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EXPLORING SRI LANKAN YOUTH CULTURE: PROMOTING AN UNDERSTANDING OF COPING STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING PRACTICE

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EXPLORING SRI LANKAN YOUTH CULTURE:

PROMOTING AN UNDERSTANDING OF COPING STRATEGIES AND THEIR

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING PRACTICE

(Spine title: Exploring Sri Lankan Youth Culture)

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by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education
(Counselling Psychology)

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Abstract

This study explored the interpersonal challenges and ways of coping utilized by Sri Lankan youth. Participants included 1.5 generation youth aged 14-20 residing in a large Canadian city. All of the participants identified as Tamil, and either their parents or they themselves were born in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has been in a state of civil unrest with ethnic conflict for several years and some participants had been exposed to large scale community violence before coming to Canada. A total of 12 semi-structured interviews organized around interpersonal challenges faced and ways of coping in the contexts of home, peers and school life were completed. From a content analysis of the transcriptions, several themes emerged. The five themes included: role expectations, collectivism and independence, violence and discrimination, affiliations and academic expectations. These themes were compared and contrasted to the available literature. Implications for future research and counselling are described.

Keywords

coping, stressors, Tamil, Sri Lanka, culture, youth, war, violence.

Dedication

I dedicate this writing to the emerging young adults I have worked with who have felt lost and lacking a voice. I have heard you and hope you find your path and mark in this lifetime through the strength in the relationships you build with others.

To my friends and family for your love, support, strength and wisdom (most of whom I ignored for a long time to finish this work), I love you, respect you and am honoured to have you in my life!

A special mention to my dear cousins, who served as role models for me and inspired me to pursue a Masters degree and continue researching-thanks *Yaar*!

To my professors from the Master of Education Counselling Psychology program: Dr. Alan Leschied, Dr. Susan Rodger and Dr. Jason Brown (my thesis supervisor) for providing continuous support towards my personal and professional growth. The steady encouragement and motivation you supplied helped me reach this goal and feel confident as an emerging counsellor, researcher and lifelong student.

I hope that my work towards social justice continues to bring inspirational, strong, committed individuals within communities for years to come. Till then-

Pranam.

Acknowledgements

I would like to send my heartfelt acknowledgements to a number of people who have helped shape the course of this study-including those whose research influenced this study.

I would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of all of the research participants who took interest in this research, shared their experiences and voices: thank you for teaching me the meaning of resiliency.

Many thanks to the organizations I worked with in Toronto: working with a team of youth activists from ground up who portray the core values of community was humbling. I thank you for welcoming me and trusting me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The realities of settlement and adjustment faced by families who are new to Canada can be very daunting. Those who have experienced community violence in their country of origin also carry the effects of those experiences with them. Youth from these families are viewed by many as at risk for becoming involved in violent activities. In Ontario, *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence* stated that youth from immigrant and refugee families who have left war torn countries to take up residence in Canada are among the most vulnerable to risk factors for violence (McMurtry & Curling, 2008).

Little research however has been devoted to the perceptions of immigrant youth who have experienced community violence in their country of origin, and the conflicts in relationships that this exposure holds in managing those challenges (Rosario et al. 2008). The purpose of the present study was to explore the interpersonal challenges faced by immigrant youth from countries where they were exposed to large scale ethnic violence, and how they managed interpersonal difficulties in family, school and peer contexts in their new country of residence.

Partnership with a culture-based youth organization in a large Canadian city provided opportunities for the researcher to become involved in the agency and build the level of trust necessary to conduct interviews with youth who would likely not have otherwise participated in research. All participants in the study had family and personal connections to Sri Lanka. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted. Scenarios in each of the areas of interest including peers, family and school, were presented to the youth and used as prompts to discuss interpersonal challenges and coping styles. The interviews were transcribed and the data analysed using a content analysis procedure that identified common themes across the interviews. The themes included 1) role

expectations 2) collectivism and independence 3) affiliations 4) academic expectations and 5) violence and discrimination. These themes were compared and contrasted with the available literature. Implications for counsellors, educators and helpers in the social services were described.

Definitions

The terms "newcomer", "first generation" and "1.5 generation" appear frequently throughout the study, and are defined here for the purposes of the thesis. "Newcomer" refers to immigrants who have been in Canada less than 2 years. "First Generation" refers to immigrants or children of immigrants first in the family line to be born in Canada. "1.5 generation (1.5G)" refers to individuals who were born outside Canada but immigrated at a young age.

Benefits of this Research

Many immigrant families have experienced the civil war in Sri Lanka firsthand. They continue to re-experience it through images and stories in the media as well as through connections maintained with extended family and friends in their home country. Sri Lankan youth in Canada may have direct experience with or knowledge of historical struggles, political unrest and ethnic violence. They learn of their history through their families and peers living abroad and in Canada, as well as from the media and through formal education. Making sense of the emotions and complexities involved is a challenge, but also necessary for the development of a healthy sense of self. The ways that immigrant Sri Lankan youth have experienced interpersonal and intergroup disagreement and ways of responding to it have not been well described in the literature to date.

Professionals and researchers will benefit from the experiences and views shared by youth. This study reviews information about the Sri Lankan civil war and mass migration of Tamils abroad, and focuses on the impact of exposure to community violence and migration related to youth's stress and coping in their host country of Canada. The perspectives of the youth themselves on the topic is also a useful way for their collective voices to be represented and used to provide sensitive and responsive helping services to this population.

Researchers will benefit from the results of this study in its contribution to the growing literature on cultural diversity among youth and ways to engage with members of "hard-to-reach" populations. Finally, the creation of a space and record of young adults' voices can be a powerful and moving experience for the participants, professionals and researchers alike.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter Two includes a historical account of Sri Lanka, its culture and settlement experiences of Tamil newcomers. A discussion is provided regarding the developmental context and tasks of adolescence as well as an overview of the interpersonal challenges and coping styles experienced. The chapter concludes with a suggested interpretation of causes of youth violence found in the models of importation and deprivation. Research methods used in this study are outlined in Chapter Three. Chapter Four provides a review of the results of the content analysis applied to the transcribed interview data. Chapter Five provides a comparison between the results of the study and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Several background factors influence interpersonal challenges and ways of coping among Sri Lankan youth in Canada. In this chapter, the history of ethnic conflict and cultural values are described before turning to a description of acculturation and finally, personal identity development. In the second section of this literature review, major contexts for interpersonal challenges are reviewed before an overview of different ways of coping is presented. Finally, *the importation theory of violence* is highlighted as a possible way to interpret the literature and study results on interpersonal stress and coping.

Background

Sri Lanka is an island off the coast of India's south-western shore. The two largest ethnic populations are the Tamils and Sinhalese. Tamils are predominantly Hindu followers who reside in the north and eastern shores of the country. The Sinhalese are predominantly Buddhists who primarily reside in the central region. It is between members of the Sinhalese, who comprise approximately three-quarters of the population and the Tamils, who comprise approximately 15% of the population, where the tension lies.

There have been multiple reports of violence between members of these populations resulting in significant losses of life over the years. Such violence and loss affects youth and families in Sri Lanka as well as those who have immigrated to Canada and who remain connected to their country of origin. In this section, a brief history of Sinhalese-Tamil relations is presented as context for the political demonstrations by Tamils in Canada during the spring of 2009.

Sinhalese-Tamil Relations

In the early 19th century, Sri Lanka, previously known as Ceylon, was Britain's first crown colony. Colonization introduced new political and economic systems as well as , Christianity and schools that reinforced distinctions between Tamils and Sinhalese (Ramanathapillai, 2006). Although colonization had an undeniably profound impact on the colony, there was, in the time following contact and prior to independence, a relatively peaceful co-existence and proportionate ethnic-based political representation (Imtiyaz & Stavis, 2008). For example, in the 1833 Ceylon legislature the Sinhalese, Tamils and Burghers (Portugese-Sinhlaese) had one representative each with the Europeans having three.

Calls for independence from Britain were voiced strongly by individuals who had organized into Youth Leagues, counting both Tamils and Sinhalese among their members and supporters. Election boycotts, petitions and labour disruptions were used to show solidarity and organization for freedom from British rule. This nonviolent independence movement led to the end of colonial rule with a new constitution and general election in 1947. At that time, the United National Party, a composition of Sinhalese and Tamil groups, the Sinhala Maha Sabha (Sinhalese) and the Tamil Congress (Tamil) formed the new coalition government (Imtiaz & Stavis, 2008).

Members of the Sinhalese and Tamil populations each felt oppressed at different times (Ramanathapillai, 2006) and following independence from Britain, tensions grew stronger resulting in open conflict. The British had offered education and administrative positions disproportionate to Tamils. The first coalition government effectively revoked these privileges with the passage of an act by a majority of the legislature that changed the official language from English to Sinhala (Sinhalese). This Act in 1956 led to the

removal of Tamils, who did not speak Sinhala, from positions in the government. With this shift, the Tamils also lost their jobs and accessibility to public benefits.

The independence movement among Tamils began to develop with the Tamil United Liberation Front party running on a separatist platform and becoming the official opposition following the 1977 elections. The success of the party in that election led to a violent backlash that served to solidify Tamil-Sinhalese divisions.

Tamil youth in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, disgruntled with the pace of change and political process used by the Tamil United Liberation Front, formed their own separatist organization that became known as Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The purpose of the LTTE was to create an independent Tamil state and legitimize the militant tactics that were utilized. Its first major attack was an ambush of a Sri Lankan army troop killing 13 soldiers in 1983. The Sinhalese response, which became known as the Black July riots, included attacks that took hundreds of Tamil lives and led to the displacement of many Sri Lankans who fled the conflict. In cooperation with other militant groups, LTTE responded by engaging in several targeted attacks against members of the Sinhalese majority (Imtiaz & Stavis, 2008; Ramanthapillai, 2006).

Conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE continued, breaking for negotiations during a ceasefire between 2002 and 2006, but resuming thereafter. Multiple reports of attacks and civilian deaths were made by the media especially during the intensification of conflict that preceded the end of the civil war in 2009. For example, De Alwis (2009) described stories of a father, a sister, a teacher and a friend who went out to engage in their daily routines, but who never returned home. Anti-Tamil riots, militant attacks, youth uprisings as well as army search operations resulted in the loss of

thousands of young Tamil men who disappeared from the north and east of Sri Lanka's island. Ultimately, the capture of LTTE headquarters by the Sri Lankan army was followed by declarations of victory and surrender respectively by Sri Lanka's President and the LTTE leader, who died shortly thereafter in May of 2009.

In response to the escalation of violence in northern Sri Lanka, a number of Tamil protests were held in southern Ontario to request international aid to bring about a peaceful solution and prevent further civilian casualties and loss of life. Hunger strikes, human chains and protests were followed by a vigil that resulted in a blockage on the Gardiner Expressway, a major Toronto highway, and effectively closing it down for several hours in mid-May. The blockage on the highway received an angry reaction from members of the public, which, for some, became a motivating factor to understand the issues. Although the Toronto mayor was critical of the protester's tactics, he did attend a protest by the Tamil community the following day indicating that "some people would be probably offended by the flag (Tamil Tigers) and afraid to show their support for these people, but I'm not here about politics" (Canadian Broadcasting Network, 2009). Inter-ethnic conflicts have been a significant part of Sri Lanka's collective history and identity that have affected and motivated community members in Canada to react in numerous ways. Although many Sri Lankans residing in Canada have formed a commitment to speak out on the violence in their home country and demonstrated their concerns openly, others have chosen to remain silent.

Cultural Values and Customs

Given the history of displacement, colonial influences, and ethnic diversity among Sri Lankans traditional beliefs and ways may differ considerably among those from Sri

Lanka, as well as between Sri Lankans in Canada and other Canadians. Ethnic-based beliefs that have been described among Tamil peoples include collectivism, respect for elders, humility, obedience, conservative sexual behaviour, high value for education, respect for hierarchy in family and family duty (Hamid, 2007). In this section, the importance of collectivism, family structure as well as gender roles and self-sacrifice are described.

Collectivism

Individualist cultures in North America focus on the needs of individuals, and those needs take precedence over the needs of groups such as extended families, communities or organizations. Conversely, members of collectivist cultures such as Tamils would view personal needs as subordinate to those of family and community. Individuals would typically be expected to forgo their needs to meet the needs of the larger group (Freeman, 1997). Research indicates that collectivist values among Tamils in Sri Lanka are held in high esteem, quite stable over time and unrelated to social and economic position (Freeman, 1997).

Family structure

As notions of collectivism are present, there is a strong sense of obligation to one's family. The senses of pride and shame are strongly tied to extended family relationships. Member conduct that reflects well upon the family is expected. To promote harmony within the family, emotional restraint is often practiced and emotional consequences are used (e.g. guilt) to remind children of their obligations. Within the family, older siblings, particularly males, are given responsibility to protect their younger

siblings and their sisters as well as maintain guardianship roles (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000).

Gender roles

The respect for hierarchy within the family is also seen in differences between opportunities given to men and women. Among young South Asian cultures, for example Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Nepalese, and Afghani women, girls are given fewer opportunities to make decisions related to jobs, marriage and school (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Such customs have lead to specific patterns of experiences, expectations as well as occupational and educational differences between men and women.

Self-sacrifice

While notions of collectivism encourage individual sacrifice for group cohesion, cultural meanings of suffering and protection can be apparent within attitudes toward or against violence. For example, in Tamil culture, suffering may be viewed to enhance moral power of the sufferer. Serving others, self-sacrificing and self-restraint are encouraged over self-serving actions. When observed from this perspective, use of force may be seen as being sacrificial for the greater good (De Alwis, 2009). Conversely, experience with violence may trigger the values of serving others and self-sacrifice to motivate action without violence. For example, a grassroots movement of mothers, labelled as Southern Mother's Fronts, formed in Sri Lanka to investigate disappearances and speak out against the losses of their sons.

Settlement

The transition to another environment is a challenge when any person is uprooted from an environment that holds the familiarity of their culture, structures, values and

practices. Although many Tamils have immigrated to Canada, others arrive as refugees. Despite the different categories under which they relocate, there is a blurred distinction between leaving willingly and being forced to leave. Most Tamils who have arrived in Canada during the ethnic conflict have done so due to fears for safety and in search of security for themselves and their families. Many Tamils left under difficult conditions and arrived with little preparation for life in a new country. In this section, the migration of Sri Lankans to Canada is described before relevant literature on acculturation, family adjustment and legacy of exposure to community violence is discussed.

Migration

The migration of Sri Lankans to Canada has steadily increased over the past few decades. Sri Lankan people have been migrating to Canada since the 1940's, with a few hundred people every ten years. During the riots in 1983 this number increased to several hundred thousand where Sri Lankans entered Canada as refugees. Over the past two decades, Tamils have been one of the fastest growing immigrant populations and Canada now has the largest population of Sri Lankans outside of Sri Lanka. In Canada, the majority of Sri Lankans (70%) are citizens, with 25% permanent residents, 3% refugee claimants, and 2% conventional refugees (Canadian Tamil Chamber of Commerce, 2007). Canada is now home to over 250 000 Tamils. Approximately 80% of the total Tamil population reside in the Greater Toronto Area and have a projected population growth to 550 000 by 2017 (Canadian Tamil Chamber of Commerce, 2007).

Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as the degree to which a person from one culture has adopted the norms and values of a different culture and relinquished those of their

original culture (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000). Acculturation is associated with personal well-being insofar as connections and affiliations with a relevant cultural group, whether traditional or host country-based, match those of the individual.

Family adjustment

Immigrant or refugee Tamil youth living with their parents may experience tension as a result of generational differences through adjustment. The culture of their parents may be very different from the culture of their peers. Youth may feel gratitude towards their parents for the struggles endured as well as having a need to repay them for the sacrifices made to provide a better life for them in Canada. However, the need for friendship and differences in expectations and realities between what their parents believe and condone may differ sharply from attitudes and behaviours of peers. These generational differences between parents and youth can lead to disagreement and conflict (Hyman, Vu & Beiser, 2000).

Violence

Studies on the impact of violence offer contrasting results. Additional stressors associated with settlement among youth include experiences with prejudice and discrimination, challenges communicating and conflict within their peer group (Beiser & Hou, 2006; Lay & Nguyen, 1998). While settlement stress has been found to increase the overall stress in youth's lives, it did not directly lead individuals to participate in violence (Spencer & Le, 2006). However, this experience creates reduced ability to cope and more dependent decision making with others including peers (Walsh et al., 2008). On the other hand, perception of fit with a peer group is positively associated with self-esteem (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001), and it has been noted that "one of the ways immigrant

youth engage in violent behaviour is through their company with delinquent peers because of conflict with their parents on intergenerational and/or intercultural differences" (Le & Stockdale, 2008).

Youth Development

Adolescence is a time of significant change in growth, maturation and development. Both qualitative and quantitative changes take place physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially. The changes do not occur at the same rate between youth, nor do they co-occur within the same rate for the same youth. While there are many developmental differences between and within youth, most who reside in North America experience pressure to formulate a sense of identity and figure out where they fit in. The challenges associated with self discovery are further compounded when a youth has experienced another culture and family who differ in significant ways from the culture of their current social group. The process of developing a sense of self is challenged by settlement into a new country and community, and the pressures of balancing different cultural realities and ethnic differences.

Adolescence is a time of rapid change, with the major outcome of the period being a mature sense of identity (Bertram, 2008). Identity is defined as the set of thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviours that form a part of one's personal style (Lalonde, Chandler, Hallett & Paul, 2001). A stable and supporting environment is essential for identity development, and is always compromised when young people are caught in ethnic warfare and resettlement. Tamil youth's search for a sense of self represents an attempt to fit into some social norms. The outcome of that search is heavily influenced by their identification with an ethnic community, sense of segregation or

distinctiveness, as well as peer and family influences (Kanagaratnam, Raundalen & Asbjornsen, 2005). Indeed, youth who lived in areas with high concentrations of people from their ethnic group had stronger ethnic identities to that group (Taylor, 2007).

Tamil youth who are born in Canada or arrive in Canada at a young age struggle with self-definition. Some are called "freshies" or "tigers" indicating a derogatory connection to war and those young adults born in Sri Lanka who represent hybrid identities. Some feel like they do not belong to any particular culture at all. Bertram (2008) characterizes these types of identity formations as identity commitment or identity confusion. While negotiations between family identity, personal identity and ethnic identity can also create challenges (Hamid, 2007), these challenges often dissipate as young adults age and achieve greater stability through adjustment to daily life in their new country and cultural community (Taylor, 2007). Through these adjustments young adults are given increasing responsibilities produced added pressure and stress.

Developmental Tasks

Not only do adolescents change and seek to arrive at a sense of who they are as people, expectations that others hold out for them also shift as they are viewed more as adults than children. These expectations come from a variety of sources which compete for the youth's attention and engagement. The expectations may be vague or focus exclusively on what not to do. However, they typically experience an externally imposed sense of responsibility to do themselves as well as their families and communities proud.

In a North American context, many young adults begin to search for paid jobs outside the home and make choices about education and careers beyond high school. For Tamil youth raised in traditional homes, achieving a high education and obtaining a

career that the parents encourage are valued. These choices can be difficult and further complicated when compounded by the stress of learning a new language or fitting in with a new peer group. It is also challenging for young adults who may have lived through traumatic experiences of war and violence as children to quickly take on new responsibilities as young adults.

Several challenges such as smoking, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour and criminal activities may begin during adolescence as an expression of fitting in. Engagement in any of these activities may create distance in the relationships that children have with their parents and other social supports. This serves to compound their risk and lead to the potential for separation and isolation from family and community. Many adolescents experiment with boundaries and challenging authority in exercising their decision-making abilities. Encouragement of decision-making and provision of space and support can help youth who are trying out various ways of coping that may become their preferred ways of dealing with interpersonal challenges during adulthood (Hamdan-Mansour, 2008).

Interpersonal Challenges

Youth from immigrant families can struggle with interpersonal relationships for a variety of reasons including the negotiation of different sets of cultural values, adjustment to new social groups, as well as personal changes associated with development and the changing expectations that others have for them. It is the relationships that youth make which are crucial for their overall social adjustment, mental health and academic success. The major areas of interpersonal relationships for youth include those with family, peers and school. Challenges in these relationships are unavoidable. However, it is in the way

these challenges are handled that determines outcomes. In this section, three primary types and contexts of interpersonal relationships are described, including the challenges experienced by youth.

Families

Despite the research that exists on peer influences, several scholars have clarified the significance of parents as primary sources of influence for emerging adults (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001). These findings can be encouraging for many parents and families, yet they can also pose conflict for young adults who are growing up in a different cultural context than that of their parents. While many of the conflicts that occur between parents and youth relate to expectations and rules (Collins et al., 1997), practices of acceptance, firmness and democracy by caregivers are associated with higher grades, greater self-reliance, reduced anxiety and lower likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviour (Steinburg et al., 1991). Immigrant and refugee youth have noted that high parental standards for achievement at times competed for their ability to fit in with peers and were compounded by language and communication difficulties they experienced (Hyman, Vu & Beiser, 2000).

For many Tamils, the civil war and violence have permanently altered the structure and functioning of the family. Many young adults have separated from their primary caregivers and even lost their fathers due to the violence. Single parents often rely on the support of relatives and extended family members, especially during settlement. Fortunately, these supports enhance and help improve parenting skills and relationships, contributing to positive adjustment for youth. However, a significant number of families with similar experiences of violence living in similar conditions

within concentrated urban Canadian neighbourhoods may not be able to provide enough support despite their best efforts.

Peers

Peer relationships may also create tensions. Adolescence is time for forming closer relationships with peers along with an expansion of social circles. Adolescents from immigrant and refugee families are often more immersed in the dominant culture than their parents because of their affiliations with school, peer relationships, and extra-curricular activities (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001). This creates additional stressors on the relationship between parents and children. If not managed well, these stressors may contribute to reduced self-esteem, lower self-concept of young adults and risk for depression (Rumbaut 1994; Verkuyten, 1998).

Conflict regarding traditional Tamil dating practices and North American dating practices can also create tensions. While younger adolescents are forming relationships with peers, interest in dating increases throughout adolescence. Young adults often form cliques and begin to socialize in larger groups of peers that share similar interests (Mathur, 2000). Tamil youth in highly concentrated areas who have lived through violence may begin to form close relationships and bonds. In the absence of opportunities for school or employment success, or persistent concerns for personal safety, involvement in illegal activities or gang membership can be a way of belonging and affirming identity.

School

Many relationships are built through social activities in and out of school for adolescents. Schools can be a source of positive support for young adults as well as a

place where the academic challenges combined by other stressors can make it very negative. As the process of colonization in Sri Lanka created a hierarchy and divide among people for educational attainment, psychological services in Canadian schools have been criticized for doing the same. There is a history of concern over streaming minority children or youth into special education services because of language or cultural differences (Hitchcock et al., 2005). The difficulties associated with educational assessment and placement among youth who have very different language and customs as well as school experiences can place youth with dramatic differences in the same setting, with the same instructional techniques geared for the same level, leading to mismatches and difficulties.

Coping

Tamil youth face considerable pressures in navigating through adolescence successfully. These challenges will also include dealing with their prior exposure of violence, the experience of settlement, life as a newcomer, being part of an ethnic minority, as well as rapid physical, cognitive and social changes. There are the additional challenges related to the expectations of others regarding who they are and what they should become. These youth cope with these challenges in different ways. However, there are few studies that have explored this topic. A study done by Nastasi et al (2007) was one of the few that explored the coping styles and interpersonal challenges of Sri Lankan youth who were living in Sri Lanka. The categories of coping that were identified on the basis of the study are presented in the following section

Stress has been defined as the perceived inability to meet expectations (Hamoud-Mansour, 2008). These expectations may be internally or externally imposed. Coping

characterizes how these expectations are perceived and managed. Some ways of coping may be considered healthy and others unhealthy insofar as they are associated with the development of mental health problems (Hamoud-Mansour, 2008). The study conducted by Nastasi et al (2007) on youth born and raised in Sri Lanka offers insight into some of the ways youth managed to cope with violence in their communities. She highlights three categories including emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping and support-seeking coping behaviours which were applicable to cultural influences.

Emotion-focused coping was defined as the ways of managing negative emotional affect. Examples of this included isolation, sleeping, withdrawal, pouting, tantrums, suicide and praying. Other activities such as listening to music, watching television or playing were used. At times, control of feelings, particularly anger, was expressed through suppression. Suppression was not uncommon and consistent with the cultural significance of maintaining control of emotion.

Problem-focused coping was defined as the ways to help identify and address the sources of stress. Problem-focused coping strategies included consciously making efforts to analyse decisions by finding the root of the problem and solving it, attempting to change situations, asking questions and seeking professional help or by taking medications. Both males and females reported seeking advice and interventions from their elders, typically associated with cultural values of respect for those teachers and healers in Sri Lankan culture.

Support-seeking coping was defined as behaviour that led young Sri Lankan participants to seek active or emotional support from others. Support-seeking strategies included efforts to obtain emotional support by speaking to the appropriate authoritative

figure. For example, in academic situations, students sought support from teachers, private tutors or friends. For other support, peers and siblings were sought out the most (Nastasi et al., 2007).

Importation and Deprivation Model

Theories that account for how immigrant and refugee youth who have experienced community violence in their country of origin are at greater risk for violence in their new country of residence have been offered (McMurtry & Curling, 2008). This section describes the importation and deprivation models of coping. These models have been influential in the approach taken in the present study, including the selection of interview questions as well as interpretation of responses.

The theories of importation and deprivation originally began as a cultural and structural way to explain interpersonal violence in the prison system (Richards, 2007).

Importation theory

Importation theory suggests that violence occurs as a result of personal characteristics that the individuals take on as a result of their exposure to those characteristics with, what is perceived to be, a supportive environment. This theory is based on the assumption that inmates in a prison for example, "import" a set of characteristics and values that motivate their behaviours while they are in prison.

Deprivation theory

Deprivation theory suggests that violence in a prison results from the institutional experiences themselves that are beyond the characteristics of the individual. Therefore, prison behaviour would be attributed to the deprivation or "pains" one experience's due to the adjustment into prison and its environment (Cao et al. 1980 in Richards, 2007).

Applied to the present topic, the interpersonal stressors that Tamil youth face can be seen as the product of their experiences. According to importation theory, exposure to violence in the home country, either personally or through the experiences of their parents, contributes to an increased likelihood of engagement in interpersonal violence in response to interpersonal stress. In this study, Tamil youth were asked how they experience interpersonal stress and how they cope with it. For example, was it primarily through problem-focused coping?

Summary

This chapter began with a short history of Sri Lanka that provided a context on cultural roots, and the nature and timing of ethnic conflict that immigrant and refugee Tamil youth and their families have experienced prior to their arrival in Canada. A brief review of Tamil values and customs was provided to draw on the contrast between cultures and describe some areas of possible differences that newcomer youth from Sri Lanka may experience. Acculturation and adjustment were described to highlight the types of changes that Tamil families and youth may encounter during settlement, before turning to the developmental context of adolescence as a time of personal change and search for identity that is influenced by new expectations from others who see them transitioning out of childhood. The resulting stress of that time may manifest in challenging interpersonal relationships in three important areas: family, peers and school. The ways that youth cope with stress were described before turning to the importation deprivation framework as a way to conceptualize risk for coping through violence.

Rationale for the Present Study

Very little has been reported on ethno-specific youth from war torn countries such as Sri Lanka, Africa, and Vietnam who have comprised the majority of the immigrant

population pool in Canada in recent years (Statistics Canada, 2007). Moreover, less has been reported on the healthy functioning and coping of youth from these countries. It is important to understand the multiple stressors one may experience though civil war, settlement and other violence. However, it is equally important to uncover the coping strategies of youth dealing with these experiences.

The limited number of studies to date offer mixed results on how Sri Lankan youth are coping. However, the main focal points of research have highlighted key socio-cultural factors that impact their development. Many families are still practicing traditional authoritative parenting and hold reserved values on gender, dating, marriage, education and careers. These practices clash with contemporary North American notions of adjustment, thereby creating unique identity negotiations among Sri Lankan youth. While Tamil youth may express their solidarity to ending violence in Sri Lanka through protest (Somasundaram, 1998), they are challenged with the process of fitting into their social life with Canadian peer groups through school, activities and work.

While there are perceptions along with data to suggest that immigrant and refugee youth from war torn countries are more likely than other youth to become involved in interpersonal violence, little attention has been paid to the possibilities of other ways youth cope with interpersonal challenges within a Canadian context. Tamil youth, because of local attention attracted through political protests of the Sri Lankan civil war, are a very visible group who are at risk for being perceived by others only as violent individuals. The purpose of the study was to explore the nature of interpersonal stressors and coping responses from their perspective to learn about their social experiences and how they negotiate them.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the interpersonal stressors and coping responses from the perspectives of Sri Lankan youth, based on their experiences with family, peers and school. An ethnographic approach was followed and included an extensive period of involvement within an organization working with youth in a large Canadian city which enhanced the researcher's awareness of the issues, to demonstrate commitment and build trust with the community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 youth. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were analysed using a qualitative content analysis procedure. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part includes a review of ethnographic research including history, types, steps, characteristics and evaluation. The second part of this chapter highlights the engagement process, procedure, sample, data collection and analysis employed in the current study.

Ethnography

The practice of ethnography stems back to the 1920's and has its roots in cultural anthropology. It is a qualitative research method for describing, analyzing, and interpreting members of cultural-based groups' shared patterns of behavior and beliefs. Typically an ethnographic approach is used when the researcher seeks an understanding of a larger issue among members of a cultural group, or to obtain a thorough understanding of the day-to-day life of members of a particular cultural group.

The degree of immersion in the study by the researcher varies between different approaches to ethnography. Common approaches include realist ethnography, case study ethnography and critical ethnography. The current study employed a realist ethnographic

approach. This approach is the least intrusive and requires the least level of immersion in the culture. The researcher takes the role of an outsider with the goal to highlight participants' views through the use of closely edited quotes. Each step in the process of interpretation of data by the researcher is documented.

There are several steps typical of an ethnographic study. These include: 1) identification of the purpose for the study and relationship to method chosen, 2) ethics and access considerations, 3) data from time in the field, 4) analysis and interpretation of data and 5) demonstration of how approach is consistent with key aspects of ethnographic research.

The key characteristics of ethnographic research were met in the present study. These include 1) cultural themes (interpersonal challenges and coping), 2) a culture-sharing group (Tamil youth), 3) a consideration of shared patterns of behavior, beliefs and language (first or 1.5 G immigrants or refugees who had experienced ethnic violence), 4) data collection through fieldwork (researcher visits to community and in-person interviews), 5) a description with themes and interpretations (qualitative content analysis procedures), 6) a group context or setting (residence in large Canadian city), and finally 7) researcher reflexivity (personal reflections by researcher of process and product).

Several questions can be asked in relation to an ethnographic study to determine its quality and utility. Has the group and its patterns been clearly identified? Have details and specific contexts been specified? Does the research convey how the culture operates within broader interpretations? Has the researcher checked for accuracy and demonstrated reflexive practice?

A basic feature of ethnographic research is the immersion of one's self into the culture of interest. The researcher had worked with Sri Lankan youth on the topic of violence prevention strategies in the school system, so was known to some youth in the area and had some awareness of the community and issues. For example, the researcher had an understanding of the stigma attached to sharing information or personal stories referred to as "snitching" with people considered to be "outsiders".

Although the researcher had prior knowledge of youth experiences of violence prevention from her work as a child and youth worker in the school system, efforts were made to be open to what would emerge from the current process. This was done through the use of formation of new relationships with youth and avoidance of pre-existing relationships with those in the group of interest for data collection purposes. Such efforts to show openness to experiences reaching beyond researcher expectations has been described by Creswell (2007) as "epoche".

Prior to engaging in data collection, the researcher was familiar with some of the serving agencies for this community. One grassroots agency was approached because of its central location, purpose and community connections. This agency agreed to participate as an endorsing agency and allowed for poster advertisements to be posted within as well as around their location. Developing a partnership with the agency posed challenges early on because of the intensity of circumstances surrounding the violence in Sri Lanka at the time, and the efforts of the agency in the public demonstrations.

It was necessary to be seen by, and build rapport with, members of this group of participants who had good reason to mistrust others, prior to any attempt at data collection. Initially, the researcher volunteered her time with a local agency and attended

events to increase her visibility and build trust among the participants. While this research was undergoing ethics review at the university, a number of protests to stop the civil war in Sri Lanka were taking place. The protests served to heighten solidarity and promote a willingness among many to have their stories heard.

Engagement Process

The partner agency had existed as a grassroots organization to engage Sri Lankan youth and provide activities, awards, community events and volunteerism to strengthen the community. It had grown to include research, advocacy, outreach and community mobilization mandates. The researcher approached the agency November of 2008 to discuss the possibility of support for the proposed study. The agency director was supportive of the request and offered to advertise the study so interested participants could contact the researcher directly for more information and to arrange an interview. It was also suggested that the researcher become involved in local community activities with youth to increase her visibility and build connections.

In preparation for data collection, the researcher became involved in agency activities, including maintaining a presence during events, drop-in hours, community vigils as well as sporting events. In addition to relationship building, the researcher gained more knowledge about the population. For example, translating the flyers or providing translator information was not necessary as the majority of youth spoke English as their first or second language. In addition, it was recommended that the researcher make at least two presentations to members of the youth committee regarding her background and interests in conducting research with local youth.

An ethics application was submitted in the spring of 2009, and once approved poster advertisements (Appendix I) were handed out and placed on public bulletin boards in various places including the agency and surrounding area. Participants were recruited in July and August during the peak of the protests against the civil war in Sri Lanka. The poster included goals of the research study, invited youth to participate and provided the researcher's contact information.

Interested participants contacted the researcher directly and arranged a time and place for the interview. Interviews were conducted in private office spaces within the agency and the local community centre. Although interviews were done on site, the space used was not observable by staff members, which managed the risk for identification in preserving anonymity. While several research participants contacted the researcher in person, participant identification was also protected because the researcher was often present in the agency and engaged with a number of youth who were not participating.

A total of 31 enquiries about participation were made through this process. However, appointments oftentimes were missed and difficult to reschedule. In addition, although many participants saw the poster ads, equally as many heard about the study through word of mouth or snowballing techniques where the participants were asked to recommend peers who showed interest.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted thirteen face to face semi-structured interviews. Only twelve of the thirteen interviews were used for this study as half of the thirteenth interview data was inadvertently taped over during the data collection process and the participant was unavailable for additional information. Saturation, defined in this study as

no new themes during four consecutive interviews, occurred after twelve were completed. The interviews took approximately an hour from beginning to end with many between 30 to 45 minutes.

The researcher was aware, based on her prior involvement with the youth, that they may have been reluctant to provide detailed information of their experiences to researchers and "outsiders" or have difficulty using language to express their experiences. It was decided that a combination of scenarios and direct questions created more ease in the conversation and proved to be beneficial to the interview process. The questions were designed to elicit experiences of how well youth were coping, where they would go for help, and what services they would need.

Following written participant consent for those 18 and older and guardian consent for those under 18 years, (see Appendix E, F, G and H) interviews began. Obtaining written parental consent posed barriers for some youth who were interested in participating, but felt uncomfortable sharing this opportunity with their parents. Only participants under 18 who obtained parental consent were invited to an interview. The interview began with a short demographics questionnaire followed by a semi-structured interview utilizing scenarios described by (Nastasi et al., 2007) regarding family, peer and school relations developed for Sri Lankan youth in Sri Lanka. The scenarios were modified for a Canadian context, but maintained the original structure and components. The purpose of the scenarios was to open discussion about a challenging topic with the youth, and follow it by several questions about stress and coping that were developed by the researcher (see Appendix C).

Each participant was provided with a written copy of the scenarios and questions to review as the audio recording device was set up. This provided an opportunity to consider responses, ask questions prior to the interview process and address concerns they had. The researcher read the scenario to the participants and asked questions in a systematic manner while taking notes, as this was the preferred method for the youth as opposed to having them read the scenarios and respond. After the interview process participants were offered a $10 gift card. Three of the participants declined the honorarium.

Sample

A table of the demographics characteristics of participants is provided. A range of participants based on age, gender, place of birth, employment and number of years settled in Canada participated. Six males and six females with an average age of 17 ranging from 14 to 20 participated. Although both Tamil and Sinhalese youth were invited all of the participants identified as Tamil and one participant identified as both Sinhalese and Tamil. Approximately half of the participants were 1.5 generation and had moved to Canada at a young age. Six participants were born in Sri Lanka, five were born in Canada and one was born in England.

Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Country of Birth	Length of Residence	Residents in Home	Employed
F	16	Tamil	Sri Lanka	15	4	Yes
M	18	Tamil	Sri Lanka	4	6	Yes
M	20	Tamil	Sri Lanka	15	2	No
F	16	Tamil	Canada	From birth	4	No
M	15	Tamil	Sri Lanka	4	4	n/a
F	18	Tamil	Canada	From birth	3	Yes
F	19	Tamil	Canada	From birth	4	Yes
M	19	Tamil	Sri Lanka	18	4	Yes
F	15	Tamil	Canada	From birth	5	No
M	14	Tamil	Canada	From birth	5	No
M	15	Tamil	Canada	From birth	4	No
F	19	Tamil/Sinhalese	England	9	3	Yes

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis procedures were employed for the analysis of interview transcripts. These steps included reviewing the raw data, coding and cross-referencing for multiple meanings, documenting emergence of themes, description of themes using participant quotes and comparison of the themes to the available literature. These steps are described in detail below.

Step 1 and 2. The interview data were transcribed manually. Each transcription took approximately 2-3 hours. The researcher reviewed the data thoroughly several times to gain a general understanding of possible themes and patterns.

Step 3. Each meaning unit (phrase or short passage) was extracted from the transcript and labelled with one or two word code such as, "peer pressure" or "hatred" based on the content. For example, the following passage was labelled as hide and placed under the theme of role expectations:

> *do stuff that they don't know about, like go outside without them knowing about it and sneak out when they are not there, like go outside and play sports (participant five).*

A complete list of meaning units and codes is attached in Appendix A.

Step 4. Each of the codes was than cross-referenced for connections and multiple meanings of stressors and coping strategies. This procedure involved reviewing each of the meaning units and codes, with the grouping of codes into larger aggregates that became the themes. For example the following passage was coded as "beef" (colloquial term for hatred used by youth), placed in category of coping and finally reviewed under the theme of violence and discrimination

when you hear people talking about your girl doing something or cheating some next guy you're gonna get pissed off and that starts to bother you and then the what's next is you wanna go beat up the next man (participant ten).

A complete list of themes by code is attached in Appendix B.

Step 5. The themes that emerged from participant responses were reviewed for consistency and depth. The language selected for titling the themes was carefully considered to avoid captions that reflected a stigmatized opinion. For example, rather than labelling a theme as identity and belonging, the meanings fit into gender roles and expectations. The use of the word expectations denotes a socialized connotation to the behaviour that young adults are challenged by rather than an identity which may be seen as promoting use of labelling. In addition, multiple quotes have been utilized throughout the analysis to capture the unique and authentic essence, language and voices of the participants. The five themes included: role expectations, collectivism and independence, violence and discrimination, affiliations and academic expectations.

Step 6. Finally, these themes were further interpreted through a comparison and contrast with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two of this thesis. The discussion is provided in Chapter Five following the results (analysis Step 5) provided in Chapter Four.

Trustworthiness

Many of the participants approached the researcher to inquire about her presence in the community and became interested in participating in the research through other participant endorsements. Many participants shared openness during and before the interview process about their participation in the research study with their friends. These

discussions helped build initial rapport with the youth. Trust was therefore obtained through the multiple steps taken to offer dignity and respect to the participants.

The researcher's personal experience working with youth was helpful in determining how best to approach them and conduct the interviews. A laid back, open approach was essential. While collecting the data through the interviews the researcher reflected all of the statements, stories and experience back to ensure the responses were interpreted accurately. In addition, a section on personal reflections appears in the results chapter of this thesis to indicate the researcher's contributions to the study in its design, conduct, analysis as well as interpretation of results.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reviews the themes that emerged from 12 transcribed interviews with Tamil youth regarding their interpersonal stressors and coping in the areas of family, peers and school. Coping and stress were seen as interconnected and difficult to separate for purposes of representation so combined within each theme. The five themes included role expectations, collectivism and independence, violence and discrimination, affiliations, and academic expectations.

The interview was designed to elicit experiences of interpersonal stress and coping in peer, family and school. The contexts were described intentionally to create ease in conversation. The participants expressed an integral connection to peer, school and family life as a part of their experience of stress and coping consistently throughout the interviews. During the analysis, the researcher found that there were clear distinctions between each of the three focal areas that were important to reflect in the study. As a result, there is overlap between the themes and questions. The connections between researcher experience of doing the study and interpretation of results are explored in the conclusion of this chapter where researcher reflections on the research process are written in first person.

Role Expectations

In this theme, participants shared a mixed response of cultural values of solidarity, respect, repayment, and how these contributed to their ability to cope with interpersonal stress. They described how their cultural values were like push and pull factors that helped them build character and family bonding through responsibilities but also created stressors as these responsibilities were compounded by contemporary lifestyles of school

and work. For example, several participants described the experience of having the

responsibility to demonstrate behaviours of automatic respect and control at times to

avoid shaming their name in the community.

> *I have a lot of respect for my parents I would just study it out and pass my exam and do whatever* (participant one)

> *My parents are like don't even think about that (referring to dating), but I just don't really want to date because at the end of the day they're your parents and whatever they say counts because they've learned from their life* (participant nine)

In addition, the frustrations around gender role expectations were described across

generations including peer groups, parents, first and 1.5 generations. Among peer groups

of both genders the perception of a female was to be submissive, quiet and shy. When she

was presenting other characteristics, she was criticized:

> *...you can talk to a guy for five minutes and they automatically assume you like them or something and then rumours spread really quickly and there are so many more people than in high school. I think that Tamil guys are like that, they don't see that it's right for girls to be talking to guys, for me they're involved in a lot of thing so I meet people on a regular basis, so I'm used to talking to new people openly so for them they found it a big deal and its embarrassing cuz you're being told about it in front of other people* (participant six)

> *For girls its mostly being popular and trying to fit in, so you start putting people down like what I've seen with most girls, or try to be like the boss and tell you what to do and I don't take nothing from nobody, I stand up for myself but there's other girls that would actually do what others say and who are they you know try to make themselves known and dominant, telling you what to do with your life, or go get me this get me that. For guys it's mostly them not being able to tell their guy friends their problems, cuz they'll be called a softy, or a girl or something* (participant four)

Participants also described occupations that their parents preferred for their

daughter or son. These expectations were expressed as deterrents to particular

occupations. The expectations led the participant to rebel against those views as the pressure to succeed was too high even when the occupations were not gender based.

> *Even things like a teacher, not many parents are okay with that especially if it's a male pursuing that I remember I wanted to be a teacher originally and one of my parents were telling my family friends that that's a really good job for females. And I thought I don't want to do this anymore if that's the kind of view that's out there, they want you to they don't see that there are other jobs out there that you can do...figuring out what you want to do cuz parents are pushing you into one field where you want to do something else and a lot of times they go to University doing what their parents want them to do and spend a year or two doing that but then they decide they want to do something else after* (participant six)

> *Typical parents who expect their children to become an engineer or a doctor or a professional. Like other parents brainwash their children to be like engineer doctor engineer doctor and they have no other careers except for those two to work under* (participant nine)

> *When I was really young my parents would be like oh you're gonna study and become a doctor but that's because they could control what I do but as me and my sister and brother grew up we just started to tell our parents what we were interested in i guess because Tamil parents are not exposed to arts or anything other than science generally they don't really know the good side or interesting side of arts* (participant seven)

At times, the pressure to please their parents impacted their self-esteem and increased their feelings of stress.

> *...you want to please them. You might just breakdown they always pressure from your parents to do well cuz they're like role models to you and u don't want to disappoint them. I guess like in someone makes you realize if you go and talk to your parents and explain to them about when you have two parents who are always looking down on you and always expecting so much out of you, that pressure makes you really nervous and really stressed out and when you're stressed out you don't tend to do well, you get nervous...pleasing your parents with your marks and education and you still doing well and having a lot of self confidence, if your parents keep putting you down, your self-esteem, your self confidence goes down and you don't feel like you can ever meet their expectations and being able to fit in, you have a hard time finding who you are and who you want to hang out with* (participant four)

If I do something I really wanna do than I'll work hard to achieve it my goal become a cop or something some other parents they'll tell you what to do and that'll be a next stress for you they're gonna force you to do Something that you don't want to do than its gonna mess up a lot. Maybe it's hard for you or since you don't want to do it you end up messing up and then you don't study and stuff and you don't get nowhere in life (participant ten)

While some young adults grappled with the conflict between pleasing their parents and themselves, they found escaping and hiding from the confrontation to be the best strategy.

There is a lack of communication, the family is not really a family cuz you're not connected you don't do anything as a family and the main stress is that you have to take more responsibility...do stuff that they don't know about, like go outside without them knowing about it and sneak out when they are not there, like go outside and play sports (participant five)

It's hard to defy parents at 19 so I'd have to abide by their rules but I'd really try to see if I could go to a University or college in a different city possibly. Its' hard to go a different way when you know your parents have your best interest at heart (participant twelve)

Participants described an unconscious and conscious socialized response to gender role expectations. Participants described the stressors around conforming to their own gender roles and coping with them by introducing different ways of thinking to their parents. Yet, participants also expected their parents to conform to those same roles where the father is dominant and strong and the mother is submissive and gentle.

When we were younger she'd expect me and my sister to do work around the house and at that time we weren't smart enough to say no here's our little brother over there, he has arms and legs to do stuff. But now how I cope with that is I tell her, we live in Canada not Sri Lanka you can't continue to tell me to do the chores cuz he's there too doing nothing, watching TV. So now it's all about communicating with my parents letting them know that we don't live in Sri Lanka and the roles are not the same (participant seven)

Dad is huge to tell you, like let's say I got 80's and stuff he would be like okay good, you feel like you didn't do anything and it's average or

something. My mom is actually encouraging if you got an A, that's good but you could do better like when you are watching TV for seven hours...don't pay attention to my dad and I know that I'm doing good cuz I'm confident cuz my older sister because she was the one that had a lot of opportunities that even our parents thought it was a sketchy thing but she knew it was good. For example she worked at Store X and the first year he wasn't that supportive cuz he didn't think that it was a good place because it was hours that would go into 11 o clock, but now she got a promotion and stuff so I get the confidence indirectly from her basically (participant eleven)*

Mom being away, cuz a guy can't do what a mom can do. I mean, I don't have a dad, but I mean thinking a guy, I have brothers and they can't really do what my mom can do. Cuz my mom she knows how to cook, she knows how to make me feel safe...a guys mentality is totally different, basically someone picks on me I'd beat the guy up, my mom would be like just leave it, she'd tell me what to do, something safe for me but a guy would be like you have to do something about it to be a man (participant three)*

Participants also described the expectations of gender roles crossing over into contemporary cultural expectations where the female role is doubled to work inside the home and outside the home:

Mom works to but she only works, usually three days but its 12 hours in a factory and my dad is a driving instructor and he works a whole week, however he has the option of coming home, taking a nap, eating, do whatever, cuz its his business as opposed to my mom, she has to work in a factory and lifting heavy stacks of paper and she still has to cook in the mornings and have a home and start late and I always tell my mom don't do it cuz we can cook ourselves, but she always says no you guys won't eat...about the dad not being able to help, yeah that does tick me off because most parents not even just in the Tamil community but in general men usually say well I'm the one who's working and bringing in the paycheque and I don't need a contribution in house work, so that part, if he had the time to help out and he didn't that would make me mad (participant seven)*

Participants described the embedded values of cultural solidarity and unity within Tamil families by being able to live up to a family name. In particular, they noted how these values were different from others around them and how it affected their success and

ability to fit in, leaving them feeling regretful. These experiences were described across

first and 1.5 generation participants. They described mixed coping styles and feeling

overwhelmed from the pressure to support people within their community through active

participation in a cultural lifestyle and events.

> They're my people. Same blood...I took a picture of a tiger, the real one,
> from a computer, and I print it out and I gave it to one of my friends to
> hold it for me and I was doing something, this guy throw it in the garbage
> just for fun right, I told him just hold it don't put it down, he just throw it
> he did it on purpose he just want to make me mad so that day after a few
> hours I talk to him he said sorry because I took that picture because I like
> tigers, animal tigers and those tigers too and I took that picture out of the
> garbage (participant two)

> ...when my parents would say don't be a bad kid and cuz you gotta support
> the family in the name wise cuz what you do affects the family and affects
> the family name and after I started thinking about that and how could I
> change those decisions in the beginning before I was gonna start doing
> that stuff so if I didn't make the choice in taking the wrong path none of
> this would have happened and everything would have been different
> instead of the way they are now (participant ten)

> I wish I could say that I do more but u know you could go back home and
> help out or stay here and protest and I don't do anything like that, but as
> much as I can within my peer groups or within my co-workers or whatever
> it maybe I try to educate them as much as possible. My friends that
> understand where I'm coming from and what I believe and they are
> supportive of that so if somebody feels differently about some of the
> opinions I have, all I can say is that you are entitled to your opinion and I
> am entitled to mine and I'm strong enough at this point to be okay with
> that...I guess it would be horrifying because you are portrayed as a
> horrible person to the community. And Sri Lankans are a tight knit
> community... (participant twelve)

These values were described as interfering notions that silenced their experiences

of violence and conflict within the home. They described the notion of silencing as one

that created miscommunication and avoidance which led them to seek alternative

resources.

*Abusive family in that kind of situation, because a lot of youth are in
families where it's really difficult for them because one of the parents is
an alcoholic and abuses them and what not or you're scared to talk about
it, cuz it's not something Tamil people talk about...when we come across
situations like that the parents are upset that the kids came and told us
because they're like private and embarrassed to talk about it...family is
not someone you're gonna talk to about your relationship, not in our
culture anyways, most parents. I would go to a teacher or talk to my
friends* (participant seven)

Participants described cultural values of hard work, but believed that it did not aid in occupational achievement. Yet the parental expectation for participants was to secure careers related to science and medicine for financial security.

*Parents come here and they have a very narrow minded view on things
and with kids they already assume they have a narrow mind about things
and they don't want to help change that and show them they are so much
more than that cuz they're capable of other thing that they like so because
of the cultural barrier. So when the parents are coming here they think
Canada is a great free country and the education is great here and there's
many opportunities and they want you to take the best opportunity out of
it, make the most of it and for them its professions that are highly
recognized like doctor engineer what not, but here we have other options
to explore so we can look at visual arts, performing arts, things like
that...parents aren't in that big of a field, they are normally working in
two jobs or trying to make ends meet but because they're from Sri Lanka
they're coming here to give us a better education they still want us to
pursue doctor or engineer and what not. But I don't think our parents are
generally in that professions* (participant six)

Two part-time jobs and overnight shifts when they start and factories
(participant one)

These stressors were coped with via avoidance of participation in either culture. Participants described how the clash in cultural values caused conflict within the home. They described a mixed response of experiences where they were unable to empathize with their parents while they were placing cultural expectations on them, yet feeling torn with the perception of sacrifices their parents had made to provide them with a different lifestyle.

I wasn't even born here, but I was raised there so I saw how much stress and trouble my parents went through to build up the life we have now, they had to come here and start fresh, both my parents went to school after they came here, so they had kids, school work and everything so they couldn't afford going to university so they did adult school and everything so cuz of that they can't send you either (referring to school), you feel like you're living that over and over again...They don't realize the social pressures that happen when you grow up in societies in Canada. They think life is about school and it's your main focus, so when kids don't meet those standards, it's a big thing (participant one)

Overall, participants described experiences of stress associated with conflicts with their parents and families, and how they coped through friendships with others who shared similar experiences as well as by taking control of their own life paths through independence similar to the broader mainstream Canadian cultural norms.

Collectivism and Independence.

While independence was desired by the first and 1.5 generation participants, collectivism was valued in their homes. Participants described the purpose of families, of respect and collectivism that provided a basis of support for the care of other family members. Typically, the oldest sibling or extended family members were responsible for the care of younger ones in the home.

...it's gonna be difficult for the older sibling to take care of the younger siblings especially if they're fighting...so I guess pleasing your parents and taking care of your siblings is really difficult when you're the oldest...I have one younger sister and she's not able to speak and it's really difficult on me because I'm always forced, not forced cuz I know it's my responsibility to take care of her and I want to go have fun too...but I feel bad for my sister cuz like she can't do that and she's 15...I feel bad for my mom cuz she's always stressed about the fact that my sister can't talk sometimes we always get into arguments...cuz it's really stressful when my mom expects me to take care of her and then I have this really big assignment due and sometimes she doesn't understand and sometimes she does... (participant four)

You're the eldest so that means there are probably responsibilities for you as the older sister...you want to leave but you can't because you have a couple of sisters or brothers that rely or depend on you (participant nine)

Both parents are hard working and the oldest kids usually have to take care of the younger siblings (participant eight)

Many of the participants shared their frustrations with the responsibilities of care giving for their younger siblings, but agreed that their responsibility towards the family was more important than their independence and desire to build relationships outside the home. In addition, avoiding the conflict was their primary coping strategy in the home.

If my mom wants me to take care of my sister I do do it but if I have something really important due, I listen to her , do what I have to do, if we do get into arguments I just try and ignore it, if you keep it in your head you'll just get angry and obviously I don't hate my sister, so I don't want there to be problems cuz I don't want her to know she's causing problems just like I do my own thing, I hang out at home, if I go out with my friends that makes it worse...you're at that age where you wanna chill and you don't really want to be taking care of people, but if you have to do it, you do it for sure (participant four)

If I had no choice, I would have to take care of my sibling's right... (participant seven)

I would put friends and family together, but when it's your family you need to take care of your three siblings, I would not go out to party, I don't even go partying, but not with three people waiting for me at home and they need me to feed them (participant three)

I used to have to stay home and watch my brother sometimes, not much, but once or twice a week I hated it sometimes...somedays I'd have to bite my teeth and take care of it, somedays I just have to do it, but some other days I'd just work around it (participant eight)

I don't think it's just the Sri Lankan people, I've grown up to realize that you've gotta no matter what age you are you've gotta be there for your parents so my dad got sick when I was quite young so I didn't have to take care of my siblings, but I had to take care of a lot of responsibilities in the house and take care of him so I know what that's like and its quite stressful but you learn to cope with it, you learn to deal with it and you do what you have to do to make it work (participant twelve)

When asked who they would seek help from in a situation where they needed a mediator to relieve their responsibilities or support their decisions with the parents, they mostly felt comfortable suggesting extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles.

> *It would be easier for them than listening to my parents instead of someone else that they're not really close with or don't really know or someone coming in and explaining that I don't want to become a doctor and I should be able to make my decisions, I think it's better having a close family member inform them and make them realize that I know what I'm going to do and I know what's right for me* (participant ten)

Seeking help from relatives such as aunts and uncles served as an important coping strategy.

> *I could go to other family members like my aunt or uncle to see if maybe they could speak to my parents to get through to them might be a little easier than myself talking to them. I have an Aunt or an Uncle that always anytime my dad or mom doesn't see things my way I kina take back to talk to them and they talk to my parents and that always helps. When an adults saying it's always different from a 19 year old saying it* (participant twelve)

At other times, even grandparents who were not physically present in the youth's lives had an important role to play in coping.

> *Personally my grandparents were always there, they don't live with me, but they live within the same city so we can go over whenever we want and they can come over whenever they want. So grandparents are always there to help out* (participant eight)

> *I'm very close to my grandparents I'll probably talk to them, they're in Sri Lanka, but they have influence over my parents, so I'd talk to them about it, my parents are giving me too much to do. They could talk to them about it and let them know how they feel* (participant five)

Participants shared the stress of mainstream lifestyles that put strain on their ability to act consistently with collective values. They also shared that the key to success

in the family unit was finding a balance between the values of independence and interdependence.

> *Patience really, like lately I've been really busy and my mom is getting upset that I'm never home anymore so when she told me that than we make time for the family, so once a week we'll chill at home, or go out to eat, making time for the family. We're all really busy and have our own lives now, especially cuz we're growing older too, my brother is going to grade 10 so making sure that we're all connected at the end of the week* (participant six)

> *My dad doesn't work, my brother he's going to university and searching for a job and my only have one sister and I usually fight with her, so I don't take on responsibility for her and my parents pretty much take care of me and they don't give me responsibility. My dad gets unemployment and my mom works and he's also searching for a job, going to college again to get a certificate. My family is very connected, we care about each other, we spend time together and do stuff together and we also have our own independence. My parents give me the choice to choose my career. And even they give a lot of emphasis on studies they don't over power it, I get to do sports and fun stuff too!* (participant five)

> *I don't want to be some reclusive old child who's just introverted to themselves and just to things by themselves and then rest of the families bonding together. I would try to get along with them, try to relate to them, bond with them, make them feel as if I'm not a burden to them and they're not a burden to me* (participant nine)

Participants shared the importance of communicating with their parents irrespective of the pressure and anxiety they may have felt about doing so.

> *My dad works insane amount of hours, I was really upset about it in high school and finally I decided to tell him about it and he actually stays home and comes home earlier, but it took me a while to tell him, that's just because me and my dad don't have that good of communication. Reassurance, yeah I want to tell my dad but how and is it gonna be weird for me to tell him and will he understand and for them to answer questions like that and say yeah that is the best way to handle situations like that* (participant six)

> *Just tell them that I don't want to be a doctor and stuff that this is my life and I'm the person who should decide what I wanna be and explain it to them and make them realize that what they're doing is not gonna help me its just gonna frustrate them in the end* (participant ten)

Trust was integral to positive relationships with parents. When the trust had been broken or not provided it was challenging for participants attempting to build it.

> *Challenges I face is that the trust part cuz I've been in a lot of trouble and stuff where they started losing trust with me and I'm the oldest right so it makes it hard because my sister and brother look up to me and if I'm a bad role model its gonna affect them cuz if I'm gonna do they might choose bad decisions like I did...just gained the trust back and then prove to your siblings that you're a good person and a good role model and change your parents and siblings opinions about you* (participant ten)

> *I would do whatever my parents want me to do because I do realize my dad's the only one working in my family so there maybe some financial issues, but I wouldn't work myself because my dad wouldn't allow to this* (participant nine)

> *I guess I'd have to do what they say, I mean my mom's not really controlling or anything she lets me do whatever I really want so I don't know how to cope with that because right now I can do what I want as long as I get back home, my mom is happy with that...as long as I'm safe she calls me, as long as I'm free for the day, I pick up the phone. If she tells me to do something I'll go with her instead of not showing up so she gets upset. So I show a lot of people that I'm with my family not without them. Some people are like always out there, or some cousins are bad kids, I always want to be with my family when they actually are there, cuz it's a once in a lifetime and you can always do stuff with your friends cuz they'll always be there, yeah and I call her and she trusts that I'll come home* (participant three)

> *They understand for the most part but than if you're rebellious and stuff that's when things get out of hand* (participant four)

Maintaining family connections served multiple purposes. It helped build family cohesion, maintain cultural values and adapt by finding balance between cultural identities. Their relationships and connection with extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles were great resources. The collective values present in these relationships were stressful at times, but usually helpful.

Violence and Discrimination

This theme revealed several forms of discrimination and expressions of violence

including gang violence, ethnic violence, abuse, internalized oppression, interethnic

discrimination and other forms of hatred. Participants found violence and discrimination

stressful, as well as proactive coping strategies and self-defence.

Some of the participants described their accounts of how the ethnic war in Sri

Lanka has affected their immediate family here in Canada as 1.5 and first generation

witnesses to violence.

> *Might have family back home who are severely injured or dead. It puts*
> *you through a lot of stress but then you still have to go through your day*
> *to day that you do here, like go to work, to live. My dad has a sister back*
> *home who's in a camp right now, he goes through a lot of mental stress*
> *because it's his own sister and everyone else is in England the rest of the*
> *family in Canada, but she's a teacher so she's the only one there, so it's*
> *kind of tough for them because she's the youngest and she's still stuck and*
> *her and her family are in a camp in Sri Lanka, so it's a lot of stress and*
> *calling. My grandfather lives in England cuz my aunts a doctor there and*
> *my grandfather went to Sri Lanka after and stayed in a house outside the*
> *camp and went to visit my aunt everyday and just got back* (participant
> eight)

> *Sinhalese really well he wasn't burned at the stake but that's basically*
> *what happens in Sri Lanka there's tires with wooden poles and I*
> *remember this and they would just come into the bus, they'd have check*
> *points and come into a bus and they'd try to see who the Tamil people*
> *were and burn them just alive* (participant twelve)

The effects of ethnic war between the Tamil and Sinhalese in Canada were known

to have existed through generations in the forms of intimidation and violence in school

and neighbourhoods. Participants described a mixed response of pride in being able to

facilitate intimidation and their frustrations and fear for their own mortality.

> *The older people are good people and they try to help these kids but when*
> *they see the older people get a big name they want to be something like*
> *that too and then everyone is scared of them, people are definitely scared*

of certain Tamil people. If you were to look at me you would know that yeah I should be scared of that guy. When I walk alone at night time, I wouldn't be scared; it's basically something you have...Somewhere to make them realize that there are people out there that care about them and care about the people they're gonna beat up, cuz there's someone waiting for them too at home, I don't want to die how that kid died (referring to the murder of the Tamil youth that took place that week) whatever you're trying to get out of it, it's not worth it cuz violence happens over girls, it's so stupid, or during school between Churchill and another school might have a problem, its stupidness (participant three)

Once when I came to Canada it was the first year I came one Sinhalese guy he messed up with me and my brother...he just hit me once, I hit him back, because it's going to be a big problem, it's going to be a big fight...then I told my brother this guy hit me and he went to the principal and told him if this guy do it again well take our part of this and do what we can and that guy he started a fight and you know...after that I beat him up and then after that he don't talk to me at all, he don't look at me (participant two)

There was a significant pressure to join gangs for some of the participants. Oftentimes, the pressure was not only from peers, but through association with their relatives who were involved with gangs . In addition, participants described turf wars where young adult males would defend their territory (area of residences) through intimidation and violence. Participants talked about how the legal system and media seemed to condone and support violence. It was difficult and stressful to distinguish between being asked for friendship or gang involvement, and yet both offered the protective benefit of peer acceptance.

When I came to Canada I know nothing about Tamil Tigers nothing at all, I just learnt everything here, I know all about them now, through internet, protest, news and now I think they are the only one who can save Tamil people from Sinhalese, now things change because of the war, now the Tamil Tigers is the only way, by fighting. If people ask me can you fight for your land, I'll say yeah (participant two)

Sometimes I get peer pressured to do bad things, but I usually don't do it and I walk out of it and find new friends. Drinking, smoking and they want you to take a smoke that's a peer pressure you have to deal with and than

if he's doing robbing he wants you to cover up for it...t. Yeah Tamil youth face gangs, they come from Sri Lanka so they don't know anything about this country so they join gangs and they go violent way and when they meet Tamil youths, they don't know if they're going to be a bad influence or not, they go and join gangs for them...you will have to face eventually in your life (participant five)

Male participants described their experiences with individual tensions that became catalysts for bigger problems.

For guys its being in that being able to fit in that crew, say a new kid comes to school and the guy thinks he's a looser cuz he's in no specific crew but he really is a nice guy, its kind of like society pushes him and forces him to be something that's tormenting him and that frustrates him, so he ends up joining a crew or something and then turf issues, that guy was from School X *and he comes to* School Y. *The guys at* School Y *for sure will give him dirty looks, threaten him because...they have problems cuz of their turfs* (participant four)

When you have your own click one of your boys can get hit and that starts a whole argument which ends up to a whole gang fight...e...I know a lot of people that did and they all in jail....but when people say no and you do good in school... you know that you made a right decision and you know that you're in a higher position than them and it makes you feel good. But then sometimes it's a big gang and people who are 22 years old and older, I associate with them cuz my cousin is one of them so I use to chill with them and a lot of cars go by and they notice that you're with them so if they cannot attack my cousin they try and hitting me, so you become a target for other gangs to send a message to the gangs you chill with (participant ten)

Other forms of hatred were observed through interethnic discrimination and racism from members of the other communities towards Tamil youth. Participants described being labelled as gang members by virtue of their appearance in the forms of dress, skin colour, gender and desire to hang out among large groups of friends. They also described how that stigma affected their confidence and presence in society, but chose to use a sense of humour to diffuse it.

We're Tamil youth there's always a bad name for it and even when you're trying to be good some people look at you at a different angle so it's hard to have confidence at something (participant eleven)

When I first moved to the country I was probably not the proudest of being Sri Lankan or just at that time you just don't know any better, I'm new to the country, but as I've grown up I've realized I need to be proud of who I am it's something that I take great pride in. Some people say things I can laugh about it but at the end of the day I wish people were more educated about community and the country (participant twelve)

Discrimination also created confusion about who they were and associated with. While being Tamil was perceived with negativity by mainstream society, fitting into mainstream society was grounds for persecution from other Tamils. This form of discrimination was primarily described as being used inter-ethnically.

A lot of people think that I'm non-Tamil. I don't want to use the word whitewash, but that's what they call me...it's something that ticks me off...Some people call me a coconut. It's brown on the outside and white on the inside but I don't really get what that me and because I don't know what their definition of a true Tamil would be and what I'm trying to get at is that really ticks me off... it's embarrassing when they say it in front of all the Tamil people or they're like you're so blonde...cuz that's who I am and for me I go to School X *and there's a lot of brown people and it's not that I'm the outcast but I'm one of the few who don't really blend in quite with other people* (participant seven)

There's a huge Tamil community they feel that if you're Tamil or Sri Lankan or whatever that you need to join and do all of these things...I don't necessarily feel the need to join certain clubs so that part of it is a little challenging because from your own community they feel that you're being a little bit of a snob but that's not the case, I'm very proud of where I'm from I just don't feel the need to parade around the school to let people know that I'm from there... (Participant twelve)

Participants perceived the hostilities among their community members from the first generation. This was observed as pressures from a cultural reference to "upholding a family name" within the community.

Tamil parents are different than other parents...Tamil parents whatever the books say they'll follow... I have Indian friends and their parents are

really into cultures and that is good, Sri Lankan parents are like that too and they try to work hard to preserve Sri Lankan culture for their children because they think it's important. The way they act, their principals and morals reflect their personality, all typical parents, especially Sri Lankan parents stand out because they are so cultured (participant nine)

The moment you get arrested and you get handcuffed you jus messed up and you parents are gonna be pissed and because I come from a Tamil Family where people Tamil people look at you and they make decisions. So if you got earrings or whatever, you're jus standing and stuff, they'd be like oh he's a bad kid...Tamil people, they talk, and then they think stuff, by the way you act or dress so that's a whole main factor for your parents cuz they're name goes down (participant ten)

Overall, patterns of violence and discrimination occurred between and within the

Tamil, Sri Lankan and mainstream communities. Youth coped through affiliations with

those who could protect them from intimidation or actual violence.

Affiliations

In this theme participants described their experiences with dating, peer pressure,

identity and belonging. Participants described the perception and belief that young adults

were not ready to date and when they engaged in relationships they were not meaningful.

This caused reluctance to engage in building relationships with others.

They're at that stage where both of them are really not mature so it's difficult for them and they don't know how to deal with stuff it's their first time or whatever. Education, family, they get caught by their parents if they're going out with someone, that's a really tough time for them. They don't know how to get by... (participant four)

Talked to couples where they've shared their dirtiest secrets and when they break up they go and tell their friends especially the guys, cuz they live in herds of guys, they tell their friends about yeah, go look about what's goin on oh I know her secrets top to bottom and to make things worse they would say those things behind her back so that just gives her insecurity to someone she just met two days ago and relationships don't last long, they may stay for two days... I'm not a person that's into relationships cuz they don't exist for me they don't last as long as we want them to...socially friends I sometimes feel like there's a lot of drama, like oh my god she broke up with him, oh my god, did you know that. I don't

want to be in those little drama bubbles cuz during class times those are the main points of conversation (participant nine)

They can start to date at a young age and do things they would probably regret than they feel bad at the end or they don't think about it...in grade nine one of my friends went out with this guy because she felt bad for him or she felt she was scared of him. I didn't really do anything... (participant seven)

Rumours and gossip created tensions between friends and limited ability to trust. While participants acknowledged the importance of building relationships early on, the challenges around selecting friends without biases or becoming involved in gossip proved to be one of the most difficult tasks.

High school is about finding the right friends and even when you find the right friends know a lot of friends but know who's your right friends and know who you can always trust (participant eleven)

Not being able to tell people about your problems because they feel uncomfortable or someone's gonna tell somebody else. different sets of friends so I just try and chill with different people all the time, I don't constantly like to be with one group because than sometimes when you're together for such a long time, I still have a tight bond with everyone... Sometimes when we have gatherings everyone comes and they just meet each other and its fun cuz they don't really know each other, but than in the end they all end up being friends (participant four)

I don't talk to people I'm not close with, I just don't go there, those are the people that talk and when they talk it starts rumours... when people talk about this and that when you didn't really do anything. I just get really pissed off...I only stick to people I'm close with (participant three)

Friends, close family, cousins, people you can share your deepest secrets with especially with something like this because after you tell someone this sort of information they would start judging you like what the hecks wrong with you, it's hard to tell someone this so you gotta tell someone you really trust... cuz you basically have no one to talk about it and have internalized it and kept it within yourself (participant eight)

Other barriers to relationship building were described as pressures to conform and being labelled. Often times, they were challenged to determine who would be a positive

influence in their life. Participants also shared their own beliefs and judgments about labels of being "cool" and "nerdy" among friends of the same ethnicity.

> *Like do you want to be nerdy or be a cool guy wearing baggy pants, baggy shorts and the one outside the back of the school smoking cigarettes. You want to be known as a gangster or a study nerd, especially with all the violence and murders going on lately...one of my close friends and went to some party and met one of my friends that I knew but he didn't know so they started talking and I introduced them and they went out for like four months and he was like the nicest guys he's like this all one love, like those romeo guys you see in Tamil movies (laughing) and than she started going out with one of my other basketball friends so it's kind of like went insane and now he's some kind of big man he tries to hit on lots of girls* (participant eight)

> *I'm not too popular but I'm not cool I'm just in the middle but popular people to me are involved in many relationships, intimate relationships and they're just like a social butterfly, they don't manage to get the grades, I don't know why but they do work hard, they like to gossip about others, especially people beneath their social level, so they'd look at a nerdy person and talk about him behind his back even when he is listening... He's socially challenged meaning he's a nerd, he's trying to find social settings, but depending on the way he dresses, the way he acts, simply looks, he hardly gets any friends because he's a nerd and he probably can't just hang out with the cool or popular kids...I want to go around meet people, be a social butterfly not some person who's super achieving cuz in my point of view their superficial, I want to be someone who can relate to others, who can get down, and someone I can be proud of* (participant nine)

> *With a lot of my Tamil friends they don't wear what I wear. It's different to them...I play it off as a joke, I don't really care for it, cuz there are a lot of people who like it and stuff and it's ok (referring to the way he dresses), and mostly just Tamil guys, cuz they're into the other styles (hand motion directed towards his head moving a hat on the side, indicating a thug dress style) so I'm okay with it. It's not that I'm hated for that, I just get teased because of it, but it's nothing big because its five out of hundred of the kids* (participant eleven)

Self-assurance was helpful. Once able to secure friendships in high school, maintaining them became an important resource of strength. Participants described feeling a sense of security with friends who provided support unconditionally and gently.

Grade 9 was a little bit hard but that was just fitting in and change of environment and being away from your old friends...so keeping a hold of your high school friends... It's more just a reassurance, some people know what they want to do they just need the confidence or a little bit of confidence, showing them the door, and other opportunities that are out there, but letting them open it themselves sometimes if a friend is strong enough they will find a resource for you. For example my friend who was in an abusive relationship, she was scared she didn't even talk me about it, you could see it and but she never admitted it to us, so I told my teacher help I don't know what to do and the teacher gave me proper ways of what I can do (participant six)

While relationships were helpful sources of support, independence and self-control were also important for coping.

Would have to talk to them, but you would have to get away from the situation I want to leave and go somewhere, get my head off it...I would try to talk to friends but it doesn't really help. I have a lot of friends, I have a lot of close friends, it doesn't really help, you could just talk to them, they're just going to tell you the truth, you know, like get over it, what more can you say. It's all up to you and how your mind works...Someone to listen, its all inside. It's all up to you how you feel about a person it's totally what's inside, the only way you can change it is if you change yourself... (participant three)

Know it sounds weird but push myself and if I can't get answers from anyone else, say ok what am I going to do now, how am I going to achieve that, or I always have my friends, they're always there (participant seven) *I need some freetime for myself to breathe go out play sports and stuff, debrief sort of thing and just relax* (participant eight)

Participants were more reluctant to share their troubles through formal counselling. When they sought formal help it was through outreach workers who had initiated contact with them. The outreach workers shared an openness, non-judgemental attitude, provided resources and confidence that was appreciated by the participants.

Grassroots agency staff were seen as helpful allies and friends rather than stereotypical professionals.

Close friends or my family members or if like they don't understand I'd probably just go to someone from Agency X cuz they can help me get

through it for sure. Basically advice, cuz obviously they've already been through that stage in life, older people especially so they could help me cope with it (participant four)

You have a lot of guidance counsellors helping out and stuff, personally Agency X *really helped me out while I was volunteering here, they cuz originally wanted to be a teacher, but they showed me there's so many more different kind of jobs out there, so that's what helped me change my path in something more that suited me. You know it's not a formal conversation I'm having with one of the outreach workers, it's just like hey you can tell them random stuff. They came to my school so there's announcements and* Agency X *having a drop in after school so drop by kind of thing, so that's the only reason because it's in my school, its accessible, I didn't have to go out of my way on my own hours so I was able to do it. I'm sure if there was another organization in my school I probably would* (participant six)

I don't want it to get back to my parents so I know that they keep it to themselves and they'll just be there, they won't be like I don't have time so can I talk to you later. Even after hours I can call like to say yeah, I have a problem, having them to be able to get resources for you (participant one)

Overall when young adults knew that they were cared for they simply wanted someone to listen, respect their diversity and provide them with the appropriate resources.

First I dealt with my vice principal I told him this is happening like this, he told me don't worry about it we'll deal with it he prayed for me once, in front of me (participant two)

However, seeking professional help from a counsellor was perceived as a last resort because of the stigma of asking for such services.

Guidance counsellors at school, teachers you're most close with, aunts and uncles. People you most trust I guess. If goes beyond your hands and you become insane and become EMO (referring to a Japanese cartoon character who cuts himself) *and beginning cutting yourself than you should seek a counsellor, so for self-harming* (participant eight)

I wouldn't say it (dating troubles) *to my counsellor too, cuz this isn't a thing that's too important to say to a counsellor but I'll talk to someone I look up to, like a role model, someone who I feel comfortable sharing my views with or my solutions...*(participant nine)

Having friends with relationship experience was helpful. Getting a balance between providing advice and being there in a supportive way was appreciated. Participants also talked about readiness to be challenged by friends.

> *I guess like I'd see if a friend has been through that situation. I guess I'd go to my tightest friend that I know that won't judge you for nothing right and try to get advice cuz usually when you freak out, you tend not to think of the most obvious ways to resolve it, but when someone else hears it they can tell you what to do and what's right, so most of the time you can trust that person cuz they want it for your better and work your way through it...the best advice for my friend to explain, put out the situation in front of me, cuz I find that if I was to get cheated on I'd get mad and angry, I'd be furious, I'm not going to sit down to think what actually what happened so I'm gonna need her to go through it and give me possibilities and take me through it step by step...it get frustrated but annoying when you're trying to help someone out, like they have problems of themselves and then they come to you for advice, so I'm giving them proper advice and they just start going off on you...they don't really understand cuz they're not in that state of mind yet right* (participant four)

Overall, support from various resources such as friends, family, and professionals were welcomed for help in relationships. However, the resources they sought were defined by the nature of the issue. For example, friends and outreach workers were more often sought out as people to listen, advise or confront because of the stigma associated with seeing a professional counsellor.

Academic Expectations

This theme highlighted the challenges and strategies employed by participants describing their experiences associated with school and academics. Adjustment to school work, dealing with expectations about what they should take, and the culture of the school environment were seen as stressors. Skipping class, following parent advice about program, seeking help through friends and finding work-life balance were strategies that helped them cope.

Although they were aware of the consequences of missing school, they had a hard time adjusting to this responsibility of attending classes regularly. These participants described their educational experience though minimizing and avoidant responses...

> *Classes are easy. I stopped cuz those classes were hard I would not go to them so you just slack off, class is good as long as you put your mind to it, but kids just want to have fun nowadays. I know elementary friends, we're not really friends no more but I still know about them and they're really smart kids and they were really good friends with me and now they slack off and not really going anywhere right now. I don't know what stress it could be but, they have too much fun, I think that's what it was... I asked people to help me out with homework and stuff, I use to skip class (haha) yeah and just have a lot of friends so one day I'll be skipping with one friend next day with my other friends, you have so much people you're doing stuff with so it keeps you occupied. Yeah even though I know I skipped school and whatever, at least I know the end of the day I still graduated, I didn't mess up some other kids did, I didn't get into drugs and what not, I still got through school even though I slacked off...Some kids stressed through school and stuff, some kids had to put their mind into it, I think it was boring for them* (participant three)

Or glorified responses...

> *It's a great opportunity for me especially cuz I want to go into politics now, and these things only come once so I have to take it. I haven't done bad in school even the first year, even though I've been this busy so I'll be okay, it's just when I do something I have to be focused on that one thing for that time frame cuz if I'm thinking about everything else I end up not concentrating on it* (participant six)

Some challenges to achieving academic success were a result of structural differences in Canadian schools compared to those in Sri Lanka where there was more of a balanced lifestyle.

> *Studying for exams that's a challenge for me because I really find it hard to focus on studies during school hours. Pretty much, I find the hours pretty long and it gets boring sometimes when you're like 9 months in school its long. Until grade six I think, school only runs until 12 o clock there, like very early morning, it starts at six o clock so you have to wake up really early* (participant five)

Often their own expectations to succeed were compounded by parental

expectations to select a profession in the field of science. The responsibility that came

with academic success included selecting a particular profession. They were conscious of

the academic rigor and time required to succeed in the sciences but they also wanted to be

a success in their family.

> *I don't know if I wanna become a doctor and then studying for the exam,*
> *it's a big exam, and then spending seven days, spending your free time*
> *doing all this stuff and have no time for fun and it really stressed me out*
> *(participant five)*

> *Why am I still studying hard when I don't know if I can go to University or*
> *College? I wanna spend time with my friends, So if you don't have*
> *anything, you don't have nothing to tell your kids or grandkids but I mean*
> *if my parents are doctors and I have money...(participant three)*

> *My parents are pretty laid back they're not very...they let me do my own*
> *thing the only thing is that they're wanting me to go to Med school is*
> *something they would really like. There is that pressure, but I have to*
> *work because at the end of the day my parents came here you know ten*
> *years ago and they still don't have that kind of money (participant twelve)*

The desire to please their parents and follow a career path they had selected left

participants feeling unsure, especially when academic pressures increased.

> *I hated it, every time I entered economics lecture I just wanted to slap*
> *myself, that's how boring it was...usually go to my sister a lot. She's like a*
> *person who doesn't care about what anyone else thinks cuz I was in*
> *business by the way and I switched out of business to make that switch it*
> *was so hard it was like, I felt horrible and awful, I felt dumb because*
> *everyone would ask me what I was doing and I'd say women's studies and*
> *they'd be like what's that and all that negative stress so I felt really bad*
> *that I was switching into it...Definitely succeeding in academics, career*
> *wise, like the doctor thing, I'm still not a 110% confident as I fight to be in*
> *what I'm studying, but I'm getting there, and that is such a big challenge.*
> *Sometimes I just sleep on my bed and think about it (participant seven)*

At the same time these pressures also encouraged participants to reflect on the

ways they coped. Some participants sought help from their friends in other courses, some

opted for balancing their work, school and home lives, and some deflected their

resentment and anger on their teachers and school environment. Others assertively

communicated their aspirations to their parents who were receptive.

> *Well for me my parents were like this before as I started growing up,*
> *especially when I went to the last year of high school, actually spoke to*
> *them when I was applying to the University and I won't be able to do*
> *sciences because I'm not really good in math and I guess for me I've*
> *always had a very good relationship with my parents so it wasn't*
> *heartbreaking for them they understood* (participant six)

Overall, participants felt that transitioning from elementary to high school and

high school to university and college posed stressors from the compounding affects of

personal, parental and academic expectations. They managed these with support from

their peers, achieving balance and finding comfort in the hope that they can adjust to

academic life once they become adjusted to the expectations.

Personal Reflections

There are several research areas I have been interested in over the years,

Immigration, youth in transition, settlement, racism, and colonization to name a few.

These interests were why I chose to research this particular area. I had a genuine interest

in the population after having worked with them and having been raised as an observer to

the increasing influx of Sri Lankan people within the community. The connection to the

culture in this way is what in the end helped me follow through with this research. This

reflection highlights my thought process throughout the process of determining a topic to

completing the data collection and beginning the writing process.

Pre-Research thoughts

Why do people automatically connect violence with Tamil youth? Is it a reality or

perception? Is it a stereotype or correlation? Is this a shared experience for people from

other communities? If indeed, violence is connected through the youth's cultural history, how can we engage them in a way out? All of these questions intrigued me early on while I began working on a violence prevention project.

As I worked in a diverse community with the majority of young adults from Sri Lanka, I noted that violence impacted each and every community member in some form. I began to ask how these young adults managed to cope with stressors from the interethnic civil war, gang violence and stigma attached to their visibility in the community.

As I formulated a research strategy in December of 2009 to uncover some of these factors, protests for the provincial government and city to help intervene the civil war in Sri Lanka were about to hit a peak period. In June 2009, thousands of families, young and old gathered in the streets and formed masses of solidarity. Unfortunately, their voices went unheard and the stigma against the population appeared to grow stronger.

Meanwhile, I had made contact with a local organization funded to work with Sri Lankan youth. I was grateful to have spent time at the agency where I was able to meet exceptionally caring staff and resilient young adults who were enthusiastic about their culture and wanted to share their stories. With such enthusiasm, I was able to gather all their experiences within two weeks.

A first generation, Canadian born, South Asian female about to accomplish her Master's degree was doing what she loved most; sharing conversations and strengths with young adults about the South Asian culture, its immense diversity, its practices, its history, its immigration experience, and its legacy. I felt deeply invested in this research not only for academic benefit but for the empowerment of youth who were so passionate.

At times, I reflected upon my experiences growing up in Canada, having parents uprooted from their home countries to escape violence, and finding a way to negotiate social boundaries of race, class and gender.

I shared many of the same sentiments the youth shared with me about their experiences with discrimination, victimization of violence, and socio-cultural expectations. It created different feelings of anger and pain at the thought that the patterns of these emerging themes were so similar to my experiences over 15 years ago; something I had studied in books and learnt growing up in an urban ghetto.

Upon further reflection, as a researcher I learnt how important it was to distinguish their realities from mine. Once I understood their individual experiences among the collective group I was able to draw parallels with the knowledge of coping and stressors as a counsellor.

During research thoughts

Through my experiences as a counsellor, I was able to observe clinical disruptions in thoughts and experiences that some of the youth had shared. For example, I witnessed a number of youth disassociating while describing their experience of witnessing war in and hearing stories about the brutal murders in Sri Lanka and while being exposed to gang violence in Canada. While their thoughts were disconnected to their responses and the questions being posed, a clear observation of trauma related symptoms were made.

Another observation I made was the perception of victimization and direct affliction of anger and pain from the effects of violence among youth who were first generation Canadians not experienced with direct-open conflict. While engaging with the youth during drop-in activities sentiments such as, "we're living in a war and nothings

gonna stop it", "I'm not gonna get into that program cuz they're racist" were past around. These expressions were important pieces of the disenfranchisement young adults felt through their identity.

Unfortunately, some of the observations were made outside of interviews and those that were made during interviews were expressed in emotion as opposed to language that could be translated through coding analysis. The chosen methodology posed a barrier in my writing to valuable data that may otherwise have enriched this study further and can be reconsidered for future studies. This will be discussed further in limitations.

Post-research thoughts

A common question people asked me was why I chose this particular area to study. Initially, I was unable to articulate a response because it felt natural for me to help by researching an area where vulnerability could potentially lead to a sense of empowerment. Having observed the negative media responses to the outcries of Tamil families encouraged me to provide an opportunity that may create different responses. I feel connected to humanitarian work and wanted to begin that quest here through research. I pose the question why not?

Although, I feel this research has just begun and would have loved to have gathered a larger pool of data using a participatory action research methodology, I am proud of the contributions the twelve participants made. I hope to continue learning from these experiences and offer new perspectives to our current way of thinking by promoting generosity, dignity, and care for who we have left to live with.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter provides a brief summary of the five themes which included: role expectations, collectivism and independence, violence and discrimination, affiliations, and academic expectations. The themes are reviewed, compared and contrasted with the literature presented in Chapter Two.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the interpersonal challenges and ways of coping utilized by Sri Lankan youth in peer, school and home contexts. All of the first and 1.5 generation participants utilized the services in an agency located within a large Canadian city. A total of six males and six females participated ranging in age from 14 to 20. Six of them were born in Sri Lanka, five born in Canada and one born in England. Eleven identified as Tamil and one identified as Tamil and Sinhalese. The interviews were manually transcribed and a qualitative content analysis procedure was used to identify emerging themes.

In the first theme, *role expectations,* participants shared their frustrations and concerns about the multiple expectations that were placed on them by their parents, their ethnic community and their peers. These expectations were created by cultural values of solidarity, respect and repayment, and experienced differently depending on one's gender. Overall, participants described experiences of the different cultures they interacted with at home and in the community that caused conflicts at home. The main coping methods utilized in response to these pressures were to agree with parents, build friendships with those they shared similar experiences to and could commiserate with, as well as take steps toward increased control of their own life paths by making independent decisions.

The second theme, *collectivism and independence,* participants spoke about how their desire to become more independent clashed with the collectivist values of their families. Although their families provided considerable support to them, and the extended family provided security of knowing that the oldest members were responsible to care for the youngest members, the need to look after others weighed heavily on them at times. In response they thought about how freeing it feels to have this responsibility lightened, but resisted the temptation to challenge it directly.

The third theme, *violence and discrimination,* revealed several forms of discrimination both within and outside of their community, as well as the meaning and purpose of violence. Fear of violence was persistent as an extension of personal or family member life experience in Sri Lanka, as well as in very practical terms within their community in Canada. The threat of violence was seen as a powerful force that could prevent aggression from erupting if it was perceived as strong enough by others, as well as an incredible burden to carry through life when the threats were unknown and perceived potentially to be everywhere. Coping with the threat for many youth meant banding together with other youth.

The fourth theme, *affiliations,* revealed participants experiences and perceptions with dating, peer pressure, identity and belonging. They described hesitations to trust and build relationships. At the same time they identified the need for trust, non-judgement, and support from various resources such as friends, family and professionals. Family and friends were seen as positive sources of support, and outreach workers were strongly favoured as formal supports over professional counsellors due to difficulties trusting those seen as outsiders and the stigma associated with needing help.

The fifth theme, *academic expectations,* highlighted the challenges and strategies employed by the youth to please their parents by choosing an education that would lead to a desirable occupation in life, while fitting into the school's expectations. Participants spoke about resisting the procedures of school, and finding ways to maintain connection to peers and a social life, but to proceed in a career direction that would not bring shame to their families.

Connection to Literature

Overall, data from the present study were largely consistent with the available literature, lending credibility to the concepts and constructs described by other researchers working with immigrant and refugee youth in North America, and extending the general applicability of those findings to Tamil youth interviewed for the present study in large Canadian city.

Role expectations

Refugee youth interviewed by Hyman, Vu and Beiser (2000) felt an unspoken need to express gratitude to their parents as a way to repay them for the sacrifices they made to provide a better life for them. Their respect for parental values and a desire to broaden their own way of life sometimes created conflict and incompatibility with Canadian values and practices, such as self-fulfillment and an "open" style of communication observed in other Canadian families (Hyman, Vu & Beiser, 2000). These findings were consistent with the youth interviewed for the present study and their expressed desire to obey parents and be responsible to maintain their cultural values. To do so, they avoided family conflict and worked to create a sense of self that was a combination of traditional Tamil and mainstream North American values and behaviours.

Participants shared that their parents offered them support in exchange for their respect. They felt comfortable reaching out for help and addressing the problems they encountered through communication with their parents. The literature validates the importance of providing unconditional support which can help guide young adults through a way of life that strengthens their best potential. Furthermore, providing or making changes to receive that support early is critical as the development of coping skills during adolescence determines the coping styles in adulthood (Hamdan-Mansour, 2008).

There were several references in the literature to the value placed on respect for hierarchy within Tamil families as well as the different roles assigned to males and females. For example, young South Asians (Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Nepalese, and Afghani women) indicated that girls were given fewer opportunities to make decisions with jobs, marriage and school (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000).

Collectivism and independence

Although participants in this study shared their experience with the oldest sibling having multiple family responsibilities, the oldest female was required to respond where as the oldest male was relieved from these duties. This was consistent with studies that suggested many conflicts that occur between parent and child are over expectations and rules (Collins et al., 1997). This consistency may be attributed to the slower pace of acculturation of parents relative to their children. While parents may adapt to styles of dressing and eating, they are more likely to retain their beliefs, values and cultural traditions than their offspring (Hamid-Mansour, 2008). At the same time, differences

between family, personal and ethnic identities can create (Hamid, 2007) challenges that decrease as they merge and strengthen over time (Taylor, 2007).

In Tamil culture, suffering is believed to enhance the moral power of the sufferer and serving, sacrificing and tolerance are promoted over self-serving, individualistic behaviours (Freeman, 1997). This was consistent with participants who indicated that their family responsibilities were of great importance. This also extended into cultural responsibility, pride and readiness to fight in the war and lay down his life if necessary stating "they're my people, same blood" as one participant indicated. This sense of pride in their ethnic community was also revealed by their eagerness to participate in a study focusing on Tamil youth and the avoidance of speaking out on particular issues of customs related to cultural pride. *Violence and discrimination.* A quantitative study conducted by Nastasi et al (2007) on Sri Lankan youth offered consistent evidence into the ways youth managed to cope with violence in their communities. Many participants used problem-focused coping strategies. They included consciously making efforts to analyze their decisions by finding the root of the problem and solving it, attempting to change the situations, asking questions or seeking advice and interventions from their elders (which are associated with cultural values of respect for elders in Sri Lankan culture). Participants were particularly close with their grandparents, aunts and uncles who served as mediators at times in parent-child conflicts. This reveals the importance of family connection and generational presence. The present study also found consistent support-seeking strategies including efforts to obtain emotional support by speaking with their peers and siblings. (Nastasi et al., 2007).

Walsh et al (2008) found that youth who experienced the highest levels of immigration related distress reported high levels of stressful life events, an inability to cope with them and required more interdependent decision making with peers and family which was consistent with participants in the present study. Young adults form cliques and begin to socialize in larger groups of peers that share similar interests (Mathur, 2000), and this was certainly consistent with the experiences of youth in the present study.

Immigrant and refugee Sri Lankan youth in highly segregated areas who have lived through violence and shared experiences may begin to form close relationships and bonds. If these traumatic experiences have affected their ability to manage their new lifestyles well they can begin to engage in illegal activities or even form gangs as a measure of seeking belonging and affirming identity (Le & Stockdale, 2008). In the present study, gang violence and gang membership were identified as major concerns. Membership was influenced by need for safety and security, influence of peer pressure, lack of understanding as well as normative experience in their environment.

Affiliations

Identity and belonging were common struggles for both genders and generations of participants. Bertram (2008) described the process of identity formation among immigrant and refugee youth, and consistent with the participants' expressions of their commitment to Sri Lankan culture as evidenced in their participation in protests, connections to ethnic-based community groups, and the traditional Tamil values they held. The merge and strengthening of sense of self informed by these different sources was reflected in their respect for parents and family, combined with their desire to fit in

with a peer group to meet academic expectations of their parents and honourable conduct in the Tamil community.

Studies show that those who lived in areas with high concentrations of people from their ethnic group had stronger ethnic identities to their country of origin (Taylor, 2007). Participants in this all indicated that that their connection to their ethnic community was of great importance and to be respected. However, Tamil youth identified strongly with their community, and made the association to violence at the community level with the presence of gangs and not an extension of violence that they or their parents had directly experienced in Sri Lanka.

Several challenges such as smoking, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour and criminal activities cited in literature were behaviours that typically begin during adolescence as a way to manage stressor and fit in (Hamdan-Mansour, 2008). These were endorsed by participants but in a very limited way. As reported in the literature, these challenges created distances and trust issues in relationships with family and positive social supports that often compound the unhealthy coping measure creating further isolation and guilt.

Academic expectations

Participants indicated that despite transitions to high school and from high school posed challenges of fitting in and adjustment to academic demands, they were able to cope well. Participants believed that pressure to succeed from parents and value for higher education was ingrained in them and served as a stimulus to complete their education. In addition, they offered that social pressures with peers were far more demanding than pressure of academic achievement. The importance of higher education

was stressed by parents of participants, and they respected their parents enough to pursue it. There was limited literature on the experiences of immigrant and refugee youth on school transitions to high school as well as post-secondary, but the presence of these concerns about the youth in the present study indicates that it may be a topic worthy of exploration in future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This paper concludes with a review of the importation and deprivation model of violence and the degree of support for this model based on results from the present study. The section ends with a description of implications from the study and its limitations.

Relationship of Findings to Importation and Deprivation Model

The importation and deprivation model was selected for its relevance to understanding the impact of Sri Lankan youth's experiences with violence. Particularly, what were the internal and external factors present in supporting violence as a way of coping? According to the importation and deprivation model, based on violence in the prison system, violence is shaped by a learned behaviour from the experiences of a person's former environment ("imported") or by a person's experiences from their former environment that are met with new experiences of violence ("deprivation") through adjustment in their new environment (Richard, 2007).

The propensity towards problem-focused coping emerged as a strong theme throughout the interviews. Forms of violence, aggression or discrimination were experienced by the youth and often multilayered with several facets. They included, 1) the experience of witnessing violence in Sri Lanka by members they share an ethnicity with, 2) the experience of hearing stories of violence from their parents country of origin and participating in violence through association in Canada, 3) experiencing discrimination and violence by members of other ethnic groups in Canada, and 4) experiencing aggression within the home. Therefore, exposure to violence in Sri Lanka and through adjustment in Canada, either personally or through the experiences of their

parents, have indeed contributed to engaging in interpersonal violence in response to interpersonal stress on a conscious and unconscious level.

Implications

Several key findings provide implications for those who work in the field of education and social services. Living in a diverse community makes it of significant value to understand the populations we work with. In this case, working with young adults would reveal that the challenges in building trust are profoundly embedded in their cultural practices, their experience with Canadian culture and the stigma of reaching out to professional services.

Overall, it seems that young adults are managing their experiences through various coping styles and strategies, however, much more needs to be revealed regarding the healthy coping strategies young adults are using. Many participants were aware of how structural and systemic factors of gender, culture, school, and violence affected their lives.

This study revealed that elders such as grandparents and aunts and uncles serve as important mediators and role models to young adults. Therefore, paying closer attention to the services they receive and helping preserve their stories may in turn provide healthy ways of coping for young adults themselves.

There is a noted disconnect between the way young adults shared their coping strategies and their perception of what they needed from people when they sought help. For example, they coped by isolating themselves, but needed someone to talk to. This is an important finding for helpers who may be conducting assessments or providing counselling. Indeed, the information that is presented is usually not the information that may be integral to the helping relationship.

In addition, many participants who sought help from services relied on their outreach culpabilities. Therefore, paying closer attention to where our efforts in help with young adults lie may be beneficial. This study revealed key findings around the complexities of experiences young adults face growing up in Canada, and in particular the transitional issues for immigrant and refugee youth to high school and to post-secondary education which could be pursued in future research.

Limitations

While the findings revealed in the present study were consistent with previous findings on newcomer experiences, ethno-specific youth culture and the impact of exposure to violence, the data presented here is collected from a restricted age range, gender, immigration experience and not generalizable in the conventional sense.

All angles considered a participatory action research focus would have been ideal for this particular study and population given more time. In retrospect it would have added to the richness of the data to embed the following questions directly into the structure of the interview:

1. *Did you participate in the protests?*

2. *How has violence affected your relationships, home and school life?*

3. *How do you cope with the loss you have experienced?*

4. *How are you coping with it, rather than how would you cope with that?*

While many of the findings add significance to the current stressors young adults face, they can also be seen as coping strategies. Unfortunately, some of the ways youth were coping such as disassociation or avoidance were not captured through the methodology. The observations were expressed in emotions, body language and shift in

thought patterns that can be connected to trauma-related symptoms. Being mindful of these observations through other research designs in future trauma-related studies should be considered to add further richness to qualitative data analysis.

The timing of this research study had both benefits and drawbacks. While some participants were fully engaged in protests to show their support to end the civil war in Sri Lanka, they were unable to generate a full picture of their lives. However, being so engrossed with their culture they were able to reveal an in depth richness to the current literature. The researcher took much caution with sensitivity to question design. However, direct questions may have revealed different responses.

Although the researcher did not identify as Sri Lankan, she felt obliged to portray the research based on a community she was close with by identifying healthy coping strategies. Therefore, her perspective is present within the analysis and discussion.

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APPENDIX A

PASSAGES BY CODE

Abuse and shame

Abusive family in that kind of situation, because a lot of youth are in families where it's really difficult for them because one of the parents is an alcoholic and abuses them and what not or you're scared to talk about it, cuz it's not something Tamil people talk about. So at Agency X when we come across situations like that the parents are upset that the kids came and told us because they're like private and embarrassed to talk about it

Academic Adjustment

The fact that studying every moment of the day unless you're sleeping, so that would be overwhelming cuz you're not used to all these times

Academic Balance

You don't have to study seven days a week. If they make you do seven days a week (referring to parents) it's gonna end up in that thing (referring to conflict), you just get stressed

Academic Change

Usually go to my sister a lot. She's like a person who doesn't care about what anyone else thinks cuz I was in business by the way and I switched out of business to make that switch it was so hard it was like, I felt horrible and awful, I felt dumb because everyone would ask me what i was doing and I'd say women's studies and they'd be like what's that and all that negative stress so I felt really bad that i was switching into it

Achievement through minimum

asked people to help me out with homework and stuff, I use to skip class (haha) yeah and just have a lot of friends so one day I'll be skipping with one friend next day with my other friends, you have so much people you're doing stuff with so it keeps you occupied. Yeah even though I know I skipped school and whatever, at least I know the end of the day I still graduated, I didn't mess up some other kids did, I didn't get into drugs and what not, I still got through school even though I slacked off...Some kids stressed through school and stuff, some kids had to put their mind into it, I think it was boring for them

Attachment

I don't think that's a part that will happen to a typical Tamil family because mothers especially Sri Lankan mothers are really attaché with their children and them going abroad for work for a year I don't think their husbands will allow this too. It might but doesn't seem typical

Affirming Violence

when I came to Canada I know nothing about Tamil Tigers nothing at all, I just learnt everything here, I know all about them now, through internet, protest, news and now I think they are the only one who can save Tamil people from Sinhalese, now things change because of the war, now the Tamil Tigers is the only way, by fighting. If people ask me can you fight for your land, I'll say yeah

Anger

the best advice for my friend to explain, put out the situation in front of me, cuz I find that if I was to get cheated on I'd get mad and angry, I'd be furious, I'm not going to sit down to think what actually what happened so I'm gonna need her to go through it and give me possibilities and take me through it step by step

Annoyed

get frustrated but annoying when you're trying to help someone out, like they have problems of themselves and than they come to you for advice, so I'm giving them proper advice and they just start going off on you, what are you saying but you know its for the better and they don't really understand cuz they're not in that state of mind yet right

Avoiding

If my mom wants me to take care of my sister I do do it but if I have something really important due, I listen to her , do what I have to do, if we do get into arguments I just try and ignore it, if you keep it in your head you'll just get angry and obviously I don't hate my sister, so I don't want there to be problems cuz I don't want her to know she's causing problems just like I do my own thing, I hang out at home, if I go out with my friends that makes it worse

I'm not a person that's into relationships cuz they don't exist for me they don't last as long as we want them to. That is if I met someone that I think he's the right one than sure I feel like we could go on, but I'm not those desperate superficial girls who want to go into relationships cuz that's not me but socially friends I sometimes feel like there's a lot of drama, like oh my god she broke up with him, oh my god, did you know that. I don't want to be in those little drama bubbles cuz during class times those are the main points of conversation

Badge

There's a huge Tamil community they feel that if you're Tamil or Sri Lankan or whatever that you need to join and do all of these things. I'm very proud of who I am and incredibly proud of where I've come from, but I don't necessarily feel the need to join certain clubs so that part of it is a little challenging because from your own community they feel that you're being a little bit of a snob but that's not the case, I'm very proud of where I'm from I just don't feel the need to parade around the school to let people know that I'm from there. That's one of the biggest challenges right now

Balance

My parents give me the choice to choose my career. And even they give a lot of emphasis on studies they don't over power it, I get to do sports and fun stuff too! I get to be with my friends and I don't know if my parents could afford my college university money?

My family is very connected, we care about each other, we spend time together and do stuff together and we also have our own independence

Baring Responsibility

used to have to stay home and watch my brother sometimes, not much, but once or twice a week I hated it sometimes, but I usually go out cuz my grandparents would come over and pick him up. Somedays I'd have to bite my teeth and take care of it, somedays I just have to do it, but some other days I'd just work around it

Barrier

parents come here and they have a very narrow minded view on things and with kids they already assume they have a narrow mind about things and they don't want to help change that and show them they are so much more than that cuz they're capable of other thing that they like so because of the cultural barrier. So when the parents are coming here they think Canada is a great free country and the education is great here and there's many opportunities and they want you to take the best opportunity out of it, make the most of it and for them its professions that are highly recognized like doctor engineer what not, but here we have other options to explore so we can look at visual arts, performing arts, things like that

Beef

when you hear people talking about your girl doing something or cheating some next guy you're gonna get pissed off and that starts to bother you and than the what's next is you wanna go beat up the next man

Belonging

lot of people think that I'm non-Tamil. I don't want to use the word whitewash, but that's what they call me but it's not a challenge but it's something that ticks me off, cuz what the majority of Tamil youth consider what a true Tamil needs to be like is really odd. Some people call me a coconut. It's brown on the outside and white on the inside but I don't really get what that me and because I don't know what their definition of a true Tamil would be and what I'm trying to get at is that really ticks me off, cuz that's who I am and for me I go to School X Scarborough and there's a lot of brown people and it's not that I'm the outcast but I'm one of the few who don't really blend in quite with other people

Gang violence is big, if you're from the eastside I'm gonna beat you up or if you're from the Area X I'm gonna beat you up. Where you're from doesn't mean that you're gonna kill another person, making them realize that they both have similar values and a lot of these kids I know for a fact are still fighting today, they still have a hope of growing up and getting a good job, no one grows up going I want to be a homeless person on the street, they have hopes and dreams and I guess bringing them together and making them realize that they can help each other to get to where they want to be, that would be a start

socially challenged meaning he's a nerd, he's trying to find social settings, but depending on the way he dresses, the way he acts, simply looks, he hardly gets any friends because he's a nerd and he probably can't just hang out with the cool or popular kids. I would want to stand up for that person, just because he's a nerd doesn't mean that he's not socially challenged, he's just hitting the books big time, but that doesn't mean that he can't find friends

high school is about finding the right friends and even when you find the right friends know a lot of friends but know who's your right friends and know who you can always trust

Bicultural

Sri Lanka and then I moved here so growing up in Sri Lanka especially having a Tamil dad and a Sinhalese mom you kind of get to experience both worlds and basically persecuted for just speaking a different language

Birth Order

You're the eldest so that means there are probably responsibilities for you as the older sister, your parents have little contact or hardly any contact with you so you can't say or do anything without their permission your friends want you to go out but you have to stay in your house because you have responsibilities in your house. You want to leave but you can't because you have a couple of sisters or brothers that rely or depend on you

Boundaries

they asked you to do something which you know is wrong if you say no and they accept the fact that you say no and they say okay that means they're your true friends but then you chill with a bunch of guys that force you to do it you just have to say no and walk away and stop talking to them, or associating with them they want you to do something instead of respecting what you are what you just said and respecting your decision and bad influence

Caution

my dad works insane amount of hours, I was really upset about it in high school and finally I decided to tell him about it and he actually stays home and comes home earlier, but it took me a while to tell him, that's just because me and my dad don't have that good of communication. Reassurance, yeah I want to tell my dad but how and is it gonna be weird for me to tell him and will he understand and for them to answer questions like that and say yeah that is the best way to handle situations like that

Chores

parents get angry if...we don't get allowances if we do chores...that's a mandatory thing, but my parents would get pretty annoyed if we don't listen because they do many things and we just don't listen, it's like stabbing them right on their back, they'd get annoyed if we don't do our house chores, but they don't force me to do this and this and they're not those typical parents who expect their children to become an engineer or a doctor or a professional. Like other parents brainwash their children to be like engineer doctor engineer doctor and they have no other careers except for those two to work under, they're pretty open, I think they're okay with what I do, If I want to become this kind of professional they'd be okay with that as long as I work hard to achieve that. They do teach me life lessons that are important to me like hard work and principles and morals and make us understand that there are certain thing you need to do to get certain things like hard work. Simple life lessons, but challenge would be doing chores

Clothing

> *With a lot of my Tamil friends they don't wear what I wear. It's different to them so they'd be like blah blah blah (making a funny face that his friends would make towards him). I play it off as a joke, I don't really care for it, cuz there are a lot of people who like it and stuff and it's ok (referring to the way he dresses), and mostly just Tamil guys, cuz they're into the other styles (hand motion directed towards his head moving a hat on the side, indicating a thug dress style) so I'm okay with it. Play it off as a joke and still do what I do. It's not that I'm hated for that, I just get teased because of it, but it's nothing big because its five out of hundred of the kids*

Collective pride

> *They're my people. Same blood*

Compromise

> *way to please my parents and myself so they sort out a win win situation. Talk to your parents, have a one on one conversation and be like oh this is what's happening I would like it if you guys were a little more lenient. It's better for me and at the end its better for all of us*

Confidence

> *Definitely succeeding in academics, career wise, like the doctor thing, I'm still not a 110% confident as I fight to be in what I'm studying, but I'm getting there, and that is such a big challenge. Sometimes I just sleep on my bed and think about it*

> *It's more just a reassurance, some people know what they want to do they just need the confidence or a little bit of confidence, showing them the door, and other opportunities that are out there, but letting them open it themselves*

Confidentiality

> *I don't want it to get back to my parents so I know that they keep it to themselves and they'll just be there, they won't be like I don't have time so can I talk to you later. Even after hours I can call like to say yeah, I have a problem, having them to be able to get resources for you*

Control

> *when I was really young my parents would be like oh you're gonna study and become a doctor but that's because they could control what I do but as me and my*

sister and brother grew up we just started to tell our parents what we were interested in i guess because Tamil parents are not exposed to arts or anything other than science generally they don't really know the good side or interesting side of arts

My mom forced me cuz she thought that it was better cuz I have family there already and they can take care of me other than that

Corporal Punishment

its not like your teachers can't touch you, they could hit you with sticks and stuff if you don't study properly. But there they give you a better process of studying I feel cuz I learnt a lot more there than here, and when I came here it was the same cuz I already learnt it there and I feel the teachers are more connected to the parents and everyone is more connected there than here, because my parents can talk to them on the phone and they're very connected

Counsellors

Guidane counsellors at school, teachers you're most close with, aunts and uncles. People you most trust I guess. if goes beyond your hands and you become insane and become EMO (referring to a Japanese cartoon character who cuts himself) and beginning cutting yourself than you should seek a counsellor, so for self-harming

Dating and Machismo

So I had one of my close friends and he went to some party and met one of my friends that I knew but he didn't know so they started talking and I introduced them and they went out for like four months and he was like the nicest guys he's like this all one love, like those romeo guys you see in Tamil movies (laughing) and than she started going out with one of my other basketball friends so it's kind of like went insane and now he's some kind of big man he tries to hit on lots of girls

Dating and Media

dating that I find is that boys are more controlling within the Tamil culture from what I see among my friends and the girls kind of let it happen or just let them control them and that really pisses me off cuz I had a friend once who told me how one of her cousins friends was dating a girl and she said something and he literally slapped her across the face and she didn't say nothing and I think it's kind of common because in Tamil movies and stuff they get that idea how they can

just do whatever they want to the girl and the girl can't say anything and I see that among my peers or people I know

Dating and Sexuality

Relationship problems cuz they're at that stage where both of them are really not mature so it's difficult for them and they don't know how to deal with stuff it's their first time or whatever. Education, family, they get caught by their parents if they're going out with someone, that's a really tough time for them. They don't know how to get by

Dating as Taboo

Family is not someone you're gonna talk to about your relationship, not in our culture anyways, most parents. I would go to a teacher or talk to my friends

Discrimination

When they hear that you're Tamil, they think that you're supposed to be a genius in math and I'm not. The best thing to do is laugh it off, they don't need to know the other stuff and trying to educate someone at this point is just too late I find. I mean it's really embedded in their head and it would be hard for me to teach them otherwise

Disempowered

This year was bad for me, first semester my average was 81 and then second semester I was in the protest so I lost myself, like 70's. I goes there every day. And not the protest, the thing happening back home. Even now there are like 300 000 people in the concentration camps you can't really do anything. And we can't do anything there are more than a thousand people being killed a week.

Disinterest

I hated it, every time I entered economics lecture I just wanted to slap myself, that's how boring it was

Drugs

I told him not to smoke right, and this guy he don't listen to me, if they started smoke its habit and my brother...pause...he wanted to go to washroom in my school and he went some three or four guys were inside smoking weed and one guy was holding the door and my brother he go inside, the guy who was inside didn't let him go and I know some of them who were inside and they were for more than one hour inside. Once principal came inside because they were

watching it on the camera video, vice principal knows that they were inside for an hour, after they came in and they thought my brother was smoking too, but he didn't smoke, and vice principal came up to him close to see if he smell but he didn't so it was good he let him go, he was scared. Friends doing drugs, they are not my best friends I talk to them

Dual Role

a lot of parents work two jobs and I wouldn't be able to ask for that but those who work nine to five I think they can definitely give a hand

Education

I wish I could say that I do more but u know you could go back home and help out or stay here and protest and I don't do anything like that, but as much as I can within my peer groups or within my co-workers or whatever it maybe I try to educate them as much as possible. My friends that understand where I'm coming from and what I believe and they are supportive of that so if somebody feels differently about some of the opinions I have, all I can say is that you are entitled to your opinion and I am entitled to mine and I'm strong enough at this point to be okay with that. I have a great friends and family

Empathy

Depending on the situation, give them possibilities of what they can do in the moment, obviously they're your friend you want better for them, so you think of if you were put in that situation what would you do for yourself or anything, tell them something that wouldn't hurt themselves or people around them

Encouragement

dad is huge to tell you, like lets say I got 80's and stuff he would be like okay good, you feel like you didn't do anything and it's average or something. My mom is actually encouraging if you got an A, that's god but you could do better like when you are watching TV for seven hours you could have done something else and done better and my sisters they understand I need to have time and go with my friends and have fun, but when I'm up watching a hockey game or something and I have a test, they'd be like just watch the recap tomorrow morning and go study now. don't pay attention to my dad and I know that I'm doing good cuz I'm confident cuz my older sister because she was the one that had a lot of opportunities that even our parents thought it was a sketchy thing but she knew it was good. For example she worked at store X and the first year he wasn't that supportive cuz he didn't think that it was a good place because it was hours that would go into 11 o clock, but now she got a promotion and stuff so I get the confidence indirectly from her basically

Environment

> *I have to like the environment that I'm in cuz in elementary like I actually wanted to study but I hate my high school so I don't put that push effort in unless it's a course that I like and if it's really something that I like or an environment that I do well*

Escape

> *would have to talk to them, but you would have to get away from the situation I want to leave and go somewhere, get my head off it and meet new people, a different country and get away cuz it was a 4 year relationship and first year high school and I was really into this girl, I mean I wasn't really a great boyfriend but it was different. I would try to talk to friends but it doesn't really help. I have a lot of friends, I have a lot of close friends, it doesn't really help, you could just talk to them, they're just going to tell you the truth, you know, like get over it, what more can you say. It's all up to you and how your mind works*

Escaping Rules

> *it's hard to defy parents at 19 so I'd have to abide by their rules but I'd really try to see if I could go to a University or college in a different city possibly. Its' hard to go a different way when you know your parents have your best interest at heart*

Establishing Power

> *For girls its mostly being popular and trying to fit in, so you start putting people down like what I've seen with most girls, or try to be like the boss and tell you what to do and I don't take nothing from nobody, I stand up for myself but there's other girls that would actually do what others say and who are they you know try to make themselves known and dominant, telling you what to do with your life, or go get me this get me that. For guys its mostly them not being able to tell their guy friends their problems, cuz they'll be called a softy, or a girl or something*

Ethnic Pride

> *when I first moved to the country I was probably not the proudest of being Sri Lankan or just at that time you just don't know any better, I'm new to the country, but as I've grown up I've realized I need to be proud of who I am it's something that I take great pride in. Some people say things I can laugh about it but at the end of the day I wish people were more educated about community and the country*

Exams

> *but studying for exams that's a challenge for me because I really find it hard to focus on studies during school hours. Pretty much, I find the hours pretty long and it gets boring sometimes when you're like 9 months in school its long. Until grade six I think, school only runs until 12 o clock there, like very early morning, it starts at six o clock so you have to wake up really early*

Exposure to Gender Studies

> *I told my mom I'm doing that she said, what's women and gender studies and of course it felt like a slap in the face at first cuz if I said I was going to do something like medicine or life science they would be like yeah yeah, go, go*

Extended Family

> *oldest sibling weather its your grandparents or your aunt or uncle or somebody instead of you going out a lot maybe your friends can come over. You're at that age where you wanna chill and you don't really want to be taking care of people, but if you have to do it, you do it for sure, but need assistance cooking or cleaning and dealing with this scenario, say two the kids are fighting and say one of them breaks one of thems nose or something, you're gonna start freaking out, but the older person has already been through these scenarios cuz they probably have kids been around kids and deal with that situation, so while one person is dealing with the bleeding nose, the other person can talk to the other person*

> *member so it would be easier for them than listening to my parents instead of someone else that they're not really close with or don't really know or someone coming in and explaining that I don't want to become a doctor and I should be able to make my decisions, I think it's better having a close family member inform them and make them realize that I know what I'm going to do and I know what's right for me*

> *I could go to other family members like my aunt or uncle to see if maybe they could speak to my parents to get through to them might be a little easier than myself talking to them. I have an Aunt or an Uncle that always anytime my dad or mom doesn't see things my way I kina take back to talk to them and they talk to my parents and that always helps. When an adults saying it's always different from a 19 year old saying it*

Faith

> *Yes we're Catholic. We go to church every Sunday. 100% with probably everything, actually I should have mentioned that earlier as well, but it helps me cope with everything*

Family Bonding

I don't want to be some reclusive old child who's just introverted to themselves and just to things by themselves and then rest of the families bonding together. I would try to get along with them, try to relate to them, bond with them, make them feel as if I'm not a burden to them and they're not a burden to me

Family Ties

There is a lack of communication, the family is not really a family cuz you're not connected you don't do anything as a family and the main stress is that you have to take more responsibility and I don't like taking more responsibility and I personally wouldn't have time to do my things I'd like to do

Fear of Mortality

Somewhere to make them realize that there are people out there that care about them and care about the people they're gonna beat up, cuz there's someone waiting for them too at home, I don't want to die how that kid died (referring to the murder of the Tamil youth that took place that week) whatever you're trying to get out of it, it's not worth it cuz girls and guys at the end of the day you're either gonna be in jail or you're gonna be somebody big and you're gonna share your experiences with your little kids. I don't know if that's a scenario but, definitely something about violence or girls, cuz violence happens over girls, it's so stupid, or during school between School X and another school might have a problem, its stupidness

Fear

they can start to date at a young age and do things they would probably regret than they feel bad at the end or they don't think about it so what I'm trying to say is that, let me give you an example in grade nine one of my friends went out with this guy because she felt bad for him or she felt she was scared of him. I didn't really do anything, but the way I helped them was I just talked to her and gave her courage, I tried to make them feel more stronger

Fight

before my exams one guy Afghan guy he came while we were playing cricket, he's my friend too, but not my best friend too, we were playing cricket with my Tamil friends and we hang around with them. The Afghan guy came and he took our ball he put it inside his underwear and he ranaway and he was on top of the street and we ask him to give our ball back and when he came back down he said take it and go, it make you mad... what you gonna do right and this guy my Tamil friend right, he call him homo, he is gay he does gay things right, he even kiss guys in

front of all those people, really gay, he hold his hand out and he touch my friend, so i went inside. My friend the Tamil guy it was his last year right to get his GSSD so I don't want them to fight, there was a camera in front of them, if they get into a fight he won't graduate so I jus try to stop them. The Afghan guy, his friend, he push me, why did you touch my brother that's his friend he say brother. I say these guys are my friends I don't want to let them fight right, if you want to fight come after school, after that I go home and some black dude told me if we are fighting he'll come and I don't know if these guys are gonna fight or not, but i don't want to fight, its just two weeks before exam, its whole of our life, my four credits, my brothers, my friends that was his last year, he can't do anything without his...so after school I just came out and this guy he was waiting for me

Fitting In

Grade 9 was a little bit hard but that was just fitting in and change of environment and being away from your old friends cuz they went to a different high school. There's only 60 people that graduated from my elementary school in grade 8 so going into high school with a thousand people was a big thing. University is a little bit different because you're basically doing things by yourself because all your friends are in different Universities, so keeping a hold of your high school friends and also I think I changed

Friendship

I'm really close to, I don't talk to people I'm not close with, I just don't go there, those are the people that talk and when they talk it starts rumours, I only stick to people I'm close with, I really have no problems with my friends I chill and play video games and we get competitive. Most of my friends are Tamil. I had one friend that I was really close with and than when he met new friends, his girlfriend and girls friends he jus left, leave for a girl that's not what a guy does... Girls are girls you can find anyone and a friend is a friend, so I become really close with my best friend, he can't find someone like me and I can't find someone like him

Freedom

I guess I'd have to do what they say, I mean my mom's not really controlling or anything she lets me do whatever I really want so I don't know how to cope with that because right now I can do what I want as long as I get back home, my mom is happy with that

my parents are like do what you want but like if you want to become a cop or like become a lawyer just work hard and succeed in life and just be what you want to be in life

Gangs

> *For guys its being in that being able to fit in that crew, say a new kid comes to school and the guy thinks hes a looser cuz hes in no specific crew but he really is a nice guy, its kind of like society pushes him and forces him to be something that's tormenting him and that frustrates him, so he ends up joining a crew or something and than turf issues. that guy was from Area X and he comes to Area Yl. The guys at Area Al for sure will give him dirty looks, threaten him because I don't know what it is its either east or west, but they have problems cuz of their turfs*

Gang Labels

> *Closely related to Tamil people, maybe just for guys, the whole situation of being categorized as a gang and maybe violence. Caught into labels*

Gender Roles

> *most of the time it is the man that is more dominant in the family that helps run the family, wife has a job that's more underground*

Gendered Pattern

> *Mom being away, cuz a guy can't do what a mom can do. I mean, I don't have a dad, but I mean thinking a guy, I have brothers and they can't really do what my mom can do. Cuz my mom she knows how to cook, she knows how to make me feel safe and a different type of scenario, a guys mentality is totally different, basically someone picks on me I'd beat the guy up, my mom would be like just leave it, she'd tell me what to do, something safe for me but a guy would be like you have to do something about it to be a man*

Gendered Roles and Mothering

> *Child responsibility of taking care of another child. I'm sure no mother's perfect so I don't think any mother can expect a child to take care of her other siblings, that's something I find icky on and about the dad not being able to help, yeah that does tick me off because most parents not even just in the Tamil community but in general men usually say well Im the one who's working and bringing in the paycheque and I don't need a contribution in house work, so that part, if he had the time to help out and he didn't that would make me mad*

Gendered Jobs

> *Even things like a teacher, not many parents are okay with that especially if it's a male pursuing that I remember I wanted to be a teacher originally and one of my parents were telling my family friends that that's a really good job for females.*

And I thought I don't want to do this anymore if that's the kind of view that's out there, they want you to they don't see that there are other jobs out there that you can do

Generational Teachings

Why am I still studying hard when I don't know if I can go to University or College? I wanna spend time with my friends, So if you don't have anything, you don't have nothing to tell your kids or grandkids but I mean if my parents are doctors and I have money

Generational Conflict

They don't realize the social pressures that happen when you grow up in societies in Canada. They think life is about school and its your main focus, so when kids don't meet those standards, it's a big thing

Genocide

Sinhalese really well he wasn't burned at the stake but that's basically what happens in Sri Lanka there's tires with wooden poles and I remember this and they would just come into the bus, they'd have check points and come into a bus and they'd try to see who the Tamil people were and burn them just alive

Gossip

I'm not too popular but I'm not cool I'm just in the middle but popular people to me are involved in many relationships, intimate relationships and they're just like a social butterfly, they don't manage to get the grades, I don't know why but they do work hard, they like to gossip about others, especially people beneath their social level, so they'd look at a nerdy persona nd talk about him behind his back even when he is listening

When people talk about this and that when you didn't really do anything. I just get really pissed off

Grandparents

my dad would be long hours gone so we'd feel frustrated, maybe talk to my other relatives and grandparents and see what they could do about it

Personally my grandparents were always there, they don't live with me, but they live within the same city so we can go over whenever we want and they can come over whenever they want. So grandparents are always there to help out

Guilt

have one younger sister and she's not able to speak and it's really difficult on me because I'm always forced, not forced cuz I know it's my responsibility to take care of her and I want to go have fun too, cuz my friends are always going out but I feel bad for my sister cuz like she can't do that and she's 15, so I feel bad for her, but at the same time I want to have fun, but I can't take care of her, it's weird, She can only say a few words, I feel bad for my mom cuz she's always stressed about the fact that my sister can't talk sometimes we always get into arguments cuz

Hard Work

need reassurance I guess. Someone to be there to tell you you can do it, we believe in you. I go to York, goin into my third year of Kin. Maybe going into my first year was hard, adapting to the whole thing where you get more freedom and space and you can do whatever you want where as in high school you have a test every week. Where as in university you have midterms and finals and its all good and that was a challenge for me getting used to the university life

Hate

we're Tamil youth there's always a bad name for it and even when you're trying to be good some people look at you at a different angle so it's hard to have confidence at something, but the difference between me and my friends teasing but we're still supportive

Once when I came to Canada it was the first year I came one Sinhalese guy he messed up with me and my brother. So first time I told my teacher, this guy is disturbing me and my teacher will go to him and say don't do anything to him. After that he just hit me once, I hit him back, because it's going to be a big problem, its going to be a big fight...than I told my brother this guy hit me and he went to the principal and told him if this guy do it again well take our part of this and do what we can and after that he didn't care about the principal and that guy he started a fight and you know...after that I beat him up and than after that he don't talk to me at all, he don't look at me.

Hide

do stuff that they don't know about, like go outside without them knowing about i t and sneak out when they are not there, like go outside and play sports

High Achiever

When I have questions I ask the teacher...I make it top priority to understand something. Studying is a big thing

Identity

Tamil youth in high school is picking who you hang out with, like do you want to be nerdy or be a cool guy wearing baggy pants, baggy shorts and the one outside the back of the school smoking cigarettes. You want to be known as a gangster or a study nerd, especially with all the violence and murders going on lately

Illness at home

I don't think it's just the Sri Lankan people, I've grown up to realize that you've gotta no matter what age you are you've gotta be there for your parents so my dad got sick when I was quite young so I didn't have to take care of my siblings, but I had to take care of a lot of responsibilities in the house and take care of him so I know what that's like and its quite stressful but you learn to cope with it, you learn to deal with it and you do what you have to do to make it work

Image

I guess it would be horrifying because you are portrayed as a horrible person to the community. And Sri Lankans are a tight nit community. So once one person knows everybody knows it must be horrifying because you're in love but you can't really pursue it and I've known a lot of people to be in that

Impress Parents

impress their parents because of course both of the parents are professionals and her life depends on this exam so it's important for her to do well in this and she has hardly any social time to chill with her friends play around do something that she wants to do

Independence

it's not always a fact that the dad doesn't do anything, it could be some cases but in other cases both parents are working hard so you just gotta commit to that and know that they're working hard for you than you gotta make a right decision that's not going to affect them and affect you and not going to affect the people around you like your siblings and stuff cuz if you're the oldest they're gonna wanna look upto you, what they do, what you do can affect the choice they make if you're on the wrong path they're gonna be like oh he did it, why can't we do it

Patience really, like lately I've been really busy and my mom is getting upset that I'm never home anymore so when she told me that than we make time for the family, so once a week we'll chill at home, or go out to eat, making time for the family. We're all really busy and have our own lives now, especially cuz we're growing older too, my brother is going to grade 10 so making sure that we're all connected at the end of the week

You can't get by with it, you have to face it, it's your decision, if you want to go in that path or choose another path in their life. People could advise them but they will have to make the choice

Influence

I'm very close to my grandparents I'll probably talk to them, they're in Sri Lanka, but they have influence over my parents, so I'd talk to them about it, my parents are giving me too much to do. They could talk to them about it and let them know how they feel

Intimidation

What the older people did and the younger people follow the older people and you follow it through the whole generation. The older people are good people and they try to help these kids but when they see the older people get a big name they want to be something like that too and then everyone is scared of them, people are definitely scared of certain Tamil people. If you were to look at me you would know that yeah I should be scared of that guy. When I walk alone at night time, I wouldn't be scared; it's basically something you have

Isolation

cuz you basically have no one to talk about it and have internalized it and kept it within yourself

Sometimes I get peer pressured to do bad things, but I usually don't do it and I walk out of it and find new friends. Drinking, smoking and they want you to take a smoke that's a peer pressure you have to deal with and than if he's doing robbing he wants you to cover up for it. It depends on people you hang out with, if you hang out with them you would face those pressures, but if you can walk out of it than you don't need to face it. Yeah Tamil youth face gangs, they come from Sri Lanka so they don't know anything about this country so they join gangs and they go violent way and when they meet Tamil youths, they don't know if they're going to be a bad influence or not, they go and join gangs for them. Facing gang related problems, sometimes you get into stuff like gang related violence when you don't even know you're getting into it. Facing pressure like studying and you know you're not going to do well so you have to go and cheat, cuz of the peer pressure you have to face and than doing drugs, robbing, drinking, smoking, all peer pressure you will have to face eventually in your life

Jail

when all my friends started getting arrested and stuff when you get arrested and you're sitting in the cell you start thinking about your family, you start thinking about are you gonna have a life like this and life a life in jail. The moment you get

arrested and you get handcuffed you jus messed up and you parents are gonna be pissed and because I come from a Tamil family where people Tamil people look at you and they make decisions. So if you got earrings or whatever, you're jus standing and stuff, they'd be like oh he's a bad kid and stuff so that's the whole main situation, Tamil people, they talk, and than they think stuff, by the way you act or dress so that's a whole main factor for your parents cuz they're name goes down

Jobs

parents aren't in that big of a field, they are normally working in two jobs or trying to make ends meet but because they're from Sri Lanka they're coming here to give us a better education they still want us to pursue doctor or engineer and what not. But I don't think our parents are generally in that professions

hard time managing school work with work cuz I work part-time so I have a hard time keeping up my grades and still try to work and save money for university. So it's just time management

Judging

Friends, close family, cousins, people you can share your deepest secrets with especially with something like this because after you tell someone this sort of information they would start judging you like what the hecks wrong with you, it's hard to tell someone this so you gotta tell someone you really trust

Karma

If my girlfriend cheated on me she will feel that afterwards when she have a bad boyfriend and she might think about me, its hard to forget about things

Laid Back

I'll ask someone who had the teacher a semester before or previously and I try and get their notes and test and study off them, cuz most likely it's going to be similar and than i'll know what kind of questions they're gonna ask. And if it gets to stressful I don't like to push my way through, I relax, I'll go out for a while and come back to it, so I'm not so stressed out

Life-Work Balance

Trying to achieve a great profession like my parents, my parents pressuring me to become a doctor, cuz I may not necessarily want to. Going to tutoring seven days a week and studying on my free time, cuz I'd like to do other things beside studying, not being able to see my friends and do other recreation things

Loss

> *Not seeing my mom and not being able to talk to her every day, also having to take care of my siblings a cuz there's four of them and b cuz when you're going to school its hard and wanting to do your own thing and hanging out with friends and sometimes like me I can't study at home so I like to study outside and not being able to see my father everyday cuz he's working long hours*

Migration

> *I wasn't even born here, but I was raised there so I saw how much stress and trouble my parents went through to build up the life we have now, they had to come here and start fresh, both my parents went to school after they came here, so they had kids, school work and everything so they couldn't afford going to university so they did adult school and everything so cuz of that they can't send you either (referring to school), you feel like you're living that over and over again*

Mom's Demands

> *Really stressful when my mom expects me to take care of her and then I have this really big assignment due and sometimes she doesn't understand and sometimes she does. But I understand she goes to work and she comes home and cooks and cleans and she has to take care of my sister*

Money

> *plus I'm parting this club which is requiring me to go to two different cities in the next two or three weeks so that's money I have to spend on that, so trying to budget everything and have time*

Moral Condemnation

> *in my culture you probably know that dating someone it's not seen as a taboo, but dating a lot of people is definitely taboo right, you shouldn't do it*

Motivation

> *If I do something I really wanna do than I'll work hard to achieve it my goal become a cop or something some other parents they'll tell you what to do and that'll be a next stress for you they're gonna force you to do something that you don't want to do than its gonna mess up a lot. Maybe it's hard for you or since you don't want to do it you end up messing up and then you don't study and stuff and you don't get nowhere in life*

Networking

continue to look at those who are successful in women's studies and just in arts in general and I just attended a Tamil studies conference recently and it's all female professors who went into the arts, so I encourage myself by looking and networking with those who are successful in my field because I always close to the business network and it's a good thing because my best friend is also doing women and gender studies and she helps a lot cuz she's Tamil herself so it's good cuz I always have her, she's always gonna be in a couple of my classes and it's always encouraging to have somebody by your side who is going down the same path as you

Obligation

My mom knows that as long as I'm safe she calls me, as long as im free for the day, I pick up the phone. If she tells me to do something I'll go with her instead of not showing up so she gets upset. So I show a lot of people that I'm with my family not without them. Some people are like always out there, or some cousins are bad kids, I always want to be with my family when they actually are there, cuz it's a once in a lifetime and you can always do stuff with your friends cuz they'll always be there, yeah and I call her and she trusts that I'll come home

Older Sibling

Both parents are hard working and the oldest kids usually have to take care of the younger siblings

Outreach

you have a lot of guidance counsellors helping out and stuff, personally Agency X really helped me out while I was volunteering here, they cuz originally wanted to be a teacher, but they showed me there's so many more different kind of jobs out there, so that's what helped me change my path in something more that suited me. You know its not a formal conversation I'm having with one of the outreach workers, its just like hey you can tell them random stuff. They came to my school so there's announcements and Agency X's having a drop in after school so drop by kind of thing, so that's the only reason because its in my school, its accessible, I didn't have to go out of my way on my own hours so I was able to do it. I'm sure if there was another organization in my school I probably would

Parental Expectations

parents cuz they just want you to do well so they always set standards and half the days you feel you can't meet those standards

Persistence

course it doesn't work right away I'd give them time for it to sink in and I would just continue to do what makes me happy, and getting a job in the non-profit sector and I got a good job right now and I told them I was speaking to another worker in another organization and I told him where I worked and he said that is soo amazing, I told my mom that and she said I know it's a good organization and she just never told me so definitely I cope with it by being successful in it like continuing to do what I like and being successful at that

Power

just tell them that I don't want to be a doctor and stuff that this is my life and I'm the person who should decide what I wanna be and explain it to them and make them realize that what they're doing is not gonna help me its just gonna frustrate them in the end

Pressure from Parents

Your parents like they have a good job and they're like a doctor and engineer so obviously you want to please them. You might just breakdown they always pressure from your parents to do well cuz they're like role models to you and u don't want to disappoint them. I guess like in someone makes you realize if you go and talk to your parents and explain to them about when you have two parents who are always looking down on you and always expecting so much out of you, that pressure makes you really nervous and really stressed out and when you're stressed out you don't tend to do well, you get nervous

Pride

My parents are pretty laid back they're not very..., they let me do my own thing the only thing is that they're wanting me to go to Med school is something they would really like. There is that pressure, but I have to work because at the end of the day my parents came here you know ten years ago and they still don't have that kind of money

Prioritization

it's a great opportunity for me especially cuz I want to go into politics now, and these things only come once so I have to take it. I haven't done bad in school even the first year, even though I've been this busy so I'll be okay, it's just when I do something I have to be focused on that one thing for that time frame cuz if I'm thinking about everything else I end up not concentrating on

Privilege

If your parents are doctors and engineers, I'm pretty sure you're set. I mean peoples parents who are doctors and engineers your kids are more spoiled so they don't have to really worry about a lot of things in life. Us kids, we don't have rich parents and we live here, We live a good life but we also have to look after each other too

Protection

When you have your own click one of your boys can get hit and that starts a whole argument which ends up to a fighting and so if your boy gets hit you're not just gonna stand there, you're gonna hit the other person back so that gets into a big problem and other people get involved and its a whole gang fight. Gotta be yourself, know who you are and believe that you are who you are and it doesn't matter what people think of you. There are a lot of haters, they can jus hate, but being you is jus what you gotta do and stay complete and do one thing, stay out of trouble and than it'll be good for you in the long run cuz if you wanna join them, lets say you wanna join a gang and than you get messed up with them, you're not gonna end up anywhere cuz I know a lot of people that did and they all in jail....but when people say no and you do good in school and you actually see people that ask you to join gangs they're all in jail so they're not doing well you know that you made a right decision and you know that you're in a higher position than them and it makes you feel good. But then sometimes it's a big gang and people who are 22 years old and older when you associate with them, I associate with them cuz my cousin is one of them so I use to chill with them and a lot of cars go by and they notice that you're with them so if they cannot attack my cousin they try and hitting me, so you become a target for other gangs to send a message to the gangs you chill with

Protest

always a lot of stereotypes that kind of surround Sri Lankan people, there has been a civil war that has been going on for a very long time, it's just un fortunate that people don't take the time to educate themselves on what's exactly happened and they just go by what's happening here or they base their judgement based on the fact that somebody's blocked the Gardiner (Canadian Highway) maybe and granted it was a very big inconvenience and maybe wasn't the smartest thing to do but there's a lot of things behind that

Pushing Academics

figuring out what you want to do cuz parents are pushing you into one field where you want to do something else and a lot of times they go to University doing what their parents want them to do and spend a year or two doing that but then they decide they want to do something else after

Pushing Profession

Okay, definitely succeeding in my academic is a main concern of mine...that might stress me out but im really fortunate to have parents who don't push me towards doctor or anything like that they would rather have me do something i really like... however stress would be sometimes when parents are like study hard or you're not going to do good, it does stress me out cuz than it really hits you, oh like if i don't study i won't do good also sometimes my mom would be like this person is studying to become a doctor now, she doesn't say it to push me to become a doctor, she just says it because I don't know she thinks doctors get in faster and that makes me frustrated at times

Rebellion

they understand for the most part but than if you're rebellious and stuff thats when things get out of hand

Recreation

I need some freetime for myself to breathe go out play sports and stuff, debrief sort of thing and just relax

Relationships

I got played, but I still wanted to be with that person and they didn't want to be with me so it was a little weird and I had trouble sleeping and what not, but I could talk to my family about it, yeah but stress does the girl want to talk to me or not want to talk to me? Her parents? I would try my best to talk to her at school or I would throw a rock at her window when she's sleeping so she would wake up. That's not really that much stressful when you know she wants to talk to you, but when she doesn't want to talk to you that's pretty stressful cuz when a person doesn't want to be with you you just get these thoughts and feelings and you don't want to tell you no...when I think about it realistically, I got played right and the guy who got played with me, cuz two of us got played he still liked her and she still wanted to be with him, cuz he treats her better right so you feel worser even though you know the guy. So I would change it as, you don't see alot of guys getting hurt by girlz, but when I do see it, the guys really into her you know what I mean, I was really into it, I still think about my ex.

Well for me my parents were like this before as I started growing up, especially when I went to the last year of high school, actually spoke to them when I was applying to the University and I won't be able to do sciences because I'm not really good in math and I guess for me I've always had a very good relationship with my parents so it wasn't heartbreaking for them they understood

Repayment

at the end of the day I know my parents have given their entire life for me always, they've been selfless, so I will definitely spend the rest of my life or as much as I can trying to repay them

Reputation

First of all people will look at you like a bad kid, your reputation will go down and it's stressful knowing when people know and when they don't know, but it's also stressful when you're like doing stuff behind peoples back and not getting caught and you have this problem to deal with and there's a chance that its gonna get big so you keep on thinking about it how people are gonna approach that situation, like where, when and family members or good friends

Resentment

I would say the money part, getting into university and paying for it but I don't know how that makes sense cuz your mom and dad are both doctor and engineer

Resources

look into finding other resources if it's either OSAP or bursaries, student loans

Respect and Control

I would do whatever my parents want me to do because I do realize my dad's the only one working in my family so there maybe some financial issues, but I wouldn't work myself because my dad wouldn't allow to this

my parents are like don't even think about that, but I just don't really want to date because at the end of the day they're your parents and whatever they say counts because they've learned from their life

Respect for Parents

I have a twin brother right, we opposite to each other, I don't talk back to my parents, he gets mad when my parents say something right, I'm not going to listen to you guys, I'm going to do everything on my own so I don't want to say that cuz I don't want to hurt their feelings

a lot of respect for my parents I would just study it out and pass my exam and do whatever

Responsibility

one of the siblings taking a part time job to help out the family

I would put friends and family together, but when its your family you need to take care of your three siblings, I would not go out to party, I don't even go partying, but not with three people waiting for me at home and they need me to feed them

If I had no choice, I would have to take care of my sibling's right, other than that dad could contribute to some of the home responsibilities to take care of my younger sibling

Responsibility of Birth Order

they'd rather listen to their parents they have more control so it's gonna be difficult for the older sibling to take care of the younger siblings especially if they're fighting they'd be like why do I have to listen to you you're just my sister, where as if it's the parents they'd get in out later there are gonna be problems like your parents are going to be disappointed in you cuz you have the responsibility for the other kids, so I guess pleasing your parents and taking care of your siblings is really difficult when you're the oldest

Role Model

challenges I face is that the trust part cuz I've been in a lot of trouble and stuff where they started losing trust with me and I'm the oldest right so it makes it hard because my sister and brother look up to me and if I'm a bad role model its gonna affect them cuz if I'm gonna do they might choose bad decisions like I did

Rumours

talked to couples where they've shared their dirtiest secrets and when they break up they go and tell their friends especially the guys, cuz they live in herds of guys, they tell their friends about yeah, go look about what's goin on oh I know her secrets top to bottom and to make things worse they would say those things behind her back so that just gives her insecurity to someone I just met two days ago and relationships don't last long, they may stay for two days

Not being able to tell people about your problems because they feel uncomfortable or someones gonna tell somebody else. different sets of friends so I just try and chill with different people all the time, I don't constantly like to be with one group because than sometimes when you're together for such a long time, I still have a tight bond with everyone... Sometimes when we have gatherings everyone comes and they just meet each other and its fun cuz they don't really know each other, but than in the end they all end up being friends

University I already knew a lot of people because of Agency X a lot of them help out here, they all go to York U so and it was like you can talk to a guy for five minutes and they automatically assume you like them or something and than rumours spread really quickly and there are so many more people than in high school. I think that's Tamil guys are like that, they don't see that it's right for girls to be talking to guys, for me they're involved in a lot of thing so I meet people on a regular basis, so Im used to talking to new people openly so for them they found it a big deal and its embarrassing cuz you're being told about it in front of other people

Sacrifice

They went through a lot, I was born in England, they were living in Sri Lanka they moved to England and my parents wanted to move back to Sri Lanka because they wanted me to grow up with the proper values and my mom wanted to make sure I was going to walk the straight and narrow line I suppose, so they moved there and than they wanted a better life for me so again the moved to Canada, so I think about their life and how much everything revolves around me and I think that its only fair that I pay back. Walking a straight line is just according to my mom...it's just making sure that you respect your parents, you are religious, there's certain cultural beliefs and behaviors she wanted to make sure I would have and she didn't think that I would have that if I lived or grew up in England so she basically made my father move from England to Sri Lanka

Scholarships

not going to university yet, but it would be like parents stressing you about getting awards for graduation and getting scholarships for university

Science

focus on sciences which is hard, some people just don't get the sciences, like me personally I just don't get them... I can't do the sciences cuz I'm the one who's gonna struggle later on

Searching for Direction

don't know, right now these days it all about having fun with friends so it really bothers people that they need to go out and have fun and need to go study. I just graduated...Im gonna go to school but I don't know when, this year, next year. I have to really spend time with my friends, I have to go outside once a day. I can't always stay home, but that's not only me

Second Chances

> *They just gained the trust back and than prove to your siblings that you're a good person and a good role model and change your parents and siblings opinions about you*

Secrets

> *But I wouldn't say this to my parents even though they care and look out for you, there are some things that do make them parents like we don't want to say a secret about your best friend to your parents because your parents might know my best friends parents and they might somehow while laughing or joking accidently release the information which I wanted to keep as a secret and than it won't remain as a secret. So, I wouldn't say it to my counsellor too, cuz this isn't a thing that's too important to say to a counsellor but I'll talk to someone I look upto, like a role model, someone who I feel comfortable sharing my views with or my solutions than I think that's....so I would just get down with both of my boyfriends and something blames on myself too and than we would come to a mutual agreement*

Security

> *you do anything with your friends basically, like not homo stuff but either we do you know that type of thing, goof around and say weird stuff and not care and they don't judge you, its jokes, your friends just go along with it*

Self Actualization

> *Pleasing your parents with your marks and education and you still doing well and having a lot of self confidence, if your parents keep putting you down, your self-esteem, your self confidence goes down and you don't feel like you can ever meet their expectations and being able to fit in, you have a hard time finding who you are and who you want to hang out with*

Self-advocacy

> *I need help with studies, I go to my parents cuz they're teachers too, they help me out with teaching and if my parents don't get it, I just go to the teachers and ask them*

> *know it sounds weird but push myself and if I can't get answers from anyone else, say ok what am I going to do now, how am I going to achieve that, or I always have my friends, they're always there*

Self-concept

I want to go around meet people, be a social butterfly not some person who's super achieving cuz in my point of view their superficial, I want to be someone who can relate to others, who can get down, and someone I can be proud of. I get really annoyed when people are overly concerned about their looks cuz I don't really mind. I just talk to people depending on their personality not their looks. Looks can be an extra factor to them, but it's the inside that counts

Self-esteem

Its been easy for me to come and talk to someone before when I had problems I didn't see it, you know when you don't feel like your problems are a priority

Self-motivation

Someone to listen, its all inside. It's all upto you how you feel about a person its totally what's inside, the only way you can change it is if you change yourself, if someone is looking at you from a third point of view they realize that this kid was studying but than he changed when he started skipping and hanging out with these people

Sense of humour

the coconut thing, I don't mind, I just don't let it sink into me, cuz I feel confident with who I am as oppose to the whole women and gender thing I let people get under my skin and but that whole coconut thing yeah it pisses me off and sometimes its embarrassing when they say it in front of all the Tamil people or they're like you're so blonde, people say yeah you're blonde. But I just say whatever, you're jealous, I don't let it sink in

Sexism

forbidded me from seeing him and I'm assuming he didn't get in trouble, so I find that really sexist that the girls the indecent one kind of and the guys all innocent

Sibling

I guess if you have siblings you can talk to your siblings, if they're older they've been through it, my brother's older so he actually talks to me about stuff

Silence

sometimes if a friend is strong enough they will find a resource for you. For example my friend who was in an abusive relationship, she was scared she didn't even talk me about it, you could see it and but she never admitted it to us, so I told

my teacher help I don't know what to do and the teacher gave me proper ways of what I can do

Slack off

Classes are easy. I stopped cuz those classes were hard I would not go to them so you just slack off, class is good as long as you put your mind to it, but kids just want to have fun nowadays. I know elementary friends, we're not really friends no more but I still know about them and they're really smart kids and they were really good friends with me and now they slack off and not really going anywhere right now. I don't know what stress it could be but, they have too much fun, I think that's what it was.

Social acceptance

I don't want to make anyone think really bad on me

Social Stigma

there's a lot of stigma in school and everyone wondering what's up with you and not being able to see the other person you're having your affair with

Spirituality

First I dealt with my vice principal I told him this is happening like this, he told me don't worry about it we'll deal with it he prayed for me once, in front of me

Sponge

let them know, and if they don't agree with it I'll be like that's fine and I'm not going to do it because sometimes you have to be strong and just let them know your view or whatever you have to say cuz they're not going to take it in like a sponge, it's gonna take some time for it to sink in, but I'm gonna make sure it sinks

Strike

Kind of put us back three months, so they rushed us through the entire syllabus. So three months they broke it down into a month. That was for first semester, our first semester ended with two months into the school year kinda thing, so they have to finish three months worth a month, which is killer for us. Getting through that was bizarre, it wasn't that bad as it seems talking to you but it was different because you're at school studying and then you get three months summer vacation and then you're back there again going through this hard intense one month

Symbol

I took a picture of a tiger, the real one, from a computer, and I print it out and I gave it to one of my friends to hold it for me and I was doing something, this guy throw it in the garbage just for fun right, I told him just hold it don't put it down, he just throw it he did it on purpose he just want to make me mad so that day after a few hours I talk to him he said sorry because I took that picture because I like tigers, animal tigers and those tigers too and I took that picture out of the garbage

Teachers

teach you a chapter and its completely different from the textbook or whatever, or they'll skip chapters and be like okay study this by yourself, but it's a new concept to you and you don't really understand it and sometimes if you go to the teachers they just think you're stupid cuz you don't understand it but and you don't want to go cuz you think they're gonna think you're stupid so you try to learn it by yourself and then you end up messed up

Time Management

like no one is looking after you, you have to time manage, plus I have two jobs and I go to school so keeping track of that and you have so many different friends now, you have high school friends, university friends, and then if you join any extracurricular activities or clubs you have those kind of people to hang out with

I don't know if I wanna become a doctor and than studying for the exam, it's a big exam, and than spending seven days, spending your free time doing all this stuff and have no time for fun and it really stressed me out when you have not time for friends and no time for space

Trust

close friends or my family members or if like they don't understand I'd probably just go to someone from Agency X cuz they can help me get through it for sure. Basically advice, cuz obviously they've already been through that stage in life, older people especially so they could help me cope with it

I guess like I'd see if a friend has been through that situation. I guess I'd go to my tightest friend that I know that won't judge you for nothing right and try to get advice cuz usually when you freak out, you tend not to think of the most obvious ways to resolve it, but when someone else hear's it they can tell you what to do and what's right, so most of the time you can trust that person cuz they want it for your better and work your way through it

In University because I work with a different age and stuff you don't really know if they're okay or not, there's a bunch of first years I'm okay with, the older ones feel like they have to watch over the little ones. Two of the staff here that I work with ended up going to the party but they're like older than I am cuz I'm one of the older staff here so it was just a little weird cuz there's alcohol and stuff, especially cuz I consider one of them to be like my older brother for him he was wierded out and it was awkward

Unconditional

so when I got handcuffed I was sitting in the car I knew that I just messed up and this was gonna be on my criminal record and I'm not gonna have a be in a bad situation for a long time and I won't get into University and stuff cuz I don't think they'll accept you if a criminal record. After that, when my parents would say don't be a bad kid and cuz you gotta support the family in the name wise cuz what you do affects the family and affects the family name and after I started thinking about that and how could I change those decisions in the beginning before I was gonna start doing that stuff so if I didn't make the choice in taking the wrong path none of this would have happened and everything would have been different instead of the way they are now

If I have fight with my friend that day I don't talk to him that whole day but if I see him next day I'll talk to him, things work like that

Under-employment
two part-time jobs and overnight shifts when they start and factories

if anything both parents are at home working a lot of hours and working two jobs

Violence

Tamil youth in high school is picking who you hang out with, like do you want to be nerdy or be a cool guy wearing baggy pants, baggy shorts and the one outside the back of the school smoking cigarettes. You want to be known as a gangster or a study nerd, especially with all the violence and murders going on lately

It hasn't happened, but it could of because there have been many times when one of my other friends wanted to beat him up and every time we'd see him, we'd have to stop him, like if we weren't there to stop him they'd for sure get into a scrap

Visibility and Parenting

Tamil parents are different than other parents...I don't want to be discriminatory but when I watch TV shows like Gossip Girl. I've seen parents who would be married to people younger than their daughters would be, families who aren't

real....they want to keep this best image for their child, Tamil parents whatever the books say they'll follow...Sri Lankan parents seem different, I have Indian friends and their parents are really into cultures and that is good, Sri Lankan parents are like that too and they try to work hard to preserve Sri Lankan culture for their children because they think it's important. The way they act, their principals and morals reflect their personality, all typical parents, especially Sri Lankan parents stand out because they are so cultured

War and Loss

Might have family back home who are severely injured or dead. It puts you through a lot of stress but then you still have to go through your day to day that you do here, like go to work, to live. My dad has a sister back home who's in a camp right now, he goes through a lot of mental stress because it's his own sister and everyone else is in England the rest of the family in Canada, but she's a teacher so she's the only one there, so it's kind of tough for them because she's the youngest and she's still stuck and her and her family are in a camp in Sri Lanka, so it's a lot of stress and calling. My grandfather lives in England cuz my aunts a doctor there and my grandfather went to Sri Lanka after and stayed in a house outside the camp and went to visit my aunt everyday and just got back

Women in Multiple Roles

mom works to but she only works, usually three days but its 12 hours in a factory and my dad is a driving instructor and he works a whole week, however he has the option of coming home, taking a nap, eating, do whatever, cuz its his business as opposed to my mom, she has to work in a factory and lifting heavy stacks of paper and she still has to cook in the mornings and have a home and start late and i always tell my mom don't do it cuz we can cook ourselves, but she always says no you guys won't eat

Work Life Balance

Guys are close to their mom, well I'm close to my mom so if I didn't see my mom in that many months it would stress me out. Being, having to take care of 3 younger siblings is a handful especially when your father is not really there for you and he's working long hours and you gotta do everything. If you're being told to take care of 3 younger siblings without the another parent being there and all he's doing is working long hours than I guess not being able to see your father is another stress, and being with your siblings, you don't get to do other things in your life like hanging out with your friends and other social things you want to do

Worth

why would you let your family meet a girl like this, they deserve something better, they deserve to meet somebody worth it, not a you know...bad girl

APPENDIX B: THEMES BY CODE

Primary themes: Theme One: Role expectations

Attachment, Avoiding, Balance, Baring Responsibility, Barrier, Birth Order, Chores, Compromise, Control, Dual Role, Encouragement, Escaping rules, Exposure to Gender Studies, Freedom, Gender Roles, Gendered Pattern, Gendered Roles and Mothering, Gendered Jobs, Generational Conflict, Hide, Image, Impress Parents, Independence, Jobs, Life-Work Balance, Migration, Mom's Demands, Moral Condemnation, Parental Expectations, Persistence, Power, Pressure from Parents, Pride, Repayment, Respect and Control, Respect for Parents, Sponge, Women in Multiple Roles

Theme two: Collectivism and independence

Badge, Collective Pride, Ethnic Pride, Extended Family, Family Bonding, Family Ties, Grandparents, Guilt, Illness at Home, Independence, Influence, Judging, Loss, Obligation, Older Sibling, Privilege, Responsibility, Responsibility of Birth Order, Sacrifice, Siblings, Trust, Unconditional, Work-Life Balance, Worth

Theme three: Violence and discrimination

Abuse and Shame, Affirming Violence, Beef, Belonging, Bi-cultural, Clothing, Corporal Punishment, Discrimination, Disempowered, Fear of Mortality, Fight, Gangs, Gang Labels, Genocide, Hate, Intimidation, Jail, Protection, Protest, Sense of Humour, Sexism, Silence

Secondary Themes: Theme four: Affiliations

Anger, Annoyed, Avoiding, Belonging, Boundaries, Caution, Confidence, Confidentiality, Counsellors, Dating and Machismo, Dating and Media, Dating and Sexuality, Dating as Taboo, Drugs, Education, Empathy, Environment, Escape, Establishing Power, Faith, Fear, Fitting in, Friendship, Generational Teachings, Gossip, Identity, Isolation, Karma, Money, Motivation, Networking, Outreach, Prioritization, Rebellion, Relationships, Recreations, Reputation, Resources, Role Model, Rumours, Second Chances, Secrets, Security, Self-concept, Self-esteem, Self-motivation, Social Acceptance, Social Stigma, Spirituality, Symbol, Time-management, Trust, Under-employment, Violence, Visibility and Parenting, War and Loss

Theme five: Academic expectations.

Academic Adjustment, Academic Balance, Academic Change, Achievement through minimum, Confidence, Exams, Hard Work, High Achiever, Pushing Academics, Pushing Profession, Relationships, Resentment, Respect for Parents, Scholarships, Science, Searching for Direction, Self Actualization, Self-Advocacy, Slack-off, Strike, Teachers, Time-management

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographics

1. Gender:

2. Age:

3. Ethnicity: (Tamil or Sinhalese)

4. Place of Birth: (Canada or Sri Lanka or Other)

5. City of Residence:

6. How long have you been living in Canada (indicate in months or years)?

7. How many people are currently living at your home?

8. Are you employed? If so, what is your annual income?

To get started, I am going to tell you about some situations that youth may face, and ask you about how you see the situation. There are no wrong or right answers to any of these questions. I am just interested in how you see things.

Academic Scenario

You are studying for an exam. Your mother is a doctor and your father is an engineer. Your parents want you to be a doctor, so it is important you do well in your exam. You get tutoring seven days a week and spend all of your free time studying. You have no time to visit with friends or for recreation and you are not even sure if your parents can afford to send you to college or university.

9. Tell me about the stressors from this scenario.

10. Would you add anything (make any changes) to the scenario?

11. How would you cope with this scenario? Tell me the strategies you would use?

12. Tell me about who or where you would get help if you wanted to?

13. What kind of things would you need from those people or places that helped you?

14. What challenges do you face in your school?

15. What do you do to get by in your school?

Relationship Scenario

You have been having a secret affair with another person who is not your boyfriend or girlfriend, and your boy/girlfriend just broke up with you because s/he found out. You cannot talk to your family, your teacher or your boos about it. You have trouble sleeping. Everyone is asking you what is wrong but you don't want to talk to them. You don't know what to do. Someone you know found a love letter you wrote and gave it to people you know. Her/his parents have found out that you've been messing around with their daughter/son and have forbid her/him to have any contact with you.

16. Tell me about the stressors from this scenario.

17. Would you add anything (changes) to the scenario?

18. How would you cope with this scenario? Can you tell me about the strategies you

would use?

19. Tell me about who or where you would get help if you wanted to?

20. What kind of things would you need from those people or places that helped you?

21. What challenges do you face with your peers?

22. What do you do to get by with your peers?

Family Scenario

Your mother has been working abroad for about a year. She sends money home regularly for the family, but there is little direct communication with you or the other children. You are the oldest child and have been taking care of the four younger children because your father works long hours. You have a lot of responsibility and don't feel like your father is doing his share. You are angry and want to leave but worry about what will happen to your brothers and sisters if you go. Your friends keep inviting you out and you are starting to go out more and stay out later.

23. Tell me about the stressors from this scenario.

24. Would you add anything (changes) to the scenario?

25. How would you cope with this scenario? Can you tell me about the strategies you

would use?

26. Tell me about who or where you would get help if you wanted to?

27. What kind of things would you need from those people or places that helped you?

28. What challenges do you face with your family?

29. What do you do to get by with your family?

Personal Experiences

30. If you could create a new scenario with supports for young people such as yourself based on the biggest challenges you face today, what would that look like?

31. What are the biggest challenges for youth in your situation, and how do youth get by?

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO AGENCY

Proposal for Research Opportunity

November 27, 2008

Dear Members of the Board,

Further to my conversation with XXX I am writing to propose the possibility of a research partnership with XXX. My name is Nisha Mehta and I am currently attending the University of Western Ontario's Graduate of Education program in Counselling Psychology. I am also a former employee of the XXX where I became familiar with the agency's initiatives and values of empowering Tamil Youth through successful integrative programming.

My interests in serving the Tamil youth population began in Markham where I implemented a bullying and violence prevention program across six schools. I saw many strengths in students that I would like to explore through my research. My thesis will focus on the stress and coping experiences of Tamil youth in the GTA. I will need to interview approximately 12-15 youth during the summer of 2009.

Some examples of possible questions are: "what are some of the challenges you face at school, at home and with your peers? How do you cope with challenges at school, at home and with your peers? What supports and services are useful and helpful? What supports and services are needed? Through this research, I will highlight the voices and experiences of Tamil youth. I would also like these results to be useful for XXX and am therefore receptive to any feedback or ideas that you may have.

I would like to thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing back from you regarding the possibility of a partnership for this research. I can be contacted anytime through the following: Mobile: or Email:

Sincerely,

Nisha Mehta, B.S.W.
Masters of Education Candidate
Graduate Studies in Counselling Psychology
University of Western Ontario

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF INFORMATION (18 and Over)

Exploring Sri Lankan Youth Culture:

An understanding of coping strategies and their implications for Counselling Practice

Dear Participant,

My name is Nisha Mehta and I am currently attending the University of Western Ontario's Graduate of Education program in Counselling Psychology. I am interested in research involving coping strategies of Sri Lankan youth today and am inviting you to participate in the study.

The purpose of the study is to highlight voices and experiences of Sri Lankan youth in contemporary Canadian communities. I will be interviewing approximately 12-15 young adults during the summer of 2009 to learn about their opinions on different types of challenges. Some examples of possible questions I will ask you include: "what are some of the challenges you face at school, at home and with your peers? How do you cope with challenges at school, at home and with your peers? What supports and services are useful and helpful? What supports and services are needed?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to meet the researcher at an office space in XXX for an interview that will take approximately an hour. It is important to know that I will not share any information that you provide me with to XXX. The interview will be kept confidential and I will not be using your name or identifying information in the final report, so your identity will be protected.There aren't any known risks to participating in this study and it is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time without it affecting your status at XXX.

Keep this letter with you for future reference and sign the consent form attached if you would like to participate. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at xxx. If you have any questions or concerns about the study please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor Jason Brown anytime through the following: Nisha's mobile: or Nisha's email: or Jason Brown's email:

Sincerely,

Nisha Mehta
Masters of Education Candidate
Graduate Studies in Counselling Psychology
University of Western Ontario

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM (18 and over)

Exploring Sri Lankan Youth Culture:

An understanding of coping strategies and their implications for Counselling Practice

Researcher: Nisha Mehta
Masters of Education Candidate
Graduate Studies in Counselling Psychology
University of Western Ontario

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Your Name (please print):

_____

Your Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX G

LETTER OF INFORMATION (Parent or Guardian)

Dear Participant,

My name is Nisha Mehta and I am currently attending the University of Western Ontario's Graduate of Education program in Counselling Psychology. I am interested in research involving coping strategies of Sri Lankan youth today and am inviting you to participate in the study.

The purpose of the study is to highlight voices and experiences of Sri Lankan youth in contemporary Canadian communities. I will be interviewing approximately 12-15 young adults during the summer of 2009 to learn about their opinions on different types of challenges. Some examples of possible questions I will ask include: "what are some of the challenges you face at school, at home and with your peers? How do you cope with challenges at school, at home and with your peers? What supports and services are useful and helpful? What supports and services are needed? The interview will be audiorecorded and transcribed into written format.

If you give permission for your youth to participate, they will be asked to meet the researcher at an office space in X for an interview that will take approximately one to one and a half hours. It is important to know that I will not share their identity or any information that is provided with X or with anyone else except my supervisor. The interview will be kept confidential. Because the research has been advertised through X, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Despite the researcher's best attempts to remove any potentially identifying information from the results, there is a small possibility that their participation could be known by readers of the final report. The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you or your youth will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. The data will be kept for a period of five years after which time, it will be securely destroyed.

There aren't any known risks to participating in this study and it is voluntary. You or your youth may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time without it affecting her or his status at X. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at xxx. If you have any questions or concerns about the study please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor Jason Brown anytime through the following. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Nisha Mehta (*Masters of Education Candidate),*
Graduate Studies in Counselling Psychology at the University of Western Ontario

APPENDIX H

Consent Form (Parent or Guardian)

Exploring Sri Lankan Youth Culture:

An understanding of coping strategies and their implications for Counselling Practice

Researcher: Nisha Mehta
Masters of Education Candidate
Graduate Studies in Counselling Psychology
University of Western Ontario

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to allow my youth participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Your Name (please print):

_____

Your Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:_____

Date:_____

Research with Youth

Sri Lankan youth aged 14-21

We are interested in your family, peer, and school experiences.

If you would like to participate in the study, please contact Nisha Mehta

by telephone at _____-_____

or by email at _____

An honorarium of $10 in a gift card will be offered for participation

APPENDIX J

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Western · USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number:	0906-13
Applicant:	Nisha Mehta
Supervisor:	Jason Brown
Title:	*Exploring Sri Lankan Youth Cultures*
Expiry Date:	April 30, 2010
Type:	M.Ed. Thesis
Ethics Approval Date:	July 16, 2009
Revision #:	
Documents Reviewed & Approved:	UWO Protocol, Letters of Information & Consent, Advertisement

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

No deviations from, or changes to, the research project as described in this protocol may be initiated without prior written approval, except for minor administrative aspects. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information and consent documentation, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

for Dr. Jason Brown (Chair)

2009-2010 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board

Dr. Jason Brown	**Faculty (Chair)**
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	**Faculty**
Dr. Jacqueline Specht	**Faculty**
Dr. Farahnaz Faez	**Faculty**
Dr. Wayne Martino	**Faculty**
Dr. Immaculate Namukasa	**Faculty**
Dr. Robert Macmillan	**Assoc Dean, Graduate Programs & Research** (*ex officio*)
Dr. Jerry Paquette	**UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board** (*ex officio*)

The Faculty of Education	Karen Kueneman, Research Officer
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	519-661-2111, ext.88561 FAX 519-661-3029

Copy: Office of Research Ethics