.[89] (Sinthuja)

She was quick to express that she never divulges her history or story with her clients, explaining that 'it comes from a survivor's guilt of some sort.' This temporal compression of the past and present is understandable; only very few Tamils have returned to Sri Lanka to live since the war ended. The predicament lies on the equation of belonging and home as familiarity. To 'be-at-home', Sara Ahmed argued, is to feel so comfortable that it must be 'overcome' or left behind, and that 'home is implicitly constructed as purified space of

[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

belonging in which the subject is too comfortable to question the limits or borders of her or his experience'.[90] Ahmed argued that the very experience of leaving home and 'becoming a stranger' leads to the creation of a new 'community of strangers', a common bond with those others who have 'shared' the experience of living overseas.[91] For many Tamil women I interviewed, the anxiety of returning to the homeland occurred along with a nexus of conflict and dislocation that continued to manifest in their perceptions of Sri Lanka through the state's treatment of Tamils in the present. This is most recently evidenced through Government-sponsored 'Sinhalisation' in Tamil occupied areas that includes a heavy military presence, settling Sinhalese families in the North, renaming roads and areas in the Sinhalese language, and building Buddhist temples in traditionally Hindu or Christian areas.[92] In short, the homeland constitutes ongoing 'production of post-independence national identity marked ethnically as Sinhalese and religiously as Buddhist'.[93]

Reconstructing Memories of War in New Memoryscapes

However, reconstructing memories of war and connecting to the homeland from a distant land were not always tied to discourses of Tamil victimhood and home-lessness.[94] For example, survival stories emerge through diasporic actors such as Bhoomi, who carried with them stories of wounded girls and women affected by the conflict. While stories of female cadres emerge at first through diasporic networks and outline crucial dimensions of the conflict including the virulent logic that directed it on all sides, Suvendrini Perera reminds us that these cannot be avoided in explorations of Tamil diasporic subjectivities.[95] They continue to 'harrow the consciousness of diasporic and refugee subjects,' and shape their 'practices of memory and forgetting, their politics of self-understanding and protest, critique and survival'.[96] Memories of war are now built into documented evidence of rape and torture

[90] Sara Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement,' *International Journal of Cultural Studie*s Vol. 2, No. 3 (1999), 340.
[91] Ibid, 337.
[92] Rachel Seoighe, 'Nationalistic Authorship and Resistance in Northeastern Sri Lanka,' *Society and Culture in South Asia* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2016), 1–30.
[93] Ibid., 12.
[94] Tamil organisations across the world used their voices to focus on the challenges and priorities of the future, specifically targeting the next generation. Tamil Welfare Association (Newham) UK, 'Annual Review Report,' 2009, 3.
[95] Suvendrini. Perera, *Survival Media: The Politics and Poetics of Mobility and the War in Sri Lanka* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 95.
[96] Ibid.

that have surfaced since the war and continue to affect diasporic support for Tamils' rights in the homeland.[97]

In this sense, the women I interviewed remembered the war as having ended in 2009 yet the conflict as continuing. For some women, their activist work in the post-war context focused on the plight of Tamil asylum seekers arriving to Australia, while they simultaneously worked to assert Tamil memories of suffering and mass atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan state and international bodies that 'turned away'.[98] As one interviewee, Bhoomi, who I return to at the end of the chapter, stated, 'throughout 2009, 2010, 2011 I worked very closely on political activism here…to try and get politicians to shift their views on Sri Lanka.'[99] Asylum seekers from Sri Lanka were met with the violence of Australian border politics.[100] That violence, as Sumugan Sivanesan argued, refers to both nation-states – Sri Lanka and Australia – that are built on exclusive sovereign legitimacies.[101]

The ideas, values and relationships that constructed these 'internationalist' norms were built on the dominance of the United States and its allies that included Australia.[102] What emerged was not only the ever-expanding space of civic exclusion, of which the imminent arrival of Tamil asylum seekers was one example, but of 'who' and 'how' one should belong in Australia thus reminding us of Australia's history as it appears in unfamiliar yet recognisable guises to Indigenous people.[103] In 'not-Australia,' Perera defines Indigenous Australians' memories as comparable to the experiences of asylum seekers locked up in internment camps – encased in chicken wire and grids of regulation.[104] These confined spaces of camps appear 'like a cyst within the body politic'.[105] Within Australia's spatial arrangements lay the suppressed voices of minority groups that continue to encroach upon the recurring moral anxieties of the Australian nation-state based on denied Aboriginal sovereignty. Within these recurring historical anxieties, the young Tamil woman was the archetypal 'unAustralian', 'non-citizen', 'not-Australian'; the young LTTE terrorist who had threatened the social and

[97] For example, see Callum Macrae, 'No Fire Zone,' (UK: Outsider Films, 2014).
[98] Perera, *Survival Media*.
[99] Interview with Bhoomi. Melbourne, January 23, 2017.
[100] Sivanesan, 'Movements of Minorities,' 1-16.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Suvendrini Perera, 'What is a Camp?', *Borderlands*. Accessed on January 14, 2018. www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au/vol1no1 2002/perera camp.html.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

moral fabric of Australian society. Nevertheless, Tamil protestors responded to the Government's rhetoric of terrorism concerning Tamils as LTTE:

> What is the definition of a terrorist? The Government is bombing our people by air and this is classed as acceptable. When we retaliate it is called terrorism. We are not terrorism; we are fighting for our rights.[106]

Perera argues that the political descriptions of the war on terror was one that contained categories that were confusing and bizarre.

> Where soldier, terrorist and refugee can be made indistinguishable, where victims fleeing Taliban oppression can be constructed as potential "sleepers" for its terror, where international conventions fail to protect asylum seekers from being criminalised as "illegal"; a war where cluster bombs and food parcels share similar packaging.[107]

By seeking to influence and control the views and actions of the Tamil diaspora, 'the destructive logic of the Tiger cause is to annihilate political reason and progress in favour of a totalitarian fantasy of power and control', however some scholars and activists argued at the time that 'those who dream from afar have a responsibility to think harder, to look deeper, and to break through to reality'.[108] However, for the Tamil women in this study, far from disempowered or 'enthralled to a destructive fantasy,' they had already claimed a moral responsibility to the reality of the Tamil plight.[109] It was not so much that the Tamil women 'agreed' or even 'supported' the LTTE, rather such associations were often overshadowed by a 'deeper' feeling that was connected to personal and communal stories of collective injustice in their homeland. One interviewee explained that her identity as a Tamil became synonymous with civil war:

> As Tamils people often say are you a Tiger and now they might know about it as the war, the human rights abuses and all the people who died and the need for justice there. It's who you are as a Tamil is shaped by what other people think you are so I think you can't get away

[106] World Socialist Web Site, 'Protest outside Australian Parliament against Sri Lankan war'. February6, 2009. Accessed on January 14, 2018. https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2009/02/tamc-f06.html
[107] Perera, 'What Is a Camp?'
[108] Nirmala Rajasingam, 'The Tamil Diaspora: Solidarities and Realities.' Accessed on January 10, 2018. http://sahasamvada forum.blogspot.com/2009/04/tamil-diaspora-solidarities-and.html.
[109] Pragasam, 'Tigers on the Mind,' 16.

> from it because it's moving there, the history is changing who you are in the present.[110] (Sinthuja)

The Sri Lankan and Australian nation-states reconfigured as 'homelands under siege' in which dramas of border protection and citizenship are raced and gendered, placing minority groups under suspicion as an alien group.[111] In settler societies, where unresolved historical tensions between Indigenous groups and the state underpin everyday life, 'place' memories are further mediated and negotiated by increasingly collaborative refugee and Aboriginal activism.[112] These collaborations represent new understandings of state violence against racialised groups in settler states,[113] working against forgetting state memories of violence. In post-war contexts, the online space has been used as a type of 'memoryscape' where deaths and torture are demarcated in specific localities and highlight the ongoing search for meaning, historical truth, and identity.[114]

Projects such as Tamil Survival Stories is one such example.[115] It is an online memoryscape that captures narratives of collective survival, preservation of identity, and the role of Tamil women in the stories. Each story illustrates women's escape and survival as motivations for their future – some remain hopeful that they will be reunited with their family. These 'archives of suffering',[116] in the face of state bans on public expressions of grief in the North East of Sri Lanka contain moments of hope, courage and belief that trace the relationship between memories of violence and women's 'voices', thus unravelling community voices outside of the LTTE's memory work and the Sri Lankan nation-state's official memories of military victory. Thus, online memoryscapes provide new, more intimate and accessible ways of drawing attention to the effects of what seems to be over and done with.

Furthermore, in the absence of alternative memories of the war, Tamil Survival Stories provide new opportunities to build dialogues about gendered and generational perspectives of war across borders, revealing a crucially feminist analysis of war. That is, the stories can reveal how war has affected Tamil people's everyday lives, in intimate and private spaces – the type that has the potential to reconfigure Tamils not as victims in need of rescue, but as a

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[110] Interview with Sinthuja. Melbourne, January15, 2017.
[111] Suvendrini Perera, 'White Shores of Longing: 'Impossible Subjects' and the Frontiers of Citizenship,' *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* Vol. 23, No. 5 (2009), 647–662.
[112] Sivanesan, 'Movements of Minorities,' 1-16.
[113] See https://www.deathscapes.org/about-project/
[114] Larkin, 'Beyond the War?,' 615-635.
[115] See http://sareesinthewind.tumblr.com/sarees-in-the-wind
[116] Seioghe, *War, Denial and Nation Building*, 197.

site of social and political resistance against militarisation. Moreover, for the postmemory generation, the online memoryscape becomes powerful terrain to reflect on the past, understand the present, and retake control of the memory work, as the life stories of Bhoomi demonstrate.

Bhoomi

> I run a blog, the whole point of that is resistance for me, another avenue of resistance. If I had more time, I would be contributing more to it or the hope is that it becomes so popular that SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) is like we need you on TV and then I can talk about our struggle through that forum. I do a lot of refugee stuff, on January 3rd we've organised a picnic for them. I'm taking them to my favourite place which I don't think they know of. We always do really sad stuff so we're gonna do something really positive because there's so much trauma and sadness.[117]

Bhoomi's ongoing political organising can be traced back to her parents' experiences in Sri Lanka in the 1970s: 'they realised that there were limited opportunities for Tamils because of Sinhala racism and Sinhala chauvinism'. Bhoomi was born in Sri Lanka, her mother is from Maanippaai, and her father is from Chavakachcheri. During the war period, Bhoomi recalled several return trips to Sri Lanka from 2002 – 2006 where she was involved in rehabilitation programs for wounded the LTTE through Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) which was central to building the welfare function of the LTTE state.[118]

> We would go up to Vanni, we would always go up to Vanni and we did whatever needed to be done so teaching English, once I did a computer course, I transcribed notes about massacres, one time I shot a lot of videos, I did a lot of interviews while I was there with the hope of making a documentary. We just went there and helped. There're heaps of rehabilitation projects going on and so whenever foreigners arrived there, there was wing of the LTTE/ rehabilitation organisations that would sort of, like TRO was operating there so we would and say what needs to be dome and just do it.

She remembered each trip as distinct yet interconnected episodes in her life. In 2008, she resigned from her job and enrolled in a journalism course to assist her with political organising work on a full-time basis, focusing mainly on online spaces. The return trips to Sri

[117] Interview with Bhoomi. Melbourne, January 23, 2017. All of the interviews in this section are from this interview.
[118] Kristian Stokke, 'Building the Tamil Eelam State: Emerging State Institutions and Forms of Governance in the LTTE-controlled Areas in Sri Lanka,' *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 27, No. 6 (2006), 1029–1030.

Lanka and involvement in the LTTE projects had strengthened her sense of belonging to the Tamil community. One return trip in particular to Vanni in 2006 transformed her sense of belonging to a Tamil community.

> I understood for the first time what it meant to be a Tamil and for me the resistance and the sacrifice and the struggle. I met so many people and I spent weeks with people who had done that, I suddenly was like you've got so much to be proud of. At the same time to go like hang on a second, the whole time I was there I was thinking I could have been that person, I could have been that *acca* (sister) that's lost her eyes or that *acca* that's lost her legs, I could have been a fighter, I could be dead, my mum could be the one that's crying you know so I kind of realised that I was one of them and I was so proud of who they were and their resistance.

Upon returning to Australia from Sri Lanka in 2006, Bhoomi became heavily involved in political activism work, as she explained.

> It's taken me quite a long time to get to that point where I am, like still I feel like I can continue the transition and by the time in 2008 I became very very close to xxxx and the two of us throughout 2009, 2010, 2011 worked very closely together on political activism here and the two of us were like inseparable and then when the war happened, the community, all the people that I knew but didn't really hang out with when I was younger because I was trying to be white, suddenly the community became really important to support the trauma of the war because my father was there during the war. And so suddenly and no one else outside the community understood what was going on so everyone else just kind of dropped off and I and became very… I needed the community. The only way I could cope with the trauma because my dad was there, everyone we knew was dying was to have, be very close to the community and that sort of started the integration back in the Tamil diaspora community in Australia.

Bhoomi's political activism at the end of Sri Lanka's civil war did not simply 'appear' nor did it stop when the war ended. Her activist work represented the grounds on which transnational acts of citizenship were taking place,[119] showing how technologies were being used in productions of transnational belonging. In the post-war context, Bhoomi's continued engagement in online spaces are intimately tied to her focus on seeking Tamil justice that includes attaining Tamil people's refugee rights in Australia. She continued her political organising work in the post-war context in response to Tamil refugees arriving by boat including people who faced immediate deportation by the Australian Government:

[119] Ashutosh, 'Immigrant Protests,' 197-210.

> We were doing public awareness work. I got media training, we learnt how to talk to media, how to write press releases to start bringing the story to the way we wanted the story to be told. We continued to do public advocacy work to try and get politicians to shift their views on Sri Lanka because everyone was playing different parts from the community.

At the same time, she stated that the 'community fell apart' in the post-war period because 'they were so traumatised and sad, and no-one really knew what to do.' Part of her goal was to inform the Tamil community about the significance of Australian politics in shaping outcomes for Tamil refugees, and Tamils in Sri Lanka. During the final stages of the war Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd effectively echoed the silent responses of the international community about the atrocities unfolding in Sri Lanka.[120] In the weeks before the war ended, the arrival of Tamil refugees by boat occupied significant political debates, for example on April 15, 2009, Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Sharman Stone, accused the Australian Government of not doing enough to prevent people smuggling.[121] Stone further accused the Australian Government of blaming countries such as Sri Lanka for not doing enough to prevent people fleeing their country by boat.[122] On April 16, 2009, Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs, Sussan Ley, stated that 'Rudd and Debus prove they're unable to protect our borders'.[123] Ley elaborated that the Rudd Government was 'irresponsible' in its approach to securing Australia's coastline and was not taking the sudden increase in asylum seekers seriously and that relying on transit countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia was 'reckless'.[124]

In response, the Australian Government stated that it was 'acutely' aware of the 'risk that some of them (Tamil civilians) will seek to leave Sri Lanka by boat, heading in Australia's

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[120] In the final stages of the conflict, UN Member States (China, France, Russia, Austria, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Libya, Mexico, Turkey, UK, US, Croatia, Japan, Uganda, Vietnam) did not hold a single formal meeting in Sri Lanka, whether at the Security Council, the Human Rights Council or the General Assembly. Instead, they held several 'informal interactive dialogue' meetings, for which there were no written records and no formal outcomes. At the meetings, senior Secretariat officials focused mainly on the humanitarian situation: they didn't explain the link between the Government and the LTTE that led to the humanitarian catastrophe, they didn't give full details on the deaths of civilians, they didn't issue a press statement until three days before the end of the conflict, they struggled to gather a minimum number of Council Member States to hold a Special Session. United Nations, 'Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka,' 2012, 80-82.

[121] Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Sharman Stone, 'Labor passes the buck for people smuggling,' Media Release, Australian Government, April 15, 2009.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs Sussan Ley, 'Rudd and Debus prove they're unable to protect our borders,' Media Release, Australian Government, April 16, 2009.

[124] Ibid.

direction,' however regional cooperation with 'transit countries' such as Indonesia was crucial.[125] The Government's financial commitments to curb asylum seekers including Tamils arriving by boat was telling: on 29 April 2009 an additional 4.5 million dollars was committed to international aid organisations supporting Tamil civilians in North Sri Lanka, and on 12 May 2009, as part of the 2009 – 2010 Federal Budget, 654 million dollars was committed to fund a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to combat people smuggling and enhance border protection.[126] For Bhoomi, the political rhetoric about Tamil refugees being part of the 'global spike' in people smuggling and the heightened 'surveillance' to monitor Australian seas,[127] revealed that while the civil war had ended, the Tamil plight continued. She worked closely with other Tamils to shift the community's views about the agendas of major political parties of Labor and Liberal Governments and commented that:

> After elections we could see voting patterns and we saw that where the Tamils were voting there was an increasing in the Greens vote so we did a lot of work with that and we did that in the last election as well. That bigger political campaign was to show the Liberals and Labor that you can't guarantee our vote and that kind of work is especially crucial now because we're sitting on a very volatile and fragile Government.

The overlapping memories of war – itself a constant renegotiation and transformation of belonging to multiple collectives in the homeland and resettlement – clearly continue to hold significance in the lives of Tamil women such as Bhoomi and demonstrated the ongoing connections between Tamil people and places on generational, gendered and transnational levels alike.[128] Bhoomi's political activism emerges over the life course as part of her unique generational experiences as an adolescent coming to terms with her identity, community and political history as a Tamil person resettled in Australia.[129]

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[125] Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith. Interview, Australian Government April 22, 2009, 4-5.
[126] Minister for Home Affairs Bob Debus, 'New Measures to enhance Australia's Border Protection,' Media Release, Australian Government, May 12, 2009.
[127] Stone, 'Labor passes the buck.'
[128] Sevasti-Melissa Nolas et al., 'Political Activism Across the Life Course,' *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* Vol. 12, No. 1 (2017), 1-12.
[129] For Tamil women such as Bhoomi and Janeeta, their ongoing political engagement for the Tamil plight has further justified the need to use pseudonyms in this study – to not only protect the privacy of interviewees but stress their position as subjects of surveillance by Sri Lankan and Australian intelligence agencies.

Conclusion

Constructions of civil war, within forced migrant life trajectories, reveal how individuals give meaning to dislocation and territories and spaces that are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. In the post-war context of ongoing discussions about the role of the Tamil diaspora in reconciliation processes in Sri Lanka, a closer look at memory is necessary to shape people's sense of belonging, hopes and aspirations. Tamil women disrupted community spaces and asserted themselves as useful communicators of injustice in the homeland by embracing their roles in political organising and memory work, for instance. Their efforts brought to the surface new forms of belonging that highlighted the changing landscape of political activism, as symbolic and meaningful constructions of the past. Identity was being reformed through narrative, in history and through adversity.[130] Postmemory, personal experiences and the spaces in between were necessary accompaniments to understanding their connections to Sri Lanka. They used their past to motivate their political activism in the final stages of the war and after, as a direct link between their history and attempts to gain a place in Tamil political life. What emerged from the interviews was a complex illustration of identity constructions inhabited by Tamil women that challenged taken for granted ideas about the assumption of cultural belonging as a necessary accompaniment to political membership.

[130] Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, 'Introduction: Mapping Memory,' in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed., S. Radstone and B. Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 3.

CONCLUSION

Young Tamils who resettled in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s did not fit neatly into the narrative of a successful multicultural Australia. Instead, they crafted a sense of belonging in ways that complicate dominant understandings of resettlement. In seeking to explore the resettlement experiences of young Tamils in Australia, this study set out to answer two main questions: How did young Tamils craft a sense of belonging in their resettlement? What is the role of memory in belonging? I began with the premise that one does not simply belong to the world or any group within it and argued that belonging is a process that has no endpoint – what I termed a *craft*. The 'craft of belonging' captured the precise as well as imprecise assemblages of migrancy and specifically the processes of resettling that were tied to the self and social setting. The memories of thirty-six Tamil forced migrants showed that the past was crucial to understanding their present and vice versa, thus producing a more holistic understanding of their lives: processes of belonging were continuous and always under construction. In this sense, the 'craft of belonging' showed that resettlement has no neat 'Conclusion'.

If belonging tends to be naturalised only when threatened, as Nira Yuval-Davis argued, then the young Tamils of this study revealed deeper level understandings of how they crafted their sense of self, *where* and *when* they fit into their surroundings.[1] The life stories approach was useful for understanding not only what happened in the past and what that means, but also for seeking ways forward.[2] It revealed people's knowledge about how they connected to society, as in Sabari's views that were presented in chapter 1 of this thesis: 'I don't think any of us really know what it means to be an Australian. What is a Tamil? What is a Sri Lankan Tamilian?'[3] However, life stories showed that these identities were always under construction, in which processes of belonging changed over the life course and in response to different contexts. The life stories presented in the thesis, therefore, allowed interviewees to interpret their experiences and reflect on the broader significance of the social and political conditions in which they crafted belonging *in* Australia. Not only social conditions, but other intersecting factors such as age, gender, legal status, caste, and class highlighted the different positionalities that shaped processes of belonging over the life course. Thus, in thinking about

[1] Nira Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Belonging* (Los Angeles, Sage, 2011).
[2] Marita Eastmond, 'Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2007), 248-264.
[3] Interview with Sabari. Sydney, November 12, 2017.

belonging in terms of the past, this thesis showed that any examination of the resettlement experiences of young forced migrants demands temporal breadth and depth.

Resettlement in Australia as Young Tamil Forced Migrants: Negotiation and Resilience

The young Tamils of this study grew up in a social setting that bore the imprint of their political history. Australian cities continued to be constituted by racialised and ethnicised borders that reinforced historical colonial demarcations, scales and categories.[4] By the 1980s belonging to Australia had been firmly rooted in a specific politics of belonging: who called Australia home and claimed a sense of belonging was inextricably tied to who had possession of the land and its people, which in turn had historically been closely guarded by white Australians.[5] I began the thesis by stating that the Australian nation-state was founded on the denied belonging of Indigenous people and emphasised that any study of migrant experiences in Australia must be viewed through this broader socio-historical framework.[6] The young Tamils of this study were further exposed to postcolonial gazes of the Sri Lankan nation-state that cemented their ascribed position as 'strangers' across borders.[7]

Processes of belonging were complex and influenced by broader narratives that stigmatised the newcomer in society. While my study has focused on young Tamil forced migrants, the broader themes such as racism at school were common to most newcomers in Australia during the same period. For example, the study revealed that school was a focal point in processes of belonging for newly arrived non-white students. The four case studies presented in chapter 5 showed how school experiences were entangled in traumatic memories of intense social relationships and personal crises. While schools were seen by adults and parents to enforce educational achievement, control and discipline, based on the interviews in this study schools were memorable for different reasons. Interviewees remembered school spaces as embodying disciplinary norms that prioritised educational bureaucracy. In their experiences, the schools that they had attended failed to support the real needs of newly arrived students and provide them with crucial supports during their first years of resettlement. The coping strategies and resilience of interviewees showed how difficult pasts continued to linger in the

[4] Suvendrini Perera, "'Aussie Luck': The Border Politics of Citizenship Post Cronulla Beach,' *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association Journal* Vol. 3, No. 1 (2007), 1-16.
[5] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonising Society,' in *Uprootings/Regrounding: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed., Sara Ahmed (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 23-40.
[6] Ibid., 27.
[7] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000).

present. Through the four case studies in chapter 5, I have been canny about which Tamil experiences I have chosen to present, as a key aim of this thesis was to undertake minority histories and humanise resistances. Thus, chapter 5, in particular, responded to disciplinary calls to examine 'historical subjects' within the decreasing gap between the present and past.[8]

Another key aspect of resettlement was negotiating Tamil culture in diaspora spaces and more specifically in family relationships. In chapter 4 I argued that young Tamil childhoods in exile were shaped by the morally and politically charged ideology of Tamil culture that was imparted by the ideologically divided older Tamil generation through Tamil activities such as religious worship and TLS. Some young Tamils responded by re-traditionalising Tamil culture by accepting and rejecting certain elements of the culture. For example, while several interviewees rejected the institutionalisation of Tamil language, they stressed its significance for communicating with their parents and in turn preserving Tamil culture. Moreover, young Tamils embraced the transnational turn in their Tamil culture through South Indian Tamil films that enabled them to connect to their families and a transnational Tamil community simultaneously. In these views, Tamilness was deeply connected with family relations that were caught in a 'web of deep-seated longings' characterised by 'variability'.[9] These longings, I suggest, were part of the outcomes of being dislocated from the homeland and the collective Tamil experience of forced migration.

The young Tamil people's desire to hold onto certain aspects of their Tamil culture in resettlement was at least partly due to them recognising their marginalised status as Tamils in the homeland. While they distanced themselves from the refugee label, as I showed in chapter 2, it was clear that war and persecution in the homeland had been stored in the archives of their memory – as personal experiences and family stories of loss and survival. Chapter 3 showed that their lives began in Sri Lanka where young Tamil people were socio-historically part of a war generation. While there were clear differences in the extent and length of exposure to war that Tamils faced in different regions, there was a collective sense of anguish about Tamil suffering, particularly after the Tamil massacre in 1983.

[8] Paul Hamilton, 'Sale of the century? Memory and historical consciousness in Australia,' in *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, eds., Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003), 141.
[9] Margaret Trawick, *Notes on Love in Tamil Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 7.

As adults, stories of survival, resistance and seeking Tamil justice had continued to occupy key spaces in their lives, even after the end of Sri Lanka's civil war. As chapter 6 showed, Tamil women were changing the landscapes of Tamil diaspora activism. Some Tamil women challenged taken-for-granted ideas about who belonged in key Tamil political decision-making spaces. For example, Janeeta's experiences represented the shift towards loose coalitions, 'horizontal' rather than 'vertical' structures in Tamil political organisations that informally encouraged belonging and shared concerns.[10] Similarly, Bhoomi's political organising through engaging Australian political campaigns further revealed the dynamics of modern Tamil diasporic actions. The women's experiences highlighted an important aspect of their resistance: the political was intimately tied to not only belonging to a Tamil community but also encompassed what it meant to be *Tamil*. Belonging is about this relationship between personal identity and collective identity – where 'there is something about one's personal belonging that is comparable to one's perception of the aims, constitution or values of a given collective'.[11]

Conceptual Advancements of Belonging: Memory and Young People's Experiences

In this thesis, I advanced concepts of belonging as being personal and political by drawing on memory as a key dimension to understanding belonging. I have applied Yuval-Davis's understanding of belonging as being tied to emotional attachments, social relations and political structures, to varying degrees.[12] I focused more on memories of emotional attachments and social interactions as interviewees emphasised their loss, survival and resilience. By incorporating memory into belonging, I argued that processes of belonging and memory constantly changed over the life course. This study has established that memory was important to crafting this belonging in Australia, and further argued that memory can not be defined purely in terms of the past because it was also closely tied to people's present and future.[13] In examining the memories of Tamils resettled in Australia, it was evident that the 'presence' of the past was not only circulating but enmeshed within discourses of changing belongings. I showed how memory was crucial to understanding processes of belonging

[10] Doug McAdam et al., eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[11] Paul Jones and Michał Krzyżanowski, 'Identity, Belonging and Migration: Beyond Constructing "Others",' in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, eds., Gerard Delanty et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 44.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Leyla Neyzi, 'Gülümser's Story: Life History Narratives, Memory and Belonging in Turkey,' *New Perspectives in Turkey* Vol. 20 (1999), 1-26.

through which we can further unravel connections between the individual and collective and use these understandings to inform current approaches towards developing more inclusive spaces for young forced migrants. In crafting belonging, young Tamils drew on their fragmented past and present to situate their resettlement experiences between a variety of generational, ideological, historical reference points, including those of key relations with their family, peers, and the nation-state. I demonstrated how the workings of memory, in a social sense, were crucial to understanding not just *what* is said but *how* and *why* it is said.[14] The thesis advanced understandings of the crucial role of memory in identity construction, by showing that without memory we are unable to understand processes of belonging that enable individuals to construct their sense of self in time and space. For the historian, then, memory work not only unravels the individual's subjectivities but reveals the collective experience, between the past and the present.[15] Thus, by examining young Tamil people's memories, the thesis demonstrated how belonging processes are necessarily driven by memory – as a source and subject of study.[16]

However, in writing young Tamils into Australia's migration history, the thesis had a more practical goal: to challenge the nation-state's repression of Tamil people's experiences of war, persecution and their challenges of resettlement. This thesis demonstrated the powerful use of counter-memories that challenged the Sri Lankan and Australian nation-state's treatment of Tamils who faced persecution in the homeland and were seeking refuge. Memory, then, was used not only in a methodological framework but made audible silenced voices of the past. Writing young Tamils into the past can enrich understandings of belonging processes in Australia in multiple ways, making it more emotional and political. In recent years, histories of childhood and histories of emotions have become burgeoning fields of inquiry that have enabled scholars to access young people's voices and agency in new ways.[17] As Stephanie Olsen reflects:

> Notions of childhood and children's emotional formation are mutable. By analysing the spaces and places of the emotional encounter at the 'emotional frontier' – where cultural

[14] Lynn Abrams, 'Memory as both source and subject of study: The Transformations of Oral History,' in *Writing the History of Memory*, eds., Stefan Berger and Bill Niven (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 90.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Stephanie Olsen, 'Introduction,' in *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*, eds., S. Olsen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1-11.

> friction and transfer take place – the intellectual architecture of childhood and the experiences of children can be reconstructed.[18]

This new interest in children's experiences in the past has shown that constructions of childhood and emotions are not universal; they are contingent on time, place and other historical factors.[19] For example, as I showed in this study, young Tamil people were constructed in multiple ways that were contingent on their historical position as part of a war generation in Sri Lanka. In their resettlement, young Tamils were constructed by their new society as 'outsiders', some young Tamils within the Tamil community due to their legal status as refugees. Their personal experiences were central to understanding their social construction within different groups. Indeed, it was this dynamic between the individual and their society that enabled new insights into Sri Lankan Tamil migration in Australia and more specifically young people's experiences.

Further Research

My original motivation for the study was to make sense of Tamil-Australian childhoods that were lived at the intersection of war and resettlement. I set out to understand how young Tamil forced migrants experienced a sense of belonging in Australia. While this thesis has considered much that is related to the resettlement of young Tamil forced migrants in Australia, the research has thrown up further questions and areas of exploration. An important area for further study is understanding the interactions between former forced migrant children and children seeking refuge in the present context. Such people-to-people encounters might offer new configurations of belonging that bring together experiences from different time periods, to offer new narratives of young forced migrants, resettlement and diaspora that can be compared across social and political contexts.

One of my interviewees, Gajan, worked as an interpreter at Christmas Island, one of several Australian Government run detention centres where Tamil asylum seekers continue to be imprisoned. The importance of Gajan's experiences at Christmas Island lay not so much in the fact that he struggled – emotionally and physically – to retell stories of war trauma that rendered the concept of interpreter neutrality difficult to adopt. Or that he had to undertake work that 'he didn't sign up for', such as intercepting a vessel carrying refugees in the ocean

[18] Olsen, 'Introduction,' 10.
[19] Ibid., 2.

in the middle of the night and processing asylum seeker applications on the boat.[20] Rather, his work as an interpreter for war-torn Tamils revealed new modalities of belonging that reconstructed social relations *between* Tamils who fled Sri Lanka.

On one occasion, Gajan had to tell a child refugee that his father had died on the boat on their way to Australia. The boy's father had drowned when the boat had leaked. His mother and sister had died in the final stages of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009. The child could not speak after he had heard the news that his father had died at sea. Gajan was ordered by Australian authorities to watch the child. He was on 'suicide notice' for the next three days.[21] On the third day, after spending one and a half years at Christmas Island working as an interpreter, Gajan decided he would return home to Sydney: 'it was too intense. I remember I came back home and cried that day.'[22] Gajan did not know what had happened to the child, whether he was one of the 505 refugees from Sri Lanka in 2009 who was resettled in Australia.[23] For Tamils like Gajan, new dynamics of resettlement and belonging appeared during interim periods of meeting other Tamils who arrived under similar circumstances of war, albeit in at a different time. This experience of dislocation is worthy of further research.[24]

[20] Interview with Gajan. Sydney, November 14, 2016.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Graeme Hugo and Lakshman Dissanayake, 'The Process of Sri Lankan Migration to Australia Focussing on Irregular Migrants Seeking Asylum.' Irregular Migration Research Programme Occasional Paper Series 10 (Canberra: Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014). 205.
[24] I pursue these 'Tamil-to-Tamil' connections in a book chapter in a forthcoming edited collection of which I am an editor: Niro Kandasamy, Nirukshi Perera, Charishma Ratnam, Eds., *A sense of Viidu: The (re)creation of 'home' by the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Australia* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan forthcoming, 2019). In 2017, four other Australian Tamil studies scholars and myself founded the Sri Lankan Tamil Studies Network that seeks to strengthen the profile of Tamil studies scholarship in Australia.

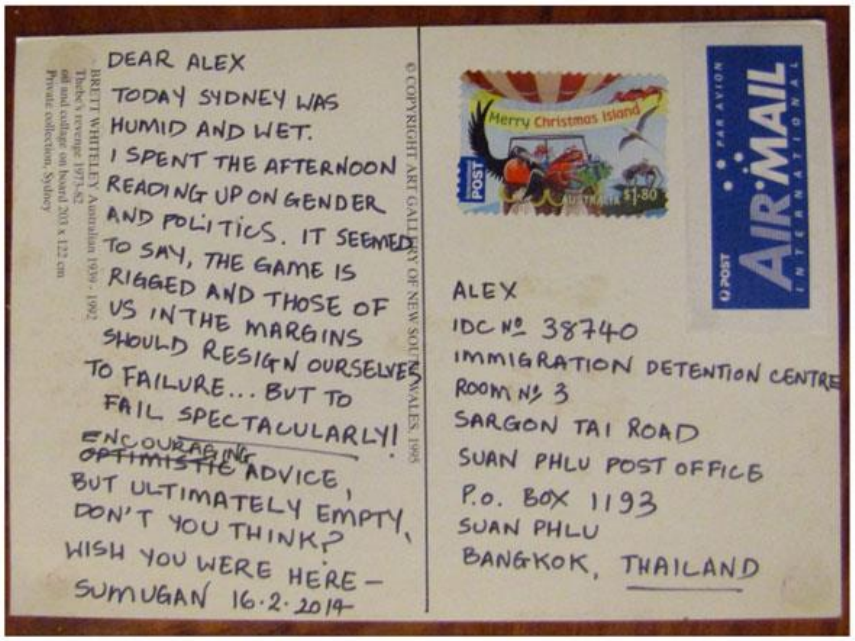

Figure 2: Wish you were here....

Source: Sivanesan, 'Postcard campaign.' Runway #24 Islands (2014).[25]

The above image is from the 'Postcard campaign' and multimedia art project 'Wish you were here' that forms part of Sumugan Sivanesan's research project entitled 'ALEX & I'. Between 2013-2016, Sivanesan, a Tamil-Australian anti-disciplinary writer, scholar and artist, produced 'ALEX & I' to explore the narrative, media history and circumstances of controversial Tamil refugee figure Sanjeev 'Alex' Kuhendrarajah.[26]

[25] Sumugan Sivanesan, 'Alex & I.' Accessed on January 12, 2018. http://www.sivanesan.net/pages/alex.html

[26] Alex first gained media attention in Australia and overseas in October 2009 as a spokesperson for 254 Tamil asylum seekers fleeing the immediate aftermath of Sri Lanka's civil war. The boat, *KM Jaya Lestari 5*, carrying the asylum seekers from Sri Lanka to Australia was intercepted in Indonesian waters at Australia's direction. The asylum seekers refused to disembark the boat towed by the Indonesian Navy to the port of Merak. During the standoff which lasted over six months, Alex became embroiled in a media spectacle, including being labelled a 'people smuggler' by the Sri Lankan Government and admitted he was a 'Tamil gang member' in Canada who was deported to Sri Lanka in 2003. Eventually, Alex and the other Tamil asylum seekers disembarked the vessel when UN officials agreed to resettle them into a third country. The asylum seekers were escorted to a detention centre. Australia's increasingly 'tough but humane' border protection policies effectively reshaped Australia's 'borderscape' – the filtering and precise regulating of migration flows. In 2015 Sivanesan's collaboration and friendship with Alex after his release from immigration detention after having been incarcerated there since 2011 resulted in creative art and research projects that revealed the hidden stories, potential plight and possibility of community against indifference and disconnection. Amanda Hodge and Paige Taylor, 'Tamil Spokesman "Alex" a Smuggler, says Sri Lankan Government,' *The Australian*, November 6, 2009; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Tamil Gang Member will be Checked,' November 9, 2009; Brett Neilson, 'Between Governance and Sovereignty : Remaking the Borderscape to Australia's North,' *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* Vol.

Sivanesan uses the postcard he sent to Alex to illustrate the connection between 'leisure time and easy cosmopolitanism of the transnational "creative classes" to the enforced inactivity of the globally displaced.'[27] In other words, the act of writing and sending the postcard demonstrated the inseparable connection between art and everyday life.[28] The postcard is a familiar style of correspondence, sent out into the world: it shows intimate gestures, facilitates time-lapsed conversations, and allows 'imaginary others' to shape personal thoughts.[29] Moreover, it reveals the distance between artists and the 'enforced inactivity of the globally displaced.'[30] Using the postcard, Sivanesan positions everyone as an artist or as an art project.[31] He states, 'I know you all as artists.'

Creative artists push forward inevitable questions arising from developments both inside and outside of Sri Lanka, such as the increasing number of Tamil asylum seekers fleeing by boat – 'what is the diaspora to do?',[32] and the change in political regime after the 2015 elections in Sri Lanka – 'how has the Tamil diaspora reacted to this change?' For Tamils who fled Sri Lanka as young people and resettled in Australia, their encounters with newly arrived Tamil refugees (as case workers, interpreters, neighbours, relatives and friends) can reproduce historically uneven forms of civility,[33] and demand new forms of community in 'superdiverse' spaces.[34] However, the connections between Tamils resettled in Australia and Tamils held in Australian-run detention centres, such as Gajan's interactions with the boy child or Sivanesan's interactions with Alex in the postcard, demonstrate the fragility of war, new confrontations and the intersections of the past, present and future that it represents. The arrival of young Tamil asylum seekers by boat has created an environment of precarity, not

8, (2010), 124-140. Sivanesan, 'Alex & I: Against Indifference,' *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* Vol. 8, No. 1 (2016), 28-40.

[27] Sivanesan, 'Wish you were here.' Accessed on January 12, 2018. http://runway.org.au/wish-you-were-here/.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] For recent examples of visual mediums see, Matangi/Maya/M.I.A (documentary, 2018); Dheepan (film, 2015). For recent examples of books see, Niromi de Soyza, *Tamil Tigress* (biography and autobiography, 2012); Para Paheer and Alison Corke, *The Power of Good People: Surviving Sri Lanka's Civil War* (biography, 2017). For an example of a successful digital platform that documents Tamil stories of survival see, http://sareesinthewind.tumblr.com/sarees-in-the-wind; http://comdu.it/about-us/.

[32] Sumugan Sivanesan, 'Movements of Minorities: AusLankan Struggles for Transnational Justice.' *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* Vol. 13, No. 2 (2016), 12.

[33] Sharika Thiranagama, 'The Civility of Strangers? Caste, Ethnicity, and living together in Postwar Jaffna, Sri Lanka,' *Anthropological Theory* Vol. 18, No. 2 (2018), 357-381.

[34] Steven Vertovec, 'Super-diversity and its Implications,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 30, No. 6 (2007), 1024-1054.

only in terms of state/civil society relations but also 'people-to-people' connections.[35] As scholars, the goal should be to produce minority histories that capture these new complexities and offer new understandings about the young individual and their society, particularly in response to structures that reinforce their marginalisation. Ultimately, this study of young Tamils resettled in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s has demonstrated that what young forced migrant people require in their lives is to have control and agency, have adults listen to their ambitions and desires – to have their voices heard. This thesis has shown that their work of belonging is ongoing, that young Tamil forced migrants demanded recognition of their various emotions and the difficulties of movement and rebuilding their lives in a new community, that traumatic memories shaped the present, and that the colonial past and present of Australia construct Tamil identity in Australia.

[35] Sivanesan, 'Movements of Minorities,' 1-16.

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The main primary sources used in this thesis comprise interviews, newspaper articles, government and NGO reports. There are also a range of other contemporary sources that were used that are identified below. I begin with the interviews that were used in this thesis, then also cite individual references.

Interviews

All interviews were conducted by the author and are in possession of the author

Interviews with young Tamil people resettled in Australia

Interview with Kumaran in Melbourne on September 10, 2015.

Interview with Rajiv in Sydney on December 11, 2015.

Interview with Suman in Sydney on December 14, 2015.

Interview with Daniel in Sydney on December 20, 2015.

Interview with Kiran in Sydney on January 10, 2016.

Interview with Devan in Sydney on January 15, 2016.

Interview with Jehan in Melbourne on February 21 and July 17, 2016.

Interview with Suthan in Sydney on March 12, 2016.

Interview with Sebanesan in Sydney on May 20, 2016.

Interview with Mathan in Sydney on June 12, 2016.

Interview with Guru in Melbourne on June 14 and July 2, 2016.

Interview with Praveen in Melbourne on August 9, 2016.

Interview with Jason in Sydney on September 12 and September 16, 2016.

Interview with Jeivan in Melbourne on October 17, 2016.

Interview with Sabari in Sydney on November 12, 2016 and January 13, 2017.

Interview with Gajan in Sydney on November 14, 2016.

Interview with Lavan in Sydney on August 10, 2016.

Interview with Dayan in Sydney on November 13, 2016.

Interview with Harry in Melbourne on August 10, 2016.

Interview with Suji in Melbourne on September 15, 2015.

Interview with Rajani in Sydney on December 10, 2015.

Interview with Varuni in Melbourne on March 15, 2016.

Interview with Seetha in Melbourne on April 20, 2016.

Interview with Aranya in Melbourne on May 14, 2016.

Interview with Thurga in Melbourne on July 13 and July 20, 2016.

Interview with Kaushal in Sydney on July 15, 2016.

Interview with Ludishya in Melbourne on August 12, 2016.

Interview with Nivetha in Melbourne on September 14 and August 10, 2016.

Interview with Vithusha in Melbourne on September 14, 2016.

Interview with Hereni in Sydney on September 12 and November 18, 2016.

Interview with Janeeta in Sydney on September 18, 2016.

Interview with Meera in Melbourne on October 23, 2016.

Interview with Sinthuja in Melbourne on January 15, 2017.

Interview with Bhoomi in Sydney on January 23, 2017.

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PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT: Participant Information

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Project Title: Exploring the long term resettlement experiences of Sri Lankan Tamil child migrants arriving to Australia between 1970-2000.

Thank you for showing interest in participating in this project being conducted by Niro Kandasamy- PhD candidate from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne. The project is funded under Professor Joy Damousi's Australian Laureate Fellowship. Please read the information below carefully and understand it fully before you decide whether or not you wish to participate in the study.

If you have any questions regarding the project please contact Niro Kandasamy on the above contact details.

What is the project about?

By participating in this research you will help us to better understand the long term resettlement experiences of Sri Lankan Tamil child migrants and how this might help to us to

better inform future child migrant resettlement frameworks. *You do not need to know about migrant policy to participate in this study.*

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Melbourne (HREC #1544372).

If I agree to participate, what will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute in two ways: participate in a one-on-one interview and in a small focus group.

First we would ask you to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher that will last up to approximately one hour long. The purpose of the interview is to find out about some of your experiences of growing up in Australia including your experiences at school, home and with friends. The small focus group will last up to forty-five minutes and allow for up to six people to explore in more-depth some of their general experiences of growing up in Australia as Sri Lankan Tamil child migrants. The focus group will be informal and facilitated by the researcher at a pre-arranged time and place.

In both the face to face interview and focus group you will not be asked to reveal any information about personal experiences that you do not wish to talk about. The project is not asking you to disclose information of a personal nature; any such disclosures could result in a legal liability.

With your permission, the interview and focus group would be audio-recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. To help the researcher make sense of what you are saying it is likely that she will be taking hand written notes throughout the interview. If you do not wish for this to happen please let the researcher know before the interview.

When the tape has been transcribed, you will be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions. We estimate that the total time commitment required of you would not exceed 2 hours should you decide to participate in both the interview and focus group.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

Data Security

The information you provide will be kept as securely as possible. For example, during the project the interview and focus group transcripts will be stored on a password protected computer and in locked cabinets at the University of Melbourne. They will be only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. After the research is completed, the data will be securely archived at the University of

Melbourne for a minimum of five years and access will continue to be restricted to the researchers named above.

Anonymity

You can be assured that your responses in the interview and focus group will be completely anonymous, meaning that we will not collect information that can identify you in any way. The researcher will not reveal or publish any identifying information about the interview or focus group participants. The small focus group will be audio-recorded and transcribed and you will be assigned a pseudonym (such as Group 2, Participant 3) in the transcript. Pseudonyms will also be used in any public documentation arising from the research.

Use of data

The findings of this study will contribute towards the completion of a PhD thesis and potentially be published in academic journals and reports, and presented at conferences. Upon completion of the PhD thesis the participants of this study will be provided with a five page summary of the findings.

What are the possible risks and benefits associated with my participants?

As the one-on-one interview and focus group include memories about childhood experiences that may include war, trauma and personal struggles, there is possibility that recalling these experiences and answering certain questions may cause you to feel upset or distressed.

If you think that answering questions that recall traumatic experiences will make you upset or distressed, please think carefully about your decision to participate in this study. If you would like to read the interview questions before the interview and decide whether you wish to participate in the study and answer all or some of the questions, you are able to do so. You can also decide not to answer a question during the interview.

Further, as the study involves small-group discussions, your complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed as another participant may recognize you or tell someone that you participated in the study.

If you choose to participate, your responses will help us to better understand how to improve child refugee resettlement frameworks. This in turn will contribute to research that seeks to understand contemporary child refugee resettlement by drawing on the long term experiences of refugees. There may not be any benefits to you personally if you decide to participate in this research.

What are my rights as a participant?

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not, or to withdraw, will be completely independent of your dealings with the ethics

committee, and we would like to assure you that it will have no effect on any applications for approval that you may submit. If answering some of the interview questions or the focus group discussions cause you to feel upset or distressed, you can take a short break or choose not to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Further, withdrawing from the project at any stage will also not prejudice your relationship with the University of Melbourne.

Once you have completed the interview and/or focus group you may withdraw your responses at any time before they have been analysed (approximately four weeks after the interview and focus group).

If you experience any distress as a result of your participation in this research, you are encouraged to seek assistance by contacting a counselling or support service. Some service you could contact include: www.startts.org.au and http://www.lifeline.org.au/.

Where can I get further information?

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Niro Kandasamy on the contact details above. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

How do I agree to participate?

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the consent form and returning it to Niro Kandasamy in the envelope provided. The researcher will then contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time for you to participate in the one-on-one interview or/and the focus group discussion.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Consent form for persons participating in the project: **Exploring the long term resettlement outcomes of Sri Lankan Tamil child migrants arriving to Australia between 1970-2000.**

Name of participant: _____

Name of researcher: _____

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that after I sign and return this content form it will be retained by the researcher.
3. I understand that my participation will involve a one-on-one interview and/or focus group discussion and I agree that the researcher may use the findings as described in the plain language statement.
4. I acknowledge that:
    a) The possible effects of participating in this research have been explained to my satisfaction;
    b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw unprocessed data that I have provided;
    c) The project is for the purpose of research;
    d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safe guarded subject to any legal requirements;
    e) I have been informed that with my consent the interview will be audio-taped and I understand that audio-tapes will be stored at University of Melbourne and will be destroyed after five years;
    f) My name will be referred to as a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
    g) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to do this.

I consent to this interview being audio-taped (please tick) □ yes □ no

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings □ yes □ no (please tick)

Participant signature: Date:

RESEARCH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Topics

Context of leaving Sri Lanka

Initial resettlement period in Australia

Growing up in a foreign country and culture

How the resettlement experience has shaped where people are now in their lives

The long-term resettlement outcomes

Interview Guide/Prompts

- What aspects of living in Sri Lanka do you remember?
- Are you able to describe what your circumstances were like when you left Sri Lanka?
- How did it feel when you left Sri Lanka?
- Can you describe what it felt like when you moved to Australia?
- What were your expectations of Australia?
- How were your expectations met? If not, why?
- Can you describe your earliest memories of resettlement into your local community?
- How did you find socialising with students at school/social life/ during your initial resettlement period?
- What do you think were your biggest barriers to adjusting in your new surroundings during the earlier years of your resettlement?
- What did you most enjoy about resettling in Australia?
- What do you remember about the final stages of the armed conflict? Were you involved in any political action?
- What are your perspectives of being a Tamil person in a post-armed conflict context?
- Have you returned to Sri Lanka since 2009? Are you able to describe your experiences?
- How do you think your resettlement experiences has shaped where you are now?
- What would you change about your resettlement experience as a child growing up in Australia?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about your resettlement experiences?