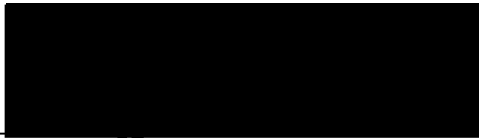


AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Sriyanthi Lorna Antoinette Gunewardena for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Women Studies, Women Studies, and Political Science presented on August 18, 2003.

Title: Exploring Sri-Lankan Women's Migration Experiences in L.A. County: Three Stories, Three Lives

Abstract Approved:



Susan M. Shaw

The recognition that women are not in a fixed position but are dynamic and active in any of the processes of migration and post-migration adjustment helps us to see the complexity of women's participation in migration. Using life history interviews, three Sri-Lankan women's migration experiences are examined for the ways in which personal networks were utilized in various phases of the migration process and how social and human capital was transformed in the post-migration adjustment process. Though in some instances the data did not fully support Boyd's (1989) predictions of the ways in which personal networks affect migration, overall, both Boyd's and Kopijn's (1998) statements that social capital is transmitted and transformed in the migration process are supported. The analysis indicates that all three women were successful in their post migration adjustment in that they were able to retain a strong sense of identity while adopting new practices in the United States.

Exploring Sri-Lankan Women's Migration Experiences in L.A. County:
Three Stories, Three Lives

by
Sriyanthi Lorna Antoinette Gunewardena

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

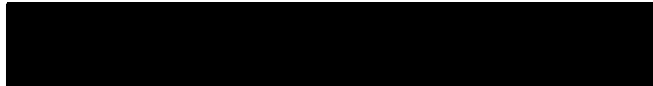
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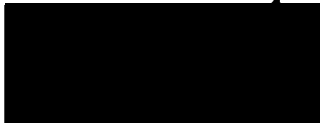
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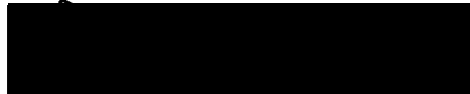
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PREFACE

In 1987, I was a research assistant for my sister on her dissertation on the role of women in development in the sugar cane industry in Sri-Lanka. In reading her final dissertation and in working with her, I realized that the sugar cane industry and other industries were destroying subsistence farming practices, structures that were traditionally based on land ownership by women, economic power for women, inclusiveness in decision making for women, and other forms of political power. Cultural practices that had empowered women for centuries were in the process of being destroyed by government policy makers and members of the corporate elite. This has been happening all over the world¹ increasingly rapidly and intensely, under the current conditions of globalization² and in a similar way had happened during colonial times as well. This has a tremendous impact on the roles that women can play in the economy and in society and bears upon Sri-Lankan women's migration to the Middle East. But I understood little about the women "in my own back yard."

My passion for, interest in, and connection to the project and the participants have very much to do with my personal background. Throughout my childhood I was surrounded by Sri-Lankan women who had migrated to the United States. I saw them working hard, preparing traditional food, preserving cultural rituals and practices, and mediating between strict husbands and children growing up in U.S. society. It was they, who, on a daily basis, had the most contact with the kids and negotiated issues of biculturalism and the benefits and costs of migration to the new generation of kids growing up in the U.S. It was these women who helped me to maintain my cultural identity. I owe a tremendous debt to them. But I never fully understood their stories.

Exploring Sri-Lankan Women's Migration experiences in L.A. County:

Three Stories, Three Lives

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Within the last decade or so, women's migration experiences are being recognized as important¹ and important to understanding globalization because of increasing evidence of the disruption of women's lives as they become more intensely entwined in global flows of production, sex traffic and service provision. Yet we know little about how women exert their agency in the processes of migration. For example, who initiates migration decision making? What do women think and feel as they anticipate migration? Who funds the move? What is the outcome of the migration experience for women within their socio-economic context? How do women actually handle the survival issues they confront in a new country? These are some of the questions and issues that the women I interviewed answer for us. In this introductory chapter I provide a general overview of this thesis, share some general information about women in Sri-Lanka, summarize the contents of the upcoming chapters, position myself as the interviewer, and discuss some ethical considerations which arose in the interviewing process.

The omission of gender and women from some of the literature on international migration (Bhagwati, 2003; Choucri, 2002; Jushasz, 1995; Korcelli, 1994; Weiner 1997) reflects a presumption that women are not active participants in the migration process. This thesis challenges that presumption. The recognition that women are not in a fixed position but are moving, dynamic, and active in many of the

processes of migration and post-migration adjustment helps us to understand the complexity of the nature of women's participation in these processes. In this thesis, using feminist research methods, I explore Sri-Lankan women's migration and post-migration adjustment processes in the United States. I have chosen to do qualitative research focusing on three cases so that I could do more in-depth and detailed work revealing the lived experiences of these particular women. I have chosen Los Angeles County in Southern California because of the visibility of the Sri-Lankan community there relative to other places in the United States. I look at the patterns revealed in the three Sri-Lankan women's life history interviews and examine the ways in which they used personal networks in various phases of their migration and social and human capital in the post-migration adjustment process.

Focusing on Sri-Lankan women migrants, I provide examples from the lived experiences of three women who come from a culture that has a rich and long history of migration. Historically and currently, Sri-Lanka, as a nation-state, is an exception to the rule when looking at gender issues in South Asia. It is historically the first nation-state to have democratically elected a woman as head of state in 1960 and is the first nation-state in 1994, to be run by a woman prime minister and a democratically elected woman president concurrently. Bilateral inheritance and property rights, control of household economy, and equivalent levels of participation in extrahousehold labor characterized gender relations in Sri-Lanka's early history. Because of these characteristics, and for other reasons, preference for girl children was the norm. Until the 1980's there were still some rural areas where these

characteristics prevailed. Before the civil war, literacy rates for women were close to 90%, and the gender gap was close to 7%, (with men at higher literacy rates). There are lower total fertility rates in Sri-Lanka than in other South Asian countries, there is a lower population growth rate, and there is a lower rate of mortality for female children under the age of 5.² It is within this social and political environment that the women I interviewed grew up into their adulthood before migrating to the United States. The analysis of three in depth interviews with Sri-Lankan women from different backgrounds who migrated to the U.S., their lived experience of migration, and the ways in which they expressed their use of resources of religious institutions and their own human capital in the form of cooking skills can provide insight into the critical ways that these Sri-Lankan women actively participated in migration processes.

In Chapter 2, I provide a literature review, examining the existing literature on Sri-Lankan women's migration. An examination of Sri-Lankan women's migration is interesting because of the history of mythical, colonial, internal, and external migration that Sri-Lankan women have participated in or been exposed to from as early as the 6th century B.C.E. There is evidence that Sri-Lankan women, in particular, have a history of migration as individuals and in the context of chain migration or family moves. There is evidence that Sri-Lankan women have utilized personal networks to migrate or to enhance the success of their migration to the Middle East, Hong Kong, and to Singapore. To date, Sri-Lankans migrated in relatively small numbers to the United States (as compared to Canada, Switzerland, or

Australia). It appears that there was a concentration of Sri-Lankans in Los Angeles County, however, corresponding with the increase in the number of Asians in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States. There is indication that the positive effects of the larger Asian American population created a more favorable environment for Sri-Lankans who migrated to the U.S. It is important to contextualize the experience of the women in this study in terms of the history of migration.

In Chapter 3, I provide a detailed explanation of the methodology. I include the theoretical bases employed in this study: feminist oral histories and Boyd's societal systems approach to migration. Life history interviews are a traditional rich source of information utilized in women studies. I describe the importance, relevance, and limitations of life history interviews as a method; the selection process; the process of interviewing; issues relating to male presence during interviews; the content of the interview questions; the process of concluding and following up on interview; and finally the ways in which I planned to examine the data using Boyd's societal systems approach (focusing on networks and social capital).

In Chapter 4, I examine the data from three Sri-Lankan women's migration experiences as told in their life history interviews. I provide an analysis of the data, looking at migration and post-migration adjustment as processes rather than events. In the migration process, I will discuss four stages: the decision process, the preparation phase, the actual journey, and the arrival and first contacts in the U.S. I will look at the adjustment process as one which involves learning to live in a new country while maintaining connections to the culture of their country of origin to avoid alienation in

the receiving country. I will look at some of the ways in which these three women utilized social capital and human capital in their adjustment to living in the United States through two vehicles: religious institutions and cooking. These three women utilized social capital through the resources available at religious institutions to meet survival or basic social, and communal needs, and they exerted agency to bridge cultures thereby ensuring the survival of their community. The three women also drew upon and increased their own human capital through developing their cooking skills as a vehicle to create personal networks to meet survival or basic needs, to meet social and communal needs, and to bridge cultures to ensure the survival of their community. In some instances, their use of social and human capital to develop personal networks was critical to their very survival in Los Angeles County.

In Chapter 5, I provide a summary of important points that emerged in the data analysis, comparing them to Boyd's model. In general, the data analysis supports the theoretical bases regarding social/personal networks that Boyd (1989) espouses. I describe where the data analysis does not fully support Boyd's statements.

Additionally, I indicate how the experiences of the women I interviewed support Kopijn's (1998) statements regarding the importance of social capital in the migration process. I conclude by making suggestions for future research.

Before I move on to the next chapter, I will position myself as the interviewer and discuss some of the ethical considerations that arose in this study. Feminist scholarship emphasizes the role of the interviewer as having an influence on the information presented in a work. By discussing the ethical considerations which

arose, the reader can better understand and contextualize the information provided in upcoming chapters. It is important for me to position myself as the interviewer and to discuss some of the ethical considerations that arose in this study to provide a framework for this thesis.

POSITIONING MYSELF AS THE INTERVIEWER

Because life histories and other types of interviews necessarily involve flows of information both to and from the participants, my personal position in terms of “history, biography, gender, social class...and ethnicity” will influence how these stories are presented (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.4). In the following paragraphs I will present information about myself which is relevant to the notion of the interview as an interactive process³.

My parents migrated to the United States in 1967 and were among some of the first Sri-Lankan migrants to Southern California. At that time, it seems that there were about 12-15 families of Sri-Lankan origin in Southern California. I was raised in a fairly traditional household in which I was exposed to many of the customs, cultural practices, and social constructs, including gender roles, of my “home” culture. I am familiar with the lifestyles and practices that the participants in my study describe in relation to their lives in Sri-Lanka. I have spent a total of five months in Sri-Lanka.

I am Sinhalese. Sinhalese people are the majority population in Sri-Lanka, and are the dominant cultural group. We are the ones with the most political power, privilege, and voice in Sri-Lanka. My parents and their parents occupied a relatively

high socio-economic status in Sri-Lanka. But I grew up in poverty until I was 9 years old when our economic status changed and we moved up into the middle class. When I was in high school our family occupied the upper middle class, but from the time I began college, my position reverted to low-income status. For the past 16 years, I have been at low-income or close to it. All three of the participants in this study are Sinhalese, but not all were of the same socio-economic status.

My family taught me to speak in Sinhala, to know and use titles of respect towards kin, to perform folk dances, and to perform and know songs and other culturally important tools/practices. I learned the value of food, gift giving, socializing, and education/literacy. All of this knowledge became an invaluable resource as I was conducting this work. For example, when participants spoke in Sinhala, I not only understood them, but I had an understanding of the cultural context within which to place those words. Having spent some time in Sri-Lanka, I had first-hand experience with most of the Sinhala words and Sri-Lankan objects my participants referred to. For example, one of my participants spoke of a clothes iron, made of cast iron, and fueled by coconut shells, that she used when she was a child. The regional supervisor of my volunteer work in Negombo actually used one of these irons daily and showed it to me, so I immediately knew what that participant was talking about. This cultural knowledge created a kind of comfort level and rapport with the participants that positively influenced my work. Because of this rapport I had with the respondents due to cultural knowledge, I believe that the information gleaned from these interviews could not have been obtained by a person who was less familiar

with Sri-Lankan culture. Also, though my direct exposure to Sri-Lanka and Sinhalese may be limited, the participants' perception of me as an insider, a member of the group, gave me access to certain types of information that I would not have had access to if I were European-American or of an ethnicity perceived as outside of the group. In other words, I would say that I was given a level of access because of trust issues based upon my skin color and my parents' ethnicity, that a white person (non-Burgher)⁴ who was born and raised in Sri-Lanka would not have.

On the other hand, the fact that I have never lived in Sri-Lanka for any significant amount of time may have had a negative impact on this work, since all of my respondents have spent most of their lives in Sri-Lanka. I have only spent a total of roughly five months in Sri-Lanka. On my first visit, I was there for two months. I lived near a rural area for one month and traveled around the country during the second month. In having lived in a fairly rural area, I was exposed to lifestyles and experiences that many researchers may not have had access to. On my second visit, I was there for about three months and lived in a fairly rural area. In this context, I was forced to speak in Sinhalese and utilize all of my knowledge about the culture as very few people spoke English in that region. Then, I spent two weeks traveling around the country. While I treasure the time that I spent there, I am well aware of the limitations of my experience. During both stays in Sri-Lanka, I know that many times, I did not fully understand the cultural and social cues presented to me. In the context of these interviews, I know that there were cues, meanings, and /or significances conveyed to me during my meetings with participants that I missed. This affected

how the participants' voices are presented.

I advocate the practice of feminism. None of the participants in my study described themselves as advocates of feminism. The similarities between myself and the respondents made for common understandings of experiences that they had in Sri-Lanka; the differences between us may have a negative impact on this study because of my inability to fully understand or appreciate the meanings and significance of some of their experiences. The fact that we are all Sinhalese, therefore, does not imply that we have the same perspectives or life experiences, while it does imply a wealth of shared cultural practice and understanding. Because of that, there are limitations to my position as an interviewer and therefore to what is being discussed in this paper. On the other hand, there may be information presented in this paper that would not likely be available to a non-Sinhalese person that I did have access to because of the ways in which I was perceived of as an insider or the ways in which the participants and I occupied similar positioning with respect to my personal history, biography, gender, social class, and ethnicity.

I am concerned about the ethics and politics of representation in my work on this project. What does it mean for me, having lived in the United States all of my life, to research and present the life histories of Sri-Lankan women who had lived most of their lives in Sri-Lanka? Would I be unconsciously replicating hegemonic practices in the process of conducting this research and in the final representation of their stories because of my internalization of oppressive practices due to my training in academia or my life experience growing up in the West? Am I fully aware of what

those hegemonic practices and behaviors look like? I think that being born a Sri-Lankan, speaking some Sinhala, being raised in a traditional household, and visiting the country twice, do not automatically mean that I would be fully respectful to the participants in this project. I am aware that my behaviors and perspective are all very informed by a Western paradigm to an extent that differs greatly from my participants. I realize that this is an issue that must remain problematized in order for this work to have any integrity.⁵

SOME ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH AROSE

As a feminist, employing oral history as a research method, I encountered several ethical issues and considerations. Denzin & Lincoln (1998) cite two works relevant to my project. First, Denzin & Lincoln, (1998) cite Janet Finch's (1984) comments on "interviewing lonely or isolated women hungry for contact with other people who may be unwittingly manipulated by the researcher" (p.316). For example, one of the women I interviewed was relatively lonely and may have been more vulnerable. In this situation, she may have volunteered more information than others did, in order to extend the length of the interview (my visits with her).

Secondly, Denzin & Lincoln (1998) cite Judith Stacey's observation (1988) of "the uncomfortable question of getting data from respondents as a means to an end and the difficult compromises that may be involved in promising respondents control over the report" (p.316). There are two realms of ethical considerations with respect to the issue that Stacey raises. One issue has to do with cultural propriety, and the

other has to do with feminist methodology. There were cultural taboos that I transgressed by asking certain questions of people who are older than I, and with whom I do not have the culturally appropriate level of closeness to pose such questions. I chose to cross certain boundaries in asking some very personal questions. In my conceptualization of some of the data “as a means to an end,” I justified breaking certain cultural rules regarding privacy (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 316). On the other hand, I was employing the feminist paradigm of “the personal is political,” and I believe that I took care to give respondents the choice to opt out of answering any question.

With respect to feminist methodology, there were a few ethical considerations that related to “respondents’ control over the report” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 316). In part, my physical location here in Corvallis as I was processing the data did not allow for the kind of collaborative participation in the writing of this project that may be ideal to feminist consciousness and practice. More than that, as the interviews were in process, I know that some of the participants viewed me as some type of an authority figure simply because I was conducting life history interviews. The very nature of spending time on an endeavor such as this placed me in a position of power. The fact that I was writing a thesis placed me in a position of authority. The mitigating factors of my youthful appearance, my use of titles which respect the authority of the participants as elders to me, my status as a single person, and my gender, were all important to balancing the power dynamics in this project.

Another ethical concern which arose, vis-à-vis respondents’ control over the

report, had to do with the use of pseudonyms. The participants I interviewed were eager to tell their stories. They were pleased that someone cared about their life experiences. They were interested in seeing their histories recorded in a public forum. However, some of the questions that I asked, and some of the responses that were given, made it unethical for me to use their real names. Though some participants insisted that it was fine for me to use their real names, I feel that some of the information they provided me may result in negative repercussions for them. In this way, I am taking away their control of the use of their names. This is problematic from the perspective of fully honoring the participants' wishes and may come across as paternalistic. However, because I wished to avoid any legal complications, I have used pseudonyms for participants and have removed any identifying information (names of employers, etc.). Now that my position as the interviewer and the ethical considerations have been noted, the work in the following chapters is properly framed.

I hope that the information contained in these chapters will be particularly helpful to those studying women's migration using life history interviews and to those studying Sri-Lankan women's migration. I hope that the analysis, indicating the ways in which these three women used personal networks, social and human capital, will increase our understanding of the ways in which they were active participants in the migration and post migration processes.

¹ A few of the works examining women's migration are listed as follows: Tienda, M., Booth, K. (1998), "Women's Position in the process of Migration: Individual and

Familial Perspectives in Changing Social Roles”; American Sociological Association, #88S20719 Association Paper; Women ‘s Rights Watch, the women and media

collective, “Sri-Lanka: the plight of women migrant workers in Kuwait,” WIN News, Wntr 1998 v24 n1 p65(1); Eelens, et al. 1992) *Labour Migration to the Middle East*,

London: Kegan Paul International Ltd.; Sassen-Koob, S.,(1996) “Notes on the incorporation of Third World Women into Wage-Labor through Immigration and Off-Shore Production,” in *The Sociology of Migration*. Elgar Reference Collection. International Library of Studies on Migration, vol. 3. Cheltenham, U.K. and Lyme, N.H.: Elgar, distributed by American International Distribution corporation, Williston, Vt., pp.143-66.

² See Bandarage, 1997, p.178

³ Denzin & Lincoln (1998) discuss the role of the researcher who understands that research is an interactive process shaped by her/his position. They acknowledge that all research findings have political implications.

⁴ Burghers are of mixed heritage, (European with Sinhalese or Tamil) and would typically have more access than Europeans or European-Americans.

⁵ Denzin and Lincoln (1998) emphasize the importance of the researcher being reflective about her/his views and “blindspots” with respect to hidden structures of oppression within the research process (p.315).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the existing literature on migration in general and specifically Sri-Lankan women's migration. The participants in this study, their parents, and grandparents have lived their lives in the context of a culture rich in history of migration, including migration associated with the numerous colonizations that Sri-Lanka has undergone and changes in the economic, social, and political structures that those colonizations have engendered. An examination of Sri-Lankan women's migration is interesting because of the long history of mythical, colonial, internal, and external migration that Sri-Lankan women have participated in or been exposed to from time immemorial.

MYTHICAL MIGRATION

Ever since the first mention of Sri-Lanka in written history, migration has been a theme—a continuous process, which has shaped the island's cultural and national identity. There are two historical records, one in the Ramayana and the other in the Mahavamsa, which include the theme of migration. The second story, in the Mahavamsa, reveals more about Indian migration to Sri-Lanka. The Ramayana is significant because it serves as the marker, the first written record of the beginning of a long history of migration on the island.

Migration In The Earliest Written Record Of Sri-Lanka

The Ramayana, a Hindu epic text written about 500 B.C.E, is one of the two religious books of the Hindus. In it, the circumstances of one of the first invasions of “Lanka” by Indians, is described (Patel, n.d.). Within this somewhat mythical account, Rama, Sita’s husband, goes to Sri-Lanka to rescue his wife, defeated and killed Ravana, and rescued Sita (Patel, n.d.). Rama and his army’s journey to Sri-Lanka, according to the epic, occurs at approximately 3000 B.C.E., marking, according to some scholars, the expansion of Brahmanic civilization to Sri-Lanka (Library of Congress, 1988a).

Migration In The Second Oldest Written Record Of Sri-Lanka

The next account of Sri-Lanka in written history is in the Mahavamsa, a Buddhist text written in Pali by monks in the 6th century B.C.E. Migration is also important in this account, tracing the origin of the Sinhala cultural group, the largest group on the island today, to India (Library of Congress, 1988a). This story not only tells us of migration, but is also an origin story.

According to the story, an Indian princess from northern India was abducted by an “amorous” lion, Simha (Library of Congress, 1988a, p.1). They had children who were half human and half leonine. One of these children, Vijaya left India and journeyed to Sri-Lanka. On the day of Buddha’s enlightenment, Vijaya and his entourage of 700 people arrived in Sri-Lanka. He established himself as the ruler of the island with the help of a “local demon-worshipping” princess, Kuveni, and identified his people as “Sinhala,” the “lion people,” in reference to his ancestry as the

descendent of a lion (Library of Congress, 1988a, p.1; Hewa,n.d.). Kuveni is said to have betrayed her own people in helping Vijaya and in being the mother of two of his children. According to folklore, her children are the ancestors of the Veddas (the aboriginal people of modern day Sri-Lanka). Vijaya then banished Kuveni and married a princess from Madurai (southeastern India). His children sought wives from Tamil kingdoms (Library of Congress, 1988a).

Archeological evidence supports the timing of Prince Vijaya's arrival to Sri-Lanka, and documents this as the first large Indian migration to the island (Library of Congress, 1988b). (There are scholars who believe that Vijaya was not the first colonizer of Sri-Lanka but that Tamils from southern India may have been the first colonizers of the island (Library of Congress, 1988b).)

In the story, the Veddas are described as descendents of prince Vijaya and the "demon-worshipping" (Library of Congress, 1988b) princess Kuveni who betrayed her people. The story tells us about a value system in relation to foreigners. Kuveni is a woman who marries outside of her group, to their dismay. She is also a woman who marries and gives birth to the children of the colonizer. Can we interpret the moral of the story by looking at her end fate? She is then betrayed by the colonizer and banished, even though her children are royalty.

The story makes reference to religious history, framing Buddhism as more elevated than what existed prior to it—"demon-worship" (Library of Congress, 1988b). As it describes the day of Buddha's enlightenment as coinciding with prince Vijaya's arrival to Sri-Lanka, it makes Vijaya's arrival seem auspicious and spiritually

significant, further reinforcing the notion of Sinhala people's right to reign over the island. According to Jayawardhana (1987) there were claims that Buddha visited Sri-Lanka three times and that Buddhism would be preserved for 5000 years by "these immigrants and their descendants" (p.4). It reinforces the legitimacy of Sinhala people as rulers, Buddhism as the highest religion, and the legitimacy of Indian colonization of Sri-Lanka.

Finally, and especially important for this paper, this story tells us of Indian migration patterns in Sri-Lanka's early history. It tells of people who came from northern and southern India. Early migrants are said to have come from the Pandyan and Dravidian kingdoms in the south (Library of Congress, 1988a), and, it is believed by some, from Bengal in the north. Others believe that Vijaya and his group came from Gujarat in northwestern India) (Hewa, n.d.). The story characterizes Vijaya's progeny as seeking Tamil wives, indicating the desirability of intermarriage between groups and Tamil women as suitable brides for Sri-Lankan royalty, indicating migration patterns from South India. The story also describes an "early and constant migration of artisan and mercantile Tamils to Sri-Lanka" (Library of Congress, 1988a, p. 1; Jayawardhana, 1987, p.2).

These Indian migration patterns were significant in Sri-Lanka's early history because they affected who was to rule the island, relationships with South India, relationships between Tamil and Sinhala ethnic groups, the composition and nature of Sinhala ethnicity, and the extent of Indian cultural influence on Sri-Lanka. It was Prince Vijaya's descendents who ruled Sri-Lanka from about the 5th century B.C.E.,

establishing its center in the north central province. During their rule, Sri-Lanka was invaded by, and engaged in trade, intermarriage, and alliances with the Chola, Pandiya, and Chera kingdoms of south India (Jayawardhana, 1987). The documentation of intermarriage between South Indians and the Sinhala proves the incredibly mixed nature of Sinhala people culturally, ethnically, and physically with that of the indigenous islanders, as well as north and south Indians.¹ The choice of marriage partners, constant flow of trade, and the creation of various other types of alliances reveal how harmonious relations were between Indian Tamils and the Sinhala at that time. (Library of Congress, 1988b) The additive nature of all of these connections (invasions, trade, intermarriage, and alliances) seems to indicate a strong South Indian cultural influence on Sri-Lanka at that time as well as a degree of ambiguity with respect to the actual distinctions between Sri-Lankan Tamils and Sinhala cultural groups. This second mythical account reveals migration patterns from various regions of India in Sri-Lanka's early history. The two mythical accounts can be seen as suggestive of a relatively long stream of colonial migration on the island.

INTERNAL MIGRATION

At the end of the classical period, marking the end of the hydraulic economy and society, 1200-1500, the Sinhala populations migrated to the central and south western areas of Sri-Lanka (Library of Congress, 1988c; Jayawardhana, 1987). Due to physical climatic changes, the hydraulic economy and society were no longer

sustainable. This led to a significant internal migration.² Due to their proximity to India, Tamils had populated the northern and eastern areas of Sri-Lanka. By the end of the 13th century B.C.E., the Sinhala kingdom had diminished in its control on the island, leading to the establishment of the Jaffna Kingdom (Jayawardhana, 1987). The establishment of the Jaffna Kingdom meant geographic, religious, and ethnic identification of the north east region of the island with Sri-Lankan Tamils.

Due to the internal migration after the end of the classical period, Sri-Lanka was divided into three kingdoms, which were the centers of political power in the medieval period. The kingdoms were located in Kotte in the southwest, Jaffna in the north, and Kandy in the central highlands (Library of Congress, 1988d). “In the medieval period, economic activity consisted of the cultivation of rice by the people for their own consumption and supplying the surplus to the King’s court and feudal landowners” (Ponnambalam, 1981, p. 5). Within this period, there was minimal migration internally and externally. These three kingdoms co-existed peacefully. European colonialism was to dramatically change migration patterns on the island again.

COLONIAL MIGRATION

The Portuguese

European colonialism began with the Portuguese. The Portuguese came to Sri-Lanka because it was the only source of cinnamon at that time and also strategically

located with respect to other Portuguese controlled trading centers such as Ormuz, Dui, Goa, Chochin, Madras, etc. Because the Sinhalese people resisted plantation work, the Portuguese imported laborers (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981). The Portuguese were the first to import South Indian laborers to Sri-Lanka for colonial agricultural projects. They created the city of Colombo, in the southern part of the island, and controlled Mannar, Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981). They controlled the kingdoms of Kotte and Jaffna, but not Kandy (Gunawardena, 1984).

The Dutch

In an effort to oust Portuguese control on the island, the King of Kandy made a treaty with the Dutch (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981). The Dutch then replaced the Portuguese sometime close to 1658 and ruled until 1776, initially leaving the Kingdom of Kandy a stronghold of Sinhala culture and religion (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981; The Family Van Dort, n.d.). But bringing in the Dutch resulted in the eventual colonial interactions with the French, and finally the long period of colonial rule under the British.

Dutch officials (men) intermarried with Sinhala women, and a new “caste” was created: the Burghers (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981, p. 13). The Dutch Burghers spoke English, were Dutch Reformed Christians, and were registered as Burghers only if they could prove that they had at least 3 European grandparents. They were very

active in government, business, and professions under Dutch and British colonial rule (The Family Van Dort, n.d.). The Dutch sought to monopolize trade in the Indian Ocean and built forts in Trincomalee and Batticaloa (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981). They brought the “embryonic” plantation system to Sri-Lanka, planting cinnamon and areca nuts, and introducing coffee and pepper vines (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981, p. 13). The Portuguese and Dutch benefited from previously established trade relationships that Sri-Lanka had created with Arabs and others, trading spices, elephants, and precious stones for silk, porcelain and other aesthetically valuable items. “But the scale of this early trade was not extensive. The Portuguese and then later the Dutch, expanded substantially on these early trading activities, primarily supplying articles of luxury consumption to the growing commercial centres of Europe” (Ponnambalam, 1981, p. 5). One of the growing commercial centers of Europe was Great Britain. (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981).

The British

Due to the French overrunning the Dutch in the Netherlands, the British took on the role of “caretaker” of Dutch interests in Sri-Lanka and remained in possession thereafter (Johnson and Scrivenor, 1981, p. 14). The British solidified and expanded the plantation system and continued to exploit the labor of South Indian Tamils, whom the British, like the Portuguese, brought in to work on the plantations under conditions of indentured servitude (Ponnambalam, 1981). “The immigration of these Indian Tamils began as a trickle in the 1830s and became a regular flow a decade

later, when the government of India removed all restrictions on the migration of labor to Sri Lanka” (Ponnambalam, 1981, p.15). This is one of the key labor migrations in Sri-Lankan history. By 1939-48, the plantation sector had “long reached its maximum expansion acreage-wise, and the principal export crops had passed their peak of profitable exploitation” (Ponnambalam, 1981, p. 15).

Migration of people from South India to Sri-Lanka under previous colonial rule could not compare to the migration that occurred under British rule. Over one million Tamils were brought over as coffee plantation laborers in the 19th century (Jayawardhana, 1987). The implications of the coffee plantation system vis-à-vis changes in Sri-Lankan society were wide ranging. One example is the effect on internal migration flows motivated by economic circumstances. Under the British, economic development was focused on the central and western regions of Sri-Lanka, which caused internal labor migration of Tamils in the Northern region to professional and government jobs. English schools in the North fostered this professional migration and also resulted in the establishment of Tamil traders in the central and western regions (Gunawardena, 1984). The plantation economy created a local bourgeoisie: some Christian converts, their children educated in England.

Initially, the Tamils brought in from South India were seasonal migrant workers; however, as the labor needs of the new tea plantation system arose, most became permanent residents of Sri-Lanka, commonly referred to as “Estate Tamils” (Village Life, n.d., p.4). The British introduced tea production for export in 1867 (Ponnambalam, 1981). By the 1890s and until today, it has remained the primary

export crop of the country (Ponnambalam, 1981).

The British were so successful in export crops partly because they stole lands through two laws, the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1840, and the Waste Lands ordinance of 1897 (Ponnambalam, 1981; Library of Congress, 1988e). The first law declared that “all forest, waste, unoccupied or uncultivated lands” belonged to the crown unless proved otherwise through payment of taxes within the previous 20 years.

The law gave the right to the governor to decide what to do with any uncultivated land, including the right to sell, lease, or grant the land to individuals or institutions (Ponnambalam, 1981, p. 7). The second law set a time limit of 3 months in which to claim an undeveloped piece of land. Any land not claimed within that period of time then reverted back to the crown. This land was mostly sold to non-Sri-Lankans or taken over for producing profits for the Crown (Ponnambalam, 1981). More than 80,000 hectares of Kandyan lands were taken over by the British (Library of Congress, 1988e, p.1). This must have had a tremendous impact on gender relations as women-owned land became controlled and taken over by men, since it seems unlikely that the British, at that time, would have sold those lands to other women.

At the same time, there were continuing efforts by the freedom fighters of that time, who were asking for various reforms, including the right to vote. The right to vote, however was only to be extended to male merchant capitalists and professionals who had a chance at having political voice. After riots in 1915, the Ceylon Reforms League was formed. In 1920, the Ceylon National Congress was formed and a new legislative council was set up in 1924 (The Island, 1998). This new council was

headed by a Tamil, representing the emerging bourgeoisie of Sinhalese, Tamils, Burghers, and Muslims (Gunawardena, 1984).

At the beginning of the “Roaring Twenties” in the U.S., by 1921, 500,000 immigrants were working on the estates in Sri-Lanka (Ponnambalam, 1981; Library of Congress, 1988e). The British had organized indentured labor from the Tanjore, Tirunelveli, and Ramnad districts of South India (Ponnambalam, 1981). “These laborers were housed in barrack like back to back “line” rooms each 10x12 ft., within the estates, and were paid a working day’s wage of fourpence” (Ponnambalam, 1981, p. 7-8). According to the U.S. Library of Congress (1988e) this permanent migration from South India was characterized as family or group migration. It was the largest migration of South Indians to Sri-Lanka in the history of the island, but was unfortunate in that immigrants who became members of a “permanent underclass” faced “abominable working conditions and squalid housing” (Library of Congress, 1988e, p.3).³

Another significant migration pattern related to British colonization can be seen in the resettlement of once abandoned dry zone areas of the northern central part of the island. Under British initiation, Sinhalese people from the central and southwestern part of the island were moved into the northern central areas as well as the eastern province after 1930. Since the eastern province especially was historically a Tamil area, this British-led Sinhalese migration was to create problems for years to come because it was seen as a threat to Tamil cultural, linguistic, and political autonomy in that region. The perception that the Sinhalese migration to Tamil

districts was problematic, was acknowledged by Prime Minister Bandaranaike. In 1958 she attempted to correct the problem by granting Tamils control of land settlement and a certain amount of autonomy within their region. Because she was assassinated in 1959, her plans remained unfulfilled. Over time, the increase in population of Sinhalese in the Trincomalee district was as much as 13% (Jaywardhana, 1987).⁴

INTERNAL MIGRATION IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Historically, relative to other industrially developing countries, Sri-Lanka had a limited rural to urban internal migration pattern. According to the Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the small size of the country, coupled with a good transportation system, provided mobility without the need for migration (p. 60). Intrarural migration was more common due to early post-independence economic social welfare programs that increased the attractiveness of remaining in rural areas (Hettige, 1992). Between 1971 and 1981, there was a 25% population increase in Hambantota bringing the total population to 424,000 (Brochmann, 1993). This indicates a large increase in population in a rural town.

Intra-rural migration was more prevalent than rural to urban migration. From 1971-1981, a general pattern in intra-rural internal migration occurred from densely populated districts, mostly in the “wet zone” (Matara, Galle, Kegalle, Kalutara, Kandy, Mannar, and Jaffna) to the more sparsely populated districts in the “dry zone” (Anuradhapura, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Polonnaruwa, Ampari, and Monaragala). Of

course, Colombo was the main recipient of migrants from rural areas, however, it also contributed “significant numbers” of out-migrants to rural districts. It is believed that the aforementioned migration patterns involved individual adult males as solo migrants, and in many cases, eventually bringing their families to reunite with them. It is notable that in Kandy and Galle, females outnumber males in the group of in-migrants. Female preponderant migration in the southwestern “wet zone” reveals the occurrence of an “apparently autonomous female migration” (Kearney & Miller, 1994 p. 10). What this indicates is that not only individual male or even eventual family migration, but individual women’s migration intra-rurally has been a part of the Sri-Lankan experience.

EXTERNAL MIGRATION

External migration in significant numbers occurred during the post colonial period of Sri-Lankan history. Migration to Great Britain, Australia, and Canada was mainly made by middle to upper class professional Sri-Lankans in the colonial and early post colonial periods and seems to have been motivated by opportunities for economic advancement and sometimes an assessment that the political problems that Sri-Lanka was struggling with would worsen. In post independence Sri-Lanka, particularly after Sinhala was made the official language in 1956, some Tamils permanently migrated to Malaysia and some Burghers permanently migrated to Australia (Hettige, 1992). According to Australian Census figures, in 1901, there were 609 Sri-Lankan born citizens (Australian Immigration Statistics, n.d.). Those

who could afford to leave before conditions worsened left for commonwealth countries. Migration to the United States began in the late 60s and was also primarily middle to upper class Sri-Lankans (Sinhalese, Tamil, and Burgher in ethnicity) who could afford to leave for the promise of a better life.

As early as 1882, Sri-Lankans were migrating to Australia. These early migrants were brought in to work on sugar plantations and fisheries (Gamage, 1998). According to Gamage (1998) and Australian Immigration Statistics, there were three significant waves of Sri-Lankan immigration to Australia: post 1948 (after Sri-Lankan independence from the British), early 1970s, and early 1980s. The first post independence migrants were primarily Burghers “who felt that the change in government would adversely affect them and their children” (Gamage, 1999, p. 4). Because of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, immigrants of “non-European appearance” were not easily able to enter Australia. In 1962, 1964, and 1968-71 large numbers of Burghers migrated to Australia (Australian Immigration Statistics, n.d.). As a result of relaxation of Australian immigration regulations in 1973, the second wave of immigrants was comprised of mainly professionals. The third wave of Sri-Lankan migrants to Australia was primarily refugees who were fleeing the effects of political problems after the 1983 race riots. By 1986, there were over 22,000 Sri-Lankan born immigrants in Australia (Gamage, 1999; Australian Immigration Statistics, n.d.). By 1995, the Australian government introduced a “Special Assistance Category (SAC) Class 215 for Sri-Lankans. This led to an immigration increase for a total of 46,981 Sri-Lankan born migrants in Australia (Australian Immigration

Statistics, n.d.).

A shift in government economic policy in the 70s created an environment in which external migration was more common (INSTRAW, 2000; Eelens et. al., 1992) and began to include working class and lower class citizens in larger numbers (Eelens et. al., 1992). This period, from the 70s on, marked the beginning of Sri-Lankan female migration in large numbers, mainly to Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, and Qatar (Brochmann, 1993; Eelens et. al. 1992). Sri-Lankan women also migrated to Singapore, Hong Kong, Greece, Italy, and Cyprus (Asis & Battistella, 1999). The main motivation for this particular group of migrants was economic benefit and is generally characterized as “temporary labour migration.” It is different in that most of these migrations were not permanent in intention (Hettige, 1992) and were supported by government policies in both Sri-Lanka and the receiving countries as temporary migration. Also, most of the migrants were individual women unaccompanied by any other family member. Muslim Sri-Lankans, who are largely Sri-Lankan Moors and Malays, were favored in migration flows to the Middle East (Brochmann, 1993).

A number of actions by the Sri-Lankan government supported migration and migrants to the Middle East. The first of these was the Foreign Labour Agency of the Labour Department’s “Memorandum of Understanding,” which placed recruitment agents under obligation to deliver successful contracts with Middle Eastern organizations, and information about commissions s/he receives from foreign agencies

to the Sri-Lankan Commissioner of Labour. Agents were required to obtain licenses at a rate of 10 Rs. per year⁵ and register with the Department of Labour. Contracts were also regulated by the Department of Labour (Eelens and Speckmann, 1992). In response to the growing number of migrants and in an attempt to protect migrants, in 1980, the “Foreign Employment Agency Act No. 32 was put in place, to supervise recruitment agents. The license fee was increased to Rs. 100 and agents were obligated to have bank guarantees for possible claims if migration problems were to arise (Eelens & Speckmann, 1992). In 1982, the Sri-Lankan government decided to find at least 100,000 jobs in the Middle East and sent the Minister of Labour to meet possible employers. They also opened a Sri-Lankan embassy in Saudi Arabia (Raj-Hashim, 1994). In 1985, the Sri-Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) was established as an “independent, semi-government body” separate from the Department of Labour, responsible for all foreign employment issues (Raj-Hashim, 1994). The goals of the SLBFE were: developing employment opportunities abroad; assisting and supporting the growth of foreign employment agencies; issuing licenses and negotiating the terms and conditions of employment with these agencies abroad; setting standards on contracts ensuring fair wages and other conditions of work; providing training and orientation programs for prospective migrants; monitoring the flow of overseas workers through the establishment of a migrant data bank; protecting and promoting the welfare of migrants; providing information, assistance, guidance, and counseling to families of migrants; investing on behalf of Sri Lankans working abroad; and implementing programs for rehabilitation and reintegration of migrant

returnees (Dias and Weerakoon-Goonewardene, 1992). SLBFE Act No. 21 was also put in place, increasing agent licensure fees, requiring agents to sign agreements to comply with the SLBFE terms and to have a bank guarantee/year for two years. The SLBFE regulated agent commissions and levied a tax on those commissions. Agents were also required to submit monthly reports on migrants. Under Act No. 32 of 1980, the SLBFE set minimum salaries for unskilled and domestic migrant workers and set up a welfare fund for training and orientation programs for migrant workers, assistance for migrant workers' families in Sri-Lanka, and reintegration of migrant workers upon return to Sri-Lanka (Eelens & Speckmann, 1992; Raj-Hashim, 1994).

Sri-Lankan women's migration to the Middle East was also supported by the Sri-Lankan government's policy to support labor migration in a climate where other countries such as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh were restricting migration flows to the Middle East (Brochmann, 1993; Eelens et. al. 1992; Dias and Weerakoon-Goonewardene, 1992). By 1992, the Sri-Lankan government had included incentives to migrant workers by exempting the first year of earnings from taxes (Raj-Hashim, 1994). From 1986 to 1991, the number of Sri-Lankan women employed in domestic work increased from 4,898 to 41,912 in the Middle East (Tyner, 2000). A conservative figure given by the Sri-Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, estimated a total of 800,000 domestic workers in the Middle East by July of 1999 (Asis & Battistella, 1999b).

By October of 1997, there were 19,602 domestic workers in Lebanon. According to Abu-Habib (1998), most of these were Sri-Lankan women. By July of

1999, over 88,000 Sri-Lankan women were to receive medical insurance and the availability of more medical facilities as the first beneficiaries of medical insurance for overseas employees set up by Kuwaiti government (Asis & Battistella, 1999a).

In addition to government policies in the sending and receiving countries that influence migration, international organizations are sometimes involved. Such was the case regarding Sri-Lankan women's migration to the Middle East when the Gulf War started. The International Labour Organization supported the Sri-Lankan government in a joint project to provide relief, training, and employment to Sri-Lankan workers repatriated during the Gulf war (Weinert, 1994). By doing so, this international organization improved the process of return migration from the Middle East.

The use of personal networks was employed by Sri-Lankan women seeking work in the Middle East. According to Hossain (1994), before Sri-Lankan government policies supported migration to the Middle East, early migrants obtained employment through the use of informal networks. In 1994, 25% of those surveyed by the SLBFE migrated through personal contacts (INSTRAW, 2000). According to Mook (1992), women migrating from eastern Hambantota⁶ utilized "personal and kinship" networks along with institutional resources to secure employment in the Middle East. This is partly due to problems with dishonest agents. The successful migrant tries to secure employment for her kin or friends by discussing employment possibilities with her own Middle Eastern employer, who then makes connections through his/her own relatives or neighbors. Mook (1992) notes that prospective

employers may expect better performance from a worker secured through these personal networks than from a “complete stranger.” Women seek these types of arrangements also because they typically do not involve the fees associated with securing employment through agents or sub-agents. If some type of payment is involved, it usually doesn’t have to be paid in advance. Also, agents and sub-agents typically collect prospective employees’ passports, while the utilization of personal networks involves only provision of copies of the prospective employee’s passport (Eelens & Speckmann, 1992; Mook, 1992). These arrangements are sometimes referred to as “ticket-sending” and in a case studied by Mook (1992) was characterized as chain migration because many members of a family secured employment through one initial migrant worker (p.129).

In the 80s there was a marked increase in the number of politically motivated migrants, many of whom sought refuge in India, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, and Australia. Most of these migrants were Tamil and initially middle to upper class, but later in the decade, increasingly members of all classes. Some sought asylum or refugee status, but many sought ordinary citizenship and permanent migration outside of the asylum/refugee process. In certain countries such as Switzerland, government agreements involved the repatriation of some Tamil migrants to Sri-Lanka. Government policies involving India, Switzerland, and other countries attempted to address and stem the flow of Tamil migrants out of Sri-Lanka. Politically motivated migration continued throughout the 90s, as did temporary labor migration.

After the July 1983 riots, 100,000 refugees from northern Sri-Lanka migrated

to Tamilnadu in South India. Most of the refugees were citizens who were driven out by the government's attempt to crack down on militant Tamils. The government attacked Tamil civilians in order to get at the militant Tamils (Jayawardhana, 1987). These government attacks resulted in internal migration as well, causing Tamils who lived in the southern part of the country to move to more densely populated Tamil areas for safety in numbers (Jayawardhana, 1987). In 1987, after an incident in which a car bomb exploded in Colombo, claiming 113 lives, the government reacted by attacking Jaffna. The result was a major dislocation of people from northern Sri-Lanka (Jayawardhana, 1987).

Sri-Lankan migration and Sri-Lankan women's migration to Switzerland is documented in McDowell's book on Tamil asylum cases. He notes that arranged marriages between Sri-Lankans were common in Switzerland after 1984, indicating Sri-Lankan women's migration to and presence in Switzerland (McDowell, 1996). He believes that favorable conditions in Switzerland for marriage increased the number of women who sought asylum there initially, however after 1988, it became more difficult as the cost of migration to Switzerland increased, and Swiss government policies were less tolerant of migration due to marriage (McDowell, 1996). According to his survey, 90 percent of Swiss migrants came from a northern island in Sri-Lanka, and 40 percent of those migrants were women (McDowell, 1996). Apparently, half of all Sri-Lankan migrant women were married, and the majority of the unmarried women gave the reason of marriage in their Swiss government entry interviews (McDowell, 1996). There was a relatively small number of women who

did not seek entry to Switzerland on the basis of marriage, and “there is no evidence to suggest that like men, these women travelled in small groups, mostly they arrived in pairs or alone” (McDowell, 1996, p.218). His research documents yet another set of circumstances in which Sri-Lankan women were migrating as individuals. Whether to reunite with a fiancé, to participate in an arranged marriage, or to simply seek safe refuge outside of Sri-Lanka, these women are part of the growing number of Sri-Lankan women who successfully engaged in external migration far from their place of origin. As of January 1995, 25,000 Sri-Lankan Tamils were living in Switzerland (FECL⁷, 1995). However, those asylum seekers who migrated after the end of June, 1990, (12,000) will be repatriated and all pending asylum cases have little chance of being accepted (FECL⁸, 1995).

Since 1983, more than 100,000 Tamil refugees also went to Canada (Kaihla, 1996). By 1994, according to Morrison et. al.(1999), over 80,000 Tamils were already living in Toronto, constituting one of the “fastest growing immigrant groups in the country,” the majority of which migrated after 1980 (p.144). Most Tamils in Canada migrated from the North, East, or Colombo (Morrison et. al., 1999). Some migrants awaited entry to Canada via Buffalo, New York (Kaihla,1996). As in Switzerland, controversy exists as to whether these migrants are really refugees or economic migrants. Unlike Switzerland, and also the U.S., Canada’s acceptance of refugee applications was close to 90%, while the U.S.’s was as low as 15% in the late 80s and early 90s (Kaihla, 1996). This may be due to Canada’s reputation for more liberal immigration/refugee policies.

In the United States, both politically and economically motivated migration increased from the 80s on. The largest Sri-Lankan population within the United States is in Los Angeles County. Due to the amendments made to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, more South Asian professionals were able to migrate to the United States (Kang, 1998).

As in the other countries mentioned, government policies in the receiving country play an important role in external migration from Sri-Lanka. Migration to the U.S. was not particularly favorable historically, but was easier after 1965 and in the 1980s and 1990s. After 1870, Asians born in the U.S. were automatically American citizens (Kitano & Daniels, 1995). In 1917, the U.S. Congress banned South Asian immigration (Kitano & Daniels, 1995). This law restricted immigration to a maximum of 2,000 Asians annually, whose citizenship or ancestry⁹ originated from 19 countries, which included the region from India to Japan, all Pacific islands north of Australia, and New Zealand (Hing, 1993). South Asians were denied citizenship due to a 1923 Supreme Court decision that they were no longer “free white persons” (Williams, 2000, p. 393). Under the Immigration Act of 1924, Europeans were given national quotas, but Europeans of Asian ancestry were still ineligible for citizenship (Williams, 2000). Several Asian countries were given annual quotas of 100, however “no person of discernible Asian ancestry could enter on these quotas” as they were intended for Whites born in Asia (Kitano & Daniels, 1995, p. 14). Theoretically, those of African descent born in Asia were also eligible but “there were few, if any, of them” (Kitano & Daniels, 1995, p. 14). In 1952, Asian wives of

American citizens and spouses and minor children of members of the armed forces were allowed to enter the U.S (Kitano & Daniels, 1995). The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 removed all racial and ethnic barriers to immigration and naturalization and allowed family reunification. Female citizens could bring their husbands to the U.S. on a non-quota basis (Kitano & Daniels, 1995). Although Asians were allowed entry to the U.S., until the 1940s and 50s, they were denied citizenship by naturalization (Kitano & Daniels, 1995). Between 1820 and 1960, only 13,607 Asians migrated from regions in the Indian subcontinent and “an unrecorded number of those departed (INS, 1982, 2-4)” (Williams, 2000, p. 393). The 1965 Immigration Act allowed quotas based by region and country. The eastern hemisphere was allowed a quota of 170,000 persons entry into the U.S., with a limit of 20,000 from each country. It also gave “high priority” to reunification of families, and the entry of skilled and unskilled workers deemed in short supply in the U.S. (Kitano & Daniels, 1995, p. 18). In 1940 the Asian American population was 250,000, and approximately 250,000 Asians also lived in Hawaii. In 1960, the Asian American population was 900,000, including Hawaiian Asian-Americans (Kitano & Daniels, 1995). Between 1925 and 1965, the general trend was very low immigration to the U.S. (Williams, 2000), but by 1980, the Asian American population was 3.5 million (Kitano & Daniels, 1995). In 1990, the Asian American population was almost 7.3 million (Kitano & Daniels, 1995).

From its small beginnings of approximately 12 families in the late 60s, the Sri-Lankan population in California rose to an estimated 5,000 by 1996 (Biederman, 1996). In the late 70s and throughout the 1980s, some Sri-Lankan refugees were

granted admission to the United States (Barkan, 1992). Sri-Lankans were one of ten immigrant nationalities¹⁰ that comprise 40.8% of new arrivals in Los Angeles county by the 1990 census (Kang, 1998). From 1972 to 1985, 6,159 Sri-Lankans migrated to the United States, making up .23% of all Asian and Pacific Islander migration to this country (Barkan, 1992¹¹), and the number of Sri-Lankans had grown by 275.3 % (10,970 people) by 1990 (Williams, 2000). In 1993, 1,109 Sri-Lankans entered the U.S. (Williams, 2000). In 1997, 282 asylum cases were pending at the start of the year and 191 were pending at the end of the year (U.S. D.O.J. INS, 1999). In 1990, the U.S. had a diversity visa lottery to favor countries that typically had low migration, including Sri-Lanka (Sherman, 1998). Though Sri-Lankans migrated in relatively small numbers to the United States (as compared to Canada, Switzerland, or Australia), it appears that they were concentrated in Los Angeles County. Due to the positive effects from the increase in the number of Asians in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States, the environment that Sri-Lankans who successfully migrated to the U.S. at that time was that much more favorable.

The general trend throughout the literature is that Sri-Lankans have a long history of experience with both internal and external migration. There is evidence that Sri-Lankan women, in particular, have a history of migration as individuals and in the context of chain migration or family moves. Further, there is evidence that Sri-Lankan women have utilized personal networks to migrate or to enhance the success of their migration to the Middle East, to Hong Kong, and to Singapore. It is within this context that we will look at the cases of three Sri-Lankan women's migrations to Los

Angeles County, California, in the next chapter.

¹ According to Jayawardhana (1987) “Sinhala” was first used to refer to the royal family, then extended to the royal retinue and eventually included ordinary people. She describes it as a social process of the “ethnic consolidation of the Sinhala people” and indicates its occurrence between the 5th and 6th century B.C.E.

² This internal migration pattern is interesting regionally because of similar mass migration away from dry zones in Cambodia, Northern Thailand and Myanmar during approximately the same period (Library of Congress, 1988c).

³ These poor working conditions and wages continued after independence, which upset a number of people whose hopes were that exploitative conditions would end when the British left.

⁴ This increase was measured between 1946 and 1981 population statistics. See Jayawardhana, 1987.

⁵ “Rs.” is the abbreviation for Rupees, the currency in Sri-Lanka.

⁶ Eelens and Schampers (1992) also document a case study of a Sri-Lankan Moor from northern Colombo who secured employment in Kuwait through a friend who was working there, avoiding recruitment costs.

⁷ “FECL offers news, analyses and comments on European developments in the fields of liberties and human rights, public order and security, policing, justice, data protection, immigration and asylum. Particular attention is paid to EU Justice and Home Affairs cooperation and Schengen policies. FECL strives to provide a forum for mutual information and critical debate among experts, activists, scholars and practitioners throughout Europe.” (explanation on main page of website)

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⁹ If a person was at least half Asian by birth, though s/he might have been born in a country outside of the region, s/he would have been considered under the restrictive quota system for the Asian region (Hing, 1993).

¹⁰The category “All other Asians” includes people from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, Okinawa, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka and others as defined by the 1990 census.

¹¹This data was taken from a table in his book. The source data for the table is the INS public use tapes and Dept. of Justice, *1981 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1981), table 13 and *1988 Statistical Yearbook*, table 3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Most of the data included in this thesis are qualitative in nature, gathered through life history interviews. These interviews were conducted in February of 2000, in Los Angeles County, California, with a non-random sample of three Sri-Lankan women. The interview schedule was focused upon migration but was approached in a manner that took into account that migration takes place in the context of an individual's life history.

LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Life history interviews are a tradition and a rich source of information utilized in women studies and migration studies. First we will discuss the importance of the method in the discipline of women studies. The feminist oral history method that I used is described in Reinharz (1992) by Dr. Sherna Berger-Gluck as biographical oral history (p.126). Biographical oral history “draws women out of obscurity, repairs the historical record, and provides an opportunity for the woman reader and writer to identify with the subject (Reinharz 1992, p. 126). Further, oral history allows women who are “less likely to be engaged in creating written records” to “speak for themselves,” resulting in “historical accounts of phenomena less likely to have produced archival material” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 131). Now that we understand the importance of life history interviews to women studies, we will look at its importance in migration studies.

The reflections and experiences of the interview participants' life histories

provide valuable perspectives about some of the actualities of migration—personal narratives that reflect perspectives that have typically been unstudied. “Through the analysis of migrant women’s narratives, integration into a foreign society becomes viewable as *work* rather than a matter of desire or intent. It is moreover work which is hardly acknowledged by the dominant society, nor rarely appears in studies of migration” (Lutz, 1998, p. 105). By utilizing life histories, one can get a sense of the actions that women engage in throughout the processes of migration.

According to Lutz (1998), looking at life histories allows us to view the individual migrant and her possible adaptations and/or strategic responses to migration.

By focusing on immigrant women’s *accounts*, a more dynamic understanding of the mental and emotional changes migrants undergo in the aftermath of their physical move, can be obtained. Instead of a ‘before and after’ perception which treats migration as the missing link, the individual is seen as one who has lived through the changes, adapted to them or not, and created strategies of resistance. The life-story includes gains and losses, hopes and betrayals, successes and failures, trials and errors, interpreted and told from the perspective of today. (p. 96)

For the abovementioned reasons, I utilized life-history interviews as the data collection method for this study. Now that we understand the importance of life history interviews in both women studies and migration studies, it is equally important to discuss the particularities and limitations of this method.

It is important to note the degree of subjectivity involved in this method for a better understanding of its usefulness and limitations. Olwig (1998) calls attention to both the usefulness of life history interviews, which she used in a migration study of

Nevisians, and the subjectivity inherent in the use of this method.

Interviews with migrants, and the writing down of their migrations stories, have been used as important data in the study of this community [Nevisians]. I would argue that these interviews can be used most fruitfully, if we do not regard them merely as 'a quarry' which can be mined for raw data on the migration process (Tonking 1990:33), but also as 'arguments created by people in particular conditions' (ibid.:29). By elucidating the interrelationship between the 'arguments' presented by migrants and the 'conditions' under which they are offered we may be able to understand a great deal about the way in which people construct their lives, and thereby themselves as persons with a specific social and cultural identity, and the particular circumstances of life, including those related to migration, which led them to relate these stories. The life stories, in other words, will constitute both 'a window' on the 'historical and ethnographic events' which make up what we might call the migration process, and 'a view of the subjective experience of the narrator' (Peacock and Holland 1993:369). (p. 64)

In other words, the life history interview does not focus on capturing factual information about the participant's life; at best, it captures the participant's perspective on her life, and migration processes that occurred in her life, at the moment in time when the interview took place.

By documenting the participant's perspective on migration and adjustment processes, life history interviews are useful for the qualitative analysis desired in this study. We are interested in understanding how the subjective experience of these three women relates to the theoretical ideas about the function of social/personal networks and the transformation of social and human capital. Now that we understand the nature of life history interviews as vehicles for obtaining subjective information about migration and adjustment processes, and we have the framework of this method,

I will describe the process of interviewing.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The interview schedule was focused upon migration but was approached in a manner that took into account that migration takes place in the context of an individual's life history. Most questions on the interview schedule were open-ended; however, some informational questions were straightforward. Interviewees were selected using snowball sampling as follows. Initially, I spoke to my family members and friends about the nature and scope of the interviews. I requested interviews with three English speaking¹ Sri-Lankan women (over the age of 18), from family members and Sri-Lankan friends and/or acquaintances who have acted as gatekeepers and identified women who might be willing to participate in the interviews. On the basis of participants' willingness to spend up to five hours in interview time, their responsiveness to my initial phone call, their availability to interview from February 15-23, 2000, and their residence in Southern California, the interviewees were chosen.

I contacted the potential interviewees, explained the purpose of the project and, upon their approval, set up meetings with them. All meetings were conducted at their homes, a location which was mutually agreed upon, and offered the most comfort to the interviewees, and for the most part did not interfere with or distract from the content of the interviews.

At the initial meeting, I explained the informed consent form. With their agreement, I asked them to sign the form and set up a meeting time for the life history

interview. In some cases I explained the consent form over the phone, mailed a copy to them, met with participants for the first time, and after they signed the consent form, conducted their tape recorded interviews in the same session. In other cases, I then met with them for the second time, brought them a copy of the consent form, and after they signed the consent form, conducted the tape recorded interview.

I prefaced each interview with an introduction. In the introduction, I thanked the participants for agreeing to be interviewed. I reiterated that the principal aim of my work was to understand the experiences of Sri-Lankan women who have migrated to Southern California. I briefly outlined the nature of the questions on the interview schedule. I then assured respondents that whatever responses that they provided for me would be kept in strict confidence and that their name and identity would be confidential information. I reminded them that they would not be identified in any discussion or publication related to this work. I assured them that there were no right or wrong answers and encouraged them to elaborate as much as they wished on the issues focused upon in the interview. I assured them that they could feel comfortable in not answering any question. Finally, I offered an opportunity for them to ask any questions about me or the work before us.

PARTICIPANTS

Sunetra: 69 years old, married, three children, Buddhist, migrated to U.S. Dec. 1964. Performing and visual artist in Sri-Lanka and U.S.

Catherine: 60 years old, married, three children, Catholic, migrated to U.S.

Oct. 1984. Actress in Sri-Lanka, bookkeeper and childcare provider in U.S.

Ramani: 63 years old, widowed, five children, Catholic, migrated to U.S. July 1994. Political leader in Sri-Lanka. Program Assistant in U.S.

ISSUES RELATING TO MALE PRESENCE DURING INTERVIEWS

Because the interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants, there were sometimes additions or corrections made by husbands and sons of the respondents. I tried to have interview sessions with only the respondents because of the possible negative repercussions of the gender dynamics, for example the silencing of respondents or the editing of content by respondents in front of their husbands or sons. A few times, I sensed that some of the men were a bit jealous that they were not being interviewed as well. For a few people, this was quickly resolved by the explanation that I was a Women Studies major. But two of the husbands spent a considerable amount of time expressing that their viewpoints and responses would be valuable to my work. I took care to acknowledge this, whilst explaining that I did have a fixed amount of resources which I chose to prioritize according to the main focus of my major.

At the same time, it was important for me to acknowledge the significance of respondents' relationships with their husbands and children because I felt that the comfort level of the respondents could be in jeopardy if they felt that the interviews were too exclusive. Respondents might be reluctant to engage in interview situations where they felt that the answers that they were providing had to be hidden from their

husbands or children. Respondents also might be suspicious of my intentions and interview questions if I pressed too hard for completely exclusive interviews, (ones in which I would be entirely alone with the respondents for the duration of the project). Also, because of the duration of the interviews, (sometimes up to 5 hours), and the fact that respondents were volunteering their time, I felt it was important to try to accommodate the interviewing situation to their lifestyle. It may have proved impractical to restrict their husbands from being present and to try to schedule interview sessions when respondents were completely alone given the nature of their lifestyles and responsibilities.

On the other hand, it may have been of benefit that respondents' husbands and/or sons witnessed the interviews while they were in session. In some cases, I felt that respondents received more validation from male family members because they perceived that respondents' life history was "important enough" to be recorded and included in a thesis project. Perhaps to some small extent, husbands and sons became more interested in respondents' lives as a result of having witnessed a few minutes of the interview sessions.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT OF INTERVIEWS

I asked respondents about the work that they performed in Sri-Lanka as well as the work that they perform in the United States. I asked questions about the roles that they played as women in Sri-Lanka, and any changes they perceived in living in the U.S. I asked them to tell me about their migration experiences. I asked them to

provide biographical data such as age, physical ability/disability, religion or spiritual practice, educational level, marital status, whether they have children, etc. I also asked them about their situation before and at the time of migration. I asked about family, family dynamics, mobility, decision making, culture and tradition. I asked them about their identity(ies). In general, I asked them about their lives to find patterns that relate to issues of agency and utilization of social networks relevant to immigration flows into the U.S.

CONCLUDING INTERVIEWS AND FOLLOW-UP

After the interview, I thanked them for their participation and gave them information on how to contact me. I gave them a time frame of two weeks after which they could see a transcript of their interview if they wished. I also let them know that as soon as I was close to having a draft ready, I would notify them so that they could see a draft of the thesis if they wished. I reminded them of their right to withdraw their interview from the project for any reason at any point in the process, and I reminded them of their right to suggest modifications based upon clarity, accuracy, interpretation or additional information, once they have reviewed the transcript or draft of the thesis if they wished.

After two weeks, as I had not yet completed transcripts of the interviews, I sent out a thank you card and a progress report to each of the interviewees. I promised to notify them as soon as I had completed a draft of the thesis in the event that they wished to provide clarifications or additional information. Once I had completed the

three transcripts which I focused on in my analysis, I sent a copy along with a card reiterating their opportunity to make corrections, clarifications, or additions, as well as expressing my gratitude for their participation in the project. None of the respondents made corrections or suggestions.

PROCESS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The theoretical basis for the data analysis in this paper is the utilization of social networks/personal networks² in the migration and post-migration adjustment processes as outlined by Boyd (1989). Boyd (1989) assessed that social networks are “highly relevant” in studying international migration because they are “conduits for information and social and financial assistance,” they “shape migration outcomes,” and they “both transmit and shape the effect of social and economic structures on individuals, families and households.” (p. 642) Boyd (1989) continues by indicating that social networks “transmit information about places of destination (including places of return migration) and sources of settlement assistance.” (p. 642) According to Boyd (1989) “studying networks, particularly those linked to family and households, permits understanding migration as a social product—not as the sole result of individual decisions made by individual actors, not as the sole result of economic or political parameters, but rather as an outcome of all these factors in interaction” (p.642).

Boyd makes the importance of understanding the role of personal networks clear. “Settlement and integration processes are influenced by kin and friendship ties,

village based networks and customs (such as festivals), membership in ethnic associations and shared cultural and ethnic origins. These personal networks provide money to finance moves. They also provide food, shelter, job information and contacts, information on healthcare and social services, recreation and emotional support (See, Cornelius, 1982: 392; DaVanzo, 1981:110; Massey et al., 1987: Chapters 6 and 9; Tienda, 1980; Yucel, 1987)” (Boyd, 1989, p. 652).

Boyd (1989) explains and provides support for the idea that the early migrants’ development of personal networks can assist later migrants from the same sending country. “Recent migrants also enter an area with many more relatives, friends and contacts than did earlier migrants (Massey et al., 1987). They also may find social and economic situations substantially modified by their predecessors (J.M. Buechler, 1987: 258)” (p.652). Other scholars, including Kopijn (1998), also emphasize the transmission and transformation of social capital in the migration process.

Utilizing Boyd’s analysis of the use of personal networks in the migration and post-migration adjustment processes, and Kopijn’s emphasis on the transformation of social capital, I looked for data from the life history interviews that related to migration and post-migration adjustment processes. I noticed patterns relating to the use of personal networks in migration and post-migration adjustment processes and the transformation of social capital in the post-migration adjustment processes.

The analysis of the interview data is similar to that of Morrison et. al. (1999) in their qualitative migration study. This analysis consists of a broad coding of the data into the themes of migration and post-migration adjustment processes, supported by

participant quotes whenever possible because of the importance of the voice of participants in feminist oral history. According to Reinharz (1992), Hampsten “urges us to use our authority to help bring other voices into print and to use our voices to comment on what we have learned” (p. 138-9). Denzin & Lincoln (1998) also point out that qualitative researchers “can create spaces for those who are studied (the other) to speak” (p.30). Denzin & Lincoln cite Acker et. al. (1991, pp.142-150) on the importance of balanced relations between the researcher and the researched by “being sure the subjects’ voices are heard” among other strategies (p.316).³ By providing many direct passages from the participants’ interviews in the data analysis (set apart from my analysis by the use of italicized font), I emphasize the importance of the participants’ voices. Particular attention was given to patterns in responses that relate to agency and use of personal networks.

¹ One of the limitations of the study is that only English-speaking participants were chosen.

² Boyd uses the terms personal networks and social networks interchangeably. See Boyd, 1989, p. 639.

³ For a more detailed review of “voice and the account” see Denzin and Lincoln (1998) page 318 and “whose voice is it?” in Reinharz (1992) pp. 138-9.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I explore the migration and adjustment processes of three Sri-Lankan women who migrated to Los Angeles County, California. By examining their life history interviews, we are able to see these Sri-Lankan women as active participants negotiating the migration and adjustment processes. Throughout the analysis, via excerpts from the transcripts of their life history interviews, using pseudonyms in place of their real names, I have tried to retain the voices of these women, as much as possible, so that one can get a more direct sense of how they experienced migration to the United States, and how they describe and perceive the use of their personal networks in the migration and adjustment processes. The exertion of individual agency and the use of social networks was critical to the migration and adjustment processes of these three women.

MIGRATION

First, we will look at migration as a process rather than an event. In the migration process, I will discuss four stages: the decision process, the preparation phase, the actual journey, and the arrival and first contacts in the U.S. Each of these stages reveals insights into personal networks and various resources that these three women utilized throughout the migration process.

The Decision To Migrate

There are two types of decision making that occurred for these three women.

In one case, (Sunetra) the woman gave her consent to her husband's initial decision to migrate. In the other two cases, (Catherine and Ramani) the women were more centrally involved in the decision making process. In the cases of Catherine and Ramani, the decision to migrate was taken within the context of threats to their lives and the lives of their family members.

Sunetra gave her consent to migrate following her husband's initial decision to move to the United States. Sunetra mentioned that when she migrated, her relatives were not important in her decision to migrate. *"Actually nobody wants us to come..."* None of her friends were involved in her decision to migrate either. *"They don't know how to come here? Why they're going to miss us, no?"* Her husband had lived in, and gone to school in Australia and thought that migration abroad would be good for the children's education. The issue arose after the birth of their first child.

... When we had the, first child, we thought of giving them a good education, a higher education, so that's why we thought of coming and my unc... husband went to Australia, no, and he studied there. So he, he said listen, one day we must take the children abroad to study. So that's why, you know, and we had a, this school problem in Sri-Lanka too.

She went on to explain that there was a rule whereby the children had to go to schools within a 2-mile radius of their homes. She and her husband felt that there weren't good schools within the area they lived. Finally, her husband was able to place the three children in schools they both thought were good, but three months later, the family migrated to the U.S.

When asked about coming to the United States, Sunetra explained that the

decision was made by her husband who had studied a lot about America. Though “most of the people there [in Sri-Lanka] were sending their children to England,” her husband thought it better to come to the U.S. She explained that they had a “nice life” there in Sri-Lanka, but her children’s education was enough motivation to move to the U.S. and for her husband to give up his “good job” as captain and pilot at Airlanka. Sunetra did not feel that she had control over the decision to come to California, though she felt that she was consulted and consented to migrate. “...*Actually I didn’t uh, [have control over the decision] my husband is the one who you know [decided], I just when he said something I said okay.*”

Sunetra was concerned about leaving her elderly mother in Sri-Lanka.

Because of her age, it was not a viable option for Sunetra’s mother to migrate to the U.S.

Yeah but, then at that time she was fairly old. So and first we came we didn’t have any insurance or nothing no? So it was difficult for us and we were new to this country too. Not like back home, no? There we know everyone and here nobody knows.

Perhaps because Sunetra was one of the “pioneering” migrants to the receiving country, having migrated in December of 1964, information about caring for the elderly in the new country was not readily available. In any case, Sunetra’s mother was sad to see her only daughter leave but supported the plan to give the children a better education. Sunetra felt so badly about leaving her mother behind that she returned to Sri-Lanka once every year to see her.

Twenty years later, in 1984, Catherine made her decision to migrate. She

engaged in a very different decision making process. Her reason for leaving was political in nature. She initiated the decision to leave and chose her destination point.

In July of 1983, one of the worst riots in the history of the civil conflict created circumstances under which many Sri-Lankans decided to leave the country. Catherine describes her experience of the violence, which was her motivation to migrate.

At the time, of need, when people were being killed, houses were burning, my ministers I helped to come into power, they passed by my house, waving to me when I was screaming at them to stay and help us at that time because my roads was on fire and there were a lot of people coming and harassing us. They're trying to rape my niece there and my children I was hiding under the beds, doing everything. They [members of the UNP political party] were just laughing and they were helping the thugs of the country to do all these things to the Tamil people. If I could have run away that night I would have run away. Well which I couldn't do. So I had to find shelter in my sister's home which was haven at that time because she, her hus..her brother-in-law was the commander of the army... And uh, if not for him, I don't know what would have happened to me. Maybe they would have raped me and killed me that night, killed my children, I don't know. Because I know a lot of things happened. People were killed. In front of our eyes. Cars were burned. It was... I lived in a neighborhood where all, most were Tamils. My next door neighbor was Tamil. The one on this side of my house was Tamil. Opposite was Tamil. So. All these houses were under fire. And I am in the center. And you think, and it's only one roof continuing to the end you know. And it would have been, and it was, and it would have been a miracle for my house not to catch fire. So it did catch fire. So. I underwent hell that night. I was cursing. I was cursing the government. I was cursing the country. You know. It was hell.

Catherine not only decided to migrate but also which country she and her children would migrate to. It was clear to her that her life and the lives of her children were in peril. She describes her decision making process as follows:

No it was no one's decision but mine [to migrate] and my,

because I had no parents, parents were dead by that time, I had four kids, the three boys uh, the civil unrest 1983. I couldn't even live in my own home, I had to go and live with my sister because, they burnt homes beside my home, because I was married to a Tamil. They really came to destroy my house. Thanks to the Buddhist priest who lived in the neighborhood they saved my home, 'til the roof was burnt. I, I, my husband was not there at that time, he was in Germany ... so I talked to him and I told him that you know it was tough. He said let us see if it will settle in a week or two, but it wouldn't settle. And then um, and after about two weeks I did come home after the problems were settled, yes. A little bit because the children had to go to school. So we were there and in my own home town, the same street I lived on, my neighbors, who knew I was their own nationality, just because I was married a Tamil, and my children, three boys carried the Tamil name, they threatened to kill my three boys saying that these are the future Tigers and terrorists of the country...So that really made me shiver. And they could do it. They would definitely do it... So I did call my husband and say, it's coming to a time that I just can't take it anymore. Staying here is a little dangerous, I don't mind but my, your boys they are threatened. They are threatened and they could fulfill it and I don't want that to happen. So then only he asked me if I would like to go to America or London or Germany. That's where his businesses were. So I said if I have to leave this country I would like to go where my sisters and brothers are. At least I'm closer to my family because I'm leaving all my family here. So I said I would like to go to America and that's the last place I ever dreamt of in my life. I dreamt of London, not America. Because at that time it was a superpower country, so I never dreamt of here.

Catherine initiated the decision to leave Sri-Lanka and to start her life within a new environment where her siblings could provide comfort and support.

Though Catherine had been through a traumatic experience during the riots of 1983 and the aftermath that followed, she was clearheaded about selecting a destination country. Although she would need to essentially migrate alone, Catherine weighed and assessed the political realities of both countries and decided that she and her children would be better off in the United States.

And here, with, I don't say that there is no violence in, in the, in America because there is. But it's not, it, it is a huge country, it is not everywhere. It's not in every nook and corner. But in Sri-Lanka, in every nook and corner it is. So here there is so much peace. And I can, I can scold Clinton if I want to. They wouldn't arrest me. If I say one word against one minister there, I would be behind bars. So that is the very thing that drove us here. We wanted freedom of worship. We want freedom of our children, of our lives. And that is all that we came here for. Nothing else. It was hell.... It was terrible. It was terrible. It was an... it was just a nightmare. Fires in front of you, children being burnt. There were children thrown from the upstairs into the fire. Babies, tiny babies thrown. These were things that happened there.

For these reasons Catherine determined that the threat to her and her children's safety was great and that by migrating to the U.S. she would find the safety she sought.

Catherine's experience was different from Sunetra's also because she already had relatives in California. It was a main factor in her decision to migrate to California.

I chose to come to America because my brother and sister were here. And that's why I chose here above other countries. I thought away from home, the next thing should be closer to my family. That's why I selected America.

She did not participate in a migration pattern whereby she would have joined her husband in Germany. Instead, she decided to migrate to the country where her siblings had established themselves.

Catherine's migration was typical of a chain migration that involved reuniting families in the receiving country. Her brother wrote to her for a year, asking her to join him in the U.S. Though Catherine wanted to join her brother then, at that time, Catherine's mother did not want her to leave.

Two years after I married. My brother migrated to the States. Uh, that's since 1970. It uh, he came in '70 and that, that was it and then he came back to Sri-Lanka in '78 when my father died. And uh, then he, he sponsored my sister. Unmarried sister. Monica. And she got a, she got a visa in '84. He applied in '78, no '79 and she got a visa in '84. So, in the meantime when she was getting ready to come, that's the time we were also trying to come. So she came before us. She got a visa before us. And we followed after about 2 or 3 months.

Typical of first family members who migrate to the receiving country, Catherine's brother sent remittances and gifts from the U.S., which built up her dreams of what life in the U.S. would be like.

Yeah, he would send us money, he would send money. He was the one who was maintaining my mother and father really. By that time my father was not working. He had just left work and they were existing with the money that they would send, my brother would send. And he would always send us big packages of stuff, you know, clothes, toys, foodstuffs and all. And we would say 'Oh my gosh. This place must be heaven!' Because there was everything, you know. And uh, when they came, when he came, he showed us slides you know, of his house, of, of everything. Disneyland, and you know he was like enticing all of us. And me, and this was the last thing I had dreamt was coming to America. I dreamt of going to London, someday, but never to America. Because this was beyond our reach. This was a supernatural thing for us you know. Coming to America. But finally we did come.

Ten years later, in 1994, Ramani came to the United States. Like Sunetra, Ramani's relatives did not want her to migrate. Her sister and mother did not want her to leave. Ramani had never lived outside of Sri-Lanka, nor had she ever been to the United States. Like Sunetra, Ramani planned to return to her country of origin. Like Catherine, under duress, Ramani made her own decision to leave Sri-Lanka for political reasons.

There was nothing for them to do because uh, I made my own decision and then I told them I'm going. And they wanted to know when I'll be, when I am coming back then I said, I, I really never thought that I will live here so long. Really in my, my mind I was thinking I'll wai... I'll stay here for five, six, months and then go back. But things happened in a different way....

Ramani planned everything herself and then told her cousins and other relatives about her plan to migrate.

Ramani received death threats because of her involvement in the political system. She understood the seriousness of those threats because her brother had been murdered in 1988 due to his political involvement. She feared that other family members were in danger because of her work. Ramani said the following about her motivation to migrate:

... I told you my brother was involved in politics, he was the political party leader, and uh, he was gunned down you know, in 1988... So after his death I was more involved in that [politics] you know. So, my mother didn't like it... My mother didn't like it because he was, she was telling me 'I lost one, one is more than enough to lose that way so I don't want you to, I want you to stop all this and stay back at home.' Which I couldn't do. Because once you are in it, you, there is no way to get out you know. You are trapped inside you know like you know even if you want to step back the, the others will not let you step back. That is what happens. So and also it is so interesting. You know. It's so interesting, though. So I was really going forward going um, deep, deep, deep into it and then my mother was very worried and afterwards I felt that I, I am, I am putting everybody's in... at risk because you know my children, my young son and you know, things happening in this uh, with the politics you know you can never know what is going to happen. So that way I thought okay the best thing is for me to go, go away at least for sometime because I had few problems you know like you know somebody threatens you, and some people give you nuisance calls and ask you to leave the provincial council and write a letter and resign things like that you know. Anyway I, I, I was hanging on to it. I, I completed five years in provincial council with all those uh, nuisance you know, threatens, and um

threatenings and all that but afterwards I wanted to go further be..I thought before I go any further I will leave these people here and go. So because I don't want them to get involved. Uh, and also my mother really asked me 'Okay do whatever you like after I die, but now just stay at home don't get involved in these things.' So I was thinking of her you know, because it's uh, sometimes you, she knows that it is good in a way to help people to go for them and going, go into the problems and take care of it. She knows that it is okay, it's good but still you know the present world is that. Sometimes you will never know what is going to happen. So that way I made up my mind to come. But I never wanted to stay thi... this long you know.

Ramani felt forced to leave Sri-Lanka for her own personal safety and the safety of her son and nephew.

Ramani was traveling with her son and nephew, but she made the decision of where to migrate. Though she was operating under the stress of a life-threatening situation, she was able to strategize about the realities of obtaining visas as part of her decision making process.

Really it was not him [my son] who, you know we, we, we, it was a sort of a surprising thing to everybody because we, we wan..what we thought was to get out of the country. That to United States or England or wherever it is you know. Just to come out from that place to leave the problem aside you know. So then I thought I will try this umm, United States and see because I you know, first of all you have to have a visa to come. So I thought okay I will try. Because you know my nephew of course he said okay let's go to, uh, some, once we were planning to go to Singapore because it's out from the country you know. So they, they, anyway I thought okay let, let me try and see. So fortunately I got the visas, so then we thought okay now that we have everything let's go to United States.

Ramani was then able to get a visa, which was a critical component in the next phase of the migration process.

The experiences that Sunetra, Catherine, and Ramani had during the migration

decision making phase relate to Boyd's analysis in several ways. In Sunetra's experience, Boyd's assessment that social networks are "conduits for information..." is unsupported. Though Sunetra's husband was a member of her personal network, he had no particular information about the United States that was key to her acceptance of his migration decision (Boyd, 1989, p. 642). However, in Sunetra's case, by looking at social networks, we are able to understand "migration as a social product," an outcome of the interaction between her husband's decision, input from her mother, and factors of an economic and political nature relating to her children's educational needs and her husband's loss of a good job (Boyd, 1989, p. 642). In other words, her migration was not merely the push of economic or political factors in her country of origin, or the pull of economic or political factors in the receiving country. Looking at migration as a social product, we are better able to understand her decision making process. Catherine's case supports Boyd's ideas well. Her family members in the United States were sources of information of "social and financial assistance," about her "[place] of destination" and were themselves "sources of settlement assistance" (Boyd, 1989, p. 642). Her brother provided financial assistance in the form of remittances and gifts. He provided information about the receiving country, and he applied for the visas for her and her children. Because of all of this assistance and information, she chose to migrate to the country where her siblings were, rather than where her husband was. Ramani's experience did not support Boyd's statements. She did not utilize social networks in her decision making, although she did factor in her mother's advice about extricating herself from political involvement. Her strategic

thinking about visas brings us to our next phase of the migration process.

Preparing For The Journey

Preparation for the journey involved various strategies and self-initiated acts. Support networks were crucial to successful preparation for each of these three women. Dissolution of households, preparing relatives for the separation, and dealing with administrative aspects of the journey such as visas are some of the activities involved in the preparation process.

Sunetra was responsible for the dissolution of her household in Sri-Lanka.

Mmm, why, we had a house, so we had to give all the stuff to other people, our house furniture and everything. Even my servant, they, I have to, no, to give I gave them all my you know like, things that I had in the house, uh, plates and everything, even my clothes I gave it to them. And people, the people who are living, you know the poor people who lived around our area, I used to, I gave everything to them too, some of my stuff. So, uh, that's the thing I did.

Let's remember that Sunetra was preparing for her migration in 1964. Being a member of one of the pioneering families in the Sri-Lankan community in Los Angeles county meant that Sunetra was not able to plug into existing networks for information and help. She discussed this with her husband before migrating and reflects on the early days.

... Now we talk you know about you know, uh, no, we, I told him that when we go there we are going to miss our people, our parents and children's grandparents, and so, and no one is here no? When we came here only I think about 12 families. Sri-Lankan families, they were here. So uh, then like we are lost you know. After coming from such a big family you know. We miss everyone.

Sri-Lankan culture is very social, involving a lot of interaction with immediate family and extended kin as well as friendships. Within that social upbringing, entering a community of only 12 Sri-Lankan families seemed very small and isolating.

Sunetra was busy up to the day of her departure and only then realized her feelings of loss that the migration would bring.

Oh, 'til the last day you know, I was s(inaudible) to come, but at the last day, at the airport, only I feel so you know, sorry, like you know I was crying you know, all my people were there standing and they were carrying my children and going here and there. They were crying too. That's the, that's the things that happened to me that day, but, before I came here I was, happily I was doing the things.

Like many migrants, Sunetra's migration involved the loss of friends and family in the country of origin but a happy feeling about the prospects of life in the new country.

Though she departed twenty years later, Catherine, like Sunetra had challenges in utilizing her personal networks in the process of preparing for her departure. Both women were happy about their decision to migrate and had help from their husbands. Catherine's husband's network was helpful in securing visas. *"We, my husband, got the own visa no sponsorship nothing he worked on the visas because he had a office here in New York. So through that we managed to get our visas to come over here."* She was relieved and joyful over the success of her plan to migrate to the U.S.

Yeah, the whole country knew that I was coming here. Everyone knew, it was in the papers that I was migrating here, it was no secret. Some people come very secretively here. To me, it was the biggest blessing I got. My passports were sealed, stamped with the seal. And I was 2 ½ years visas given openly, my visa's 2 ½ years without any problem were given to me, so... I, it was not going to be a secret and I was, we were so overjoyed.

Catherine also had an unsuccessful attempt when utilizing her personal network to try to find out information about California.

Well, uh, I met a person who had returned from America. He was in the consulate. Of the Sri-Lankan embassy. And I didn't know that New York was so far away, Washington was so far away from California. Now in Sri-Lanka we talk of Jaffna, Colombo, everything is so close. But I didn't know I, I went, I was asked to come and see him because some of our friends knew him very well. So I was saying, 'Oh, we are getting, we have got our visas to California, and how's it like?' and all that. So he said, 'I'm in Washington, I haven't been to California, I came for my father's funeral, uh, the place I live is very cold, the place where you are going is they say, they say it's like Sri-Lanka. There is tropical climate, uh But I don't know much about it. I know it's a beautiful place to go to.' So he was not able to do it, and unlike now, in those days we couldn't find literature much about other countries, and we didn't know where to go and get it. We couldn't go to the American Embassy because it was cordoned off, and you had to make appointments to go in. If you just say you want to go and get some flyers or something, they wouldn't let you go in. So it was hard. So it was basically, we had no knowledge.

Catherine also had to do a lot without the help of resources available through personal networks when she was preparing for her migration journey because she was the last in the chain of migration in her family, and her husband had already migrated to Europe.

Well, I was it, because my husband was not there. He was in Germany. Basically I had to do everything. I had to get the passports ready, I had to get tickets, I had to do everything by myself. Because I had no parents at that time. My brother was over here. My sister was here. So I only had friends. Uh, and of course I had a lot of relatives, but they, you know they live far away so it's not easy to meet all of them and do things. So practically I had to sell things that I didn't want like my car, and big appliances and things. Got as much as money that I could out of that. Most of things I gave to the free you know to my sister and my cousins and all that, but uh, the things that would bring me more money like the car and stuff, those things I did sell. And I

needed to bring the money here, coming here for the first time, at least bring, I mean Sri-Lankan money is nothing in comparison but it would be something. So I did all that by myself. Everything was done by me.

Catherine was cognizant of future financial needs when preparing herself in Sri-Lanka for her migration.

Selling my car, and you know for having little money in my hand my husband sent most of the money for the tickets and stuff. But I needed money for myself. So I sold all the things that I had the most valuable things. And the rest of the thing I dispersed to everyone and made a, had some money. At least I found about \$2000 in my hand, which was great to, at least for a few, one or two months for us, you know of expenses.

Like other migrants, she left Sri-Lanka reluctantly because of what and who she would miss, but joyfully for what the future held as she describes the day she left Sri-Lanka.

There were hundreds of people. My whole street I lived in, my neighborhood, everyone was outside. I left early morning. I got up at 5:30 in the morning and the whole hou., the neighborhood was up. And uh, then there were about 3 busses waiting for us to join us. All the people in the neighborhood, relatives, uh, all my cousins, everybody. So it was just like a sending off, like, I was like a minister there going off, you know. It was a big thing and it was sad. It was in a way like a funeral. They were all sobbing and crying uh, because they're missing me. And uh, I was sad because I was leaving. Although inside me I was happy I was coming here. Uh, in one way I was feeling selfish. I'm coming for my freedom. When the others also needed freedom and I can't bring them you know, there's nothing. So, it was sad.

Ramani made most of the financial arrangements for the trip. *"I was, money wise I was all right. So I could manage with my self. So nobody had to help me on*

that journey [to the United States], you know.” She continued:

I had some savings, from since a long time you know, as I told you I had some savings and I withdraw all that, all that money I withdraw from the bank, because uh, you know these two, these uh, two boys were sometimes, they were, because I was facing more and more problems, ‘specially my nephew, he wa... my, my son was not very much involved in politics with me, but my nephew was, you know so he was mmm, getting little scared you know when, sh, he goes with me in the night, and come back very late in the night and it was not so secure you know. So them uh, mm, at that time he was telling me many times, ‘Why don’t you make some arrangements for all of us to go for some, to some place and stay for some time and come back?’ Then I was telling him, ‘You know I, we cannot, you know it is,’ no, we, I told him, ‘I cannot borrow money from anybody to go abroad. That’s not the way you know.’ Uh, because people who lives there has lot of problems uh, and still they, some people with problems, they don’t have money, ah? So when ‘specially you have been in politics and you tell somebody that mmm, you don’t have money but still you like to have a loan to go abroad it’s a joke you know. So then I told him, ‘I, I cannot ask from anybody for any money to go abroad. If I am sick, here, then I can tell them to pay my bill. Hospital bill. But not to go abroad,’ you know because running away from problems like yeah, so then I told him ‘Wait, wait, give me some more time,’ because I had some uh, uh, savings in the bank, and it has to mature you know. If you withdraw it before the period then you get less. Yeah. So I was telling him, ‘Let me have some more time until that money is confirmed.’ So everything was okay and then I withdraw all that money. And at that time, uh my son was there in Sri-Lanka, he, the one who is in Dubai, he was in Sri-Lanka at that period. Then he was the only one who knew where we were going. Uh, because he, he is the one who helped me to fill out the visa application and things like that, so when we got the visa, he was rea... really he was happy because he knew that I am walking away from problems. So he was happy then he, he asked me whether I need some money, I said, ‘No. I have e... I think I have enough but if I need, then I’ll let you know.’ And also a friend, good friend of mine who was doing politics with me, he had a good friend who has a travel agency, yeah, so he arranged to get our tickets, uh, at a very low price. So that way I had enough money to, yes.

Ramani utilized her personal network by getting help from her son who was living in Dubai to complete the visa application process and by using her network to contact a

travel agent for inexpensive air tickets.

Packing for such a journey was a new and unusual experience. It involved anticipation of a new identity in the United States. Though Ramani had some contacts in the receiving country, she had not yet secured living arrangements or work for herself or her nephew or son.

Such a small [travel bag], such a small, because we didn't bring anything at all, because uh, it was like a, I cannot explain, it as, I don't know what we were going to do and where we are going to end. We knew that we are coming to America but, nobody knows what's going to happen so we didn't bring anything just I brought few, I didn't even bring one sari with me you know I brought two, three, frocks with me and uh, that's it. And from Sri because I kn... I knew that you know from Sri-Lanka I got into the plane, I was wearing uh, shoes and everything. So inside the plane I just removed my shoes and I wore a mm... rubber, pair of rubber slippers, I told, then these boys were asking me, 'Are you going to wear that?' I said 'Yes now I am nobody.' Who knows who you are? So until I arrive in uh, New York I was wearing that uh, rubber slippers and also until I came down to California I was wearing. Because it was eas... so easy you know. Um, so that way, we, nobody knew what is going to happen, all three of us. But uh, but my uh, nephew and my son, I was little bit worried, because I had money all right, but I was worried you know, I don't know where we are going to live and this and that. Being a grown up person I had to wo... uh,... Yeah, I was little worried. Then my uh, nephew uh, he, he was, he told me, 'Don't worry, I, uh, you, I mean we will support, we will look after you we will go to wash cars even to look after you don't worry, you will be well looked after.'

When Ramani left Sri-Lanka, she lost her status as a political leader, her status as a member of the privileged ethnic majority, her status as a member of a relatively affluent socio-economic class, and the comfort of being personally known within her community and region. Her shedding of her shoes was a symbolic act that paralleled her shedding of her former identity. But at the same time, in this shedding, she gained

freedom from personal danger, she gained freedom from the type of age discrimination and certain types of gender discrimination she would have faced in Sri Lanka.¹ Like Sunetra and Catherine, Ramani carried these concerns of the changes in status she would face in the receiving country with her in the process of migration.

In this phase of the migration process, Sunetra, Catherine, and Ramani were marginally successful in utilizing their personal networks. Sunetra had help from her husband in this phase and distributed her belongings to members of her personal network. The large gathering at the airport provided social support for Sunetra's journey. Catherine's husband's network was utilized in securing visas and in financial assistance for the journey. She also disposed of her belongings to members of her network. Catherine also received a show of support from a large gathering of neighborhood friends and family members at the airport. Ramani chose not to utilize her personal network for financial help because of her political involvement. She did get help from her son to complete the visa application process and got help from a friend of a friend to secure inexpensive airplane tickets. Ramani was also able to secure information about some contacts in the receiving country. Ramani's ability to extend her network to include a travel agent was a good example of Boyd's idea that social networks are "conduits for... financial assistance," since she saved money on three international air fares. (Boyd, 1989, p. 642) The subject of international travel brings us to our next phase—the migration journey.

The Migration Journey

The discussion of the migration journey involves: the mental preparation and state of mind of each woman at the approach of and during her journey, the unexpected changes and events that took place during the journey, and the types of help each woman procures from her social and personal networks. The distance between Colombo, Sri-Lanka and Los Angeles, California is 9,368 miles, as the crow flies. (Byers, 1997) In this section we will better understand how each woman experienced that very long journey.

Sunetra had traveled a lot before she migrated to the United States. She had been to England, Holland, and France and several other countries. Since Sunetra's husband left 3 months before her, she and the children traveled alone to the U.S. Within the journey, she utilized personal connections with friends and her uncle in New York to create a rather enjoyable process. She enjoyed the experience partly because she knew some of the people from Airlanka already, partly because she stopped over in England and stayed with some of her friends, and partly because the KLM staff was friendly to her and her children. There were three legs to the journey: Colombo to London, London to New York, and New York to Los Angeles. She stayed overnight in New York with an uncle. *"I think my husband had a friend in New York. Yeah. Uh, we had some relatives in New York. He was doing some work in the Embassy. Yeah. U..A... United States, what do you call... U. N.? Yeah. He was working there."* Sunetra's journey was pleasant and joyful overall.

Though Ramani had traveled to other countries (Singapore, Malaysia, India, and Dubai) the trip itself was unpleasant. She traveled from Colombo to Singapore,

stayed a few nights there and then went on to Frankfurt and finally to New York, her planned destination site.

Oh, it was horrible because it was so far, so far and so many hours you have to be and you know, just you, you, you, if you look outside there is nothing just you are somewhere in this world you know. And um, it makes you so horrible because the journey is too much. For a person to come from.

Catherine's journey was from Sri-Lanka to Singapore to Japan, and then finally to the United States. Like Sunetra, Catherine had traveled before. She had lived in India for 3 years or so, and been to Singapore for a visit. Her husband had traveled to Germany and New York for business, and therefore had some experience of what life might be like in the United States. Because her husband was in Singapore at the time, she and her children and a young woman she employed to help her, traveled the first leg of the journey on their own. In Singapore her personal contacts made the journey more enjoyable.

Yeah. Because I had never done a long trip. I had always done a short trip to India just 1 ½ hours, Singapore is about 3 hours, 4 hours. So, when I took this trip, up to Singapore we were fine. We traveled we were happy. And that we were going to meet our, my husband and the children's father was there then, so we had all that happiness. Sadness we left behind and we were on our route there and we were, and I was used to seeing Singapore and we were, we had lot of friends there. So I knew we were going to meet them. So it was fine up to Singapore. Then we stayed the night there. It was overnight there. So we met our friends. We had dinner, everything, and we slept. We had to get up early morning again for the next flight. Then our flight stops at Japan for the refueling and take, picking up passengers. Up to Japan it was fine. After Japan, coming to California, that trip, for me it was exhausting, and it made me sick. I was sick. My daughter felt sick. And uh, so, so was my servant I brought. The three of us felt very sick we were like throwing up, and the food, we couldn't

eat properly, and, uh, 'til we landed we were sick. After we landed we were okay and then of course the custom officer was worried that we had thrown up and thinking that we were really sick bringing some virus in. They told us that we should see a doctor immediately. They wanted to know if we can, but anyway there was a custom doctor who came and evaluated and said 'No, this is only a jet lag for them. And uh, they are exhausted.' So with that we were fine. After we landed we were okay, but it was tiring. The first long trip ever.

Catherine felt that coming to the United States was beyond an adventure. It was a matter of survival and basic freedom, which she anticipated joyfully.

Yeah. More than it [an adventure] actually, coming to America has been, not a dream. It was never a dream of mine to come to here because you couldn't even dream of thinking of coming to the States. But coming it was very adventurous and uh, actually I couldn't, I don't, I don't know if there's any words for me to express it. The feeling I have. The thankfulness I've been able to come to a place like this. Uh, freedom. You can say do anything. You can do what you want, you can go to any church. You can walk on the street anytime you want. Which you can't do in your own country. In the country of your birth you can't do it. And you come to a stranger place and you can do it all you know. That's the difference. That's all we wanted. We wanted a place, safe. To live.

She described her thoughts about her migration.

We were coming here to join family too. That was one point of it. Mainly we came for safety. We were so much in trouble. Scared. You would sleep. You never know if there would be a bomb. Or if you were raped. If you were killed. Or kidnapped. You never knew. What was in store for you. The following day. So this, the main thing was coming here was for freedom. The main thing is freedom.

Catherine's personal history as an actress was important to her ability to conceptualize the migration to the United States.

Well, I didn't come to live here permanently because I didn't

know, I didn't expect. I didn't know what to expect to come here you know, how it would be. How my children would adjust. Uh, they all spoke English. They were more educated in the national language, Sinhalese, and I didn't know how to cope, how I would accept it. Because I had never been to live. I had been India, Singapore only. Never been to London either. And coming here was going to be a big change. Because I thought would I be able to cope up to keep up with the standard of America you know. I, the only thing I would know of America was movie stars. That's all we saw. The movies or the movie stars. I used to collect all the movie stars' pictures when I was a little girl. Buy the bubble gum to collect those pictures. So I had Esther Williams I had one whole album of her. She was my, and Eva Gardner. So I used to only think of beauties, beautiful people and movies. So if you didn't if you were not able to cope up with that then you couldn't be there. That's what I was feeling you know.

Her fears about adjustment to life in the United States were coupled with joyful anticipation, which accompanied her on her migration journey.

...It's like coming to heaven, going to heaven. That is the feeling we all had. But could we meet the standards? That was our problem. Inside us. Will we be able to cope up with this? Could we meet the standards? How would our children adjust? Not knowing that there were also human beings here, you know. The feeling we had was it was heaven. That's it.

Ramani's journey was less enjoyable than Sunetra's and more similar to Catherine's in that she also didn't feel too well after the plane ride. But her journey provided important opportunities to benefit from her personal networks to secure employment since, upon arrival, she realized that she was mistaken about the ease of transitioning into the economy. When Ramani arrived in New York, she asked someone about an inexpensive place to stay. She trusted a virtual stranger and took a bus to her motel to find that she had been truly helped by this person's directions.

Since Ramani migrated in July of 1994, it was the presence of an already established Sri-Lankan community in Los Angeles that brought her, her son and nephew “7 busses” away from New York, to connect with these resources.

So after coming here, in fact you know, we came to New York. Now I remember. We came, we, we stepped into the United States in New York. So after coming to New York we were, we went, we took a room in a hotel and we were there, and then, um, uh, we met few Sri-Lankans, uh, my nephew had some friends over there, and they told them it seems that it is better you go to Los Angeles. And uh, because there are more jobs there and more opportunities there. And more Sri-Lankans also. So then my son he, he said okay ‘Let’s go to Los Angeles.’ I told him ‘My God. I’ll never step into a plane as long as I remember this trip.’ (laughs, both laugh) Because it’s enough you know like 24 hours in the plane I said ‘I’ll never step in this another until I forget this trip, I can’t go anymore.’ Then he said ‘Okay let’s go by bus.’ So we, we arranged the ticke... he went and brought the tickets so then he said ‘Okay let’s go by bus.’ So it was a nice trip too. It was a very nice trip from New York. We took the Greyhound bus and we, we arrived here on the 4th day morning, right. 4th day morning we were here and we were, they were changing busses and, anyway it was a very nice experience. 7 busses, right?

Ramani used her personal network in Sri-Lanka to gather information about resources in Los Angeles, even though she had not planned to go there.

I forgot to tell you, before, leaving Sri-Lanka, I talked, just I talked to a friend of mine who, who is coming here, very often you know, he used to come to New York or Los Angeles, he comes at least once a year. So because he’s a president of one nonprofit organization in Sri-Lanka, so he comes here, in and out you know. Then I ask him. Just to give some kind of a, some address or whatever it is. For us to go and meet some people and uh, so he gave me a certain address.

This contact information, led her to resources that eventually rooted her in the vicinity where the contact lived.

Then uh, he took us to that place, which, which is also in Hollywood. That is why we got stuck here you know [now], in Hollywood it's in Vine. So he took us, he showed the house, 'This is the house where, this is the address.' So I went in and rang the bell, a person, a gentleman walked out. Then I introduced myself I said I am so-and-so, I am a friend of so-and-so. And uh, so first of all I told him because in Sri-Lanka I have heard you know the Sri-Lankan culture is different. If somebody, if a person comes to my house even if I don't know him still, I, I am aware [help them out] yeah, but here it is different I heard. So first of all I told him, I brought enough money with me. Ah. (light laugh) because I just want, I wanted him to know that we won't be a burden to him you know.

Because the contact was a not a Sri-Lankan person, her level of confidence about the help she would receive was a bit ambivalent, but once here in the U.S., she relied upon it to link her to resources in Los Angeles. Ramani trusted that she would somehow manage to secure a place to live and employment for herself and the two relatives who were migrating with her.

Ramani anticipated a smooth transition into the U.S. economy. In her case, she had not utilized her personal networks to secure contacts for work for herself, nephew, and son because she thought it unnecessary.

So I thought uhm, it will be so beautiful and you will never find mmm poor people, ah, because i... Uni... America is the best country in the world and you won't see any poor people and so somebody else... somebody told us over there 'Oh my god you just have to step in you find any amount of jobs,' and things like that so I had a very different picture in my mind about United States.

The migration experiences that Sunetra, Catherine, and Ramani had were exemplary of Boyd's analysis in that each of them benefited from the use of personal networks. Sunetra's journey was eased by her contacts at Airlanka, her

friends in England, and her husband's friend in New York. Ramani utilized her personal network to get a contact in Los Angeles without even knowing if she would travel there. Boyd's reference to Massey's work that early migrants' development of personal networks can benefit later migrants was demonstrated by Ramani's experience where her nephew was told by Sri-Lankans in New York to go to Los Angeles because of the Sri-Lankan community there. Ramani did not use her personal network to obtain information about employment in the receiving country because she did not anticipate any difficulty in finding work. In fact, her personal network failed her because she was told that it would be easy for her to find employment. In that situation, Boyd's statement about personal networks assisting migrants did not hold true. Catherine benefited from her personal contacts in that her husband provided information about the receiving country (he had been to New York), her journey was eased by friends in Singapore, and the comfort of joining her family in California. Catherine's social networks "transmit[ted] information about [the] place of destination," however her media exposure and other sources of information gave her a more favorable impression of what she would actually encounter (Boyd, 1989, p. 642).

Arrival

Arrival into the United States was different for each of these three women particularly because of who their first contacts were and what resources either in terms of personal contacts or financial resources each person had. In all three cases, the women had some financial resources to draw from and at least one contact. None of

the three women had ever visited the United States and each was starting a new life in a place they had only imagined before.

Sunetra shared her first moments of arrival in the United States.

Uh, the beautiful sort of, in the night we came, and it was so beautiful you know with the lights and all, even when we landed in New York, it was in the night. It's so beautiful. And it was, the weather was cold. Yeah, New York it was uh, snowing. The car we came to my uncle's house, with all the snow, snow-covered car.

Her first impressions of people in the United States were positive.

...People were very friendly and you know, first when we went to uh, I took the children to downtown in the bus. First when we came here we didn't have a car, now even when my husband came first, he didn't have a car, then when we came, we got money here, so he bought, went and bought a car. Then when we went downtown, one day in the bus, just to take the children in the bus. They haven't been in the bus, 'ti... uh, this is the first trip by bus for them. So when we were standing in the bus stand, there is a old lady came. And she gave a little cross, yeah to my youngest son, and she blessed us you know. So I felt so happy you know, that lady said, 'Oh bless you my son.' and all, he was, she was touching my son's head. And she blessed us so I that thought they were very nice people.

Her previous travel appears to have made her transition here easier. "Um, suddenly when you come from there to here, uh, you like bef... before I came here I traveled, so I got used to this place. That's right, nothing new to me, yeah." She compared her experience in England to California.

They were, actually they were very friendly and they were talking to us you know, as if we knew from a, them from a long time, you know. They were very nice, you know, friendly, it's not, they were not strangers like you know. Like when you go to some other countries, my god they don't look even. Yeah. Like in England and all, they are not so friendly like here.

Sunetra didn't plan to stay here, which may have made a difference in her migration experience. Anticipating her residence in this country as a move for her children's education and eventual return to Sri-Lanka, she may have found comfort in the idea of returning to her family sometime in the future.

Having family in the U.S. made for a smooth transition into a new home and provided support during Catherine's adjustment period.

... He [my husband] asked our brother if he could find us a place to stay and do everything for us. Which he did. So it made it easy for us when we arrived here we had a home to stay, and fully furnished and all that. So he [my brother] helped us that way.

Upon arrival to the United States, Catherine's expectations were not all realized. She, like many migrants to the U.S. translated information about the enormous wealth of the country into corresponding images. Catherine's exposure to media images also framed her expectations.

It's not all that I dreamt of. I, I thought the roads may be like golden, and every building must be perfect and all that. But uh, that's what I dreamt and thought within, inside me. Well, everything wasn't it. But when I saw, I, I didn't lose anything in, within me, the expectations that I had was it was all going to be like golden and nothing could be tarnished you know. I knew that was only my thought. Ah, that's what I thought about it. But when I saw the reality of it, I knew this was the normal people living here and the only time I was like astonished to see was different colors of hair. And different colors of eyes. That is the most you know, intriguing thing for me. When I was white hair, red hair, you know, grey, different, different colors of hair, browns, and people having green eyes, blue eyes. That's the, that is that was the thing that you know like uh, it was something like surprise to, in me, and, and the beautiful churches they had here, people were very warm. Even the customs in the airport, they were very, and I saw a lot of black people. I was thinking how come there are a lot of black people in America, I thought there would only be

white people, you know. But looking at the black people made us more comfortable. Because we're dark, so we thought yes, we could be like them, you know, and (sigh) my expectations here, really I knew I could make a life for myself for my kids. And we had ? something. So I mean that's maximum we could think or expect, this country, in a strange land.

Overall, Catherine was not disappointed, however, and took comfort in the ethnic diversity in Los Angeles as a prediction of her success in integrating into this society.

As a later migrant to Los Angeles county, Catherine, who migrated in October of 1984, benefited from the comfort of already having a Sri-Lankan neighbor.

I did feel at home, because right opposite our house lived a Sri-Lankan family. Added to our stay here, that was a great relief. That was one thing, and then even our neighbors, immediately they would talk to us, 'Welcome neighbor,' they would tell to us, and it was great, and um, I think uh, I don't know how the other states are, but in, in the States, but I think California, I'm very happy and thankful to God for having brought me to California.

Upon arrival, Catherine and her family had to adjust to colder temperatures than they were used to and shared another first impression of her U.S. experience.

When we came in October, it was Fall. It was quite cold in the nights. Later was fine. In the night it was so cold and uh, immediately we had to get all the warm clothes. And my sister brought me some jackets and my brother gave us some warm clothes, some blankets and stuff...

Catherine, like many Sri-Lankans, benefited from the more moderate climate in California than in other states in the U.S.

Catherine remained relatively close to where she first migrated to in California. Catherine's motivation to settle in California and buy a house there was partly due to

the favorable climate and partly due to the established Sri-Lankan community.

Uhhh, because this is where we started life. And that we thought, and this is the best climate. Because everyone said that there is no state that has the same climate except Hawaii. And um, most of the Sri-Lankans live in California. And if you go to, if you just see the population we have about 30 to 40,000 Sri-Lankans living in California. That's a big amount of people from one little country.

Catherine experienced the comfort of entering into a well-established Sri-Lankan community, which made their migration process that much easier.

Ramani describes her arrival in Los Angeles as follows.

You know we, as I told you we, we uh, I mean came we took Greyhound bus and then all the way down we came to Los Angeles Greyhound bus stand. Where we knew nothing about Los Angeles and so I told these two guys, 'Okay let us take all my, all our things down' and then, I had, ... before, leaving Sri-Lanka, I talked, just I talked to a friend of mine who, who is coming here, very often you know, he used to come to New York or Los Angeles, he comes at least once a year... Then I ask him. Just to give some kind of a, some address or whatever it is. For us to go and meet some people and uh, so he gave me a certain address. Then when we arrived in Los Angeles, so I had that address with me, then I took it and I, we showed to the taxi driver you know. Because we don't know where we are going. So then we showed to the taxi driver, and I told him can you please take us to this address. So I didn't, I, I never tried to pronounce it even because the way I pronounce will be different and then he will not understand you know, so I, I gave the paper to him, then he said 'Yes, yes. I know this place. I will take you.' So we had to change some money so we stop in between and got some ca... what do you call it, traveler's checks changed, and then uh, he took us to that place, which, which is also in Hollywood. That is why we got stuck here you know, in Hollywood it's in Vine. So he took us, he showed the house, 'This is the house where, this is the address.' So I went in and rang the bell, a person, a gentleman walked out. Then I introduced myself I said I am so-and-so, I am a friend of so-and-so. And uh, so first of all I told him because in Sri-Lanka I have heard you know the Sri-Lankan culture is different. If somebody, if a person comes to my house even if I don't know him still, I, I am aware [help them out] yeah, but here it is different I heard. So

first of all I told him, I brought enough money with me... because I just want, I wanted him to know that we won't be a burden to him you know. So I said 'I brought enough money with me, I am so-and-so's friend, can you please help us to find a room uh, to stay.' ...So I told him 'Annex,' I used that word you know, 'Can you please find us an annex.' Then he said uh, then I told him 'We are, we just arrived in Los Angeles.'

Ramani's arrival into the U.S. was partially described in the previous section since her journey did not end until she came to Los Angeles. As was mentioned before, she was not met by anyone at the airport in New York. She did utilize her social skills to engage with a person in New York and obtain trustworthy information about directions to an inexpensive motel. Her arrival into Los Angeles was softened by the contact information she obtained before leaving Sri-Lanka. She was able to then expand her network to include resources from the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple, which I will discuss in the next section. Her arrival was less pleasant than Sunetra's or Catherine's because her networks did not provide as many resources as did theirs.

When Sunetra landed in New York, she was greeted by her uncle and stayed with him overnight. Catherine's husband asked her brother to find a place, and she arrived into a fully furnished home. Catherine had a Sri-Lankan neighbor and arrived into a Sri-Lankan community, which she estimates at 30-40,000 people. When Ramani arrived in New York, she had no contacts there but on a tip from a Sri-Lankan in New York, she was directed to Los Angeles. Upon arrival to Los Angeles she was able to utilize the contact information she had obtained through her personal network. While all three women in varying degrees demonstrated Boyd's point about receiving

support in the form of “settlement assistance,” Catherine and Ramani both experienced Boyd’s prediction that later migrants from the same sending country benefit from the early migrants’ development of personal networks. In other words, the large Sri-Lankan community in Los Angeles made Catherine’s and Ramani’s arrival easier.

It is easy to see the ways in which these three women utilized their personal/social networks throughout each stage of the migration process. They utilized not only their own direct contacts, but also contacts obtained through friends, family, and fellow Sri-Lankans. In looking further at the migration process, several points relating to gender and migration patterns emerge. Two of the three women made their own decisions to migrate due to political reasons. All three women migrated with the interest of their family’s well being as a factor in their decision making process. All three women played critical roles in preparing for the actual migration. The experience of the migration journey for each of the interviewees was affected by previous travel experience. All three women had positive perceptions of their futures in the United States. This brings us to the next section—the adjustment process.

THE ADJUSTMENT PROCESS

The adjustment process involves learning to live in a new country while keeping what is familiar alive to avoid alienation. These three women utilized social

capital and human capital² in their adjustment to living in the United States. I will discuss the way they developed personal networks through two vehicles: religious institutions and cooking. One way in which these three women utilized social capital³ is through the resources available at religious institutions. They used these institutions to develop personal networks that allowed them to meet survival or basic needs, social, and communal needs, and they exerted agency to bridge cultures to ensure the survival of their community. The three women also drew upon and developed their own human capital as a way of establishing personal networks. They improved their cooking skills as a vehicle to create personal networks to meet survival or basic needs, to meet social and communal needs, and to bridge cultures to ensure the survival of their community. In some instances, their use of social and human capital to develop personal networks was critical to their very survival in Los Angeles County.

Utilizing The Social Capital Of Religious Institutions

Meeting Basic Survival Needs

The legacy of the establishment by Sunetra and her husband of the first Sri-Lankan temple was important for Ramani and Catherine, who were both raised Catholic, but benefited from the resources the temple provided. In Ramani's case, it initially provided a place to live and then later assistance with an illness. In Catherine's case, it provided social support. We will begin with Ramani's experience.

Ramani benefited very much from the resources that the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple had to offer in meeting her most basic needs when she arrived. When she

arrived in the U.S., she had a contact that she had obtained from a friend in Sri-Lanka. She took a cab to his house directly from the airport. His advice was to go to the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple since he was not Sri-Lankan and believed that people at the temple would help her. Simply because she was Sri-Lankan, she was able to plug into the resources available at the temple.

Ramani went to the temple and spoke to the monk who then asked another person at the temple to help them find a place to live. The monk let them stay at the temple until evening that day. The other person at the temple found a place for them to stay within a few hours. He even took the apartment in his name since Ramani didn't have a social security number to put on the application for the apartment. The next day, this man came and took them to the social security office and they tried to apply for social security numbers. They found that they were not eligible since they were on visitors visas. The man came in the evening and advised them to try another strategy to get a social security number. Her son decided to say that he wanted to get a car to visit places in the U.S. but couldn't do so without a social security number. The representative in the social security office told him to return with evidence that he passed the driving test and he could then obtain a number. Though the card said "not valid for work," he was able to use the number to gain employment in a grocery store.

In August of that year, Ramani became very ill.

I was very sick. I got very sick you know, you know it was something in my uterus. It got this fibroids or something and started bleeding and these boys didn't know what to do, and uh I was really bad. Even the doctors thought that it was the end of everything you know. So I had, I didn't know what to do because we had no insurance.

No insurance and nothing.

She didn't know anybody she thought could help her out at that time. One day, she fainted while both her nephew and her son were at work. She was bleeding so much that she crawled to the phone, called her son and said, *"I'm very sick. I don't know what to do, call somebody."* He started crying because he felt so helpless, but then decided to call the "priest" at the temple. Within 10 minutes, two monks arrived at her apartment. They drove her to the emergency room. Knowing the situation about the lack of insurance, they advised her to say that she had no one in this country to help her and that she was on a visit here. They advised her to say that she was staying with some friends. Using that story, she was able to receive care in the hospital. The monks visited her every day. The person at the temple who had helped her to find an apartment, came almost every day. She was in the hospital for 17 days. *"So the priest helped me on that. He said okay, tell, tell them like this. So. Anyway it was done."*

When Ramani wanted to move to a bigger apartment, she received assistance from a contact at the temple. She was given the name of a Sri-Lankan who was renting an apartment. This person turned out to be Sunetra's husband. Ramani and her sons rented an apartment from Sunetra's husband and lived there for three and a half years. This demonstrates the function of the temple in linking resources within the Sri-Lankan community in Los Angeles.

When I asked her about contacting the Catholic church when she arrived, she said that she and her son went to a Catholic church for Easter and Christmas, but when they moved, she stopped going. She still goes regularly to the Buddhist temple, taking

almsgiving on the first day of every month. She said that the Catholic church was not important in helping her to adjust to living in California and that the temple was.

“Because they [people at the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple] were there when I really need help.”

Meeting Social And Communal Needs

Sunetra, Ramani, and Catherine met initial social and communal needs by utilizing resources at the Buddhist temple. Though both Ramani and Catherine were practicing Catholics, they both found a sense of community that had developed around the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple. The Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple functioned as a nucleus of support providing valuable networks, a sense of belonging, a place of cultural and social refuge in a new environment, and a place to practice Sri-Lankan culture. The temple seems to have provided a symbolic link to Sri-Lankan culture—a place where these two women could nurture their Sri-Lankan identity. For all of these resources, the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple is important to both Ramani and Catherine despite their religious practice as Catholics. Further, the Catholic church was less adept initially in meeting Catherine’s social needs when she was not easily accepted at her first encounter there. Before long, however, Catherine met her social and communal needs by utilizing resources both from the Buddhist temple and the Catholic church.

Sunetra believes that the temple was important in helping her to meet initial social and communal needs in her process of adjusting to living in California.

According to Sunetra, the development of the first Sri-Lankan temple brought the twelve Sri-Lankan families who were here together in creating a place that was not only a site of religious or spiritual practice, but also a place where traditional Kandyan dance, Sinhala language, and other Sri-Lankan cultural practices were carried on in the U.S. For this reason, even non-Buddhists participated in efforts to construct and establish it. The Sri-Lankan-American association that grew out of the fundraising efforts for the first temple still exists today. The social events such as dinner-dances that served as fundraisers also functioned to bring the very small Sri-Lankan community of that time together in collaborative work. Sunetra describes the process as “fun” and explained that it brought those families closer together. The personal networks she developed at that time are still in place. She is proud that she is still friends with and regularly meets with many of those families.

When I asked Ramani about community centers, she mentioned the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temples. *“There are like 5 temples. Buddhist temples. So, if people want to go and get some kind of assistance always they can I think.”* Ramani explained her utilization of the resources at the temple as not in conflict with her spiritual practice.

I am not a Buddhist. I am a born Catholic, but I still believe in every religion. Whatever good is what, what is good is good in...so then um, I got there and I give them some offerings, and I talk to them and I feel so much comfortable you know.

Catherine had a different experience, connecting with the Catholic church to help her adjust to life in California, but still visiting the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple. When I asked her about community organizations, she mentioned the Sri-Lankan

Buddhist temples. *“ Then also the temples, where they have group of, different groups of Sri-Lankans belonging to their, temples, and uh, I of course go to every one of them, so we belong to almost every one of the temples there [in Los Angeles]. ”* She went on to say that she belongs to every one of the different groups they have at the temples.

When asked about social interaction, Catherine discussed her participation in the Marion movement at her church and how the arrival of a Sri-Lankan priest provided her the opportunity to create social networks.

Well, I had some, American friends of mine. I had known through a priest, a Sri-Lankan priest. He worked in a parish and he introduced me to all those people and they really loved me. And I had quite a big crowd there. And for the few years, for about 4 years, it was only Americans I knew. I didn't know many Sri-Lankans, I knew them, and uh, um, they were some, they were a mixture of whites, Mexicans, um they were some from South America, some Hispanic people. Uh, and one or two blacks, in between. It was a great group. They were really nice people. So we used to get together every Friday. Called the Charismatic group. So we have the prayer meetings, we get together and finish our prayers and then finally, we end up at um, at one of the Mexican restaurants and they would ask, they would invite um, I mean would drink Margaritas, and they introduced me to all their type of things, the Mexican foods and Mexican drinks and all that. Then we did have annual celebrations. We had annual celebrations of the Blessed Mother's birthday, September 8th uh, all these congregations, all the grou..different groups uh, that the Reverend Priest belongs to, they would get together because the annual get together like a big party, uh, then we would have our birthday parties of different people, um, so very often I go to all their homes, and we also had the statue of Blessed Mother that we would take to different homes, uh, like I would invite the priest to bring the statue to my home, then I invite all my friends, plus the people who bring the statue. So we have a little party then. So every week, we take the statue to different homes. So the statue lies there for one week, and they can have anything what they want during that week. And um, those were religious social gatherings we have.

When I asked Ramani who she mixed with socially when she first came here, she discussed the temple.

Uh usually, you know most of the time I used to go to the temple. Because I, as the prie... uh the Buddhist monk, they helped me... So I even now, at least uh, once or twice a month I go to the temple and talk to them.

Ramani, like Sunetra still maintains the personal networks she established at the temple upon arrival to the U.S. Ramani also interacts with the Sri-Lankan elderly at the temple, discussing their adjustment to California when they come for a visit.

Ramani described the comfort provided by the cultural resources at the temple and the importance of those in her initial adjustment to California. Ramani and her son and nephew were comforted immediately just to see something written in their own language. *“So when we came to the temple, you know these boys were very happy to see the board written in Sinhala letters you know, because it was not that long that we left Sri-Lanka, but still you know...”* She spoke of the strength of the cultural experience at the temple.

So I was going there you know I feel like you know whenever I go there, and sit and talk with them, they, I sometimes feel that uh, I it's you know, a Sri-Lankan feeling you get you know just like you go to Sri-Lanka or something.

The temple clearly functions as a connection to the homeland, in that being there engenders feelings of being home.

Exerting Individual Initiative

Both Sunetra and Catherine exerted individual initiative to change the religious institutions they were involved with and bridge the cultures of their country of origin and the receiving country. Sunetra did so within the context of creating a Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple. Catherine did so by creating the Marion Movement in her Catholic Church.

Sunetra's parents and grandparents were both Buddhists. She grew up practicing Buddhism. Until she got married, she used to go to temple every Sunday and even had a monk come to her home and practice almsgiving rituals. Her husband is also Buddhist, and she maintained her spiritual practice when she arrived in the U.S. In the U.S., she went to the Japanese Buddhist temple in Los Angeles and was then instrumental in the creation of the first Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple in Los Angeles.

When we came here we didn't have any Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple, so we used to go to Downtown Japanese Buddhist temple....So at that time we didn't have a temple, our own temple. So when somebody died, a Sri-Lankan, somebody died, nobody was there to , no, no monks were there to go and do... that ceremony thing for the funeral, so my husband, he is the one who goes and does that, like a, monk. Yeah, so I go and help him to do that. After that we thought, oh better to have a temple. So he, he, organized some group, with some group... and that's the time he thought of, we collected money, and my children and your brothers, two brothers, everybody played the band, and had dinner dances and everything to collect money for the temple. And we collect money, and some people gave us some money, some Sri-Lankan people, and, bought this temple. The first temple. We are the one who started that first temple.....

Yeah, so we are happy with that[those] two monks, so we are the first people who started that uh, temple, and in this place, we had the first meeting here....This is that place where other two, four monks came and had you know pirith? They had the pirith for the beginning.

So we had four, about twelve families here, we are the people who started the temple. Now, about five, six temples in this area... Even this temple, the first temple, my children helped a lot. My god. Yeah, they used to climb the roof, and do everything... Now people have how many place now after that. If somebody dies even, now they have a place to give the dhane everything, yes.

Sunetra and her husband's efforts to create the first Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple were very successful and are clear examples of agency exertion.

Catherine also took initiative in the first church she went to on arrival to the United States. Catherine's parents and grandparents were very religious. She went to church every morning, and her family prayed the rosary every night before bed. When she came to the United States, Catherine initially felt somewhat alienated in a "95% White" church. Unlike her initial feelings at the airport when she arrived, that California was a welcoming place for people of all ethnicities, she encountered a lack of diversity at her church and the way that her phenotype became a social stigma in the receiving country. She recounted an incident that described the problem as follows. She sat in the last pew of the church and noticed that she and her children were the only black-haired people at mass that day. When people were asked to show a sign of peace, those in front of her didn't turn around. She felt really bad but continued to attend mass until one Sunday when she met a Filipino lady who welcomed her.

Although Catherine had a rough start, she persisted and after seizing the opportunities provided by the arrival of a Sri-Lankan priest to her parish to create social networks, she not only developed those social networks, but exerted agency and

started the “Marion movement” at her church.

... And um, after that we were so welcomed and the priest, wanted to, to talk to us, and I even started, uh, the Marion movement in the church. They didn't even have a they, being a Blessed Mother's church, they didn't even have a statue. So I told the priest I said, 'You know, uh this belonged to Blessed Mother, you must have a statue you must have the month of May celebrations, devotions,' and he said 'We are always keeping a low key right now for Blessed Mother because of the protestants and all that, we just want to uh, gradually bring them along.' So I said, 'Father, when are you going to do if you don't start right now.' And then we started the uh, devotion to Blessed Mother in month of May. And it still carries on now. And they erected a huge statue. So at least I feel good that I did something.

Catherine was able to successfully bridge the culture of her country of origin and the culture of the receiving country by utilizing her social networks, thereby transforming her church and ensuring the survival of her community within that church.

Catherine took the opportunity of the Sri-Lankan priest's arrival to reinforce her traditional style of dress, the sari, in her church environment.

... I was invited most of the time, and they would ask me to wear the sari. They would, and they would fuss around me, which I didn't get that attention among, I mean other than within my own family, we were not that recognizable. But here, they did recognize us so that was a good feeling.

Wearing traditional clothing reinforced the maintenance of her Sri-Lankan identity in the new cultural environment, ensuring the survival of her community in her church environment.

When looking at how these women utilized the resources of religious institutions in setting up personal networks in their adjustment process, a few patterns

emerged. One pattern is the individual initiative exerted by these women to improve or change the religious institutions they entered into in the United States. Another pattern is the development of social networks from the resources of religious institutions, where these particular women's first friends and social interactions originated in the temple/church. Another notable pattern is the retention of Sri-Lankan traditional culture because of their exertion of agency in transforming the religious institutions. Two of these three women interviewed exerted individual initiative within the realm of the church or temple that significantly changed those environments. Catherine, Ramani, and Sunetra all utilized networks of religious institutions that were important, if not critical to survival, as in Ramani's case, to their new life in the United States.

In this section we saw how Ramani used her network to get her to the Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple where she received important information about shelter (a place to stay her first night in Los Angeles and her first and second apartments), social services (social security office), and healthcare (understanding of the insurance and hospital billing systems). When she was very ill, the monks came to take care of her.

All of these examples demonstrate Boyd's statement that personal networks function to "provide... shelter,... information on healthcare... and emotional support" (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). Sunetra's involvement in the development of the first Sri-Lankan Buddhist temple entailed the creation of the Sri-Lankan-American Association and fundraising dinner-dances, which in her opinion brought those Sri-Lankan families closer together in a process that was "fun." Her fears and anxieties about

missing people from her culture were vanquished because of the strengthening of what Boyd refers to as “kin and friendship ties” (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). Her experience demonstrates Boyd’s prediction in that her settlement and integration processes were in fact influenced by “kin and friendship ties” and “membership in ethnic associations” (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). Once the temple was established, it became a site for what Boyd calls “village based networks and customs” since traditional Kandyan dance, instruction in Sinhala (one of the languages of the country of origin), traditional Buddhist funeral ceremonies, almsgiving, and other Sri-Lankan cultural practices took place. Further, it provided a site for culture based “recreation and emotional support” for both Ramani and Catherine, which helped both of them to adjust to life in California (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). Ramani socialized with the monks and the elderly at the temple. Catherine’s utilization of personal networks at her church also provided opportunities for “recreation and emotional support” (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). She met church members through a Sri-Lankan priest and then became a member of the Charismatic group. They went out to dinner together, had annual celebrations, celebrated birthdays, and visited each other’s homes. These examples above indicate the transformation of social capital—the social skills and networking skills that each of the women had—to meeting adjustment needs in the new country, supporting Kopijn’s emphasis on the transformation of social capital in the migration process. These women brought other skills that were transformed to meet adjustment needs as well. In the following section I will discuss their use of human capital (Kopijn, 1998).

Drawing On Human Capital

Cooking was another way in which the three women I interviewed used and developed their own human capital in their adjustment to life in California. All three of these particular women changed their gender role performance in relation to cooking upon arrival to the United States. Due to their socio-economic status in their country of origin, none of the women had been the person primarily responsible for cooking in Sri-Lanka. After experiencing downward mobility in socio-economic status upon arrival in the United States, they all had to adjust to performing a more traditional gender role vis-à-vis cooking. Though cooking was associated with downward mobility in socio-economic status, these women experienced cooking as a positive change in which they were able to meet basic survival needs, to meet social and communal needs, and to bridge cultures.

Meeting Survival Needs

Sunetra didn't cook in Sri-Lanka because of her socioeconomic status. She had hired help to do the cooking and only made her favorite puddings. Once in the United States, however, she was responsible for cooking.

Oh my children helped me to do the house cleaning and all. Yeah, I just managed you know. I was not used to do those things, but when I came here, I thought 'No I have to do.' So I started doing everything at home. Cooking, washing, but my three sons they helped me like three girls, no [isn't that so].

Sunetra's career as a performance artist and painter was temporarily transformed into that of a homemaker. Tasks she usually would have assigned to

hired help became the duties of herself and her three sons, thereby changing the gender role performance of all four of them. In her case, she reverted a to more traditional gender role, and her children, in her perception, crossed into performance outside of their prescribed gender role.

Cooking for Sunetra extended into a business as well, when she and her husband opened a Sri-Lankan restaurant. Within this context, she shared Sri-Lankan culture and even taught Charleton Heston how to eat with his hands.

When we had the, Sri-Lanka restaurant those days, you know who came there? Um, uh, uh, the famous actor, mmm, he played in uh, ah, Charleston, uh, Charleton, (uh, Charleton, Charleton Heston?) Yeah, yeah. Yeah, he came with wife or I don't know, wife or girlfriend... Oh he was such a wonderful person. Friendly. And he had a long patch my husband was talking, talking and he, he teach him to you know, to eat uh, with the fingers. So he tried to eat like that you know, (light laugh) like a little child he was putting in the mouth inside and he was so happy that he met us you know. He was talking, talking and then, then only we knew uh, then only we knew after signing the book. Then we knew him that, who is the man. But he was so nice ah.

Opening a restaurant that featured traditional food and teaching people the traditional manner of eating Sri-Lankan food in the receiving country is one way that Sunetra maintained her sense of Sri-Lankan identity in the U.S. and bridged the two cultures successfully, however, it was also crucial to meeting her survival needs for income in the receiving country. Sunetra translated the use of her cooking skills into an income generating venture, which increased her ability to survive successfully in the U.S.

Unlike Sunetra, Ramani began cooking as child's play in Sri-Lanka. They would "borrow" rice, vegetables, and dried fish from her mother, and she and her female cousins would prepare food and serve it in banana leaves for their boy cousins

and parents. As a teenager, Ramani enjoyed cooking as a pastime also. Though she was not responsible for daily cooking as she too grew up in a household with hired help, she assisted with the cooking in Sri-Lanka. Once in the United States, for two years she was solely responsible for cooking for herself, her nephew and her son.

Um, y...I...I was used... because you know, even in Sri-Lanka we have, always we have somebody to help uh, in your houses. We have at least one or two people to do the cooking, helping and cleaning, and washing clothes and things like, but still we do the work too, because we, we help the... we get together and we do most of the work we get together and work. So coming here was nothing much to me you know. Uh, I did the cooking from the very beginning I always do it and especially the Sri-Lankan boys they don't know how to cook. I don't think so. Even, even to make a cup of tea don't, they have to, they are, they are depending on me.

Ramani, like Sunetra reverted to a more stereotypical gender role in the U.S. In Sri-Lanka, Ramani spent most of her time occupied with her duties as a provincial council member. The responsibilities associated with her government post as well as her political party involvement were prominent in her life. In her first years in the United States, she, like Sunetra, reverted to the role of a homemaker, a more stereotypical female gender role.

Like Ramani and Sunetra, Catherine also cooked as child's play in Sri-Lanka. They cooked in little clay pots and pans. They would serve the food on banana leaves and eat together. Catherine grew up with hired help in her home but had to do cooking related chores, such as scraping the coconut, grinding chilies, and cutting vegetables on a regular basis. Catherine's mother did most of the cooking, and Catherine assisted her on a daily basis. As she grew older and began working as an

actress in film and theater, she was still responsible for cooking at home. Catherine, unlike Ramani and Sunetra, did not experience a dramatic change in gender role performance in the United States, since she was responsible for cooking in Sri-Lanka. Catherine had a career in the theater outside of the home and simultaneously performed some of the functions of a homemaker within the home.

Once in the United States, like Sunetra, Catherine's cooking became a business venture. On weekends she would do catering for the Sri-Lankan community. However, unlike Sunetra and Ramani, Catherine brought hired help with her from Sri-Lanka to assist with the household work. In other words, Catherine did not experience the same level of downward mobility in socio-economic status as Sunetra and Ramani had. As a single parent of three small children, she asserts that hired help contributed to her ability to do the catering work.

... The job I did at home was doing some catering, for the weekends, which earned us a lot of money. Of a weekend I would earn about a \$200. So that was big money. That, it's, it was just, by chance I did it. Because I did make once some food for a Sri-Lankan friend and the people who came there and tasted and liked it, and then when they had something they'd ask that friend, who had made that food, and word of mouth. And that's how I expanded on my [catering]. Well, I started with \$15 for 100 string hoppers. And additionally if I made curries I would charge them \$25. It depended on what I made, so for a weekend if I made food and earned about \$200 it was like a weekly salary for me. It was great. So it was a salary at work and a salary at home.

In the U.S., Catherine maintained her lifestyle of working outside of the home and performing a more stereotypical gender role simultaneously as she had done in Sri-Lanka.

Meeting Social And Communal Needs

Sunetra, Ramani, and Catherine increased their human capital through the development of their cooking skills. They expanded the use of those skills strategically to meet not only their own family needs but to reach out to other Sri-Lankans. Further, they used cooking as a vehicle for increasing and maintaining their social networks with Americans.

Once Sunetra arrived in the United States, she not only cooked for her own family but began to cook as a way of contributing to ten of the Sri-Lankan families who lived in the same area.

So I am the only one didn't go to work, so I cook at home. All the other ladies go to work. So in the evening they come and, they come home and after work, they are asking, 'Sunetra, did you cook anything today?' So I used to say, 'Yes, yes.' So they come with the plate of rice, plain rice and they take all my, what do you call vegetable curries and they go home and eat. They do that every day like that. So I used to cook a big pot of chicken and all. It was fun. Like one family, we used to live like one family... If one person... one person has a birthday party, oh we used to cook everybody would get together and cook and go there with the food to give a big surprise.

Cooking was also a way of helping for Sunetra, included in what she calls “charity” and “social work.” She and her husband housed newly arrived Sri-Lankan people for one or two years sometimes, cooking for them, clothing them, and buying the school bound “fellows” supplies to go to college.

Similarly, Ramani’s cooking was a bond between other Sri-Lankans.

Yeah, I talk to this lady who lives upstairs and there's another lady living closer to me, who has a small baby, so sometime like once a month or twice a month I when I make some special food, because she has the small baby, she, she, uh, I mean feel difficult to cook also

sometimes, so when I make some special food I always visit her and give her some and come and spend some time with her.

Ramani's almsgiving to the temple also involved cooking. "*...If I can cook, at home, if it is a Saturday, I cook early in the morning I wake up and cook and take the food to the temple.*" The cooking she did for the temple was a way of helping to meet the survival needs of other Sri-Lankans.

Catherine also bonded with other Sri-Lankans here in the U.S. through cooking.

Yeah, weekends, I used to have a whole bunch of Sri-Lankans coming home. All the single ladies, who, whose husbands, are either they were divorced or they were working here as single, they have left their families behind. So we all, they would all come to my home. So and we all get together and cook. And eat a good meal and have fun like singing and dancing. Every Sunday, that was the thing we had. All get together cook, eat, dance, and then clean up together.

These get togethers provided much needed social connection for other migrants who missed their families and were adjusting to life in a new country. Catherine mentioned that this was a form of help for her own social needs as well. In the next section, we see how the three women developed another way of meeting their social needs in the U.S.—how they expanded their social circles to include non-Sri-Lankans by hosting events and engaging in activities that centered around cooking.

Bridging Cultures

Part of adjusting to the receiving country is bridging cultures—maintaining a sense of cultural identity while participating in a new culture. Activities centered

around food are common ways of sharing cultural knowledge and making new friends. All three women interviewed shared examples of how they utilized their skills in cooking to bridge cultures and increase their social networks in the United States.

Cooking for Sunetra was also a way of interacting with American friends that she had met at City College, where she took art classes.

They used to invite you know us, to their house, and I used to invite them here, and give dinners and oh they love to eat our curries. Oh yeah. We had a restaurant, no, one time? So I used to invite them for dinner there.

Sunetra even taught some of her artist friends to cook Sri-Lankan food.

Like Sunetra, cooking was a part of interactions with White friends for Ramani.

So, we were, we were invited for uh, Thanksgiving or like New Year, and so we, we go. I always make some, they wanted me to make some spicy food and bring so I used to make something and take with me you know.

Cooking was also a way for Catherine to bond with her children's American boyfriends and girlfriends.

They all loved me, they would come home, they would eat our food. They enjoyed our food. Bec...and they would say, every time they come it's a different kind of food in our house. Rice and curry but different things you know. And then they would ask, 'How come y'all are gifted to have everything different. How come we are not having the same thing.' Once there was one boy who would say, 'My mother would make me steak and uh, what, mashed potatoes every day. And I hate it,' he would say. And one would say, 'My mother and her salad. She would give us salad every day. One day would be a barbeque chicken or barbeque.' So I said 'How can you eat only that?' 'That's what. That's why we are wondering how you do differently.' So, uh, they enjoyed. A lot.

Sharing food or exchanging cultural knowledge about food is not only a way of expanding social networks, it is also a way of reinforcing and retaining the culture of the country of origin in a new country, as we will see in the next section.

Retaining Traditional Culture In The Receiving Country

Certain cultural practices require the activity or the knowledge of more than only one person. Cooking is one of them. For example, in enjoying the fruits of one's labor, for many people it's no fun to eat alone. In Sri-Lankan culture, the use of written recipes is not as common, so maintenance of the knowledge of how to prepare a dish is obtained through regular practice and consultation with others. Some people don't prepare certain dishes according to their skill level, familiarity with ingredients, or the ease of availability of ingredients, and therefore benefit from being able to collaborate on a meal. People enjoy tasting the regional variations of a particular dish. In the United States, there are very few Sri-Lankan restaurants, so the home preparation of food frequently becomes a catalyst for social interaction.

Catherine describes cooking as a key reason to participate in Sri-Lankan community groups.

Um, because I feel, uh, my people are here... I can eat, because most of the time we do our Sri-Lankan cooking, so it's nice to remember everything. There are food that I don't even cook and I don't get a chance of eating them, so, for that purpose.

But cooking traditional foods goes beyond a mere culinary experience. It touches on something much deeper than that. It involves participation in a cultural practice that

links one to one's ancestors. It can be a matter of being proud of one's country of origin, maintaining "roots" and a sense of cultural identity. For Catherine it was all of those things.

Catherine feels that cooking traditional Sri-Lankan foods in the United States is very important. She is proud that she cooks rice and curry at home nearly every day though she has lived here for 15 years, and disapproves of children who grow up here and don't eat traditional food.

And um, they don't like the Sri-Lankan food. They say they can't eat spicy thing, 'How the hell are you guys eating?' They would like, they want to know, you know. Sometimes I feel that the parents have not instilled in them. And they have not taught them. You have to respect people you have to eat Sri-Lankan food. But most of them here they are proud to say 'Oh my children don't like Sri-Lankan food.' But I, I detest that. Because I think you're betraying your country, and from where you have come.

Catherine also feels that cooking is an important part of being a good mother. She feels that since her son likes to eat her food he is close to her and accepting her help. She also lists cooking for her children as another form of taking care of their needs.

We always used our fingers, and fingers had to be washed before eating. That had to be done, uh, most of the time my kids would like me to feed them. I fed them. Even now, my old..third boy if he sees me eating he'll say 'Can you give me a bite?' I would still feed them. So that is the usual way we do in Sri-Lanka too.

For Sunetra, Ramani, and Catherine, cooking was not only a way of interacting with Sri-Lankans and "Americans" in the U.S. and for engaging in almsgiving and

charity work, but it was also a way of retaining and transmitting traditional culture in the new cultural environment. These three women utilized their human capital in the form of cooking to develop and reinforce their personal networks in the receiving country.

In looking back at the overall topic of cooking, we find support for Boyd's statements about the transformation of social capital (Boyd, 1989) in the examples provided below. Boyd (1989) asserts that social networks are "highly relevant" in studying international migration because they are "conduits for information and social and financial assistance," they "shape migration outcomes," and they "both transmit and shape the effect of social and economic structures on individuals, families and households." (p. 642) All three of these women used their social and human capital to "shape the effect of social and economic structures" in the receiving country (Boyd, 1989, p. 642). Catherine's experience illustrates Boyd's statement about personal networks providing job information as a tool to "shape the effect of the economic structures" in the U.S. (Boyd, 1989, p. 642). She was able to start a catering business because of her strategic use of connections within the Sri-Lankan community. Sunetra, Ramani, and Catherine all benefited from the social support that cooking for fellow Sri-Lankans and non-Sri-Lankans in the receiving country provided, demonstrating Boyd's point about personal networks providing for emotional support in the settlement process, but also demonstrating that their use of cooking skills was a key example of the utilization of human capital as a means to "shape the effect of social... structures" in the receiving country (Boyd, 1989, p. 642). Further, both

Ramani and Catherine's experiences support Boyd's assessment that more recent migrants benefit from networks set up by early migrants, since Ramani and Catherine moved into an already sizeable Sri-Lankan community when they arrived. They indeed found the "social and economic situations [substantially] modified by their predecessors," enabling them to reap those benefits during their adjustment process (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). All three women drew upon their human capital to create personal networks, thereby increasing their social capital. This increase not only supports Kopijn's emphasis on the transmission and transformation of social capital in the migration process, but also shaped the success of their adjustment (Kopijn, 1998).

SUMMARY

The voices of the women as represented by excerpts of their life history interviews inform us of their personal experiences of migration and adjustment. We understand their decision making process, their preparation for the journey, and their arrival experience through their eyes. We see them as strategically utilizing resources, developing networks, and increasing their human capital. We better understand their adjustment process and the key ways in which they skillfully negotiated their way through that process. These three women were able to not only survive on a basic needs level, but also to meet social and communal needs and exert agency to transform the environment they entered, to ensure the survival of the culture of their country of origin, effectively bridging the two cultures and successfully adjusting to life in California. The analysis indicates that all three of the women were

successful in their post migration adjustment in that they were able to retain a strong sense of identity while adopting new practices in the United States.

¹ Ramani mentioned that she would never have thought of working at her age in Sri-Lanka, but was very happy to be productive in that way here in the U.S. She explained that women of her age typically don't start new careers in Sri-Lanka and that it was much easier for her to do that in this country because of specific programs in Los Angeles County targeted for training seniors.

² By using the term "human capital" I am referring to the "skills, knowledge and experience possessed by an individual." (derived from Oxford American English Dictionary, see Abate & Jewell, 2001)

³By using the term "social capital," I am referring to "skills, knowledge and experience" derived from groups or institutions in society. (derived from definition of human capital, Oxford American English Dictionary, see Abate & Jewell, 2001)

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Overall, the experiences of the Sri-Lankan women migrants interviewed in this study support the theoretical bases regarding social/personal networks Boyd (1989) espouses (p. 642, 652). Below, I will describe how in some situations these particular women's experiences did not fully support all of Boyd's statements. I then indicate how the experiences of the women I interviewed support Kopijn's statements about social capital in migration as well (Kopijn, 1998, p. 119). I then discuss migration as a gendered process. Finally, I share my suggestions for future work.

SUPPORT OF OR FAILURE TO SUPPORT BOYD'S WORK

Boyd (1989) indicated that social networks "transmit information about places of destination (including places of return migration) and sources of settlement assistance" (p. 642). In some cases the social networks that these three women utilized were unsuccessful sources for information about their new destination, but overall, all three women benefited from their connections with family members, friends, and referrals in the initial phases of their migration. Since none of the women participated in return migration, there was no indication as to how their social networks function on that point.

According to Boyd (1989), the utilization of social networks/personal networks¹ in the migration and post-migration adjustment processes is important because of the ways in which they are "conduits for information and social and financial assistance," "shape migration outcomes," and "transmit and shape the effect

of social and economic structures on individuals, families and households” (p. 642). In the analysis of the three Sri-Lankan women interviewed in this study, we saw that social/personal networks provided critical information about meeting survival needs upon arrival into the United States, allowed the women to connect with important social resources, and provided them opportunities to use their developed cooking skills for financial gain.

Boyd’s idea that “studying networks, particularly those linked to family and households, permits understanding migration as a social product—not as the sole result of individual decisions made by individual actors, not as the sole result of economic or political parameters”—is supported by the experiences of all three women (Boyd, 1989, p. 642). By having access to their migration stories as represented in the interviews, we understand their migration decisions as interplay between political forces, economic conditions, and needs of family members. As Boyd’s more detailed explanation suggests, “settlement and integration processes are influenced by kin and friendship ties, village based networks and customs (such as festivals), membership in ethnic associations and shared cultural and ethnic origins” (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). The successful settlement of all three women relied upon their active development of social networks which provided links to the culture of their country of origin.

Boyd suggests that “ these personal networks provide money to finance moves. They also provide food, shelter, job information and contacts, information on healthcare and social services, recreation and emotional support (See, Cornelius, 1982:

392; DaVanzo, 1981:110; Massey et al., 1987: Chapters 6 and 9; Tienda, 1980; Yucel, 1987)” (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). This was not well supported by the experiences of the women interviewed in this study (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). None of the women financed their move through personal networks. Perhaps none of the women financed their move using personal networks because of their socio-economic status before migration. Sunetra found job information and contacts, recreation, and emotional support through personal networks. Ramani found shelter, job information and contacts, as well as information on healthcare, recreation, and emotional support. Catherine found shelter, job information and contacts, recreation, and emotional support through her personal networks.

Boyd’s(1989) support for the idea that the early migrants’ development of personal networks can assist later migrants from the same sending country is well supported by the experiences of both Catherine and Ramani, who migrated, respectively twenty and thirty years later than Sunetra. Where Boyd supports Massey’s notion that “recent migrants also enter an area with many more relatives, friends and contacts than did earlier migrants (Massey et al., 1987),” there was also evidence that Ramani and Catherine’s experiences held true (Boyd, 1989, p. 652). Further, Boyd’s support for the idea that “they also may find social and economic situations substantial modified by their predecessors (J.M. Buechler, 1987: 258),” corresponded to the lived experiences of both Catherine and Ramani, who had not only Sri-Lankan neighbors, but Catherine was able to develop a catering business targeted to the increased Sri-Lankan population (Boyd, 1989, p.652).

SUPPORT FOR KOPIJN'S WORK

Kopijn's (1998) emphasis on the transmission and transformation of social capital in the migration process was well supported by all three Sri-Lankan women's lived experiences both in terms of the transformation and transmission of social capital in the context of utilizing resources from religious institutions and the transformation of their own human capital in the context of cooking to meet post migration adjustment needs (Kopijn, 1998, p. 119). All three of the women I interviewed were successful in adjusting to life in California while retaining a strong sense of their Sri-Lankan identity. Their use of social and human capital were crucial in this regard.

MIGRATION AS A GENDERED PROCESS

The experiences of these three Sri-Lankan women's migration to the United States were gendered in many ways. As women, these three individuals were responsible for the social aspects of the transition: preparing family and friends for the migration and maintaining contact with family and friends once the migration took place. They were responsible for emotionally, psychologically, and physically preparing their children for the migration, and were primarily responsible for their children during the migration journey. These women were primarily responsible for the dissolution of their households in Sri-Lanka. Once in the U.S. these three women were primarily responsible for handling issues of adjustment for their children and for the retention of traditional Sri-Lankan culture and identity of their children. These three women were seen as the source of emotional strength and security for their

families both during the migration process and after arrival in the U.S. All of these examples illustrate the ways in which migration was a gendered process for these three particular women.

CONSTRAINTS IN REPRESENTATIVENESS

Because of the qualitative nature of this research, the information provided in this thesis does not claim to be representative of any group's experience. The life experiences of these women in terms of their periods of arrival, ages, ethnicity, level of education, and socioeconomic status can only provide a glimpse of how these particular women experienced migration to Southern California. Also, the particular information provided could perhaps be an impetus for a larger study, expanding upon themes that were prominent in the lives and experiences of the women interviewed in this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Outside of the data included in the analysis, the rich text of the entire life history interviews remains unexplored. It would be wonderful to find a way to more widely share those life histories so that other scholars could delve into them for various types of social and feminist analysis and so that all of the information that these particular women so painstakingly shared about their lives could be included as part of the national histories of the United States and Sri-Lanka. It would be

interesting to interview more women who migrated at different time periods and take a look at the relationship between changes in U.S. government immigration policies and migration decision making processes. It would be wonderful to conduct a much larger study of Sri-Lankan women in Los Angeles County, exploring migration and post migration adjustment processes. It would be interesting to compare life histories of Sri-Lankan women who migrated to Los Angeles County, women who in Sri-Lanka had different socio-economic backgrounds, were of different ethnicities, and came from rural vs. urban places of residence. It would also be informative to look at the impact of the civil war on migration patterns and the ways in which women cope with the difficulties associated with wartime experience.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Traditionally, migration to the U.S. has been viewed as a process of assimilation, and ultimately it may be just that. But in the case of these three first generation Sri-Lankan women, what we have gleaned from their life histories is a story of adaptation to the new milieu, but also the retention of a strong sense of cultural/ethnic identity. In the case of Sunetra and Ramani, maintaining a Sri-Lankan identity was perhaps necessary in order for them to keep alive their dream of returning home, as Sunetra describes in the following statement.

“Yeah, but uh, because of these problems, ethnic problems, in Sri-Lanka, that’s why we’re still you know [here in the U.S.], we don’t want to go and stay there for a long time. If everything is to settle down then we are going to go back. Yeah. Our house is there so we like to stay with our people too. Nothing like our own country, no?”

Whether or not they return is beside the point. She still retains a strong identification as a Sri-Lankan, referring to Sri-Lanka as “home” and her “own country,” though she has lived in the United States for 39 years. When she naturalized, she opted for dual citizenship in both the U.S. and Sri-Lanka—a route that was more costly and took longer administratively. Though Catherine is a naturalized U.S. citizen and has no intention of returning to Sri-Lanka, her strong views about the retention of Sri-Lankan culture in the U.S. reveal her resistance to complete assimilation. What these life history interviews have revealed is that these women adapted in very healthy and positive ways, but in doing so, they actively resisted complete assimilation. All three of these women fought against the erasure of the culture of their country of origin. Further, it seems that the connection to the culture of their country of origin is a life line for success in adaptation in the new country.

ⁱ Boyd uses the terms personal networks and social networks interchangeably. See Boyd, 1989, page 639.

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