# Boat People and Terrorists
*The media-driven moral panic and double consciousness of the Tamil diaspora in Canada*

by

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## Abstract

This thesis is a study of how Tamil people have been stigmatized in Canadian newspapers and its effects on Tamil youth. This research focuses on two key periods of newspaper coverage for the Tamil diaspora in Canada: protests in Toronto during May 2009 and the landing of the MV Sun Sea in August 2010. Tamil activists and migrants were frequently conflated with Tamil Tiger terrorists and were framed as "bad immigrants" in contrast with "good immigrants" or "law-abiding citizens"; these attributes were often applied to the majority of the Tamil diaspora.

Expanding moral panic theory, this study contributes the element of *legacy* as a key in establishing modern moral panic, with an emphasis on its lasting effects. In particular, this is the proposal of Bill C-4 (later Bill C-49) and double consciousness evident in discussions with Tamil youth. These youth explained that they sometimes felt pulled between their Canadian and Tamil identities, judged themselves through the eyes of others, and profiled other Tamils based on crystallized stereotypes, all of which were dimensions present in the newspaper coverage.

# Contents

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1.1    Introduction

"In the minds of most of the public, Tamils are all Tigers," reads an editorial in the *National Post* (Mraz, 15 May 2009, p. A12). As I will illustrate throughout this thesis, the conflation of Tamils in Canada with Tamil Tiger terrorists has been present since at least 2009, proving to be a steadfast, durable, and damaging stereotype. This sentiment gives additional meaning to a declaration scrawled on the University of Toronto St. George campus made in September 2010: "Tamil Tigers are terrorists." For most of the public, the message might as well have read, "Tamils are terrorists."

This problematic conflation led to the research questions guiding my thesis: (i) how are Tamils stigmatized in Canadian news media?; and (ii) how, if at all, does this stigmatization affect Tamil youth living in Canada? To answer these questions I conducted a critical discourse analysis of 445 national and local newspaper articles covering two key periods for the Tamil diaspora in Canada.

The first period was a series of demonstrations held in May 2009, including a brief protest on the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto. These demonstrations were attempts by members of the Tamil diaspora to raise awareness and support for a ceasefire during the bloody end of the Sri Lankan civil war. The civil war began in 1983 when a history of institutionalized racism against Tamils carried out by Sri Lankan's Sinhalese majority reached a boiling point (Weiss, 2012). The LTTE, a rebel group claiming to represent the interests of Sri Lankan Tamils, waged a long war against the Sri Lankan military until they were defeated in May 2009. By 2006, however, the LTTE had been proscribed as a terrorist organization by most of the world that was engaged in the War on Terror. In a post-9/11 world, this proscription forced a very complex issue to be viewed through a very simple lens.

The second period was the landing of the MV Sun Sea, a cargo ship carrying nearly 500 Tamil migrants fleeing post-war Sri Lanka, in August 2010 and the subsequent proposal to change refugee policy in October 2010.

The second research question, regarding the effects of stigmatization on Tamil youth, was answered through discussions with ten Tamil youth and a phenomenological approach to interpreting and presenting their experiences. Two discussion groups and five interviews were conducted through this process.

## 1.2 Theoretical and methodological approaches

The theoretical approach to this project was primarily influenced by two seminal texts on moral panic theory: Stanley Cohen's (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panic* and Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda's (2009) *Moral Panics*. These two texts offer comprehensive models to operationalize the actors and occurrences throughout a given moral panic. Cohen organizes moral panic in four phases: warning, impact, inventory, and reaction. Goode and Ben-Yehuda organize moral panic in five dimensions: concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionality, and volatility.

However, the overuse of the term "moral panic" by pundits, public officials, and public in general, along with the oversaturation and over-reporting of certain news stories in a multi-mediated, 24/7 news cycle means that we need modified criteria for moral panic in (high, late, or post) modern times. Moral panic, after all, is about deviance. Its presence should be signified by the attempted or actual punishment for a society's perceived transgressors. It is within this context and understanding of moral panic that I introduce the concept of *legacy* as a way to gauge the staying power of sentiment, the institutionalization and semi-permanent sides of the moral panic, and just how seriously a given society was *affected by* rather than *exposed to* the narratives.

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Focusing on the long-term impact of moral panic, processes that make certain groups folk devils or "Others" through "Us" versus "Them" language may cause subjects of moral panic to internalize these negative images. I argue that this may be particularly true when folk devils have their identities linked to race or ethnicity, namely because these are noticeable and fixed characteristics. If these dispositions are internalized, they may result in *double consciousness*. Double consciousness, coined by W.E.B. Dubois (1989), means that these racialized or ethnic groups may perceive themselves through the eyes of those that label them as deviant. They may also feel a sense of two-ness, caught between their racial or ethnic identity and the identity of the larger, dominant group without truly feeling as part of either one. These are troubling anxieties that stem from social issues but manifest as personal problems.

To study the presence of moral panic in these two periods, I studied the media data using the principles of critical discourse analysis outlined by Teun A. Van Dijk (1993). This approach to studying text provided me with the tools to study minute details, such as writing styles, choice of words, lexical devices, and much more found in the coverage. This method also outlined the importance of connecting these events to larger historical and geopolitical themes and context, such as the post-9/11 age of security, the War on Terror, Islamophobia in the West, the proclaimed failure of multiculturalism in Western Europe, and global economic uncertainty.

The discussion groups and interviews were conducted and analyzed using a phenomenological approach. These discussions and interviews were employed as a unique contribution to supplement the critical discourse analysis. They were also designed to provide space for the voices of Tamil youth under non-sensationalized circumstances. This was especially important because this group had been significantly disparaged during both

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coverage periods. Furthermore, this approach not only provided rich data, but it also allowed research participants to build a group knowledge base through their discussions, and in many instances enabled them to relate their individual experiences with group experiences.

## 1.3    Findings

My findings are that the May 2009 period did not represent a moral panic because it lacked the legacy criteria I have established as a new requirement. However, it was constitutive of a *traditional* moral panic (as outlined by Cohen and Goode and Ben-Yehuda) and proved to be a precursor episode to the moral panic that arouse from the landing of the MV Sun Sea in August 2010.

The May 2009 protests was not a moral panic in my new sense of the term since there was no formal change or proposal to change the ways in which this group would be punished. However, as an episode in a longer panic, it established Tamil activists as folk devils through several stereotypes and "Us" versus "Them" distinctions. In particular, Tamil activists were perceived as "bad immigrants", rule breakers, and were directly and indirectly conflated with Tamil Tiger terrorists through journalistic language, public sentiment, and speech making. This episode also revealed xenophobic sentiment from both public officials and members of the public, including a distrust of Tamils as an immigrant population. In many instances, the images of Tamil activists were extended to all Tamils in Canada through expert testimony, a multitude of stories about the story, and the use of generalized language. These images and stereotypes carried over and crystallized in the MV Sun Sea coverage more than a year later.

When 492 Tamil migrants appeared off the coast of British Columbia, it was immediately framed as a security issue by national newspapers, experts, and public officials. In fact, the most vocal member of the Canadian government was Minister of Public Safety

Vic Toews and not the Minister of Immigration. The speech making by Toews and the multitude of references to him as a source ostensibly framed the landing of the MV Sun Sea as a matter of national security. At the onset, one of the primary concerns was that Canada would become a target for international human smuggling rings and fraudulent asylum seekers. As such, the overwhelming reaction was to thwart terrorist networks from abusing Canada, not providing shelter to fleeing people.

The images and stereotypes of Tamils as rule breakers and terrorists returned and were firmly crystallized as lasting images. Moreover, these stereotypes were exclusive to passengers of the MV Sun Sea. Experts appearing in several newspapers framed the entirety of the Tamil diaspora in Canada as hardcore LTTE supporters. One expert claimed that because of such strong ties to the terrorist group as a source of identity and meaning, Canada's Tamil youth were a "poisoned generation" (Libin, 15 August 2010, p. A1). When dubious reports emerged that Tamil refugees were returning home for vacation, the Toronto Sun all but incited a witch hunt and called for every Tamil in Canada to have their refugee file reviewed (Levant, 22 August 2010).

The perception was that Tamils were cheating the system and taking advantage of Canada's goodwill. This sentiment combined with fears of national security and the resurgence of a terrorist organization on Canadian soil. In response to this mixture, many newspapers, experts, public officials, and a large contingent of letter-writing members of the public demanded an overhaul to a refugee system that was perceived as broken and porous. In October 2010, the Conservative government introduced Bill C-4, their official proposal to overhaul the refugee system, with particular provisions to punish refugees suspected of using human smugglers to enter Canada, among many other changes. Meeting the criteria of

establishing a legacy, the proposal of the bill institutionalized the moral panic and the Tamil diaspora as deviant transgressors.

During my discussions and interviews with Tamil youth, it was clear that these events have resonated with them, often in very negative ways. Mainstream news media were described by many of the participants as responsible parties in spreading these negative stereotypes, including suspicions of fraud, one of the primary concerns raised in the MV Sun Sea coverage. Participants also pointed to the simplified conflation of all Tamils with Tamil Tigers as particularly frustrating, feeling that most Canadians can only relate to Tamil people through a perceived relationship with the Tamil Tigers or the Sri Lankan civil war.

The most important aspect of these discussions were the ways in which some of these Tamil youth seemed to compensate for these negative perceptions. Several discussion group participants revealed that they shorten or Anglicize their names in the workplace, deliberately obscure their Tamil identity at work or other public places, and show signs that they may profile other Tamils, particularly youth, based on stereotypes depicted in media. Many of the participants referenced the ways in which Tamils were depicted during the May 2009 protests and the constancy of those images in their lives. It was evident that many of these participants judged themselves and others through the views of contempt exhibited in several mainstream newspapers. At other times, some of these participants felt pulled between two identities, in which being Tamil was something they did at home, but not so much in public. These participants revealed the damaging legacy of this episodic moral panic.

## 1.4 Motivations

Prior to university, I grew up in a working class neighbourhood in Scarborough, Ontario (a district of Toronto). My neighbourhood had a sizeable immigrant population,

many of whom were Tamils that had fled Sri Lanka after the onset of the civil war. Since I was born in the mid-1980s, I grew up with initial offspring of Canada's Tamil diaspora. Most of my best friends are Tamil and the stereotypical images of Tamils in the May 2009 protests and MV Sun Sea coverage resonated with me on a personal level. I am passionate about this project, but at the same time my training as a social scientist allowed me to maintain a critical distance. Rather than hindering my project, my experiences enriched it through my ability to connect with and speak to Tamil youth, an understanding of life for many members of the Tamil diaspora, and my passion to conduct a critical study assessing some of the challenges this community faces.

However, my motivations extended beyond a personal level. This research was also an initiative to put forth theoretical, methodological, and political contributions to the fields of youth culture and deviance. Theoretically, I have proposed a contribution to moral panic theory that takes into account a changing mediascape. With a specific focus on the long-term impact of a moral panic, my contribution links moral panic's folk devil and "Us" versus "Them" processes as conditions capable of producing double consciousness. While double consciousness can certainly exist without moral panic, the polarizing climate produced by the panic offers the conditions from which double consciousness can galvanize, especially when the folk devils' identities are tied to race or ethnicity.

Methodologically, I presented a unique contribution by supplementing a critical discourse analysis with the voices of a stigmatized group that was not afforded the same benefit in the sample analyzed. In this case the sample was newspaper coverage.

Politically, I intended to trace the changes to rules and services in refugee policy in Bill-C49 (passed in 2012 as Bill-C4) as originating in 2010 in response to the MV Sun Sea and crystallized stereotypes of Tamils in Canada. By doing so this project is able help other

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researchers trace the path of the bill by emphasizing its point of origin, something than could be lost due to its lengthy legislative process.

## 1.5    Project map

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of this project, including an in-depth analysis of moral panic theory by Cohen and Goode and Ben-Yehuda. This chapter also introduces and explains my contribution of *legacy* to these theoretical models. With the emphasis on the legacy of moral panic, the chapter reviews ways in which immigrant groups that are policed at the border become policed within. The chapter also features a review of double consciousness by some of the concepts' forebearers and innovators, including an analysis of how it applies to the Tamil diaspora in Canada.

Chapter 3 is a review of the methodology used in this project. Using a social constructionist approach, I have applied methods of critical discourse analysis to my study of newspapers. Using a phenomenological approach, I counducted and analyzed data in discussion groups and interviews. The chapter features the core principles of critical discourse analysis I employed, including methods for conducting impactful social science. It is in this chapter that I explain the importance of talking with Tamil youth to illuminate their experiences as a way to supplement the newspaper coverage.

Chapter 4 is the critical discourse analysis of the May 2009 protests. This chapter outlines some context for the demonstrations, the principle themes in which Tamils were referenced in the newspaper coverage, and an explanation of why this event did not meet the new criteria for moral panic I have established.

Chapter 5 is the critical discourse analysis of the arrival of the MV Sun Sea in August 2010 and the subsequent fallout. This chapter outlines reasons for why Tamils might leave Sri Lanka within the context of the civil war and geopolitics; the principle themes revealed in

the coverage; ways in which stereotypes from the May 2009 episode were carried over and crystallized; and a review of Bill C-4's core proposed amendments to refugee policy as the institutionalization of the moral panic.

Chapter 6 is the phenomenological analysis of the discussion groups and interviews held with Tamil youth. The rich data collected from these talks with young Tamil people revealed a connection with their lived experiences to the moral panic found in Chapters 4 and 5, worrying signs of double consciousness, and strategies for changing negative perceptions of the Tamil diaspora.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion of this project. It will review the answers to my research questions and how they were arrived at. This chapter also proposes future research related to this project, such as a review of further episodes of this moral panic and expanded analysis of Tamil youth experiences.

## Chapter 2 - Theory and Literature Review

"Tamil Trouble," "Taking Tolerance Too Far," and "What Next A Suicide Bomber?" are some of the titles from the newspaper coverage of Tamil protests in Toronto during May 2009. More than one year later, "On The Lookout For Tigers," "A Test For Canada," and "Canadian Compassion Can Be Deadly" are some of the titles from the newspaper coverage of the MV Sun Sea during Summer and Fall 2010.

In her research, Anuppriya Sriskandarajah (2010) examined how media and the public viewed the 2009 Tamil protestors as "not real Canadians". My research further supports Sriskandarajah's research, while building on this database by covering the MV Sun Sea's arrival as well. My research also operationalizes this distinction in terms of moral panic theory (the subject of this chapter) and analyzes how this distinction was made to more than just Tamil protestors (the subject of Chapters 4 and 5).

This chapter begins with an in-depth review of moral panic literature, including its origins, theoretical shifts, varying perspectives, and a model for measuring the presence of moral panic. Following this section will be a discussion of 'Islamophobia', a modern moral panic that exists in many Western states following 9/11. Describing Islamophobia will provide a basis for understanding anti-Tamil sentiment in Canada, including many shared descriptors in each respective moral panic. Concluding this chapter will be an examination of documented consequences of "Othered" diasporas and possible outcomes resulting from anti-Tamil sentiment. This includes an elaborate discussion of double consciousness, the variations and elaborations to its meaning, and its contemporary application to make sense of the experiences of the Tamil diaspora in Canada.

## 2.1 Moral Panic, definitely not a *Cohen*-cidence

I will begin with Stanley Cohen's concept of moral panic to frame my analysis of media, political, and public constructions of the Tamil diaspora and Tamil refugees. In his seminal work *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Cohen (1972) defined 'moral panic' as:

> A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the subject of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself (p. 9).

Cohen's research focused on media, political, and public responses regarding two teenage subcultures, the Mods and the Rockers, after disturbances in the seaside town of Clacton, UK on Easter weekend 1964. During that weekend fights broke out, authorities were called in, and there were 97 arrests and an estimated £513 in damages (Cohen, 2002, p. 25). Cohen analyzed newspaper stories on youth violence and vandalism from 1964 to 1967, including other holiday weekend disturbances in other towns. What he found was that these types of skirmishes or disturbances were not uncommon in the 1950s and 60s. However, there was a shift in the reporting and attitudes towards these instances. Cohen did not ask *why* these disturbances occurred; he was concerned with why the *reaction* occurred and on the *scale* it did (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 23).

Cohen's (2002) research on the Mod subculture in 1960s Britain found that Mods and Rockers "stood for everything resented about the affluent teenager" (p. 162). These children did not live through the war, they did not know economic hardship, and they were living in a period of affluence without having fought or worked to earn it. The views of

teenagers' fashion and behavior shifted, leading to new images of young people. This is not unlike the shifting associations with immigrants arriving on a boat, something very typical in early Canadian history, which has become wholly unacceptable and even criminal.

Cohen's (2002) model for understanding moral panics is derived from a sequential model used to describe the phases of a typical physical disaster (pp. 11-12). This model focuses on the social and psychological impact of these conditions. The disaster model has seven phases: *warning, threat, impact, inventory, rescue, remedy,* and *recovery* (Cohen, 2002, pp. 12-13). After carefully merging, reconfiguring, and renaming some of these phases, Cohen (2002) arrived at a condensed version of the sequence: *warning, impact, inventory,* and *reaction* (p. 13). However, unlike the linear, sequential disaster model, Cohen posits a circular model. This model suggests that there is a warning-impact-reaction feedback loop, where each phase may be revisited and its significance amplified. In Cohen's analysis, this model represented how society responds to a perceived widespread social threat or deviance.

### 2.1.1 *Warning*

The *warning* phase represents the period leading up to an incident, where anxiety rises based on predicted danger and the public communication of that threat (Cohen 2002: 12). This phase sets the stage for moral panic.

### 2.1.2 *Impact*

The *impact* phase is the initial deviation followed by the immediate unorganized response to the threat (Cohen, 2002, pp. 12-18). This phase occurs primarily at the local level and considers the involvement and actions of the perceived deviant group(s), the local population, and the police.

Before continuing through the rest of Cohen's model, I will now draw from Kai Erikson's (1966) *Wayward Puritans* to define *deviance*. While studying Puritans in the

Massachusetts Bay of mid- to late-17<sup>th</sup> century United States, Erikson developed a general

sociological theory of deviance. Deviance "refers to conduct which the people of a group

consider so dangerous or embarrassing or irritating that they bring special sanctions to bear

against the persons who exhibit it" (Erikson, 1966, p. 6). Erikson (1996) makes the

distinction that no behavior is inherently deviant; behavior is characterized as deviant based

on the standards of its audience (p. 6).

### 2.1.3 Inventory

The *inventory* phase is an assessment of the conditions interpreted and presented by

mass media (Cohen, 2002, p. 18). The stories and images of deviance are received primarily

through mass media. Under these conditions, news stories and images: are highly processed

and coded; transition beyond the local area to regional and national coverage; and are

reported through numerous narrative schemes (i.e. editorials, letters to the editor).

Cohen (2002) outlines three ways that media take inventory of an emerging moral

panic: (i) Exaggeration and Distortion; (ii) Prediction; and (iii) Symbolization (p. 19). Each of

these inventory-taking methods can lead to 'over-reporting', a phenomenon of which Cohen

is particularly critical.

Distortion is the gross exaggeration of the seriousness of the events that take place,

including the exaggeration of: the number of people taking part in an event; the number of

people involved in violence; and the cost and effects of any damage or violence (Cohen,

2002, pp. 19-20). Distortion takes many different forms. First, events can be distorted

through sensational and/or misleading headlines. Beyond their headlines, stories may be

distorted through the use of melodramatic vocabulary, generic plurals, and the intentional

amplification of elements of the story considered to be newsworthy (Cohen, 2002, pp. 20-

21).

Prediction, occurring after the initial assessment of an event, is the anticipation of what should be done 'next time', including the expeditious measures already taken following the event (Cohen, 2002, p. 26). Predictions are solicited from official sources such as local politicians and police spokespeople, as well as local residents and members of the group(s) involved in the event (Cohen, 2002, p. 26). While prediction is important in the inventory phase, it reappears in the *reaction* phase as a way to consider what measurable actions must be taken to counteract forecasted deviance.

Symbolization is the process of meaning making that occurs in producing the news. Symbolization is the transmission of stereotypes, the attachment of symbolic meaning to words and images, and the process by which neutral words begin to convey complex ideas and emotions (Cohen, 2002, p. 27). Cohen (2002) outlines three processes of symbolization: "a word (Mod) becomes symbolic of a certain status (delinquent or deviant); objects (hairstyle, clothing) symbolize the word; the objects themselves become symbolic of these status (and the emotions attached to the status)" (p. 27). In part, symbolization is linked to the practices that lead to exaggeration and distortion (Cohen, 2002, p. 29). Sensational and/or misleading headlines, melodramatic vocabulary, and exaggerated figures, among other elements, set the stage for "unambiguously negative symbols" to emerge from events that did not warrant or provide sufficient materials to make such an assessment (Cohen, 2002, p. 29).

Symbolization may also occur through the use of interviews with 'representative members' of involved groups (Cohen, 2002, p. 29). These interviews are dramatized and ritualistic, and the label reporters put on their interviewees may cause them to act in exaggerated ways that 'fit' the label (Cohen, 2002, pp. 29-30). As a result, preliminary exaggeration and distortion may generate a label that later becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In all of symbolization, stereotypes emerge, crystalize, and play an important role in how the public perceives its presumed deviants.

Cohen (2002) outlined four cumulative effects that occur in the inventory phase as such:

> "(i) the putative deviation had been assigned from which further stereotyping, myth making and labeling could proceed; (ii) the expectation was created that this form of deviation would certainly recur; (iii) a wholly negative symbolization in regard to the Mods and Rockers and objects associated with them had been created; (iv) all the elements in the situation had been made clear enough to allow for full-scale demonology and hagiology to develop: the information had been made available for placing Mods and Rockers in the gallery of contemporary folk devils" (pp. 30-31).

Cohen did not explicitly name these effects, but I will do so here. The first effect can be considered *database building*, as a collection of 'proof' is assembled to fit the assigned labels. This database is called upon to project the actions of those involved in the second effect, becomes more intricate in the third effect, and is more or less a polished version in the fourth effect.

The second effect can be called *assumed recidivism*, where projections for those involved to reoffend become a given. In this effect, the actual recurrence of deviance is not especially required – it is driven primarily by the anticipation. These projections lead to the intensified escalation of negative symbolization that is grafted on to the reputed deviant group(s).

The third effect can be tagged as *symbolic dislocation*. It remains symbolic because those considered deviant are not outright removed from society, but there is a process of identifying their presumed differences as a way to separate them from the expected norm. This is where the labels of "Us" and "Them" begin to emerge and the "Them" signify those who are disjointed.

The fourth and final effect can be termed as *devil making*. A profile of the *folk devil(s)* emerges when taking into consideration the ever-building database of 'proof', fear of future conflict, and the negative symbolization of the deviant group. The folk devil is the (evil) party *responsible* for the event, the behavior, or the phenomenon (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 91). By profiling who *is* a folk devil, there is a simultaneous profiling of who *is not* a folk devil. These profiles are made in the news, where any competing definitions are hierarchically ordered and a final, unambiguous definition emerges. In terms of who gets a voice, agents of social control, such as the police, are more likely to be believed than the presumed deviants (Cohen, 2002, p. 33).

While the *devil* half of this term is significant, so too is the *making* half. The etymology stems from Cohen's (2002) assessment that "[t]he inventory is not reflective stock-taking but manufactured news" (p. 31). Cohen (2002) argues that taking inventory of deviance means cataloging "elements of fantasy, selective misperception and the deliberate creation of news" (p. 31).

While some distortion and exaggeration can be chalked up to human error, Cohen has demonstrated that much of this is deliberate. While it is deliberate, it is more routine than commandment that drugs, sex, and violence are seen as appealing stories and that the actions of particular groups, such as youth and immigrants, are repeatedly and pervasively perused (Cohen, 2002, p. 32). In his analysis, Cohen (2002) found that other than the event in Clacton during that fateful weekend, there was nothing else that was particularly worthy of reporting (p. 32). As such, it was practically a necessity for it to become a bigger story. Cohen (2002) encapsulates this idea in one sentence: "Mods and rockers didn't become news because they were new; they were presented as new to justify their creation as news" (p. 32).

### 2.1.4 *Reaction*

The *reaction* phase is a combination of the rescue, remedy, and recovery stages from the aforementioned disaster model (Cohen, 2002, p. 13). The reaction phase is where stories and images from the inventory crystallize, shaping and shaped by organized opinions and attitudes, which in turn inform coordinated opposition and practices in social control.

After an initial event passes, news media keep the story alive by transitioning from initial reporting to interpretation and tackling the 'issues' (Cohen, 2002, p. 35). Thematically, these stories are about the opinions and attitudes of the deviant group in question. In his research on the Mods and Rockers, Cohen developed a typology to organize these opinions and stories based on their origins. First, there are opinion statements *by* media, such as editorials, articles, and cartoons (Cohen, 2002, p. 36). Second, there are opinion statements *in* the media, such as letters and quotations from speeches, statements, and sermons (Cohen, 2002, p. 36). Third, there are other public arenas such as parliamentary and council debates (Cohen, 2002, p. 36). For the purposes of this study, I will only be considering the first two categories, as my emphasis is on widely distributed stories and images of Tamils in Canada that are designed for public consumption. While parliamentary and council debates are significant, I am more interested in the significance of strategic use of media in the political proceedings regarding the events in question.

Cohen developed three themes for sorting these attitudes and opinions: *orientation, images,* and *causation. Orientation* is the emotional and intellectual standpoint from which deviance is evaluated (Cohen, 2002, p. 37). *Images* are the opinions about the nature of the deviants and their behavior (Cohen, 2002, p. 37). *Causation* is the set of opinions about the causes of deviant behavior (Cohen, 2002, p. 37). These themes are not mutually exclusive and often feed into each other as the coverage continues and strategies are conceived.

Orientation is society's way of understanding how to make sense of the perceived deviance. Cohen found several standpoints that were used to make sense of the Mods and Rockers phenomenon. Some interpretations viewed the Mods and Rockers as something resembling a natural disaster. Other interpretations concluded that things were bound to get worse before they got better – a *Prophecy of Doom* (Cohen, 2002, p. 38). Another theme contemplated what *could have* happened. Another still did not look forward or backward, but suggested that Mods and Rockers were only one of many already-present deviant groups, all of which were ready and willing to come out of the woodwork. This culture of fear would lead to a culture of control to quell the rumbling deviants.

Images are where things start to take a more defined form. Cohen finds that in moral panic a process of *spurious attribution* takes place (Cohen, 2002, p. 39). This is where the inventory is used to pull together a set of false attributes that are assigned to perceived deviants. As such, certain attributes will lead to a certain remedial theory and course of action. Cohen states that certain terms can become part of a deviant group's mythology. He cites that Mods and Rockers were described as savages, maniacs, cowardly, aimless, and foolish, to only name a few (Cohen, 2002, p. 41). Spurious attribution is not random – actually it can be very familiar. Cohen (2002) writes "[t]he audience has existing stereotypes of other folk devils to draw upon and, as with racial stereotyping, there is a readily available composite image which the new picture can be grafted on to" (p. 41). I will later demonstrate the relevance of Cohen's assessment to my research, as there are many shared attributes between the stereotypical images of Muslims in the Islamophobia moral panic and Tamils in this research. Stereotypical images are also complicated by the contradictions that appear in news media, such as Mods being described as "dirty and scruff" but also as "slickly dressed" (Cohen, 2002, p. 42). Descriptions of Tamils in Canadian news media also bear

contradictions. Tamil protestors in May 2009 are described as both self-interested and compassionate. Tamils on the MV Sun Sea in Summer 2010 are described as both exploiters of the Canadian immigration system and as exploited by a ring of human smugglers.

The images formed created a distinction between the deviants and the rest of society. Interestingly, while Cohen's moral panic study found that the reaction that occurred was partly in response to a newly influential and affluent generation of British youth, many youth showed a great deal of disdain towards Mods and Rockers. Mods and Rockers were refuted as being a representative sample of the youth population and were shunned by many as a "Lunatic Fringe". With many adults and youth sharing the same images of Mods and Rockers, this helped cement their status as a folk devil.

Causation is the assessment of the factors leading to the deviancy and directly informs the organized reactionary measures that follow. With orientation and image packages developed, causation might see the deviancy as a problem with society as a whole ('A Sign of the Times'); a virus ready to spread on contact ('It's Like a Disease'); the workings of a conspiratorial society ('Cabalism'); or even just as something to do ('Boredom') (Cohen, 2002, pp. 46-48).

While particular orientations, images, and ideas on causation may appear ubiquitous, Cohen (2002) conceded that societal reactions to these mediatized images are complex, heterogeneous, and are unevenly diffused and absorbed (p. 49). Factors such as age, sex, class, region, political affiliation, and others account for these differences. However, he argues that at times of moral panic, societies are more open to consensus on shared common values, more likely to agree on what is damaging or deviant, and are more able to recognize these values and when they are violated (Cohen, 2002, p. 58). When this level of consensus is combined with the narrow interpretation of a society's presumed folk devils,

competing perspectives are greatly disadvantaged. The models of interpretation that win out in this reactionary phase "form the basis of social policy", including "how and at what point the deviant is fed into the social control apparatus" (Cohen, 2002, p. 58).

Cohen used and expanded on Edwin Lemert's (1951) concept of *social control culture*. The social control culture is the social control apparatus and its elements, such as "laws, procedures, programs and organizations which in the name of a collectivity help, rehabilitate, punish or otherwise manipulate deviants" (p. 447). Social control culture is part of the organized reaction to the problem of deviancy. Social control culture consists of three elements: *diffusion, escalation,* and *innovation.*

*Diffusion* is simply who gets involved, from local police all the way to national agencies (Cohen, 2002, p. 66). *Escalation,* in this sense, is not the number of agents involved, but the scope and intensity of the reaction (Cohen, 2002, p. 67). This is where the logic of the reaction is measured. If the scope is vast and there is anticipation of further acts of deviancy, a justification for "taking elaborate and excessive precautionary measures" can be found (Cohen, 2002, p. 67). This logic is not only about whom to punish, but also about whom to protect. *Innovation* is the suggestion or introduction of new methods of control (Cohen, 2002, p. 68). A common rationalization in these circumstances is "new situations need new remedies" (Cohen, 2002, p. 71). If it is believed that old methods are useless, obsolete, or ill-fitted, then innovation becomes a requirement. Institutions themselves can be blamed for their inadequate rules or responses in times of perceived crisis (Cohen, 2002, p. 91). It would seem safe to suggest that if the state is seen to be at fault it will have greater impetus to innovate itself out of its perceived shortcomings. I will demonstrate this in my media analysis, suggesting that critiques of Canada's immigration policies by major newspapers led to dramatic changes to refugee claimant rules.

In a nutshell, the impact-inventory-reaction loop often fosters the conditions for over-estimation, which leads to hyper-escalation, which may end in dubious innovation. After establishing a model for *how* a moral panic can be understood, Cohen (2002) states that the best question is *why* certain behavior is reacted to in a particular form and intensity, in a particular period of time (p. 149). Asking this question might tell sociologists more about the society than its deviants. Returning to Erikson's theory of deviance might help answer this question.

Erikson (1966) states that every human community exhibits its identity through the boundaries it maintains. Boundaries are the set of acceptable limits for the behaviors and actions within a community. These boundaries are dynamic, shifting when leadership changes, when the mood of a community transforms, and when boundaries are challenged (Erikson, 1966, pp. 12-23). People who are outside of the acceptable limits of the group are "met by policing agents whose special business it is to guard the cultural integrity of the community" (Erikson, 1966, p. 11). Every society has boundaries, which means every society has behavior it considers deviant. Boundaries are meaningful in that they identify the moral character of a society, but they only remain meaningful if they are tested (Erikson, 1966, p. 13).

In terms of my study on the perceptions of Tamils in Canada, there is an evident boundary shift occurring. The boundary certainly began shifting after the events of 9/11 – if they had not begun to shift already. However, following the election of Conservative Prime Minster Stephen Harper in 2006, a very traceable shift has emerged.

Canada has seemingly had a more sympathetic relationship with Tamil refugees than other Western neighbors, but this relationship changed in 2006 when the Liberation Tigers

of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or more commonly 'Tamil Tigers') were designated as a terrorist organization (Public Safety Canada, 2012).

The shift continues through May 2009, when Tamil protestors carrying Tamil Eelam flags (eelam is generally considered to mean 'home' in Tamil) were considered terrorist sympathizers, if not terrorists themselves. During that same month, days removed from the end of the Sri Lankan civil war, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) dropped support for Sri Lanka (York, 30 May 2009, p. F1). CIDA's official page cites the end of the civil war, an improving economy, and a solid rank on the United Nation's human development index (as of 2011) as reasons why Sri Lanka "is ready to move forward on its long-term development plan to reduce poverty" (CIDA, 2012). This decision is all the more startling when considering that this occurred during a month in which thousands of Tamil protestors took to the streets of Toronto and Ottawa, urging the Conservative government to intervene in peace talks with the Sri Lankan government, arguing that the Sri Lankan government had engaged in many human rights violations.

This shift continues still through October 2010, when the Conservative federal government introduced a draft of Bill C-49. This bill was meant to protect Canada from 'bogus' refugee claimants and deter migrants from using human smugglers in their travels. It was to accomplish these goals by designating "irregular arrivals", such as the refugees on the MV Sun Sea as "designated foreign nationals", and barring them from applying for refugee status for up to five years; barring "designated foreign nationals" from sponsoring family members for up to five years; and permitting the imprisonment of "designated foreign nationals" for up to 12 months. While Bill C-49 did not pass under the minority Conservative government, it has taken shape under Bill C-31, drafted by a majority Conservative government that has already passed a bill that will significantly reshape

Canada's laws on crime and incarceration. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 5, these bills represent the organized reaction to the news media coverage on the MV Sun Sea. I will also argue that images of Tamils on the MV Sun Sea are crystallized versions of the images of Tamils from the May 2009 protest coverage. This is only a brief sketch of the attitudes and boundary shifts surrounding these events. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will discuss these in much greater detail, but for now it is possible to see the relevance of Cohen's theory of moral panic.

## 2.2    More moral panic principles

Cohen's (2002) work on moral panics is certainly very relevant and the crux of my own theoretical approach. However, Cohen does not provide a particularly strong theorization about where power factors into the lifespan of a moral panic. A lot of the responsibility has been placed on media because they play the most active role in escalating the panic. While this is true, power is an important and complex aspect of a moral panic that warrants further discussion. The three theories of moral panic that will illuminate the presence of power are the *elite-engineered model*, the *interest-group perspective*, and the *grassroots model* (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009). These different models add to Cohen's solid base and help to answer why a moral panic might take the particular shape it does, and what groups play the most active and significant roles.

### 2.2.1    *Elite-engineered Model*

The *elite-engineered model* argues that the ruling elite (i.e. dominant capitalist class) engineer moral panics, generating and sustaining public panic over an issue that is not terribly harmful to the society as a whole (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2009: 62). This model is most famously presented by Stuart Hall et al. (1978) in a study of 'mugging' as a moral panic in early-1970s Great Britain. Hall et al. (1978) argued that the 'mugging' moral panic was

engineered to deflect attention from an emerging crisis in the capitalist system, such as falling profits increasing inflation, and economic recession.

In this model, Hall et al. complicate the role of media in ways that Cohen did not. The elite-engineered model considers the social production of news in the sense that media is a reflection of dominant power relations and a tool used by elites to reproduce structures and relations of domination. In this sense, news media are still responsible for inciting moral panic, but their actions are considered more purposeful as the ruling class and its elite members coordinate them. This purposefulness is something that is missing or incomplete in Cohen's moral panic theory. In other words, there is someone driving the ship on a specific course.

Furthermore, more than just media, the whole social control apparatus was part of the scheme. Hall et al.'s (1978) elite-engineered model argued that the law-and-order campaign, generated through the 'mugging' moral panic, served to legitimate state power as the only "effective means of defending hegemony" (p. 66). This legitimation of state power and law served as a retooled "instrument of class domination" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 196). The idea that one class can orchestrate moral panic is too conspiratorial to believe. However, this model develops notions of power and purposefulness in moral panic as important considerations, and that at some point, moral panics may serve the intent of specific members of a population.

### 2.2.2 Interest-group Perspective

The *interest-group perspective* focuses on the "middle rungs of the power and status hierarchy" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 67). These interest groups include portions of media, religious groups, educational organizations, and many more, all of which "may have an independent stake in bringing an issue to the fore, focusing attention on it or

transforming the slant of news stories covering it, alerting legislators, demanding stricter law enforcement, instituting new educational curricula, and so on" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 67). This model asks which of these groups, among others, has something to gain from a "widespread panic about a given behavior or institution" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 67).

Unlike the elite-engineered model, group interests are independent of the desires of ruling elite, even contradicting them (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 67). However, even though interests and material gains may be at stake, it is important to note that these groups may have a sincere belief in the morality of their cause (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, pp. 67-69). While material pursuit might outweigh moral gains, the two are not always easily separated.

On the other hand, like the ruling elite, interest groups cannot manufacture a moral panic on their own; "some latent fear or stress must preexist in the general public" because "concern over a nonexistent or relatively trivial threat cannot be conjured out of thin air" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 69). While the interest-group perspective sheds light on the mid-level material and moral entrepreneurs involved in moral panic, this is yet another incomplete model, lacking an adequate explanation for how such widespread support can be mustered.

As Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) point out in their wonderfully written *Moral Panics*, media outlets make up one of these interest groups (p. 54). Compelling news stories often get bigger, usually as a way to sustain or increase readership. The same stories get reported in different ways, by different voices, in different newspapers, and in different sections of those newspapers. The amount and diversity of the coverage speaks to the noteworthiness of the story. All of this leads to the ubiquitous presence of a news story that

would otherwise not exist. This is all very cyclical and the growth of a story is good business. The ubiquity of a story may make it all the more compelling, which in turn makes it appear more noteworthy, which may lead to an increased readership. In part, these factors often lead to a predictable pattern of 'over-reporting'. Cohen's work exhibits the key role news media have in escalating incidents into moral panic, but sometimes those attempts do not work. The reason they fail to break beyond media is because they do not resonate with a large enough segment of the population and thus fail to gain any real steam. In this case, these vapid, manufactured panics are mainly confined to media.

As a way to differentiate moral panics from these otherwise oversaturated news stories, I suggest using the concept *flashpoint*. Borrowing from studies in celebrity culture, a flashpoint occurs "where a particular celebrity completely dominates media coverage, producing an excessively focused global public" (Turner, Bonner, and Marshall, 2000, p. 3). This is a brief, but intensely covered event. Here is where I mark a distinction between moral panic and flashpoint. A true moral panic requires an issue concerning deviance to reverberate throughout a significant sector of a society, enough to be considered consequential. To operationalize this, a true moral panic must spur some sort of change in social control such as: (i) an attempted or successful reform of policy or law; or (ii) intensifying the practices and/or punishments of already existing laws. This marks the legacy of a true moral panic. A flashpoint is simply a story or string of related stories that are transient and overrepresented in media for a relatively short period of time, but, on its own, is otherwise devoid of longstanding consequences. I argue that with this framework in mind, the response to the landing of the MV Sun Sea was undoubtedly a moral panic.

### 2.2.3  Grassroots Model

The *grassroots model* supposes that panics typically originate with the general public (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 55). This theory affirms that while politicians and media may influence these general concerns, unless they strike a chord of dormant concern, they cannot generate adequate public participation to foster a moral panic. In this model, the public is the driving agent: politicians make speeches that echo and appeal to the views made by their constituents; media distribute stories that the public is likely to find distressing; and activists launch social movement organizations that whet the attitudes held by their supporters (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 56). These populist responses are all designed to quell the constituency's deeply rooted attitudes and beliefs that there is a significant danger to their values, safety, or very existence (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, pp. 56-57).

The grassroots model of moral panic exemplifies the need for a real panic to strike a chord with a sizeable segment of the population. Moral panic simply cannot be manufactured. However, this model also highlights the roles media and politicians have in "fanning the flames" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 56). Without their presence, concerns may not reach the critical mass they need to become a full-fledged moral panic.

Taken together, given both their strengths and shortcomings, these three models show that "[n]o moral panic is complete without an explanation from all societal levels, from elites to the grassroots, and the full spectrum from ideology and morality, at one pole, to crass status and material interest at the other (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 71).

### 2.3  The five elements of *Moral Panics*

In response to the shortcomings of these three models, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) have developed a crystallized model of moral panic and its five elements. This model is inspired by Cohen's model and there are many overlapping elements. However, Goode

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and Ben-Yehuda's model moves away from the disaster analogy and finds more detailed ways to operationalize moral panic. This operationalization is to both uncover the sources and purpose of a moral panic, but also to rigorously test the presence of a moral panic, as opposed to something akin to the flashpoint concept I discussed earlier. These five elements are: *concern, hostility, consensus, disproportion*, and *volatility*.

## 2.3.1 Concern

The first element of moral panic is the "heightened level of concern over the behavior of a certain group or category and the consequences that behavior presumably causes for one or more sectors of the society" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 37). This is a widespread anxiety that can be measured through public opinion polls, public commentary in media, proposed legislation, number of arrests and imprisonments, and social movement activity (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 37).

## 2.3.2 Hostility

The second element of moral panic is "an increased level of hostility toward the group or category regarded as engaging in the behavior or causing the condition in question" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 38). Here is where the distinction between "Us" and "Them" occurs. "Us" constitutes the respectable society and "them" constitutes the deviants that may harm or threaten that society's values. Similar to the concept of devil making earlier, profiles of deviants are established, they are made readily identifiable, and hostility towards them is expressed through stereotypes.

## 2.3.3 Consensus

The third element of moral panic is a "substantial or widespread agreement or consensus... that the threat is real, serious, and caused by the wrongdoing group members and their behavior" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 38). Depending on the concern at

hand, this substantial agreement or consensus may be held by the majority of the society, or it may only concern certain groups or categories (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 39). The caveat is, unlike the elite-engineered model, that this consensus must reach some sector of the general public.

## 2.3.4 *Disproportion*

The fourth element of moral panic is *disproportion*, "the implication that public concern is in excess of what is appropriate if concern were directly proportional to objective harm" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 40). In other words, the consensus group believes or states that more people are engaged in this deviant behavior than the number of those actually involved. In terms of the reaction phase, disproportionate measurements of harm often result in disproportionate measures in response to the actual threat. Without disproportion and the crystallized polarization of "Us" and "Them" there can be no moral panic. Even in moral panics about imaginary threats, the key is to "emphasize the contrast between the condition or behavior that is denounced and the correctness of the righteous folk engaged in the denunciation" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 249).

Disproportion, the aforementioned linchpin of moral panic, has sometimes been attacked as a meaningless, immeasurable concept. Some critics have argued that it is too subjective to be measured, thereby trivializing the study of moral panic altogether (Waddington, 1986; Cornwell & Linders, 2002). Waddington (1986) finds moral panic to be too "value-laden" (p. 258) and the measurement of the problem against the response to be too difficult to determine (p. 246).

However, the concept of disproportion can be very useful if properly operationalized. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) do just that by outlining five measurements to verify the presence of disproportionality: (i) Figures cited to measure the scope of the

problem are grossly exaggerated (p. 76); (ii) the threat that is feared is non-existent according to available evidence (p. 76); (iii) when legends or "tall tales" regarding the deviant group(s) are more readily believed than normally (p. 76); (iv) two similar conditions exist, but one condition is acutely focused on, while the other is largely ignored, even if the real threat or damages the first condition causes are equal to or lesser than the second condition (p. 77); and/or (v) "the attention paid to a given condition at one point in time is vastly greater than that paid to it during a previous or later time without corresponding increase in the objective seriousness" (p. 77). These five criteria of disproportion contain many of the elements in Cohen's inventory and reaction phases, but in a way that explicitly measures and verifies moral panic.

## 2.3.5 *Volatility*

The fifth element of moral panic is their volatile nature; moral panics can both erupt and subside very suddenly (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 41). However, especially for the purposes of my study, it is important to note that phases and elements of some moral panics may lie dormant for long periods, some of which have a tendency to occasionally reappear (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 41). Also, some long-lasting moral panics, such as those that find various youth populations to be deviant, see the intensity of concern wax and wane over time (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 43).

Goode and Ben-Yehuda outline two types of moral panics: ones that vanish without a trace and ones that leave a lasting impression. On one hand, some moral panics vanish without legal, cultural, or moral changes to society. Essentially, these panics leave a society no different than it was before (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 41). The term 'moral panic' is one of the few concepts used by sociologists that have permeated popular culture (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 29). It is so frequently thrown around by politicians, pundits, and

the public alike that, perhaps, the term might not seem to mean much at all anymore. This might suggest its use, as the main theoretical guiding force of this research project, was a rather dubious choice. While it may be true that we live in a world that might seem filled with moral panics, these inconsequential panics should be thought of as flashpoints rather than moral panics. This distinction helps to add rigour to the study of moral panic, both satisfying critics and making things clearer for scholars using the theory. While several episodes of flashpoints may one day lead to a full-fledged moral panic, they should not be misconstrued as one until these criteria are met.

On the other hand, some moral panics may become institutionalized, leaving behind recognizable changes in the form of "social movement organizations, legislation, enforcement practices, informal interpersonal norms or practices for punishing transgressors" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 41). The immediacy of the panic may fade, but real consequences remain. Goode and Ben-Yehuda write, "the implications of moral panics have barely begun to be understood, suggesting that the subject needs a great deal more attention and nuance, not less" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 43). With the additions and distinctions I have proposed, I believe my analysis answers that call for the evolution of moral panic theory. If my efforts to differentiate flashpoint and moral panic are acceptable, a sixth element, *legacy*, would be a useful addition. The next section will address some of the possible legacies of moral panic relevant to my research on Tamils in Canada.

## 2.4    Legacies

### 2.4.1    *The production and policing of Tamilphobia*

The post-9/11 moral panic of Islamic terrorism that has swept much of the Western world has resulted in the conflation of terrorist and Muslim (Saeed, 2007, p. 446). *Islamophobia* has emerged as an important topic of study (Cesari, 2009; Esman, 2009; Saeed,

2007). What has emerged is a new form of racism or xenophobia that shifts away from biological issues towards cultural incompatibilities. This can be seen in the number of remarks stating multiculturalism has failed in Europe. The perceived incompatibility between Europeans and Muslims has marked Muslims as a foreign 'Other' living in a place where they do not belong. This public sentiment labels Muslims as different, but more in the sense of being defunct than distinct. Moreover, the convergence of labeling and blocked opportunities has caused many Muslims to become more isolated and a small number to turn to militancy as a form of resistance (Esman, 2009). This was particularly evident in several weeks of civil unrest taking place in France during the Fall of 2005. The participants were not militant Islamist terrorists, but disenchanted youth of Muslim and North African origins, many of whom reside in ethnic ghettos, demonstrating their grievances with a profound lack of economic options and racism (Esman, 2009).

It is important to note that compared to other Western states, Canada has not experienced the same intensity of Islamophobia; its immigrants are more likely to become citizens and there is little evidence of immigrant or minority ghettos (Kymlicka 2010). Will Kymlicka[1] (2010) cites Canada's history of multicultural policy, as well as the attribution of multiculturalism as part of a broader Canadian identity, as the reasons behind these very different landscapes. Moreover, Kymlicka (2010) finds little evidence of the 'failed multiculturalism' of Europe in the Canadian context. As a result, immigrants to Canada enjoy high levels of political and social integration compared to other Western states.

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[1] I use Kymlicka's report for two reasons: (i) it is a report commissioned by Citizenship and Immigrantion Canada's assessing the state and success of multiculturalism; and (ii) Kymlicka is interviewed as an expert during the May 2009 coverage (Jimenez, 25 May 2009, p. L1), both to reflect on Canada's success with multiculturalism and to specifically to comment on the Tamil demonstrations.

While these are all positive findings, there may be signs of cracks in Canadian multiculturalism, both in political and social practices. First, while Kymlicka finds that Canadian news media generally have lower levels of "immigrant bashing" than other national media (particularly the UK), I will demonstrate in Chapters 4 and 5 that there is a strong presence of this in Canadian news media. This is particularly evident in labeling the nearly 500 Tamil migrants on the MV Sun Sea, in very stereotypical codes, as "boat people", "queue jumpers", "bogus refugee claimants", and "terrorists".

The fear and distrust of these Tamil migrants was most evident in the speech making that followed. The most vocal cabinet minister was Minister of Public Safety Vic Toews, not the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Jason Kenney. Focusing the issue around public safety rather than immigration both represented and perpetuated many of the views published in the newspaper coverage. This unequivocally framed the nature of Canada's response: the border and those who enter it must be policed. While it can easily be assumed that 9/11 was what set it off, Sherene Razack (1999) points to the 1990s as the marking of a new era in policing the border (160). Under the Progressive Conservative Mulroney government, this new era set out to distinguish legitimate asylum seekers or immigrants from the illegitimate (Razack, 1999, p. 160). In other words, categories of good and bad immigrants emerged: the "construct of the good immigrant who establishes Canada's essential goodness, and the bad immigrant who forces otherwise generous people into taking stern disciplinary measures" (Razack, 1999, p. 174).

Razack (1999) argues that more than ever, immigration became about who can be trusted (p. 160). Race remained central to this trust issue, with migrants from Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan being among the least trusted. Razack (1999) finds that policing the border also requires policing bodies of people of colour already inside it (p. 160). As I will

argue later, both Tamils already living in Canada and at our borders have profiles that highlight criminality as a core component. Questions of fraud at the border may be finding their way within. While it may not be as visible or intense as those in Europe and the United States, Canada may have a "racialized structure of citizenship" (Razack, 1999, p. 162). The moral panic towards the presence of Tamil asylum seekers in Canada, along with the stereotypes that emerged and evolved from the May 2009 protests, have intensified policing efforts and questions of trust. While this distrust appears to be episodic, its occasional intense presence may be indicative of a *Tamilphobia*. I argue that these sustained feelings of distrust and surveillance produces a legacy of negative, internalized effects for at least some Tamils in Canada. This is especially true when moral panic is institutionalized.

### 2.4.2 Consciousness consequences

While there is strong evidence that immigrants to Canada enjoy high levels of integration, economic performance has decreased for recent immigrants (Kymlicka, 2010), and there are signs that second-generation visible minorities feel lower levels of "belonging" to Canada, compared to both their parents and White counterparts (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). While economic integration may contribute to social integration, it does not guarantee it (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). With recent immigrants' economic performance on the decline, it arguably becomes less of a factor in spurring feelings of integration. However, in terms of feelings of belonging for immigrants from visible minorities, feelings of vulnerability and discrimination are of much greater significance than economic performance (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007).

According to data from the Ethnic Diversity Survey (Statistics Canada, 2003), of the recent racialized immigrants to respond, more than a third stated they had experienced discrimination, compared to 19.2 percent from recent European immigrants. Even though

they have higher expectations for social acceptance than their parents (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007,), 42.2 percent of children of immigrants from racial minorities said they had experienced discrimination (Statistics Canada, 2003). Of all the different minority groups, second generation Black and South Asian (where Tamils would qualify) respondents were least likely to self-identify as Canadian (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). This lower sense of belonging may be compounded for young Tamils as they continue to be exposed to the negative stereotypes, distrust, and surveillance of Tamils in Canada.

The growing angst towards Tamil people – both within and approaching Canadian borders – by media, politicians, and Canadians at large may lead to many negative consequences. These consequences include the creation of a large, disenfranchised Tamil diaspora living in Canada. One possible outcome is that members of this diaspora might develop anxieties stemming from these perceptions, suffering quietly and possibly resulting in generations of Tamils that struggle to integrate. These anxieties might also cause members of this diaspora to openly rebel, perhaps violently, in resistance to these attitudes. Milton J. Esman (2009) argues that cultural and economic deprivation for Muslim diasporas in Western states, particularly in Europe, may force them to become more isolated and turn to militancy as a means of expression and resistance.

These anxieties are not isolated, nor are they located solely at the individual level. They may manifest in a large number of people within a community of shared experiences. When these anxieties are widespread and deeply entrenched, they may form what is called *double consciousness*. This term was coined by W.E.B. Du Bois and represented the central focus of his seminal 1903 work, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois (1989), a Black scholar writing about the experiences of Black people in post-slavery United States, wrote that the feeling of double consciousness is asking one's self, "How does it feel to be a problem?" (p.

4). Du Bois (1989) argued that protracted experiences of slavery, elimination of culture, economic depravity, and institutionalized racism converged, leaving Blacks in America with no true self-consciousness, but only an ability to see their self and their worth "through the eyes of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 5).[2]

At its most tangible state, double consciousness takes its shape as one's own individual anxiety. However, what might appear to be a personal trouble is inextricably linked to public issues. Du Bois demonstrates this in his work where he links the history of American politics and culture to the double consciousness of its Black population. In turn, I will work to do the same in the chapters to follow, linking media, political, and public dispositions to a possible emerging Tamil double consciousness. Linking the personal to the public is an important step towards understanding double consciousness, with the goal being a reversal of its effects and putting an end to the practices that perpetuate the problem.

To assess the presence of double consciousness in the case of the Canadian Tamil diaspora, the first step is to establish that there is a pervasive sentiment in which Tamils in Canada are viewed as an 'Other'. While Tamils have only been in Canada en masse since 1983, the circumstances necessary for fostering double consciousness certainly exist. Through episodes of moral panic, contemporary media provide the conditions capable of accelerating this 'othering' process, while the current Canadian political climate fortifies these attitudes through speech-making and legislative changes. Legislative changes leave a legacy of the moral panic by institutionalizing the fears, stereotypes, and boundaries by which it was measured. In a sense, policies borne from moral panic are the semi-permanent lens from which the moral panic and its deviants were viewed.

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[2] For Chapters 3 and 4, keep in mind the idea of a "world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."

Du Bois (1989) wrote of double consciousness as a state where one always looks at one's self through the eyes of others (p. 5). Those others were White Americans that made 'Others' out of the Black population. Double consciousness is like an identity fissure: "One ever feels his twoness,– an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois, 1989, p. 5). Here Du Bois underscores the destructiveness of this condition. The process of healing double consciousness is the merger of those two selves where neither is lost (Du Bois, 1989, p. 5).

Much has been made of Du Bois being influenced by essentialist race-based science when he had set out to dismiss many of its tenets (Mocombe, 2009). True, Du Bois located double consciousness in dark bodies, but consider the spirit of what he was writing. Double consciousness was located in dark bodies because it was forced upon them through a racist culture of White superiority. The use of blood, body, and soul set the context, showing that double consciousness sits in the most intimate of places: the self. However, even though double consciousness is such a personal phenomenon, it is undoubtedly the outcome of very public circumstances.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1903) expanded the use of double consciousness, highlighting the split within Black identities as not quite belonging to either their African heritage or Western location:

> The worst feature of this double consciousness is that the two lives, of the understanding and the soul, which we lead, show very little relation to each other; never meet and measure each other; one prevails now... and the other prevails then, all infinitude and paradise; and, with the progress of life, the two discover no greater disposition to reconcile themselves (pp. 353-354).

Paul Gilroy's (1993) addition, among others, to the concept of double consciousness was in conceptualizing Black people in the West as a diaspora. Black culture in the West

"represents a response to the successive displacements, migrations, and journeys (forced or otherwise) which have come to constitute these... special conditions of existence" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 111). While Tamils in Canada have different reasons for their migration, namely the Sri Lankan civil war, they certainly represent a significant diaspora of violently displaced people. The Sri Lankan civil war forced many Tamils to leave Sri Lanka; they are not simply economic migrants. The May 2009 protests represent a key moment for understanding the "special conditions" that place Tamils between two homes. For these Tamils, especially those active in the May 2009 protests, the relationship between Canada and Sri Lanka was a major point of scrutiny in several newspapers, with some coverage voiced that Tamils need to go home to solve their problems. The question remains: Is there a home and where is it?

Ernest Allen Jr. (1996) provides a succinct overview of the three main anxieties inherent in double consciousness. First, Black life and thought are both aware of and stymied by the power and pervasiveness of mainstream (i.e. White) stereotypes against them. Second, racism blocks Black Americans from American culture. This can be expanded to Western culture and I suggest other diasporic communities, albeit within a different historical tradition. Third, these external projections are internalized as embodied dispositions, resulting in the conflict of being African and American simultaneously, without wholly being either one, and viewing one's self through the eyes of the oppressing group. With these conditions, I will argue that moral panics have the potential to intensify double consciousness in diasporic communities, particularly the Tamil diaspora in Canada.

While moral panics can disappear as suddenly as they appear, they represent an intense burst of disdain for one particular social group. For Cohen's Mods and Rockers, they were identified largely through fashion, and when the trends disappeared so did the ability to single them out. However, some moral panics leave lasting effects and there is no fashion

change that changes the colour of one's skin or heritage. A possible example of double consciousness in the Canadian Tamil community is the story of Conservative MP candidate Gavan Paranchothy (Reinhart, 14 April 2011). Paranchothy had adopted several different names leading up to his bid for candidacy and has worked to obscure his Tamil background. Paranchothy was born Thayan Raghavan Paranchothy, shortened his name in 2009 to T. Raghavan Paranchothy, changed his name again in March 2011 to Ragavan Paranchothy, and finally changed his name to Gavan Paranchothy in April 2011. Paranchothy's pattern of name changes curiously parallels less than desirable images of Tamil protestors and asylum seekers in Canadian news media.

Could this be indicative of a pattern that could emerge for other public Tamil figures? Could this have implications at other levels, such as Tamil school children or job seekers as a way to conceal their Tamil heritage? Certainly this is not a new phenomenon as other immigrants have practiced a form of name shortening or Anglicizing to better fit in (i.e. Asian immigrants in the 'Asian Invasion' moral panic). The point is that this is not indicative of a multicultural and accepting approach to settlement. I have found an answer to some of these questions in my discussions with young Tamil people and will discuss those answers in Chapter 6.

In review, the phases and dimensions for understanding moral panic, outlined by Cohen and Goode and Ben-Yehuda, guide the theoretical framework for my research on organized responses to Tamils in Canada.

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) point out, "The moral panic is one of the few concepts developed by sociologists that has escaped the academic ghetto and suffused into the popular and media vocabulary" (p. 29). Along with their call to add more nuances to the study of moral panic, I have proposed new criteria for rigourously testing moral panic with

the additional element of legacy as a benchmark. Again, legacy can be operationalized as (i) an attempted or successful reform of policy or law; or (ii) intensifying the practices and/or punishments of already existing laws. Without meeting this benchmark, the type of transient fervor that would otherwise be described as moral panic should now be considered a flashpoint. I will demonstrate in Chapters 4 and 5 that the newspaper coverage on Tamils in Canada and institutionalized response from the federal government meet the benchmark of moral panic. Chapter 6, guided by my study of Duboisian double consciousness, is an analysis of institutionalized legacy becoming an internalized one.

Even with the proposed additions, these two seminal models for analyzing moral panic guide my focus on the processes that differentiate deviants from 'common folk', characterize deviants as folk devils, and how stereotypes crystallize through detailed and sustained concern. These two models highlight the key roles played by representatives of the state, media, citizenry, and presumed deviants. Taken together, these models make clear the power of discourse, including how presumed deviants (ie. Tamil activists and Tamil asylum seekers) are spoken about and by who is doing the speaking. These models will guide the critical discourse analysis central to my research in the review of nearly 450 Canadian newspaper articles and conversations with ten Tamil youth.[3] The methodological aspects of this critical discourse analysis are outlined in Chapter 3 and carried out in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

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[3] Alan Hunt is another theorist instrumental in this field of study. However, because his work does not typically focus on media coverage I have chosen to draw primarily from Cohen and Goode and Ben-Yehuda.

# Chapter 3 - Methodology

The primary goals of this research are two-fold: (i) to identify the means by which popular culture representations stigmatize Tamil Canadians; and (ii) how such stigmatization is incorporated (or not) into Tamil Canadian youths' sense of identity and belonging to Canada.

To accomplish the first goal, I have conducted an extensive critical discourse analysis of six mainstream Canadian newspapers in two periods covering key issues involving Tamils in Canada. To accomplish the second goal, I conducted two rounds of focus groups and several interviews with young Tamil Canadians, using a phenomenological approach to examine and present my analysis.

## 3.1    Social constructionism

This research has been conducted primarily through a social-constructionist frame (inspired by Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Hacking, 1995). A great deal of this project involves the process of meaning making, but without resorting to positivist claims about 'truth' or 'objectivity'. However, this is not to say that the outcome of my analysis does not bear truth or objectivity – it just does so without resorting to positivist methodology.

Social constructionism is the view that what we know, how we know it, and what our knowledge amounts to (i.e. reality and society as we know it) are derived from social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). While we largely take reality for granted, it is not inevitable or predetermined. Rather, reality is deeply rooted in history, context, has different meanings to different groups, and is in an ongoing process of negotiation. Ian Hacking (1995) argues that virtually everything that is social is socially constructed. Instead of being concerned with proving or disproving this point, Hacking is most interested in the *ways* in which things get socially constructed. However, this can be somewhat difficult to ascertain

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because even though social aspects of reality are socially constructed, many things are still taken for granted.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that social researchers can overcome this predicament by collecting many different standpoints. This allows social researchers to move beyond their own standpoint (i.e. social position). By using different standpoints to scrutinize their own views as well as the other views collected, social scientists can create the type of distance from their own standpoint that will allow them to transcend their own subjectivities, resulting in a sort of quasi-objectivity. While this does not equate to true objectivity, such a thing cannot plausibly exist in a socially constructed reality.

Through an analysis of six different Canadian newspapers and discussions with ten Tamil Canadian youth, I have collected enough standpoints to scrutinize my own position as a researcher, as well as the standpoints of each voice from my collected data. Six newspapers provide a plethora of standpoints, including (but not limited to) the editors and journalists involved in reporting stories, the letter-writing members of the public, members of political office, police officers, experts, bystanders, and activists. These standpoints are scrutinized, compared, and contrasted to each other, interpreted through my standpoint as a researcher and choices of theoretical and methodological lenses, and then tested again in discussions with my research participants.

The subjects of deviance, boundaries, activism, and citizenship are all taken for granted social constructs found in my research. To make sense of these subjects in a well-rounded and critical manner, they are deconstructed through a series of many levels. They are first broken down at a theoretical level: moral panic theory (Cohen, 2002; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2009) and deviance and boundary control (Cohen, 2002; Erikson, 1966). The next level of deconstruction is by making sense of them through historical, political, and

geographic context: post-9/11 Islamaphobia (Saeed, 2007; Cesari, 2009); neoconservativism and neoliberalism (Kennelly, 2009; Razack, 1999); and global diasporas (Esman 2009). As meanings form, they are interpreted and deconstructed through a lens of acceptance and consciousness (Allen, 1996; Du Bois, 1989; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007), with both newspaper articles and discussions with young Tamil Canadians servings as sources. Similar to the phases and elements of moral panic theory, these levels of deconstruction are not necessarily sequential; there is a great deal of reverberating feedback that loops to and from each level.

What follows through the rest of the chapter is an outline of my media study and a rationale for using Canadian newspapers as my media-based data source; the principles and application of critical discourse analysis; and the guiding principles, criteria, and obstacles in my focus groups and interviews.

## 3.2    Timelines and newspapers

The first method is a detailed critical discourse analysis of several Canadian newspapers centering on two important recent events: the actions of Tamil protesters in Toronto during May 2009 and the landing of the MV Sun Sea on the coast of British Columbia in August 2010. These two events mark the most prominent news events covering Tamils in Canadian media. A major goal in this analysis, like other qualitative studies of this nature, is to reveal themes that emerge from the data (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 392).

The first period, the coverage on the Toronto protests, ranges from May 9 to May 30, 2009. Tamil protestors organized in Toronto for several weeks and orchestrated a number of demonstrations. Their goals included raising awareness of the Sri Lankan civil war, its violent and impending conclusion, and urging the Conservative government to take action in peace negotiations between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (more commonly known as 'Tamil Tigers') and Sri Lankan officials. The most significant protest was the

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occupation and blocking of the Gardiner Expressway by 5,000 Tamil protestors on May 8, 2009.

The coverage of the following four newspapers was analyzed: the *Toronto Star*, *The Toronto Sun*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *National Post*. These newspapers represent coverage at the local level in Toronto (*Toronto Star* and *The Toronto Sun*) and coverage at the national level (*The Globe and Mail* and *National Post*).

Beginning with a study of the Gardiner Expressway protests was useful for contextualizing emerging representations of Tamils in the Canadian public consciousness. This allowed for a comparison of these two events to see how coverage and responses have changed or stayed the same. This level of analysis was also designed to uncover tropes and stereotypes in action and the scope of Tamil representations. At its best, the coverage during this period painted Tamils in Canada as compassionate and desperate, albeit a little disorganized. At its worst, Tamils were portrayed as a nuisance, rule-breakers, extremists, and terrorist sympathizers.

The second period, the landing of the MV Sun Sea and the political fallout, ranged from August 1 to October 31, 2010. This period covered the weeks leading up to and following the landing of the MV Sun Sea, a ship carrying nearly five hundred Sri Lankan Tamil asylum-seekers. This period extended beyond the coverage of the MV Sun Sea and its passengers. The purpose was to include the responses from both the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Public Safety, journalists and expert opinions on Canada's immigration reputation and practices, and the amendments made to refugee claimant laws.

The newspapers selected for this section of the media analysis were *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, *Toronto Star*, *The Toronto Sun*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *National Post*. The rationale behind studying these six newspapers was to obtain a comprehensive media and

political response to the MV Sun Sea and Tamil asylum-seekers. The Globe and Mail and National Post are representative of national coverage of the event and uncovered the level of exposure and discourse at a national level. Studying the Toronto Star and Toronto Sun were useful because Toronto is home to Canada's largest media market and the largest community of Sri Lankan Tamils. This coverage helped to uncover how members of the settled diaspora spoke for or spoke to the passengers of the MV Sun Sea. Finally, a study of The Vancouver Sun and The Province was useful for revealing the immediate responses of the region initially exposed to the MV Sun Sea.

Throughout this analysis, several questions were asked: How frequently did reports directly covering these events appear in the newspapers? Where were these reports located in the newspaper? How greatly did local coverage differ from national coverage? What type of language was used to describe protestors/migrants, their actions, and their signs and symbols? Whose voices were heard or represented (ie. politicians, journalists, and activists/advocates, among others)? The purpose of these questions was to determine what newspaper coverage and political action revealed about Canada as a host society.

These newspapers were selected because they represent the highest levels of circulation per locale, as reported by the Canadian Newspaper Associations' (2010) *Circulation Data Report 2009*. In light of Cohen's (2002) research on Mods and Rockers, I anticipated varied perspectives and levels of sensationalization, especially in the differences between local and national coverage.

### 3.2.1 *Why newspapers?*

Now that all of the newspapers in this qualitative study have been listed, it might be asked why I would study newspapers at all given the number of different mediums for news and information. In a 2008 study consisting of 1,000 interviews exploring daily media use

and news consumption, it was found that Canadians acquire their news and information from a number of sources: television, newspapers, radio, magazines, computer-based Internet, and mobile device-based Internet (Solutions Research Group [SRG], 2008). Respondents spent 2.3 hours each day consuming news and information. Their account of media usage time was broken down into six categories:

| Source | Percentage of Time | Source | Percentage of Time |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 24% | Newspapers | 22% |
| Internet (PC) | 22% | Magazines | 17% |
|  | 13% | Internet (mobile) | 2% |

(SRG, 2008, p. 19)

Given the number of different sources for news, newspapers might not appear to be so significant. However, consider that much of the time spent reading news online might be reading news from a newspaper website. The one hundred most visited websites in Canada include The Globe and Mail (37), Toronto Star (52), and Vancouver Province (94) (Alexa, 2012). Except for *CBC Television* (31), *The Globe and Mail* was the highest ranked news website in the nation (Alexa, 2012). Then consider many articles that appear in the print version of a newspaper also appear in the online version – often for free. It is true the Internet represents a nexus of multimedia and many online newspapers feature videos, but about half of online local and national news consumption is text, with the other half being videos (SRG, 2008, p. 44). While online video news might be on the rise, forty percent of online news seekers still preferred text compared to thirty-two percent who preferred video, with twenty-eight percent remaining undecided (SRG, 2008, p. 41). Keeping video news in mind, half of Canadians were first exposed to a news story on television, compared to seventeen and

sixteen percent in a newspaper or on the Internet, respectively. When Canadians followed up on a news story – and only sixty-three percent did – more than a quarter of them chose the Internet. If we make the safe assumption that many online news seekers visit the websites of Canada's biggest newspapers for their information, it is easy to see that while newspapers may have transformed in the digital age they still remain relevant.

## 3.3    Critical discourse analysis

### 3.3.1    *Principles of critical discourse analysis and breaking through the narrative*

Jane Stokes (2008), when writing about the features and functions of news, writes that we cannot help but interpret our lives through narrativization. This means that as a society we are compelled to write and read 'stories' and that our news is as structured by story elements as any theatrical performance. These narratives are one of the means by which we reproduce our values and ideas (Stokes, 2008, p. 67). A good story is one that makes us forget that it is a narrative. Stokes warns researchers to remain critical and not to get carried away by the story. Researchers are urged to interrupt the story, analyze it, and dissect it (Stokes, 2008, p. 67).

With Stokes' advice in mind, I made use of Bent Flyvjberg's (2001) principles of *phronetic* social science and Teun A. Van Dijk's (1993) principles of critical discourse analysis to guide my own analysis. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that for social science to truly matter, it must take a phronetic approach, meaning an approach that is context-specific, prudent and engaged in important social issues, and an activity done in public for the public (p. 166). Flyvbjerg sees discourse (and theory) as coming secondary to practice, meaning that a discourse analysis prone to tunnel vision cannot engage in praxis or social science that matters. An overemphasis on a (sometimes) jargon-filled toolkit, combined with a lack of context can make a discourse analysis prone to an undermining narrowness.

To avoid this tunnel vision, I incorporated the principles of critical discourse analysis outlined by Van Dijk, which mesh well with Flyvbjerg's emphasis on phronesis. While critical discourse analysis can still be somewhat encumbered by being linguistically centered, the principles outlined by Van Dijk (1993) encourage and outline a way of conducting critical discourse analysis with prudence and praxis as guiding forces and ultimate outcomes. Combined, prudence and practice are meant to guide a researcher to study a topic that is of consequence and develop an analysis that moves beyond theory and into practice.

Van Dijk (1993) outlines a complex, multidisciplinary approach that might be called 'sociopolitical discourse analysis' (p. 249). This approach focuses on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). Dominance is defined as 'the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality' (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). More than simply studying text, this approach requires critical discourse analysts to understand the structures and strategies of discourse, including how power and dominance operate in social relations (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). These principles of critical discourse analysis require an awareness of material conditions, more than just speech, which produce and reproduce social inequality at the societal level. Power is at the center of social inequality and a key concept in critical discourse analysis. Discourse analysis without a strong conception of power fails to comprehensively illuminate the differentiating effects of discourse.

The role of critical discourse analysis is to deconstruct discourse in a way that can penetrate the surface, to pull apart common sense and make it uncommon. In effect, the end goal is to create counter-hegemony. The comprehensiveness and size of this media analysis

provided enough material to move beyond the detail and see the patterns of the news coverage.

### 3.3.2   Cracking the codes

The discourse analysis, guided by my theoretical framework outlined in the preceding chapter, outlined some of the racialized code words and discourses of illegality associated with the Tamil community in Canada. These include terms that conflate Tamil activists to terrorists and their youthfulness to dangerousness. Other terms are more relevant to the analysis of the MV Sun Sea coverage, such as "boat people," "human cargo," and "waves" (Hier & Greenberg, 2002). Such terms and their centrality within media representations are key to understanding the way issues of security are shaped. Several Canadian newspapers have added to this lexicon, with Tamils on the MV Sun Sea labeled as "queue jumpers" and "bogus refugee claimants" along with allusions to their involvement in criminal and terrorist activity.

Many of these codes are quite obvious, but others become less significant without an understanding of context. For instance, taken on their own, allusions to terrorism are still important within this analysis. However, when these allusions to terrorism are coded in the context of post-9/11 Islamophobia and the War on Terror, their meanings are much more elaborate.

### 3.3.3   Sociology that matters

Critical discourse analysis can be a phronetic research method if practiced with the appropriate principles. Prudence is a fundamental starting point, as critical discourse analysts should locate a pressing social issue to deconstruct and reconstruct (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 252). Serious social problems are complex and critical discourse analysis (if practiced phronetically) is a complex, multidisciplinary approach capable of living up to its task.

Critical discourse analysis minimizes the distinctions between theory, description, and practice (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 252). However, this only becomes possible through phronesis: a context-informed, artful analysis that is theoretically and methodologically rigourous to the point of informing thoughtful action. Social scientists must become acclimatized with the society and debates of their social issue to acquire an understanding of discourse and its uses and consequences.

This acclimation begins by studying the context of the social issue and the significant historical and contemporary power relations of different social groups involved. Power is measured through material resources and status and lived out through uneven access to discourse. There is a strong parallel between social power and discourse access. To elaborate on this point, power and access to discourse (or lack thereof), shapes control or influence over genres, contexts, participants, audience, scope and text (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 256). This is a *discourse access profile*: the relationship between power and the ability to shape discourse. An average person has a very low-level discourse access profile, while a Member of Parliament or head of a professional organization would have a much higher discourse access profile. These powerful social groups have access to control, shape, and influence discourse, while most other people (more or less) have passive access as (more or less) controlled participants, onlookers, consumers or users (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 257). Through a process of revealing and concealing particular things, control over discourse is about constraining the parameters of ways of thinking, which lead to constraints on ways of acting.

These controlled features of discourse are made visible through models or representations (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 258). In reference to identity and racial identity in particular, models and representations materialize as archetypes or stereotypes. The latter is

much more likely. These features of discourse become clear and operational through an acclimation of the social problem and context.

Other important elements of discourse include argumentation, rhetorical devices (ie. hyperbole and euphemisms), lexical style, perspective, story telling, and the strategic quoting of credible witnesses, among others (Van Dijk, 1993). However, while these linguistic components are fundamental in doing discourse analysis, phronesis must act as the solder that merges discourse and praxis (or the material) to make social science that matters. Using Van Dijk's (1993) analysis of Western parliamentary debates in Germany, France, the United States and particularly the United Kingdom, the following section will engage in a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of critical discourse analysis.

### 3.3.4 *Context, constraint, and action*

A phronetic approach to critical discourse analysis, as mentioned above, builds on the secondary nature of discourse and places a newfound primacy on context and power in (real and material) action. Context is much more than understanding the immediate discourse being studied. Van Dijk studied parliamentary debates and uncovered the racist discourses of Western conservative political parties in Germany, France, the United States and the United Kingdom. What Van Dijk found was something of a historical bloc. Through access to discourse politicians and media used a wide range of sources (i.e. parliamentary debates, radio, television, and print news) to reshape debates on racism. More concretely, racism had been redefined as a less harsh xenophobia (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 266). In this sense, racist discourse was downgraded in terms of its severity. Through the relations between power and discourse, xenophobia was half-excused through quoting inaccurate statistics, among other tactics (Van Dijk, 1999, p. 267). There has been another visible wave of this sentiment in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Between October 2010 and

February 2011, the heads of state in each country declared the failure of multiculturalism within its borders (*Daily Mail Online*, 11 February 2011). Considering these declarations as part of the context, one of the goals of this research was to investigate if this discourse has penetrated Canadian political and public sentiment.

The power of discourse is such that those who have access to discourse can define their agenda. Hyperbole and perspective combine to create positive self-representations of those with power and negative other-representations of racial groups. These negative models of immigrants or minorities reach a state of ubiquity and these views can influence the public or publics. This is not to say that the public is not critical or is completely submissive nor that powerful elites are coercive. The use of discourse by elites is meant to make these views appear as common sense, and thus taken as natural ways of viewing aspects of the social world. Discourse can permeate through the social world much more easily than coercion or threats of violence. If alternative media is scarce or non-existent, these models are more likely to become common sense archetypes or stereotypes. This can be representative of public opinion from the ground-up, but Van Dijk sees it more as a top-down force of manipulation. Common sense takes form despite being propped on shaky ground and while Van Dijk focuses on a particular parliamentary debate in the UK, the discovery of this historical bloc would be lost without considering a multinational context. In this example, an analysis of the processes shaping and constraining the actions of one nation is shallow without understanding the wider geopolitical climate. This awareness of context allows social scientists using this method to overcome the problem of being able to ask and answer the "Why now?" questions.

For critics who would argue against these top-down exercises of power, Van Dijk (1993) provides evidence of small-scale issues that are taken up by the British Tory

government in April 1985 (pp. 269-278). This involves the issue of school headmaster Ray

Honeyford and accusations of racism from parents of his students and anti-racism advocates

on one hand, and the Torys (including MP Marcus Fox and former PM Margaret Thatcher)

as his defenders on the other. Through a parliamentary address Mr. Fox was able to access,

perpetuate and build upon the Western racist discourse, even promoting an anti-anti-racist

discourse that attacks anti-racist advocates as enemies of free speech. Furthermore, Fox's

perspective on the issue purports the comparatively powerful (compared to the targeted

racialized groups) to be a 'silent majority of decent people' (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 270). He even

conflates anti-anti-racists (or enemies of democracy) with Nazis, Marxists, and polluters (Van

Dijk, 1993, p. 278). These also represent ways to speak about racist categories that do not

necessarily use racist terminology; something that would go over the head of a researcher not

immersed in context. This is the power of discourse. Without going into further detail, Van

Dijk's analysis of Fox's address was able to pick up on the subtleties of conservative political

tactics.

Social scientists using this approach must identify the power relationships in

discourse and acknowledge the differences between how it shapes discourse – as in who has

access to discourse. Discourse is crucial to what shapes any given debate. Foucault (1972)

suggests that truth is made through having the power to take knowledge and make it true;

these are considered truth claims. Truth claims are products of how, when, and where they

are produced. Critical discourse analysis must pay close attention to context to understand

the relationships between truth claims and the formation of discourse. Truth claims can be

proven as problematic, but unless there is something to replace or amend them, they will

continue to exist. Thus, social scientists must work towards a *practice* of counter-hegemony,

offering alternative and critical discourse to amend or replace problematic discourse. My

focus on praxis moves beyond a strict study of discourse by also considering material implications. The concept of double consciousness is a way of uncovering the cracks in common sense; my second qualitative method with young Tamil people will help to uncover and develop ways to overturn these stereotypes.

## 3.4    Focus groups and interviews

After completing my discourse analysis and illuminating the representations of Tamils in news media, I drew upon my findings to develop focus group and interview questions. Much of my discourse analysis uncovered a series of stereotypes used to describe Tamils in Canada. As such, a discussion of stereotypes and belonging were central to my discussions with Tamil youth.[4] The goals of this section were to uncover the discourse describing Tamils, as explained by Tamil youth, and to better understand the impact of such discursive constructions in their lives. Two 60-minute focus groups and five 20-minute interviews were conducted as the second half of my analysis.

The main focus of this section of the research project is on young Tamils, those who were either born in Canada or who left Sri Lanka at too young an age to remember their home country. This group is arguably the most vulnerable to feeling the negative effects of double consciousness, as well as the most likely to talk about it. As mentioned in the previous chapter, double consciousness has several meanings. One is the state of feeling part of two different groups (in this case as Tamils in Sri Lanka and as Canadians in Canada), but truly belonging to neither one. Second is the sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others, usually through the eyes of the oppressors (Du Bois, 1989). While Canada has a strong reputation for being a multicultural and accepting society, its reputation may be

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[4] Part of the development of this section is in thanks to a mock focus group orchestrated with the help of several colleagues and my thesis supervisor.

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masking the difficult lived experiences of Tamil people within its borders. This may be especially true for youth, who are among the most scrutinized social group by media, the state, and police (Cohen, 2002; Hall et al., 1978).

These issues and others were discussed with ten participants, four female and six male, self-identified young Tamil people aged 18 to 28. The participants in this project were affiliated with the Tamil student associations at their respective college or university, attending at least one organized event. These participants are young Tamils who grew up in Canada with immigrant parents, have participated in an identifiable Tamil community, and are old enough to vote and work in Canadian society. Participants were recruited through word of mouth, first through myself and then later by other confirmed participants. This represents the age range of children born to Tamil immigrants that left Sri Lanka after the beginning of the civil war in 1983.

I chose current and former students for two additional reasons. First, in September 2010 there was a message spray-painted on a wall at the University of Toronto's St. George campus reading, "Tamil Tigers are terrorists". As current or former members of a Tamil Student Association in the Greater Toronto Area, these participants were likely to have had first hand knowledge of the message or would have been informed through their association. In this sense, they may have ideas on handling negative stereotypes. Second, being affiliated with a Tamil Student Association served as a useful benchmark for identifying Tamil Canadians that were engaged in the community.

### 3.4.1 *Phenomenological approach*

The specific aim of my research through this second qualitative method is to find out how Tamil youth might be affected by the stigmatization found in my media analysis. I have undertaken a phenomenological approach to illuminate their lived experiences. A

phenomenological approach used in the study of youth cultures "is to better understand the interpretive dilemmas underlying young people's struggle to 'become somebody' [...]" (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010, p. 45). With my hypothesis that young Tamil people in Canada might be more prone to experiences of double consciousness, understanding their struggles to 'become somebody' were central to my analysis.

A phenomenological approach, especially with an emphasis on youth culture, provided my research with "the capacity to better understand worlds that are opened up through their deeply felt cultural experience" (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010, p. 46). In other words, these discussions and interviews were designed to build a knowledge base of Tamil youths lived experiences in relation to my research questions.

### 3.4.2 Obstacles

Prior to conducting my fieldwork I encountered two significant obstacles: recruiting from formal Tamil organizations and recruiting female participants. I began this project hoping to recruit participants from the University of Toronto Tamil Student Association and the Canadian Tamil Youth Alliance. However, these two groups did not express interest in participating beyond preliminary correspondence. Their lack of involvement does not detract from the substance of this project, as my target participant profile was still accessible, but not having access to large pools of possible participants did pose a challenge to recruitment.

Recruiting female participants was also difficult; many fewer women than men were available to participate. My goal for participant involvement was to have a 50:50 gender ratio, but this proved to be difficult. After several delays recruiting women, I settled on a 4:6 ratio. Due to these difficulties and the desire to provide women with a more inclusive environment, focus groups were divided by gender, meaning that the first was conducted with four women and the second was conducted with six men. While it is possible there are

fewer women than men in my participant network, it seems that there is something else at play. During the focus groups, the women needed more time and encouragement to get started before engaging in the discussion. After an initial ten minutes or so, the women were notably more comfortable, while the men needed less time to reach a similar atmosphere. On the other hand, the discussion with the men became boisterous, with some speaking over others, and required several instances of intervention. I suspect that recruitment difficulty can be attributed to gendered expectations for women to be docile, minimize their presence in public spaces, and to be less politically engaged than men (Gilligan, 1982).

### 3.4.3 Focus group questions and fundamentals

The focus groups were conducted on two separate dates, using the same questions and images of the Tamil Eelam and LTTE flags:

- Do you struggle with being Canadian and Tamil? Do these two identities seem to mesh together well, have a neutral relationship, or is there a conflict?
- What does the Tamil Eelam flag mean to you? Would you use it during a protest or other demonstration?
- Have you ever experienced racism, xenophobia, or anti-Tamil sentiment? Can you describe the incident(s) a little?

This project is concerned with an emerging issue and seeks to answer complex questions. Some of these questions might appear pre-judged, particularly the ones referring to identity and belongingness. However, they are inspired by my extensive media analysis, in which Tamil activists' legitimate presence in Canada was openly questioned, their ties to Sri Lanka scrutinized, and an extensive number of race/ethnicity-based stereotypes were applied to them. The media analysis established the legitimacy of these concerns and offered specific incidents to serve as talking points with my participants. Focus groups were the starting point for the second qualitative analysis because of the quantity of data that could be collected, the sense of shared experiences that could be observed, and the ability to address

issues that might not be observable on the surface. What follows is a rationale for this second method of qualitative analysis and the principles of conducting focus groups and interviews that guided my research.

First, focus groups have been used in research projects where initially little is known (Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006, p. 145). Compared to interviews, focus groups often accumulate a larger quantity of data and allow for a higher level of analysis (Kirby et al., 2006, p. 146). As an emerging topic, the quantity of data is particularly useful, not only for addressing this research, but also for determining other areas of interest. A primary goal of qualitative research is to elicit rich, detailed material from the participants involved (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 12). This elicitation was aided by the excitement of participants, who were able to build off one another and collectively address the questions.

Second, interviewees are likely to talk more candidly with each other and this is strengthened when groups are created on the basis of similar characteristics or shared experiences (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 338). This seemed especially true with the group of four young Tamil women, providing them with a safe place to speak openly with other similar people. This dimension applied to discussing the sensitive issue of racism, again providing participants with a safe place, where similar experiences could be shared and empathy could be exchanged.

Third, focus groups are useful for studying psychological issues or deeply embedded attitudes (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 228). Participants did not directly address the issue of double consciousness, but their individual and collective answers engaged with the concept in ways that could not be visible solely from one-on-one interview data.

While there are many benefits to focus groups, they do sometimes have a tendency to develop into a "group think" (Janis, 1971), diminish the visibility of individuals (Kirby et

al., 2006, p. 145), and may prevent some participants from revealing certain information for fear of being judged. Building a rapport with participants through email prior to meeting, creating a safe environment, and intervening in the focus groups when necessary minimized these issues. To create a comfortable and respectful environment, I employed a number of tactics. First, I ensured that participants had a comfortable place to sit and food and beverages to enjoy. Second, I also asked each participant to introduce him or herself, starting with myself, in order to break the ice. By acknowledging my own nervousness in conducting these focus groups, I was able to minimize any perceived differences in power, while also bolstering my approachability. Third, I explained the sensitive nature of my research, informed each participant that we can stop at any time the conversation might be uncomfortable, and thanked them for making a valued contribution to my project. Finally, as an obvious non-Tamil, I explained the importance for my research on Tamils in Canada to have Tamil Canadians as producers of knowledge.

In addition to these focus groups, I conducted five 20-minute one-on-one interviews to follow-up with participants about particular issues they raised or did not raise provided a method to reassert individual experiences where necessary. Following a semi-structured interview plan, this allowed for a comfortable and less ritualized experience for the interviewees (Kirby, et al., 2006, p. 134). The interviews also elicited rich, personal responses to the focus group questions.

The sensitive nature of these questions has the capacity to stir up issues for the participants involved. I have made myself available to all participants to speak with following the interviews, offering any support that might be required and following up with participants to ensure their emotional wellbeing. I provided an inclusive environment where participants were respected and given a voice through the research results. By asking

prospective participants to speak about "Being Tamil in Canada", the participants who felt open and comfortable with speaking about their experiences were more likely to be involved than others who might have been uncomfortable with these topics. Being transparent about the nature of the research and questions to be asked provided participants with the ability to make informed decisions, which should have minimized the emotional or psychological risk involved. Conducting focus groups followed by interviews allowed for participants to have a feeling of familiarity and community with other people they might know, while allowing for more sensitive information to be discussed during interviews.

## 3.5    Concluding comments

The critical discourse analysis I applied to my media sample, while an onerous task in terms of the volume detail, was very fruitful in answering my research questions. It uncovered widely used stereotypes and allusions of Tamils in Canada as terrorists, fraudsters, and a generally criminal presence. The analysis also uncovered mainstream sentiments of xenophobia and racism. These features of the media analysis, among others, will be the subject of Chapters 4 and 5.

The results of my media analysis directly informed the topics discussed in my focus groups and interviews, making stereotypes and belongingness central themes. While recruitment proved to be an obstacle, the eventual proceedings were rich in detail, expanded my level of analysis, and uncovered ongoing panics concerning Tamils in Canada and the ease with which negative stereotypes are applied. The analysis of this fieldwork will be the subject of Chapter 6.

## Chapter 4 – May 2009 Demonstrations

"No sympathy for Tamil protestors", "Tamils deserve straight talk", and "Seize a street, all you need is a cause" are all headlines from articles covering the May 2009 demonstrations in Toronto, Ontario. These articles, like many others, either denounced or trivialized the actions of Tamil activists.

My findings suggest that the May 2009 protests do not represent a moral panic, in the extended sense I have proposed, because they lack the legacy criteria. However, they are constitutive of a *traditional* moral panic (i.e. Cohen's model) and represent a precursor episode to the moral panic that arises from the landing of the MV Sun Sea in August 2010. This episode widely circulates unfavourable characterizations of Tamils in Canada. These characterizations will later crystallize into the negative stereotypes seen in the MV Sun Sea coverage (Chapter 5) and will linger in the minds of some young Tamil Canadians (Chapter 6). Three primary themes emerged from the May 2009 coverage: (illegal) activism, xenophobia and racism, and terrorism. Each theme contains many of Cohen's phases and Goode and Ben-Yehuda's elements of moral panic, meaning that they are situated to reappear during future episodes of moral panic concerning Tamil presence in Canada.

The following section provides the context and timeline for the demonstrations in Toronto and others occurring in Ottawa. Following that section will be a presentation of the three primary themes that emerged from the coverage: activism, xenophobia and racism, and terrorism.

The activism section discusses the role of the police played in monitoring the demonstrations and high-ranking police officials who supplied journalists with expert knowledge to frame the demonstrations as illegal and dangerous. This section also explains

how protestors were profiled as "bad activists", especially in contrast to Toronto's "innocent citizens" in language that firmly establishes an "Us" group and a "Them" group.

The xenophobia and racism section discusses how the profiles of "bad activists" were elaborated in ways that illustrated Tamil activists as "bad immigrants". A number of letters from the public appeared in newspapers that provided methods for being "good immigrants" by either protesting peacefully or not at all.

The terrorist section is a discussion of the ways in which Tamil activists were conflated with Tamil Tiger terrorists in direct and indirect ways, including many instances of descriptive language that likened the protestors' actions to terrorist tactics. This conflation with terrorism was the most damaging stereotype applied to Tamil activists and Tamils in general, serving to undermine their actions by situating them as dangerous and raising suspicions about their message and allegiances.

## 4.1 Background on the demonstrations

The intent of these activists was to urge the international community to negotiate a ceasefire in the Sri Lankan civil war and provide humanitarian aid to Tamil civilians. These civilians, some of them family members of expatriate Tamils now living in Canada, were caught between the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE, both accused by the UN of indiscriminately endangering non-combatants.

Tamil-Canadian activists began a series of protests in January 2009, focusing their efforts primarily in Ottawa and Toronto. Other protests were held around the world, such as in the United Kingdom and India. One year before these protests began, the Sri Lankan army withdrew from a ceasefire deal they had with the LTTE (Saunders, 18 May 2009, p. A1). Several peaceful protests occurred in January 2009 through Toronto (*CTV*, 30 January 2009).

Throughout the month of April 2009, tens of thousands of Tamil activists protested on Parliament Hill, urging Ottawa to help stop the war or impose economic sanctions on Sri Lanka (*Toronto Star*, 21 April 2009). On several occasions, the large number of protestors intentionally or inadvertently impeded traffic. Also occurring this month, on April 14, 2009, the LTTE was told to surrender after being refused by the Sri Lankan government to negotiate a ceasefire and restart peace talks (Saunders, 18 May 2009, p. A1).

What activists were asking for – Canadian intervention in the Sri Lankan civil war – was not without precedent. In 2002, Bob Rae, as part of Ottawa-based group Forum of Federations, served as an advisor in the aforementioned ceasefire brokered by Norway (Knox, 22 April 2003). Rae has been serving as Liberal MP for Toronto Centre since 2008 and was Premier of Ontario in the early to mid-1990s. It is noteworthy that this ceasefire was negotiated before Canada and the European Union proscribed the LTTE as a terrorist organization in 2006. In a global "War on Terror", other than several ignored calls for a ceasefire by Canada, the United States, and the UN, it became all but impossible for any Western nation to intervene in the civil war due to the LTTE's terrorist label. Seemingly, intervention such as that seen in Bosnia (1994) or Libya (2011) was not available under these parameters.

Tamil activists continued the majority of their protests in Toronto, the city wth the largest diasporic Tamil community in Canada. Demonstrations continued on University Avenue, at the Consulate of the United States, and Queen's Park. These demonstrations also interrupted roadway traffic at various points, in part due to the number of protestors involved.

On May 10, 2009, between 2,000 and 3,000 Tamil protestors converged on the Gardiner Expressway, blocking traffic on the thoroughfare and a connecting highway. This

demonstration occurred after protestors learned of 378 Tamil casualties caused by Sri Lankan army shelling in the 'so-called' safe zone (Lewington & Makin, 11 May 2009, p. A1). After several hours and the involvement of the Toronto Police Services, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and Liberal Party staff, protestors left the highway peacefully.

Coverage of the protests continued in relatively high volume throughout May 2009, including many articles covering the conclusion of the Sri Lankan civil war, which officially ended on May 18, 2009. Following the Gardiner Expressway protest, Tamil protestors focused their efforts primarily on University Ave., the US and Sri Lankan consulate buildings, and Queen's Park. While Tamil activists continued demonstrations well into Fall 2009, their numbers diminished significantly after the weeks following the end of the war (Rankin, 11 October 2009). Their goals for intervention also shifted from calling for a ceasefire during the twilight of the war, to asking for international aid and an investigation of the Sri Lankan government for crimes against humanity.

The Gardiner Expressway protest, along with the several days that followed with dozens of stories covering the event, represents the peak in coverage during these demonstrations. It is at this point where I will analyze the news coverage guided by moral panic theory through a discourse analysis of 197 newspaper articles from *The Globe and Mail* (48), *National Post* (54), *Toronto Sun* (19), and *Toronto Star* (76). This chapter will measure the presence of Cohen's four phases of moral panic (*warning, impact, inventory,* and *reaction*); Goode and Ben-Yehuda's five elements of moral panic (*concern, hostility, consensus, disproportion,* and *volatility*); and my proposed sixth element of moral panic, *legacy.* The following sections are a discussion of the phases and elements present in the May 2009 coverage, as well as the ways in which Tamil activists were made to be folk devils.

## 4.2 Activism

The most prevalent theme from the May 2009 coverage is the theme of activism. While Tamil activists protested and demonstrated for a ceasefire in Sri Lanka, and later international aid after the war concluded, voices in and of the media were primarily concerned with the city of Toronto's traffic and public safety. Their actions were often regarded as escalating and increasingly aggressive. The city is a place of contestation for many commentators stating that Toronto is not an appropriate venue for voicing concerns for something happening across the world. Activists' interests in Sri Lanka – argued to be at the expense of Toronto – even had one journalist questioning the legitimacy of their presence in Canada (Blatchford, 12 May 2009, p. A13). In several instances the number of activists at a particular demonstration were exaggerated and several incorrect predictions appeared as to where Tamil activists might show up next. Likewise, the sheer number of articles covering the one-time Gardiner Expressway protest demonstrates another form of distortion in over-reporting. A total of 59 articles (or 30 percent) made reference to the Gardiner Expressway demonstration. Activism is the running theme throughout, and the widely held view of Tamil activists as "bad activists". This produced an environment where writers, speakers, and readers alike drew from the "bad activist" assessment to make xenophobic statements and conflate Tamil activism with terrorism.

### 4.2.1 Policing and surveillance

Jacqueline Kennelly (2009) writes "the possibility for creating a public sphere of contestation within Canada is being continually and increasingly placated, repressed, and commodified through institutional, cultural, and social factors, and this is felt most strongly by young people coming of age in the new millennium" (p. 128). Kennelly (2009) identifies consumption and community volunteerism as the expected markers of "good" activist-

citizenship (p. 132). In this ever-pervasive model, "good citizens" increasingly express their activism by making purchases for causes they support (i.e. t-shirts, bags, and books). These items serve as badges of "good" activism, while community volunteerism is marketed as a way to feel better about one's self (Kennelly, 2009, p. 132). This is the expected and accepted way citizens are to engage social issues.

On the other hand, activism that directly challenges the state or state policy, "precipitates forms of surveillance that suggest it has been carried out by the bad activist" (Kennelly, 2009, p. 132). Tamil activists in May 2009 were undoubtedly viewed as "bad activists." The primary benchmark for measuring this claim is the mention of police presence in most newspaper articles directly reporting on the May demonstrations. The Toronto Police Service and its Chief, Bill Blair, are key actors in the May demonstrations. Blair, in particular, is mentioned in just under ten percent of the May 2009 articles and is a chief source of official quotes. In this role, Blair serves as one of the most prominent experts in framing the impact, inventory, and reaction phases of this episode.

Newspapers reported that the 2,000 to 3,000 protestors on the Gardiner Expressway were met by hundreds of police in riot gear (Doolittle, 12 May 2009, p. GT4). Very little violence was reported and Blair and his officers were commended for their patience and "deft handling" (Barber, 16 May 2009, p. M3) of a "dangerous, volatile situation" created by protesters, in which "[a] single misstep, one push, an accidental tug" could have resulted in "a stampede, chaos and even deaths" (Blatchford, 12 May 2009, p. A13). Blair was described as a "new breed of highly educated and trained leader" (Siddiqui, 21 May 2009, p. A25) whose police force resolved problems "not necessarily with force but with intellect" (Blatchford, 12 May 2009, p. A13). A journalist for The Globe and Mail went as far as

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writing, "the cops are the only ones thinking their way through this thing" (Blatchford, 12 May 2009, p. A13).

Two important observations emerge from the police-themed media coverage. First, it is paradoxical to label police in full riot gear as peaceful or non-violent. The presence of police in paramilitary gear, armed with facemasks, shields and batons, is an irrefutable threat of violence. Second, one National Post article reported that some officers had been hurt on the scene (*National Post*, 11 May 2009, p. A4), but that same article did not mention whether any activists sustained injuries. As a result of the coverage, Tamil activists were much more likely to be viewed as violent than the police, despite very little violence occurring at all.

### 4.2.2 Profiles, planning, and tactics

Police surveillance was one marker of the prevalent view that the May 2009 Tamil activists were "bad activists". This characterization was further developed by news media through quotes profiling activists involved, lengthy discussion and reviews of activists' plans and tactics, and several stories questioning (and answering) "What's next?" and "What to do with them?"

Early descriptions of Tamil activists focused on their youth, questions of leadership, and use of unorthodox forms of protest. The National Post wrote, "young, first-generation Canadians of Tamil descent have been the most visible protestors" (Leong, 12 May 2009, p. A14). Perhaps predictably, their youth was conflated with angst. The Globe and Mail's "Protests aren't the way, Tamil Tiger leader's Canadian family says", features an interview with a Toronto Tamil man about his thoughts on the protests (Reinhart, 13 May 2009, p. A1). Appearing the day after initial reports on the protests, protestors are described as angry young Tamils "letting off steam" (Reinhart, 13 May 2009, p. A1). The primacy of this front-

page article along with his estranged familial ties to the LTTE leader, gives this man authority as a representative of Toronto's Tamil community.

With "young" and "angry" firmly established, other caricatural characterizations emerged. As mentioned above and in more detail later in this chapter, Tamil activism was conflated with LTTE terrorism. Other views suggest they are ungrateful immigrants who either tax the citizenry of its patience or the state of its resources. Sadly, with the presence of xenophobia and Islamophobia, in particular, these characterizations are somewhat predictable. However, one disturbing article in the National Post "Tamil Romeo and Sinhalese Juliet", whose purpose is to provide insight to the Tamil experience in Canada, encapsulates these views and then expands on them. The journalist referred to protestors on the Gardiner Expressway as "rabid Tamils [who] surged into roadways blocking traffic, demanding Canada to save them, turning from figures of sympathy into bloody nuisances, from citizens into adversaries, from freedom fighters into extortionists" (Jonas, 16 May 2009, p. A25). Not only does this rabidity suggest Tamil activists were unorganized, it depoliticizes their demonstrations and quite literally likens them to dogs (after Tamils were called "underdogs" only the sentence before. This image represents only one of the entries in an extensive database of information collected on the event and its actors. Specifically, database building gives primacy to exaggerations, images, and stereotypes of the perceived deviant group. Representations such as these propel the process of situating Tamil activists as folk devils. The image of Tamil protestors as rabid dogs dehumanizes them, aiding in the process of polarizing "Us" with "Them".

While Tamil activists' level of organization (or lack thereof) was inferred in the article mentioned above, this topic was an important and sometimes central focus in a number of articles. "Expressway march called spontaneous; No leadership group, say

demonstrators,",reads one headline in the National Post referring to the Gardiner Expressway demonstration (Hanes, 13 May 2009, p. A13). Protestors stated that the demonstration was neither predetermined nor at the behest of a leader. In response to those claims, Police Chief Blair said, "When people make statements [that] it's spontaneous… I simply don't believe that's true… There is an intelligence behind this" (Hanes, 13 May 2009, p. A13). With that statement, Blair recalibrates the perception of protests from spontaneous, chaotic, and unsupervised to something closer to calculated and manipulative. Tamil activists found themselves caught between two simple and problematic characterizations: untamed mob or innovative practitioners of public nuisance. In either characterization, this process of database building helped shape the devil making to follow.

With questions of leadership being so important to the official voice of the police, it would be useful to understand how Tamil activists organized and who organized them. One article in the Toronto Star has a student organizer explain that thousands of Tamils can be made aware of plans or important information through email, social media, and text messages (Mathieu & Taylor, 12 May 2009, p. GT5). Toronto is home to several universities and colleges and most of those schools have Tamil Student Associations. An email to each association asking to forward it to their own mailing list allows for word to travel quickly. Social media posts on websites, such as Facebook, allowed for many other Tamil and Tamil Youth organizations to become aware of any planned demonstrations. From there individual people can inform friends and family through text messages. So even though these messages might originate from somewhere, having so many groups involved can potentially fragment leadership.

Furthermore, there had been a tendency for possible leaders to consider themselves more as organizers. While the nature of organizing such a large number of people might

have fragmented leadership, it also might have been a deliberate understatement. One possible reason came from a York University student who said, "The community is afraid to take leadership… for fear of persecution" (Leong, 12 May 2009, p. A14). The student said people feared being followed by the RCMP if thought to be a leader or part of a leadership group. This displays an awareness of police surveillance of the "bad activist", the awareness of the risks involved in being identified as an activist, and the suggestion that Tamil activists represent a possible terrorist threat.

While the question of leadership and who was behind the organization of thousands of protests was heavily featured, *how* they organized and *what* they organized for were scrutinized even more so. The mediascape reported their tactics as ever escalating, illegal, new and unique, a precedent for future protestors to follow, and some also reported on possible punishments or strategies of deterrence.

At least nine newspaper articles reported trends of escalation in Tamil activism. When speaking about the Gardiner Expressway demonstration, Police Chief Blair stated that activists had "escalated beyond merely a democratic process" (Lewington & Makin, 11 May 2009, p. A1). This was described as the highest point (so far) of a trend in "escalating public protests" (Bonoguore, 13 May 2009, p. A10), which had become "increasingly controversial" (Clarkson, 12 May 2009) and "increasingly aggressive" demonstrations (*The Globe and Mail*, 12 May 2009, p. A16). Within the collected data, the word "more" appeared very often. These demonstrations had become "more radical" (Goldstein, 14 May 2009); "more drastic" (Hanes, 13 May 2009, p. A13); and "more comfortable embracing Tamil Tigers" (Leong, 14 May 2009, p. A13; sentiment also referenced in Reinhart, 12 May 2009, p. A12). Also, at least once, a demonstration became "more aggressive" as the day went on (Bonoguore, 14 May 2009, p. A13). All of these articles appeared very early on in the coverage, setting the tone

for the reader and articles to follow. This tone is important because as part of the inventory taking, it further characterizes Tamil activists as folk devils that are likely to repeat and even intensify their indiscretions. It is also noteworthy that seven of these nine articles appeared in national newspapers and the Toronto Star avoided this type of language. This means that the tone existed at a national, rather than at the local level. Similar to Cohen's findings for Mods and Rockers, sensationalization was more likely to occur outside of the local level.

The escalation theme also necessitates prediction. After the Gardiner Expressway demonstration, newspapers and political figures anticipated "more" from Tamil activists. Predictions centered on how many would be involved in future demonstrations, where activists would appear next (i.e. highways and subways), and that other protesting groups would use these new Tamil tactics.

"Let's call it the Tamil traffic strategy," reads the first sentence of an article in the National Post (Martin, 16 May 2009, p. A5). The article continues to suggest that, "From now on, everyone with a gripe that warrants political attention should follow their example." This so-called 'Tamil traffic strategy' was treated as an entirely new phenomena in the National Post: "Canada's Tamil community has perfected a new way to elevate their cause politically with plenty of free media coverage: Block traffic in Toronto" (Martin, 16 May 2009, p. A5). Another National Post article, the front-page "Seize a street, all you need is a cause" (Corcoran, 15 May 2009, p. A1), suggested that this precedent, established by Tamil activists and lax regulations on public demonstrations, would inspire other groups with a cause to block traffic. This 'story about the story' is one of the first articles to exemplify the reaction phase. The argument it presents is that there is nothing to stop protestors from blocking Toronto streets and that a permit system should be instituted. This reaction and others that followed – with their own suggestions on what to do about Toronto's "Tamil

trouble" (*The Globe and Mail*, 16 May 2009, p. A13) – stemmed from the perception that Tamils were using new, illegal measures to support their cause at the expense of the city.

With the Gardiner Expressway and other demonstrations, Tamils were accused of "[t]aking tolerance too far" (Fulford, 16 May 2009, p. A25). This front-page article, again appearing in the National Post, suggested that Torontonians were putting up with all the "chaos and menace" because they were doing "almost anything to avoid appearing insensitive on any issue related to 'multiculturalism'" (Fulford, 16 May 2009, p. A25). The article juxtaposes images of a menacing Tamil "mob" against "innocent citizens" that should not have to suffer through protests for something occurring "on the other side of the world" (Fulford, 16 May 2009, p. A25). This dichotomy was also echoed in the Toronto Sun's "Tamil protest on Gardiner was criminal" (*Toronto Sun*, 12 May 2009). Current Toronto Mayor, Rob Ford, then only city councilor, described the Gardiner Expressway demonstration as "hoodlumism" (Weese and Artuso, 12 May 2009). Strikingly, "hoodlumism" is still a far cry from the allusions to terrorism that will be discussed later. As news media and others take stock of inventory, these sentiments exemplify the symbolic dislocation that separates "Us" from "Them".

Many other articles reported that the Gardiner Expressway demonstration was "illegal" even several days after the actual event. I would argue that with these sentiments appearing in print and floating in the air, some readers might have regarded the *legal* protests that continued as illegal ones. Furthermore, the emphasis on the newness and criminality of the protests, especially when compared to the innocence of Toronto's citizens, masked the fact that other highway blockades had occurred in the past in the name of political protest. Strikingly, it was only at the local level in the Toronto Star and Toronto Sun that it was reported that blocking a highway was not a new strategy of protestors. The Toronto Star

reported that Tamil activists "didn't break the law any more than truckers, farmers or aboriginals blocking highways, roads and trains" (Siddiqui, 21 May 2009, p. A25). While it was still illegal for Tamil activists to block the Gardiner Expressway, this article was one of very few to state that it was, in fact, a tactic established by precedent cases.

After months of protesting at Parliament Hill, Queen's Park, and the U.S. Consulate, Tamil activists seemed to feel that they were not being heard. National spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), David Poopalapillai, did not condone the protests on the Gardiner Expressway, but some of his words can explain why it might have reached that point. Poopalapillai questioned why Canada, among the first countries to sanction South Africa during apartheid, had not done the same to Sri Lanka (Goldstein, 13 May 2009). The CTC was especially critical of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who despite months of Tamil protests for Canadian intervention in Sri Lanka, had not once addressed them publicly. In a defining statement, CTC spokesperson Manjula Selvarajah observed, "When Hamilton was supposed to get a hockey team, Harper was in Europe and made a statement on it... Meanwhile, here's an issue that affects 300,000 Canadians and we're asking for a statement" (Yuen, 20 May 2009).

Still, while many statements from Tamil activists and community members held a great deal of credence, they appeared more as "Them" comments than "Us" comments. Some journalists and Conservative MPs were critical of NDP and Liberal politicians who had spoken with Tamil activists, suggesting, "if they [hint] that they can be pressured to take action [it] will only lead to more protests, more disruption, more anger and more grief" (Wente, 14 May 2009, p. A19). This call for a limited or no reaction at all is part of the impact-inventory-reaction loop, assessing the outcome of activists' actions and calling for a modified response.

Other examples indicated a more developed impact-inventory-reaction loop and presented a firmer reaction. Five days after the Gardiner Expressway, the Toronto Sun published an article assessing what to do in the event of future "Tamil disruptions". The article, assuming recidivism on the part of protestors, suggested they be "dispersed" with water (Worthington, 15 May 2009). This is meant to be a better solution than using batons or rubber bullets against protestors. While this water dispersal would come from fire trucks because water cannons were not available, the image of dark-skinned protestors being blasted by water recalls images from the Civil Rights Movement. The journalist failed to make this connection. Interestingly, the author of the article assures the reader that, "the public dismay over Tamil protests is not motivated by racism, but motivated because it is a violation of the rights of everyone else" (Worthington, 15 May 2009).

### 4.2.3 *The wrong arena and a losing fight*

The message to Tamil activists in both national newspapers and the Toronto Sun was clear: Canada, and specifically Toronto, is not the arena for your fight. Reaching this point covers Goode and Ben-Yehuda's elements of concern, hostility, and consensus. The level of over-reporting, exaggeration, and lack of historical context fulfill the requirements of disproportion.

Even the Toronto Star, seemingly with the intention of offering well-rounded coverage of the Gardiner Expressway demonstration, may have done more harm than good after over-reporting elements of the story in ten different articles two days after the actual event. In a front-page article, the National Post reported 5,000 demonstrators took to the Gardiner Expressway, despite the three other newspapers citing only between 2,000 and 3,000. This represents a gross exaggeration of figures.

National newspapers sorely lacked an ability to situate the Gardiner Expressway in a historical context of other road-blocking protests. This fills another measurement of disproportion, as the attention paid to this event appears to be vastly greater than that paid to similar events in a previous time (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 2009, p. 77).

With the idea that Canada is not the appropriate venue for ending the Sri Lankan civil war, despite Tamil activists' best efforts, primary concerns about the protest were shaped around blocked traffic and public safety in Toronto. Scarborough Councillor Adrian Heaps was quoted saying, "Any action they're seeking rests with the federal government, not with the municipal government, and that's where they should be directing their attention" (*Toronto Star*, 12 May 2009, p. GT4). With this statement, Heaps appears unaware of or indifferent to the number of demonstrations held on Parliament Hill. It was not until closer to the end of the civil war that newspapers devoted more of their coverage to the driving force behind the demonstrations. Despite historical precedent for Western and Canadian intervention in similar issues overseas, many articles suggested that there was nothing Canada can do in Sri Lanka. The Globe and Mail reported, "A tragedy is playing out in Sri Lanka, and relatives of the protesters are being slaughtered. But what, exactly, are we supposed to do about it? Ban tea imports?" (Wente, 14 May 2009, p. A19). The idea that Canada could do anything was the protestors' "delusions" (Wente, 14 May 2009, p. A19).

An article appearing in the Toronto Sun reads, "Chaos, civil violence, and turmoil in Sri Lanka have little relevance in Canada -- and even less to do with Ontario or Toronto, apart from the reality that we have provided sanctuary for huge numbers of Sri Lankans seeking to escape their homeland" (Worthington, 15 May 2009). Here the explicit message is that the war has nothing to do with Canada, while the implicit message is that Tamils are

being ungrateful guests. This further illustrates the "Us" versus "Them" rhetoric present in this episode.

Staying with the idea of Canada as a generous host to unappreciative guests, is an excerpt from The Globe and Mail article "Whose rights are really being trampled?":

> We live in a country where we don't even know how many of our fellows are Tamils from Sri Lanka, but are simultaneously asked to accept on faith that they are properly and legally here and to extend to them every privilege conferred by Canadian citizenship - and to suck it up without complaint (Blatchford, 12 May 2009, p. A13).

This article questions both the legitimacy of the protests and the legality of an undetermined number of Tamils' immigration to Canada. So while Tamils are portrayed as "bad activists" and not "good citizens", these statements suggest they might not be any type of citizen at all. Questioning their legal place in Canada delegitimizes the protests. This is the kind of xenophobia increasingly accepted in a post-9/11 world.

While a later article in The Globe and Mail comes up with a population number, "Tamils deserve straight talk" also questioned how Tamils came to be in Canada:

> Canada (specifically, Scarborough, Ont.) is home to more than 200,000 Tamils - the biggest Tamil diaspora in the world, next to India. How did that happen? The answer is that we are a compassionate nation, and also easy to exploit (Wente, 14 May 2009, p. A19).

This excerpt is yet another example of "Us" versus "Them" rhetoric, with "we" being gracious Canadians who have possibly been exploited. Meanwhile, this sentiment is an example of the power behind masked xenophobia and its ability to penetrate and find acceptance in mainstream coverage. The next section is an analysis of more explicit forms of xenophobia.

## 4.3    Xenophobia and racism

### 4.3.1    *"Good immigrants" versus "bad immigrants"*

There were at least three core views of Tamil activists and their actions during the May 2009 protests. The first perspective viewed Tamil activists as disruptive with reason, as they were exercising their rights in a democratic state, with the intention of bringing peace to Sri Lanka. The second perspective viewed Tamil activists as disruptive people with an impossible goal, seeing Canada as unable to intervene in the Sri Lankan civil war. The third perspective viewed Tamil activists as criminal, dangerous, and ungrateful guests, whose unlawful protests disrupted life for the innocent citizens of a host nation that had no interest in an ethnic conflict overseas.

This third perspective, based in xenophobic discourse, was most commonly found in national newspaper coverage, although it did appear in local newspapers with much less frequency. Voiced by journalists and members of the public (i.e. bystander quotes and letters), this perspective was instrumental in the crystallization of Tamil activists – and arguably, all Tamils in Canada – as rule-breaking, radical immigrants. As I will argue later in Chapter 5, this perspective carries through to the 2010 coverage of the MV Sun Sea.

With the two excerpts at the end of the last section, it is evident that there was some suspicion about the legal presence of Tamils in Canada, which was considered to be due to Canada's international reputation and purportedly easily exploited immigration system. While this type of distrust of Tamil immigrants was not widespread during the May 2009 coverage, it is positioned just outside of the threshold of the widespread expectation that Canada's immigrants should be grateful and cooperative. This expectation was particularly evident in the national newspaper coverage, to the point where a "good immigrant" and "bad immigrant" typology emerges (inspired by Razack, 1999). Quite literally, a letter to the

National Post compares "Vietnamese, Chinese, Burmese, Tibetan and other[s]" that "humbly asked the Canadian government to look into their concerns" to Tamils that "disrupt the lives of other Canadians" (Swann, 13 May 2009, p. A19). This letter also confines the area of protest to Parliament Hill, without regard to the fact that protests in Toronto might be more sustainable for Tamil activists since this is where the majority of them live. The writer also overlooks or is unaware of the numerous demonstrations held by Tamil activists on Parliament Hill earlier in the year.

Similar sentiments were expressed in another letter published that day, written by Martin Collacott, former Canadian high commissioner to Sri Lanka (Collacott, 13 May 2009, p. A19). Given his former position, Collacott represents an official source. In his letter, he suggested that the protestors' objective "was to bring about a situation that would allow the Tigers to preserve their fighting capability and prolong the insurgency" (Collacott, 13 May 2009, p. A19). Collacott made these remarks in spite of demonstrations asking for humanitarian aid and Western intervention to end the ongoing genocide against Tamils by the Sri Lankan state. Collacott's letter was also one of the first "opinions in the media" that directly compared Tamil activists to the LTTE, and subsequently terrorists: "The demonstrators borrowed a page from the Tiger playbook -- exposing young children to danger" (Collacott, 13 May 2009, p. A19). These sensationalized comments led to the following prediction: "Unless Canadian authorities are prepared to prevent such illegal activities... residents of Toronto and other Canadian cities should be prepared for more... incidents by groups using Canada as a base for settling scores in their former homelands" (Collacott, 13 May 2009, p. A19).

While Collacott does not specify a strategy for prevention, his quasi-official statement urges authorities to prevent falling down a slippery slope. There is a need to send a

message to Tamil activists, who were presumed to repeat their offense, and other potential deviants that Canada would not be a "base for settling scores" (Collacott, 13 May 2009, p. A19). This letter seems to ignore that Tamil activists are part of a large, established diaspora of Sri Lankan Tamils living in Canada. It also reduces a much more complicated issue into a matter of settling a score. As with other global diasporas, for the Tamil diaspora in Toronto, their activism was reflective of their responsibility (and perhaps the guilt) to engage in the politics and plight of their former homeland from their current homeland (Esman, 2009). Despite being viewed as "bad immigrants", it is entirely likely that Tamil Canadian activists viewed themselves as "good emigrants".

Two other letters from readers in the National Post serve as exemplars for the extreme end of this "good immigrant"-"bad immigrant" dichotomy. The first letter informs immigrants to Canada, Tamils in particular, of the three commitments they should fulfill: "Leave your luggage at the door; get along; and if you wish to protest something in the country you left, go there to do it" (Caldwell, 12 May 2009, p. A17). The second letter also has a protectionist stance: "If these people feel so strongly about their cause, may I suggest they go back from whence they came and do their demonstrating in their homeland" (Russell, 16 May 2009, p. A23). In a review of the week in letters, the National Post informed the author that "back from whence they came" is a short drive for most Tamil protestors, as their homeland is Canada. However, the fact that this letter was published in the first place is indicative of an existing public sentiment and willingness for the newspaper to publish that sentiment. As such, letters represent both the interests of the public and newspaper.

Articles such as the ones referenced above openly question where "home" is or should be for Tamil Canadians. Given Reitz and Bannerjee's (2007) general analysis that

second-generation visible minorities feel lower levels of belonging, this obvious and saturated public backlash may intensify feelings of not belonging in the young Tamil activists taking part in demonstrations, as well as other Tamil Canadians exposed to the coverage.

### 4.3.2 Racism or reverse racism?

One of the few national newspaper articles condoning the demonstrations, appearing in The Globe and Mail, was not even an article covering the protests. Aware of this unique stance, the journalist wrote that he was probably the only person in Toronto "who has no problem with the Tamils taking over the streets and the Gardiner Expressway," while noting, "Canada as a venue for arguing the politics of another country isn't new" (Doyle, 13 May 2009, p. R3). While this view of the protests was rare for national newspapers, this sentiment appeared with greater frequency in local newspapers.

Lorrie Goldstein of the Toronto Sun was arguably the most vocal journalist in denouncing the xenophobic (or as he called it, racist) backlash against Tamil activists. In his article, "Protest backlash unearths racism," Goldstein called on journalists to speak up against coverage "falsely implying most Tamil Canadians are crazed radicals, ignoring the fact most have protested peacefully for months and implying they have no right to influence Canada's foreign policy is unjust" (Goldstein, 14 May 2009). Goldstein also criticizes Prime Minister Harper for proscribing the LTTE as a terrorist organization in 2006 without equally condemning the Sri Lankan government (through economic sanctions) for its own violations (Goldstein, 14 May 2009).

This backlash to the backlash against Tamil activists was also met with, well, backlash. Another journalist featured in the Toronto Sun, Peter Worthington, said discontent with protestors was borne from frustration, not from racism (Worthington, 15 May 2009). In fact, he argued that reverse racism was responsible for "cowardly" and

"timid" responses from the mayor and media. Worthington, the same journalist that suggested water dispersal to remove activists from the streets, argues that the backlash against Tamil activists was a tempered response.

Goldstein followed up his first article with another, noting, "Numerous talk shows picked up on it and the Sun's website and my e-mail were flooded with comments, many opposed, many supportive, many unprintable" (Goldstein, 21 May 2009). In direct response to Worthington's article, Goldstein unearthed a 1991 piece, "The Power of Protest", in which Worthington "praised a truckers' demonstration that had shut down Hwy. 401" (Goldstein, 21 May 2009). In a review of the response to those protests, Goldstein noted that none of the demonstrators were told to go back where they came from. To exemplify his point, Goldstein cited an email sent to the Toronto Sun reading, "Shoot the bastards and then ship the Tamilia where they came from!" (Goldstein, 21 May 2009). While this might be one of the more extreme reader responses, it was still drawn from a large pool of 'milder' racist and xenophobic comments. As such, the backlash against Tamil protests (and the backlash to the backlash to the backlash) indicates that race and nation were significant factors. At best, a significant amount of the backlash was a xenophobic response. At worst, that backlash was overtly racist.

## 4.4     Terrorism

How is it that these xenophobic and racist responses can be published, supported, and even defended in Canada's multicultural society? The answer is that a number of "opinions in media" and "opinions of media" successfully conflated Tamil Canadian activism with Tamil Tiger terrorism. This (con)fusion of two very different groups justified the xenophobic and racist coverage and backlash as a response to terrorism. This section investigates two key aspects of the May 2009 coverage. First, is the presence of terrorism-

related discourse to describe Tamil activists and their actions. Second, is how overtones of terrorism undermined Tamil Canadian activism due to the public, political, and media conflation of the Tamil Eelam flag with the LTTE flag. Similar to other cases I have documented, sensationalization is primarily perpetrated by national newspapers.

### 4.4.1  *Tamil activists are lexically Tamil terrorists*

My analysis of the 197 articles covering the activist demonstrations and conclusion of the Sri Lankan civil war uncovered several terms used by journalists, politicians, police, bystanders, and letter-writing members of the public that explicitly or implicitly likened Tamil activists to terrorists. The terms I will discuss were not drawn from articles covering the Sri Lankan civil war since those terms were about Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and not Tamil activists in Canada. However, the overlapping use of some terms to describe these two very different groups only strengthens my claim that they were linked in and by media.

The term *hostage* appeared five times in the sample: twice in the National Post (Eisan, 12 May 2009, p. A17; Fulford, 16 May 2009, p. A25), twice in The Globe and Mail (Lewington & Makin, 11 May 2009, p. A1; Blatchford, 12 May 2009, p. A13), and once in the Toronto Sun (Clarkson, 11 May 2009). In one reader's letter to the National Post, Tamil activists were referred to as Tamil Tigers and were charged with holding the city hostage (Eisan, 12 May 2009, p. A17). An article reflecting on the Gardiner Expressway demonstration wrote motorists stuck in traffic were "trapped like hostages" (Fulford, 16 May 2009, p. A25). Then Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner, Julian Fantino, told a local news channel, "[W]e can't have the city or community or society being held hostage by any one sector of society" (Lewington & Makin, 11 May 2009, p. A1). Hostage-taking, as Tamil activists were accused of doing, is primarily committed by terrorists and kidnappers. (So is "high-jacking", a term also used by Fantino). When actual hostage-taking is carried

out, it usually involves some sort of ransom or negotiation, not a temporary delay in motorized transportation. These damaging allusions to terrorist activities were made early in the coverage and set the tone for a number of other terror-related terms that would follow.

The term *human shield* appeared in two articles, once by a journalist in The Globe and Mail (Blatchford, 12 May 2009, p. A13) and once by a letter-writing member of the public in the National Post (Burke, 13 May 2000, p. A19). Both articles accused Tamil activists on the Gardiner Expressway of using children as human shields, just as Tamil Tigers used human shields in Sri Lanka. While this term was used only twice in the activist coverage, it appeared with much greater frequency when describing the tactics of the LTTE in the civil war coverage. An article appearing in the Toronto Sun, while not using the term 'human shield', charged Tamil activists of "including… children they unbelievably conscripted" into their protest (*Toronto Sun*, 12 May 2009). The following day, the Toronto Sun published the article, "A bloodbath in Sri Lanka", and listed conscripting children into their ranks as one of the many atrocities carried out by the Tamil Tigers (Goldstein, 13 May 2009). Again, the allusions to terrorist tactics were very strong.

The term *target* appeared in two articles, once in the Globe and Mail (Bonoguore, 13 May 2009, p. A10) and once in the National Post (Hanes, 13 May 2009, p. A13). The National Post article was titled, "Highway may be target of Tamil protest" (Hanes, 13 May 2009, p. A13). This article, appearing after the Gardiner Expressway demonstration, was an unfulfilled prediction that Tamil activists would hold a second demonstration on the 401, a much bigger stage. This prediction not only assumed Tamil activists would strike again, but would escalate their tactics. The expectation for Tamil activists to target something in the Globe and Mail article had much stronger allusions to terrorism. Tamil activists were described as "possibly targeting the downtown subway" in addition to holding a rally at

Queen's Park (Bonoguore, 13 May 2009, p. A10). This article goes on to mention public safety and security as a primary concern, should any protests be carried out in the subway. The concern for public safety and security, along with a prediction that Tamils would "target" the downtown subway, arguably evokes imagery from the 2005 London subway bombings.

These terms, along with the predictions of future, escalated forms of protests, made it possible for Tamil activism to be seen as related to Tamil terrorism. Sadly, in mid-May 2009 there was a fire set to a Buddhist temple in a Toronto Sinhalese community. The fire was suspected to be have been committed by militant Tamils supportive of the fallen LTTE. However, it is important to note that no arrests were made for that fire. The significance of this story was its presumed connection to the series of demonstrations carried out by Tamil activists. In a letter printed in the Toronto Star, a reader made this connection, writing, "In light of escalating demonstrations and the fire at the Buddhist temple last Friday, suspected by some to have been set by Tamil Tiger sympathizers, it is not too difficult to see how this 'global protest' will eventually play itself out with our very first suicide bomber" (*Toronto Star*, 18 May 2009, p. A10). This fear of "home-grown terrorism" of a Canadian Tamil Tiger sect is echoed in another article in the Toronto Sun (Warmington, 15 May 2009). However, by all accounts, the May 2009 demonstrations, while growing heated at points, were almost exclusively peaceful cries by law-abiding citizens for peace in Sri Lanka. While Tamil activism and Tamil terrorism did not appear to overlap in practice, it did appear to overlap in the discourse published in the media coverage.

### 4.4.2 Tamils raise red flags

Up to this point I have argued that Tamil activists, through a process of an ever-escalating moral panic, were met with a xenophobic and racist backlash. This backlash was

seen as justified because of the activists' possible connection to a proscribed terrorist organization. The section above is a focused discourse analysis on the keywords used to describe Tamil activists as terrorists. The purpose of this section is to explain the general way in which Tamil activists were conflated with terrorists and seen as terrorist sympathizers because of their use of the Tamil Eelam flag.

In 197 articles, only one article set its primary purpose of differentiating the flag of Tamil Eelam and the flag used by the LTTE. That article, appearing in the Toronto Star, "Do flags signal peace or terror?", explains the difference between the two flags (*Toronto Star*, 14 May 2009). This article allowed Tamil activists to voice their concerns over the confusion and provided them with space to explain the differences. The flag for Tamil Eelam features a snarling tiger, backed by two crossed assault rifles, imprinted on a solid red background. The LTTE flag is very similar, except it has the group's inscription in addition to the rest of the elements.

The issue that was overlooked in the coverage was the reappropriation of the flag in 1990, when the LTTE flag was modified and made to be the emblem of the Tamil Eelam, a non-militaristic movement for an independent Tamil state. Only the Toronto Star explains this in detail, despite the flag and its connection to the LTTE being mentioned in 43 articles (13 in The Globe and Mail; 9 in the National Post; 12 in the Toronto Star; and 9 in the Toronto Sun). To put this in perspective, of the 48 Globe and Mail articles, 22 were primarily concerned with coverage of the civil war. This means that half of the articles covering the protests mentioned that Tamil activists were holding the flags of a recognized terrorist organization.

This made it difficult for politicians to openly sympathize with protestors for fear of being labeled soft on terrorism. Constant references to a terrorist organization painted

Tamils as terrorist sympathizers, suggesting their political opinions were dubious at best. This was most evident early on in the coverage when International Co-operation Minister Bev Oda said, "My one issue is that, rather than protest for the Tamil community, it seems they're representing the Tamil Tigers" (Wingrove, Bonoguore & Curry, 12 May 2009, p. A1).

However, it is also important to consider what the flag means to the Tamil activists that used it during demonstrations. One Tamil activist explained his time in the demonstrations as a cathartic process: "When I went to protest, I felt that I was not only raising my voice for the cause, but I also felt that we were getting together, seeing each other, feeling our pain" (Thomas, 20 May 2009, p. A14). Many of those same activists held up Canadian flags, exhibiting the blended nature of their presence in Canada. However, the terrorist connotations of the Tamil Eelam flag was highlighted much more than their use of the Canadian flag. The sign of "Tiger flags" becoming more visible was undoubtedly viewed as a menacing sight (Bonoguore, 14 May 2009, p. A13). While I do not have the space to explain the history of the LTTE as a symbol of freedom fighters for many Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamils abroad, I will quickly highlight the importance of reappropriating negatively viewed symbols and terms throughout history. Consider the reappropriation of the Pink Triangle used by Nazis to mark suspected homosexuals in concentration camps and how it has become an important symbol in the GLBTQ community. Or the GLBTQ's reappropriation of the term "queer". Or the reappropriation of the term "bitch" by some third-wave feminists. There are many more examples of the reappropriation of negative symbols to something that is praised by others, including non-members of those communities. As non-militant goals for Tamil Eelam emerged out of a militant movement, Tamils reappropriated the original meaning of the flag as a marker for their community.

This mistaken conflation to the terrorist organization might have been the reason why Prime Minister Harper remained silent during the protests. Harper has since become more vocal about Sri Lanka's suspected crimes against humanity, even stating he will boycott the 2012 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (of which Sri Lanka is a member). Certainly he must be commended for this, there is no denying that and boycotting CHOGM would be a step in the right direction in leaning on President Mahinda Rajapaksa. However, it may also indicate that the war on terror superseded international intervention to thwart highly suspected crimes against humanity at their peak.

## 4.5 An abrupt ending

While Tamil activists continued to hold smaller demonstrations well beyond the ending of the Sri Lankan civil war, the coverage of those demonstrations ended abruptly about a week after the war's conclusion. In fact, one Tamil reader wrote a letter to the Toronto Star, asking why the newspaper did not cover a candlelit vigil held by thousands of Tamils at Queen's Park on May 22 (*Toronto Star*, 26 May 2009, p. A22). The other three newspapers also failed to report on the vigil. This suggests that newspapers were primarily interested in the controversial nature of the protests, and once those features dissipated, so too did the coverage.

This volatility fulfills Goode and Ben Yehuda's (2009) final element of moral panic. However, because there were no institutionalized changes or serious proposals for change, it does not meet the additional requirements for moral panic established in Chapter 2. While not a moral panic in itself, it is an episode in a longer panic. This coverage, lasting for at least the better part of a month, established the stereotype of Tamils as self-interested rule breakers with possible links to terrorism. By framing the issue in these discursive terms, subsequent practices and reactions were constrained to treating other Tamil issues within

these terms. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, these stereotypes were carried forward and crystallized in the 2010 coverage of Tamil migrants arriving on the MV Sun Sea. The application of these stereotypes on a very different group of Tamils is also indicative of the way in which these stereotypes were extended to all Tamils in Canada.

## Chapter 5 – MV Sun Sea Coverage

"Tamil migrant ship linked to terror group", "On the lookout for Tigers", and "Tamil boat shows refugee policy flaws" are just a handful of the headlines from newspaper articles covering the arrival of the MV Sun Sea in British Columbia. These articles, like many others in the coverage period of August 1 to October 31, 2010, framed 492 asylum-seeking Sri Lankan Tamils as a global and domestic security threat, an example of "failed" refugee policy, and Canada's immigration "problem".

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that Tamil activists were stigmatized in and by media in a variety of ways. The most prevalent themes were the depictions of Tamil activists as self-interested rule-breakers and criminals requiring police surveillance; the resignation that nothing could be done by Canada (or the West) to intervene in the Sri Lankan civil war; the distinction between "good immigrants" and "bad immigrants"; questions of Tamils exploiting Canada's immigration system; several examples of overt xenophobia and covert racism by journalists, experts, politicians, and members of the public; and the conflation of Tamil activism with Tamil Tigers and terrorism. While the events and reactions stemming from the May 2009 protests did not culminate in a moral panic, they represented an *episode* of multi-staged moral panic and the characterizations of Tamils in Canada made during this preliminary episode were carried over into the MV Sun Sea coverage.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how these characterizations and stereotypes became crystallized through moral panic, to the point of necessitating an official legislative response due to the calls from journalists, experts, politicians, and the public to punish these transgressors. I will also demonstrate that many of these characterizations and stereotypes to describe Tamil activists were not only grafted onto the Sun Sea's passengers, but to all

Tamils in Canada. The themes mentioned above from the May 2009 coverage are also present in the 248 articles covering the MV Sun Sea, with the additions of threats to national security; Canada's so-called "lax" and "broken" refugee, terrorist, and human smuggling laws; and recession-based xenophobia.

The following section of this chapter will include the context of the MV Sun Sea's arrival, including a brief discussion of another ship landing in Canada several months earlier, the aftermath of the Sri Lankan civil war, the immediate and structural issues Tamils face in Sri Lanka and South Asia, and the geographical context of migration from Sri Lanka.

The next section will stem from my critical discourse analysis of the 248 newspaper articles. This collection of articles includes national coverage (40 articles from *The Globe and Mail*, 37 articles from the *National Post*), local coverage in British Columbia (25 articles from *The Province*, 52 articles from the *Vancouver Sun*), and coverage in Toronto, which most of Canada's Tamil population calls home (50 articles from the *Toronto Star*, 44 articles from the *Toronto Sun*). The two broad themes emerging from the coverage were security and recession- and economic-based xenophobia.

The final section of this chapter will be a study of elements and phases of the panic, such as the different levels of sensationalization from local and national coverage, an overview of crystallized characterizations and stereotypes of Tamils in Canada, and the organized political response that left a *legacy* and fulfilled the criteria of moral panic I have set in this study.

## 5.1 Context

### 5.1.1 *The Sri Lankan civil war in a snapshot*

After almost 26 years of fighting between the Sri Lankan army and LTTE, the Sri Lankan civil war ended on May 18, 2009. The end of the war was an important issue to the

global Tamil diaspora, as seen in the previous chapter, with many Tamil activists citing the humanitarian issue (re)emerging on the island just south of India. Throughout the May 2009 coverage, it was clear that the war ended violently with heavy losses on both sides and a high number of civilian deaths. Days after the war ended, the UN estimated that between 80,000 and 100,000 people were killed during the conflict (Haviland, 17 June 2010). The civil war and the issues that caused it and remain is a task requiring its own study. However, some context of these issues is key to understanding the Sun Sea coverage.

Sri Lanka is comprised of a number of ethnicities, but is largely dominated by a Sinhalese majority and a much smaller, but still significant Tamil minority. Each ethnic group has their own language, Sinhala and Tamil, respectively. Sinhalese are primarily Buddhist, while Tamils are primarily Hindu with a sizeable Christian population. These differences were key drivers behind the civil war. Gordon Weiss, former UN senior official in Sri Lanka, outlines some of the Sri Lankan government's history of institutional racism in an Op-Ed in The Globe and Mail: making Sinhala the sole official government language in 1956, making Buddhism the state religion in 1972, organized massacres of between 2,000 and 3,000 Tamils and arson destroying tens of thousands of Tamil homes and business in 1983 (Weiss, 28 August 2010, p. A15).

In response, the LTTE carried out assassinations of many politicians, including Sinhalese, "soft-line" Tamils, and the Indian prime minister in 1991 (Weiss, 28 August 2010, p. A15). Heavily outnumbered against the Sri Lankan army, the LTTE resorted to other guerrilla tactics, the use of suicide bombs, extortion, conscription, and the recruitment of child soldiers. While most of the world viewed them as terrorists by 2006, the LTTE was unlike most of the world's terrorist organizations in both size and scope. In fact, the LTTE was more like a small army and pseudo government. Before being basically eradicated at the

end of the civil war, the LTTE and its political wing ran the Tamil-populated northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, with a news station, banks, court, and police service. These areas were part of the separatist state, or Tamil Eelam, sought out by many Sri Lankan Tamils in response to the misconduct of the Sri Lankan government. Weiss writes, "the Tamils harboured a grievance born of both perceived and actual injustices" (Weiss, 28 August 2010, p. A15).

Additionally, aside from the assassination of Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi, the LTTE almost exclusively carried out their operations in Sri Lanka (Weiss, 28 August 2010, p. A15). Their grievances are with the Sri Lankan state and their operations are not likely to go global. With many of its rank-and-file members being conscripted or forcibly recruited, it is a dubious act to call one of these men a "terrorist" because they were unlucky enough to be an able-bodied man during the civil war. So while it is certain that factions of the LTTE carried out acts of terrorism, the organization was much more complex than it has been (or not been) described.

### 5.1.2 Push and pull factors for Tamil asylum seekers

Despite some international pressure, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa has denied access to the UN to conduct an investigation into human rights violations by both the Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE (Ward, 14 August 2010, p. A8). Rajapaksa also denies foreign press access to Sri Lanka, meaning that even informal investigations are hard to come by. In fact, Rajapaksa has called Sri Lankan journalists 'traitors' for echoing the UN's calls for a human rights investigation (Greensdale, 23 March 2012). Yet, despite the many allegations and reports of misconduct, indiscriminate shelling, and human rights violations, the Sri Lankan government has held firm that "it did not spill a single drop of human blood" (Weiss, 28 August 2010, p. A15).

Rajapaksa made it his personal mission to destroy the LTTE and campaigned on that promise, saying that it will bring peace to Sri Lanka (Lewington & Makin, 11 May 2009, p. A1). Following the military campaign, however, there have been very few attempts at reconciliation with the Tamil minority (*The Guardian*, 4 June 2012). In fact, there have been many incidents that would make the Tamil minority uneasy.

This uneasiness was primarily due to the sustained military presence in Tamil occupied areas of Sri Lanka. In May 2009, following the end of the civil war, *The Globe and Mail* reported that the Sri Lankan army would require an additional 100,000 soldiers (300,000 in total) to sustain peace and resettle the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Tamils (Saunders, 29 May 2009, p. A14). It would be soldiers, not humanitarian organizations and social workers that would be doing the majority of resettling war-weary Tamils (who, for all intents and purposes, were living as refugees in their own country). Also, two war measures, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (which allows for arbitrary arrest of civilians) and the Emergency Regulations Act, had not been abolished as of August 2010 (Bell, 17 August 2010, p. A1). In light of reports of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and sexual assault by soldiers, Tamils had a great deal of misgivings towards the resettlement plan (Hume, 28 August 2010, p. C4).

So with many reasons to leave Sri Lanka, potential Tamil asylum seekers need to decide where to go. South Asian countries such as India and Thailand have not signed the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. India has taken many Tamil refugees, but not signing the convention does limit the rights of refugees. Australia had stopped taking in Sri Lankan refugees after a number of boats arrived following the civil war. Additionally, Australia handles asylum seekers of this nature at offshore processing centers, meaning that they are denied refugee rights because they have not officially landed in country and can be

turned away (Walia, 14 August 2010, p. C5). With the refugee policies of those three states

being less than desirable, Canada has a significant number of pull factors for Tamil asylum

seekers. Firstly, Canada has a worldwide reputation as a humanitarian beacon and being a

land formed by immigrants. Secondly, Canada (specifically Toronto) houses the largest Tamil

diaspora outside of South Asia, meaning that there are greater opportunities for integration

and an easier transition in a vastly different place.

With the push and pull factors in place, the next question is why some Tamil asylum

seekers travelled by boat and with the aide of human smugglers. First, Sri Lanka is a small

island, so air and boat travel are the only ways out. Second, the conditions in Sri Lanka made

travel without the aid of a human smuggler very difficult for a large number of Tamils. In

September 2009, Amnesty International reported:

> "Only a fraction of nearly 300,000 people who were displaced by recent fighting
> in the north east of Sri Lanka have been allowed to leave government camps
> since the war ended in May. More than a quarter of a million people remain
> detained and under military guard in crowded, unsanitary conditions that are still
> far below international standards" (Amnesty International, 2009).

While the number of people displaced by the civil war is extremely high, the keys to that

report were that "only a fraction… have been allowed to leave" and that they "remain

detained under military guard". The only way people were getting out is if they were

smuggled and if they were displaced due to combat, it is possible they might not have had

the documentation required for air travel. At the peak of the coverage, Tamil asylum seekers

on the MV Sun Sea were reported to have paid up to $50,000 to human smugglers for their

journey. While it is not verified that all of the passengers came from these camps, there were

many references made to them in the coverage. As one letter-writing member of the public

wrote to the Toronto Star, "a large part [of the money] would have gone to the police and

army personnel to look the other way when they escaped and then to brokers and contacts

until they find their way to the smugglers" (*Toronto Star*, 28 August 2010, p. IN7). In fact, as the Toronto Star reported, many journeys by asylum seekers to Canada have involved human smugglers, dating back many decades (Whittington, 14 August 2010, p. A6). This is nothing new and the truth is that most refugees involve or even require human smuggling at some point in their journey (Peixoto, 2009; Guerette & Clarke, 2005).

### 5.1.3 *Bringing it all together*

All of these factors came together in the separate arrivals of two boats carrying Tamil passengers from Sri Lanka. The focus of my research is the landing of the MV Sun Sea on August 2010, but another smaller ship arrived ten months earlier. The MV Ocean Lady arrived in British Columbia on October 17, 2009, carrying 76 Tamil passengers (Fong, 18 October 2009). All of the passengers were men and the ship had spent 45 days at sea (Carlson, 12 August 2010). Coincidentally, the ship left about the same time as the aforementioned report from Amnesty International was published. The most noteworthy information from this ship is that despite 25 of the passengers being suspected of having links to the LTTE, all of the Ocean Lady's passengers were released due to lack of evidence from security officials, and all filed a refugee claim (Aulakh, 11 August 2010, p. GT2). Officials and media outlets knew of the lack of evidence linking the Ocean Lady passengers to the LTTE by the time the Sun Sea had arrived in August 2010. However, this did not seem to deter widespread public claims of LTTE links to the Sun Sea by politicians, experts, and media. When the Sun Sea landed in August 2010, security fears and deficiencies served as the primary framework for interpreting the coverage and response.

### 5.2    Security

The arrival of the MV Sun Sea was a huge news story and became an important national debate about existing refugee and immigration policy in Canada. No issue was more

central than the presumed security threat the Sun Sea represented. This framework was established very early on in the coverage and was used by many "right-thinking people" as a reason to call for changes to existing "failing" policy.

### 5.2.1 Framing the crisis: The Globe and Mail is first on the scene

There were 248 total articles covering Tamils and the Sun Sea between August 1 and October 31, 2009. The very first article published on the story, The Globe and Mail's "More Tamil vessels may be headed for Canada," established and revealed security as the primary framework for the coverage and responses from media, politicians, experts, and the public. Three official experts or officials referenced in the article were terrorism 'expert' Rohan Gunaratna, Canadian Defence Minister Peter MacKay, and Canadian Minister of Public Safety Vic Toews. These three figures served as authorities on terrorism, national defence, and public safety, respectively.

Gunaratna, a terrorism 'expert' who "has consulted for the Canadian government and is a professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore" (Quan, 7 September 2010, p. A4), was the first to comment on the ship in the article (Youssef, 5 August 2010, p. S1). He stated that two additional vessels, as part of a Tamil Tiger human smuggling operation, were waiting to see how Canada would deal with the Sun Sea before moving forward (Youssef, 5 August 2010, p. S1). He also claimed that arrival of the Sun Sea was due to Canada's soft response to the Ocean Lady. In one phone interview, Gunaratna stated Canada was soft, they are being targeted by the Tamil Tigers, and that more ships will come if they continue to be soft. Gunaratna capped off his analysis of the situation by asking, "What is the point of having a Canadian military?" claiming that the Sun Sea posed a threat and that, "The Canadian military is designed to thwart threats to Canada" (Youssef, 5 August 2010, p. S1).

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Not mentioned in that article is that Gunaratna is a Sri Lankan national, who has close ties to the Sri Lankan government and has even helped the president with his memoirs (Quan, 7 September 2010, p. A4). Despite questions of his credibility, Gunaratna is mentioned in seventeen different articles, most of which were early in the coverage period and he was referenced primarily as a terrorism expert. Widely suspected of being the Canadian government's primary source (Peach, 20 August 2010, p. A.10), Gunaratna played a key role in feeding into the warning, impact, and inventory phases and the concern dimension of the ensuing moral panic. His prediction of two vessels laying in wait started the panic off with a prediction that carried forward, but has not been fulfilled almost two years later. In other newspapers, Gunaratna was quoted saying, "Canadian laws are exceptionally weak when it comes to terrorism" (Carrigg, 10 August 2010, p. A4) and "[Ocean Lady passengers] have been released not because they are not terrorists but because the manner in which refugee law exists in Canada" (Aulakh, 10 August 2010, p. A1). With his "expert" testimony, Gunaratna was instrumental in establishing the limits of interpretation and the reactions to the events. The limits of interpreting the MV Sun Sea as a security threat are instrumental in the ensuing moral panic.

MacKay, the Minister of Defence, was only mentioned briefly in the first article, but his presence is still significant as a way of interpreting the warning and impact phases of the panic to come: the landing of a ship full of asylum seekers warranted mention of Canada's purveyor of national defence.

Toews, the Minister of Public Safety, was also only briefly mentioned in the first article. However, unlike MacKay, Toews would play a monumental role in shaping the moral panic. The arrival of the Sun Sea was a nationwide headline that had many officials, experts, professionals, and advocacy groups all commenting on the event. None were more vocal

than Toews, who was featured or mentioned in 75 of the 248 newspaper articles. Toews was more vocal and prominent in the coverage than both Prime Minister Stephen Harper (40 articles) and Minister of Immigration Jason Kenney (21 articles) combined. Toews' earliest direct quote in a newspaper appeared on August 10, 2009 (Carlson, 10 August 2010, p. A1). Kenney's earliest direct quote surfaced on September 2, 2009 in an interview with the National Post (Don, 2 September 2010, p. A4), weeks after the initial phases began and the official response was already underway. The fact that the Minister of Public Safety appeared in more than three times as many articles as the Minister of Immigration, while also directly responding to the event in media three weeks earlier, clearly illustrates Canada's official reaction to the landing of 492 Tamil asylum seekers.

### 5.2.2 *Framing the crisis and fuelling the panic*

The sensationalization and framing of the panic started by The Globe and Mail, was followed by another national newspaper, the National Post, its first article. "Tories set sights on incoming Tamil ship", a front page article, featured Toews along with John Thompson (security expert and president of the Toronto-based Mackenzie Institute) and Peter St. John (associate Professor of Political Studies at the University of Manitoba, specializing in intelligence and terrorism) (Carlson, 10 August 2010, p. A1).

The article also reports that 25 of the 76 Ocean Lady passengers were suspected of being members of the Tamil Tigers, but failed to state they were released due to insufficient evidence (Carlson, 10 August 2010, p. A1). This flimsy reporting might lead some readers to believe that one boat already landed with a third of its passengers being terrorists, asking them to think of the numbers when another boat lands with 492 passengers.

Following the statement of suspected LTTE members on the Ocean Lady, the article quotes Toews saying, "There is reason to believe that a listed terrorist entity, the LTTE, may

be involved in organizing and carrying out this activity" (Carlson, 10 August 2010, p. A1). Not enough to mention that a terrorist group might be aboard the ship, Toews fuels the panic in his public statement by saying, "The LTTE, I remind you, is an organization that has engaged in the widespread use of suicide bombings against civilian targets in Sri Lanka, and used extortion and intimidation to raise funds within the Canadian Tamil community" (Carlson, 10 August 2010, p. A1). Here Toews elaborated on still unconfirmed suspicions supplied by a questionable source, to the point of suggesting that the LTTE is as much a concern within Canada as it was in Sri Lanka.

Thompson, the security expert, states that there is a "dead-certain guarantee that there are members of the Tamil Tigers aboard" (Carlson, 10 August 2010, p. A1). Like Toews, Thompson elaborates on possible crimes LTTE members could commit in Canada, telling the paper "while these people may not pose a direct threat to Canadians, many are skilled in organized crime and could pursue violent activities" (Carlson, 10 August 2010, p. A1). Statements like these, in the very first article to report the story in this paper and concerning unconfirmed suspicions, present elaborations that are very far removed from what is actually happening. It is especially noteworthy that these elaborations appeared two days before the ship officially landed.

The Province, a B.C. newspaper, in its first article, "Second refugee ship in sight", presented statements from Gunaratna and Manjula Selvarajah, a spokeswoman from the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC). Selvarajah stated, "Those on board the MV Sun Sea are fleeing Sri Lanka after the end of a war of independence between the Tamil Tigers army and the Sri Lankan government" (Carrigg, 10 August 2010, p. A4). Gunaratna, like in his other appearances, chastised Canada for its weak laws, predicted more ships to come, and claimed that Tamil Tiger leaders were aboard the Ocean Lady (Carrigg, 10 August 2010, p. A4).

The Vancouver Sun, Toronto Star, and Toronto Sun all reported that there were 200 suspected migrants aboard the Sun Sea in their first articles. The fact that the actual number was 492 should lead to some questions about the accuracy of information Gunaratna was supplying Canadian officials.

The Toronto Star's first article, "Are 200 on cargo ship refugees or terrorists?" started their coverage with a sensational front-page headline. The paper also featured Toews' comments about LTTE aboard the Sun Sea, along with a comment he made following the speech, "I think it's important to send a message that Canada should not be viewed as easy entry into North America and that we are very concerned about security issues" (Aulakh, 10 August 2010, p. A1).

Two other officials with affiliations with the Sri Lankan government were featured. First was Sumith Dassanayake of the Sri Lankan High Commission in Ottawa, stating, "Most of [Toronto's Tamils] are hardcore LTTE people... The Tigers are trying to regroup here to keep the movement alive" (Aulakh, 10 August 2010, p. A1). This statement echoes the suspicions raised by Toews and other terrorism and security experts. Second was the familiar Gunaratna, claiming that Canada's weak laws allowed LTTE members from the Ocean Lady to be freed from custody while waiting for their refugee claims to be processed. The sensational headline, along with the quotes from these authoritative sources helped to distort the event during the inventory phase. As the inventory phase is key in taking stock of the conditions of the event that will lead to a panic, coverage such as this article played a key role in framing the remaining phases and elements to follow. While spokesperson for the CTC, David Poopalipillai dismissed these accusations as fear mongering, much of the damage had already been done and the sentiment that Canada could be a breeding ground for terrorists became a key cog in the security-related moral panic.

### 5.2.3 Tigers 2.0

If I have not already established that security and a fear of LTTE members in Canada was a paramount concern during this coverage, let me bolster this claim. Along with the profuse references to the Minister of Public Safety as the authoritative voice on the landing of a ship containing 492 asylum seekers, the six newspapers made reference to many keywords in the security, terrorism, and fear-based lexicon. Very directly the words "security" and "criminal" appeared in 71 and 69 different articles, respectively. The words "terrorism" or "terrorist(s)" appeared in 134 articles. More specifically, the LTTE or Tamil Tigers, firmly established as a terrorist organization in the newspapers, were referenced in 132 of the 248 articles. This means that references to terrorism and/or a specific terrorist organization were made in more than half of the articles in the three-month coverage period. The conflation between Tamils in Canada and Tamil Tigers seen in the May 2009 protests was carried out and intensified in the MV Sun Sea coverage.

In May 2009, Tamil Tigers were suspected to have a presence in Canada and they were described as violent terrorists. However, it was not especially clear what their supposed impact in Canada would look like. This is something elaborated on in much greater detail in the MV Sun Sea coverage. As mentioned above, Sri Lanka's High Commission in Ottawa claimed that most of the Tamils in Toronto are "hardcore LTTE" supporters and that the Tigers would use Canada as a base to regroup (Aulakh, 10 August 2010, p. A1). With this statement appearing in the first few days of the coverage, it paints Tamils already in Canada as rebellious and militant. Likewise, with the arrival of the MV Sun Sea thoroughly referenced as a terrorist operation with terrorists definitely aboard, both Tamils in and outside of Canada's borders are depicted as being a large community of terrorist

sympathizers with terrorists in their ranks. In a sense, the argument against the MV Sun Sea seemed to be that Canada already has enough Tamils and does not need any more.

In the National Post article "Tigers 2.0", published two days after the ship's arrival, aforementioned security expert John Thompson told the paper, "Here in Canada, you've got all these young kids, their whole sole idea of Tamil identity has been defined by the Tigers. They're being raised as a poisoned generation to perpetuate the conflict" (Libin, 14 August 2010, p. A1). In his expert opinion, Thompson did not say there were "a few bad apples." Instead, he made a grand statement, claiming there was an entire "poisoned generation" of Tamil Canadian children whose "sole idea of Tamil identity has been defined by the Tigers." As I have argued and illustrated throughout my research project, if Tamil identity is defined by a relationship to the Tamil Tigers, Canadian news media and public officials are responsible for a great deal of those defining parameters by continually referencing Tamils by way of mentioning the LTTE and conflating Tamils in Canada with Tamil Tiger terrorists.

Thompson's sentiment of the "poisoned generation" appeared in a letter written into the Globe and Mail, published on August 21, 2010. This letter-writing member of the public outlined "The task of the refugee board" (the article's title), writing that Tamil "newcomers should be settled in disperse areas around Canada where they will not have to integrate into the local Tamil culture and be subjected to its pressures" (Spencer, 21 August 2010, p. A16). This depiction a hardline, terrorist-supporting Tamil community in Toronto appeared in three of the most widely circulated newspapers: The Globe and Mail, National Post, and Toronto Star.

Further fuelling the moral panic, prediction was plentiful during the MV Sun Sea coverage. The National Post spoke with a former chief of strategic planning for CSIS, who

believed that that the Canadian government was "not fully prepared for the kind of underground organizing and sophisticated operation like LTTE is capable of… which… could well include infiltrating political and judicial institutions" (Carlson, 10 August 2010, p. A1). It is suspicions like these which might be at the root of name changes undertaken by Tamil professionals and public officials to change their name to obscure their Tamil heritage, such as Conservative MP candidate, Gavan Paranchothy, mentioned in Chapter 2.

After the MV Sun Sea had been docked in Canada for two days, Thompson's comments were taken together with comments from other experts, resulting in predictions being made that the LTTE would reestablish its ranks in Canada with the goal of financing its terrorist operations. It was posited that if the LTTE did not pursue these operations they were fully capable of setting up elaborate criminal organizations, capable of infiltrating Canadian political and judicial institutions. Furthermore, Canada would have to make dramatic changes to its "broken", "weak", and "soft" laws and policy to prevent more boats from coming as a way to stop these threats from happening. Predictions made by official sources during this inventory phase, despite being sensational or incorrect, have a way of reappearing and framing the reaction phase to follow when an organized response is made by decision-making officials (Cohen, 2002). These predictions represented a series of elaborations that took the story well beyond what was actually happening. They created a sense of distortion that would fuel calls from politicians, journalists, experts, and members of the public for innovative measures to change Canadian refugee policy and human smuggling laws. As such, the stereotypes of Tamils in Canada and their conflation to Tamil Tiger terrorists were crystallized in the name of protecting Canada. While immigration lawyers, advocacy groups, and the CTC wrote to several newspapers and were quoted in

many articles, headlines such as "Turn back the Sun Sea", "Warm welcome means more ships", "Taking advantage", and "Tamils, go home" depict the prevailing sentiment.

## 5.3 Immigration and Economics

Aside from preeminent fears of security, crime, and terrorism, there was a second dominant frame that shaped the coverage and reactions to the moral panic surrounding the MV Sun Sea. This was the concern over the perceived threat of illegal immigrants "taking advantage" of Canadian immigration policy in a time of economic downturn.

Moral panic sends a clear message about the behavior of perceived deviants: "this is behavior we will *not* tolerate" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 248). In their study of moral panic, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) explain, "Under the right conditions – for example, an economic depression resulting in the need for a scapegoat, the rise of an anti-Semitic, xenophobic candidate, the eruption of a sex scandal – the sensitization resulting from the nonexistent threat could very well aggravate a new moral panic" (p. 249). The MV Sun Sea made a very noticeable arrival, but its 492 asylum seekers represent only two percent of the total 23,110 refugee claims made in 2010 (Canadian and Immigration Canada, 2011). On average, those 492 claims were comparable to about eight days worth of claims during the course of the entire year. Given the statistics of refugee claimants, the amount of coverage per passengers fulfills the disproportion criteria of moral panic. In line with this disproportion and sensationalization, the predominant coverage labeled passengers of the MV Sun Sea as "queue jumpers", "backdoor invaders", "bogus refugee claimants", and "fraudsters". The focus of this section is to explain how these labels were primarily used to compare "good immigrants" to "bad immigrants" in the context of recession-stricken Canada. This section also fortifies the links between the May 2009 and MV Sun Sea episodes of the moral panic. This is no more evident than in the National Post article "Taking

advantage" and its take on "bad immigrants": "[Tamil protestors in Toronto] showed both a serious lack of respect, and a huge sense of entitlement. So why should Canadians now be surprised by the brazen appearance of the Sun Sea?" (Kheiriddin, 17 August 2010, p. A12)."

### 5.3.1 *"Good immigrants" versus "bad immigrants" redux*

In Chapter 4, I illustrated that throughout the May 2009 protest coverage, public officials, journalists, and many members of the public made it very clear that Tamil activists were "bad immigrants". Those same sentiments are found in the MV Sun Sea coverage, applying the "bad immigrant" label to both passengers of the ship and Tamils already in Canada.

Passengers of the MV Sun Sea were called a variety of different names. Of those names, "queue jumper" was the most frequently used, with references to an immigration or refugee "queue" appearing in 31 of 248 articles. Links to terrorism and human smuggling early in the coverage already painted the passengers as "bad immigrants", but there was also a comparison to "good immigrants" that took place with the "queue" as its focal point. "Good immigrants" filed proper forms and were expected to wait until they were accepted – even if that meant waiting several years (Solberg, 23 August 2010). As the National Post put it, "Instead of going through normal immigration channels, or the refugee admissions process, those aboard the Sun Sea headed for the front of the line, thanks to their wallets" (Kheiriddin, 17 August 2010, p. A12). Suspicions that those aboard the ship were abusing the immigration system were littered throughout the coverage, with the claim that Canada was, in one way or another, "being taken advantage of" appearing in 23 of the 248 articles (two in the Globe and Mail; two in the National Post; four in The Province; four in the Vancouver Sun; six in the Toronto Star; and three in the Toronto Sun). Those 23 articles

meant that roughly one-tenth of the coverage staked or presented that claim, either through the words of the journalist or through the words of his or her source.

All of these claims and labels were applied before the ship landed on August 12, 2010 and a formal investigation could be held and the refugee cases heard. Many public officials, experts, journalists, and members of the public had already passed judgment. In an editorial appearing in the National Post on the day the MV Sun Sea landed, the answer was "simple": "Turn the ship back before it reaches our territorial waters" (*National Post*, 12 August 2010, p. A12). The call to turn the ship back was made four times, counting the title, because Canada "cannot afford to become the world's collection point for Tamil radicals" (*National Post*, 12 August 2010, p. A12). "Tamil radicals", needless to say, are perceived as "bad immigrants". This was the perceived impact the MV Sun Sea and other predicted ships would have on Canada. With these suspicions came numerous calls from a variety of sources to drastically change and strengthen Canada's refugee and immigration laws to prevent Canada from remaining a "target" of terrorists and human smugglers. The article also cites "intelligence sources here and in other Western nations" insisting that the Sun Sea was renamed after being used as a gun-running ship for the Tamil Tigers (*National Post*, 12 August 2010, p. A12). This claim, like many other pre-arrival claims, was untrue as the ship had been purchased only months before its journey to Canada (Carlson, 24 August 2010, p. A4). However, these false claims, combined with misleading statements of terrorists on the Ocean Lady, became part of the inventory that would feed into the reaction phase of the panic concerning the Sun Sea.

As I referenced in Chapter 2, Razack (1999) finds that policing the border also requires policing bodies of people of colour already inside it. With suspicious Tamils approaching the B.C. shore in August, the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA)

conducted a secret report from 50 random case studies of Sri Lankan nationals in Canada that had submitted refugee applications (Cleveland, 26 August 2010, p. A13). The report found that 31 of the 50 applicants had been granted asylum. The report also found that 22 of those 31 had made trips back to Sri Lanka (*National Post*, 24 August 2010, p. 16). Using the report as proof that Tamils had "duped the system", the Toronto Sun quoted Government House Leader John Baird saying, "It's self-evident that that's a reasonable concern... Immigration is something our government supports. Obviously there is a right way and a wrong way" (Weese, 22 August, 2010).

In what can be described as trying to incite public outrage – or even worse, a witch hunt – the Toronto Sun published six articles based on this report within two days on August 22 and 23, 2010. Five of those articles appeared on August 22, clearly establishing the viewpoint held by the paper: Tamils already in Canada are fraudsters, so why should we let in a boatload more? In all six of the articles, the report was presented as having *Tamil* respondents. However, the CBSA survey was conducted with *Sri Lankan nationals*, with no way of distinguishing Tamils from Singhalese.[5] Furthermore, four of the five articles published on August 22 referenced only percentages (71%) or "the majority" of Tamils refugees returned to Sri Lanka. Only one article cited that the report was based on only 50 randomly surveyed respondents (Levant, 22 August 2010). With only 50 respondents and no way to determine if all of those respondents were Tamil, this report is certainly not representative of the Tamil community in Canada. However, this did not prevent the Toronto Sun from using it in that manner. Using this flimsy information, the Toronto Sun claimed "We've been duped by Tamils" (*Toronto Sun*, 22 August 2010), referred to refugee

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[5] To its credit, this was clarified by the National Post, but not until August 26, 2010 in a letter from a reader (Cleveland, 26 August 2010, p. A13).

claims by Tamils as "wholesale fraud" (Levant, 22 August 2010), and accused passengers of the MV Sun Sea of pulling a "ruse" (*Toronto Sun*, 22 August 2010).

This was no longer just about human smugglers or terrorists anymore – this was about "the majority" of Tamils being "queue-jumpers, scam artists, back-door invaders, and no doubt more than a few terrorists linked to the blood-mongering Tamil Tigers" (*Toronto Sun*, 22 August 2010). The newspaper also questioned what those "bad immigrants" were doing on their trips back to Sri Lanka: "Vacation? Visit relatives? Or recruit?" (*Toronto Sun*, 22 August 2010). These suspicions went as far as suggesting what can only be called a witch hunt: "The only way to restore confidence in the system - and respect for the value of Canadian citizenship - is to have an audit of every Tamil refugee to see if they, too, took vacations back to Sri Lanka, after swearing they were terrified to be there. Those who went back should be denaturalized - stripped of their immigration status and deported immediately" (Levant, 22 August 2010). The message was clear in that *all* Tamils in Canada should be suspected of abusing the Canadian immigration system, that they need to be taught respect, and should be forced out if found to be abusing the system.

Only one article, appearing the day after the fervor on August 23, provided a voice for the other side of the debate. CTC national spokesperson David Poopalapillai was interviewed by the Toronto Sun, with the newspaper reporting, "There was nothing unusual or suspect about Tamil refugees in Canada who have gone back to Sri Lanka... After all, there was a four-year cease-fire in the civil war and they were 'good years'" (Weese, 23 August 2010). With the civil war beginning in 1983 and a ceasefire between 2002 and 2005, almost twenty years passed between the first Tamil refugees' arrival in Canada and conditions improved enough in Sri Lanka for some to return to visit family members and their former homeland. The CBSA report was not published and only topline figures were

released (Cleveland, 26 August 2010, p. A13), so there is no way of determining what period any of these refugees returned home. As Poopalapillai stated in the article, "If there are any undesirables, then eliminate them. Our system (in Canada) has the capacity, or efficiency, to weed out those undesirable elements" (Weese, 23 August 2010). The witch hunt proposed by the Toronto Sun and the calls for an immigration and refugee policy overhaul were hostile and sensational responses to sensational stories and distorted figures.

### 5.3.2 Xenophobeconomics

The cost of the journey for each MV Sun Sea passenger was cited in about two dozen different newspaper articles. That cost was estimated at $40,000 to $50,000 at the height of the coverage and was presumed to go directly to human smugglers running the ship. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, there are many other costs prior to travel, such as bribes to various officials and police. These non-travel costs would apply even more so to Tamils living in Sri Lanka's displacement camps. The National Post, in particular, cited that passengers paid at least $40,000 to smugglers for their journey in six different articles during the panic period. However, almost two years later, the newspaper cited that passengers paid between $20,000 and $30,000 for their journey (Bell, 26 June 2012). With costs being cut in half after the fervor of the panic subsided, it should be questioned why these incorrect numbers were so widely reported. Were officials and journalists too eager to publish and speak on unverified numbers? Presented as they were, the cost for each passenger on the ship made for a compelling story that fuelled certain aspects of the moral panic.

One of those important aspects was the projection of how much the MV Sun Sea passengers would cost Canada and its taxpayers. With the passengers established as "bad immigrants" who were "taking advantage" of Canada, it was an easy jump to portraying them as a burden to our social services. Tamils became full-fledged folk devils when the

"Us" versus "Them" distinction grew even more polarized, with the coverage repeatedly mentioning the cost of their arrival in a backdrop of economic uncertainty in the West. Listed below are some of the examples of this xenophobic economic stance (or as I call it: xenophobeconomics).

In the aforementioned article, "Turn back the Sun Sea" by the National Post, when referring to the notion that the LTTE will regroup in Canada, the paper printed, "Why should we devote tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars to settle such a foreign squabble?" (*National Post*, 12 August 2010, p. A12). Here the "taxpayer" is what divides "Us" from "Them" and this distinction is sprinkled throughout the coverage. A member of the public writing into the Globe and Mail had this to say: "One can only speculate on what it will cost for processing, health care, detention, investigation, adjudication, education and social services" (Enemark, 16 August 2010, p. A12). Here, like with "Turn back the Sun Sea", was a mind already made up that these 492 people were unworthy of asylum even before their first hearing in front of the Immigration and Refugee Board. Letters like this were not the only litmus test for public sentiment. Numerous newspaper articles cited a rash of letters and emails received from angry readers, there were two public opinion polls that had a significant proportion of Canadians calling to send the ship away, accounts of angry radio and television talk shows with incensed listeners, and there was even a small gathering of protestors in Victoria to oppose the ship's arrival.

With this widespread sentiment, it was evident that more than one person was speculating the costs of these Tamil asylum seekers. Liberal MP Keith Martin told The Province that, "[His Victoria, B.C. constituents are] angry because they don't want the Tamil people to be let into Canada and they don't want them drawing from our social services because they're already under a lot of pressure" (Lazaruk, 13 August 2010, p. A4). However,

unlike many of the calls being made, Martin said that turning the ship back would be "signing their death warrant" (Lazaruk, 13 August 2010, p. A4). That same article also cited a widespread email that incorrectly informed Canadians that refugee claimants, such as the ones arriving on the Sun Sea, would be eligible for monthly benefits exceeding those given to Canadian pensioners (Lazaruk, 13 August 2010, p. A4).

The gathering sentiment appeared to suggest that once passengers from the MV Sun Sea arrived in Canada they would have it made. The Toronto Sun published an article reading: "After being held briefly, the 490 will be let go, to collect welfare, medicare and child care benefits for the years it will take before their refugee cases are heard. That's what happened to the 76 Tamils who landed on a ship last October. When Canadian officials didn't have enough evidence to prosecute suspected terrorists, they were simply let go" (Levant, 17 August 2010). Rather than being held briefly, many passengers from the MV Sun Sea were detained for an extended time. The last female passenger was released from the CBSA's custody on March 24, 2011, while 44 of the 380 men remained incarcerated (Dhillon, 24 March 2011). The 380 men aboard the ship had been held in maximum-security facilities (*Toronto Star*, 8 September 2010, p. A22). Well after the height of the panic has subsided, it is clear that there was no "jumping" of a "queue". Furthermore, this article suggests that Canada is providing benefits to suspected terrorists who were only released because "Canadian officials didn't have enough evidence to prosecute them". In this sense, these men must contend with the reverse onus under the many suspecting eyes that see them as guilty until proven innocent. This is telling of just how far the conflation between Tamil Tiger terrorist and Tamil has been developed. In turn, this makes the divide between "Canadian taxpayer/us" and "Tamil/them" more of a fissure than a crack and fulfills the

moral panic criteria of consensus with the numerous calls that something must be done to punish these transgressions.

## 5.4 Elements of the moral panic

### 5.4.1 *Local coverage, Toronto coverage, and national coverage*

Just as in Cohen's (2002) study of moral panic, I have found differences between local (where the event happened) and national coverage. Those same differences appeared in the previous chapter, with local Toronto newspapers offering more rounded and less sensationalized coverage than their national counterparts. The same can be said for the MV Sun Sea coverage. However, for this event I added a third element, the Toronto market coverage, as a way of analyzing how coverage in the primary home of Canada's Tamil diaspora was presented.

At the local level were The Province and Vancouver Sun. The Province had, by far, the lowest number of articles on the coverage with only 25 and none of those made the front page. In a sense, perhaps the paper treated the arrival of the MV Sun Sea as business as usual. This is not to say that ships full of hundreds of immigrants land on Canada's western coastline very regularly, but it has happened occasionally and the paper did not blow the latest event out of proportion.

The Vancouver Sun published well-rounded coverage that was the most sympathetic of the six sources to the Sun Sea's passengers. Throughout 52 articles, the newspaper built a strong sense of context for the push and pull factors that would cause 492 Tamil people to leave Sri Lanka. Most importantly, the newspaper truly put Tamil migration in perspective, explaining that Canada was no patsy or target as Tamil refugees were spread out in 57 different countries (Hume, 26 August 2010, p. A7); proving that smuggling was not a new phenomenon (Hume, 28 August 2010, p. C4); that Canada had been much more open to

White refugees who had obviously been smuggled out of communist regimes during the Cold War (Hume, 21 August 2010, p. A6); and that for people fleeing for their lives, as passengers on the MV Sun Sea claimed, there is no "queue" for asylum seekers (Hume, 28 August 2010, p. C4). The newspaper published many quotes, letters, and op-eds from immigration lawyers representing Tamil claimants, spokespeople for the CTC, people working for NGOs, and supportive letters from the public. Furthermore, any derogatory statements, such as terrorist or "queue jumper" were always presented as quotes from a source and not as the words of the journalist. "Sources" and "evidence" were also often contested, with the newspaper suggesting that Canada was getting its information from a Sri Lankan government with a spotty record.

In Toronto, there was a great disparity between the coverage presented by the Toronto Star and the Toronto Sun. The Toronto Star offered a great deal of rounded coverage, with many op-eds, letters, and quotes devoted to the proponents of the "Them" side in the moral panic. However, their first article on the coverage, "Are 200 on cargo ship refugees or terrorists?" was the sensational kind of front-page headline typical of the national newspaper coverage. Additionally, 50 articles published on the story despite being so far away from the coverage, no matter how well rounded, may have inadvertently propelled elements of the panic as a byproduct of over-reporting. Regardless of its shortcomings, the Toronto Star was arguably the second most vocal proponent of the "Them" side in the moral panic. One of the newspapers' most important contributions to the coverage was in asking if the MV Sun Sea was being used strategically by the Conservative government to distract people from recent blunders: "the mass hysteria manufactured by Ottawa has served its purpose, for now. It pushed aside the scandals the Conservatives have been embroiled in

- the ruining of the national census, the building of unneeded prisons and the untendered purchase of F-35 fighter jets" (Siddiqui, 19 August 2010, p. A25).

The Toronto Sun provided the most sensationalized coverage, sometimes bordering on hateful throughout 44 articles. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, with the CBSA survey report of Sri Lankan refugees returning home, the Toronto Sun made a habit of citing flimsy "evidence" and ostensibly called for a witch hunt to investigate every Tamil refugee claimant in Canada's history. The Toronto Sun, if not the most instrumental, was arguably the most vocal source in painting all Tamils in Canada as "bad immigrants".

The National Post arguably reported the second-most sensationalized coverage throughout 37 articles. It would be a strong argument, too, considering calls to "Turn back the Sun Sea", excessive references to Tamil Tigers and detail about their atrocities when referring to the MV Sun Sea, as well as falsely reporting the MV Sun Sea was an LTTE gun-running ship. The National Post also commented on the CBSA survey report in an editorial entitled "What we expect of new Canadians" (*National Post*, 24 August 2010, p. 16). Unlike the Toronto Sun, the National Post did clear up questions of ethnicity in the survey and admitted it was a small sample size. However, it was another example of reporting inaccurate information.

The Globe and Mail also provided fairly sensational coverage on the MV Sun Sea throughout 40 articles. This is especially evident in the aforementioned first article the newspaper published, thoroughly framing the arrival of the Sun Sea as a security threat. However, the newspaper also published an op-ed written by Gordon Weiss, a former senior UN official in Sri Lanka, who provided a strong case for why Tamil refugees fleeing to Canada needed our protection. On the other hand, the article appeared in late August, more than two weeks after the ship officially arrived, meaning that the frame of the coverage was

more or less set. This was somewhat of a trend in the national papers, with "Them" arguments appearing several weeks after initial coverage and often only from "Them" supporters instead of journalists. This amounted to MV Sun Sea advocates missing the crucial opportunity needed to stake a claim in the national debates, a time when "security" and "bad immigrants" were on the tip of so many tongues.

### 5.4.2 Reaction and Legacy

Throughout this chapter it has been my goal to prove that a moral panic took place in August 2010, using Cohen's (2002) phases and Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (2009) elements of moral panic theory. I have thus far demonstrated that Cohen's criteria of warning, impact, and inventory have been met with stereotypes and images of Tamil migrants and Tamils in Canada crystallized into folk devils and the prevalent calls to punish their transgressions. Likewise, I have also demonstrated that Goode and Ben-Yehuda's elements of concern, hostility, consensus and disproportion have been met with a vocal hostility emanating from a number of journalists, public officials, experts, and members of the public distorting issues of "security" and "immigration" into a softness, weakness, or deficiency of judgment that must be corrected. In dealing with a deviant mass of migrants with more presumably on the way, the necessary changes to quell the fears of this panic would need to occur at the level of social control and policy.

In late October 2010, the official Canadian response to the moral panic fulfilled the criteria I set in Chapter 2 of "legacy," with an attempted or successful reform of policy or law. Prior to these changes, there were already penalties for anyone who attempts to smuggle 10 people or more into the country: a $1 million fine and/or life in prison (*Toronto Star*, 8 September 2010, p. A22). However, as I have illustrated throughout this chapter, the moral panic was not only about smugglers, it was also about the smuggled. They too needed to be

deterred from their deviant behavior, according to the "Us" side. Bill C-49, as it was known when it was first introduced, would allow the Minister of Public Safety (not the Minister of Immigration) to determine whether a refugee claimant qualified as an "irregular" arrival if they used smugglers or a criminal organization to come to Canada (*National Post*, 25 October 2010, p. A6). To set the limits of my study, I will not trace the long path Bill-C49 took through several reiterations and a federal election until a form of it was finally passed. What is important for this study is the "attempt" at policy change because it crystallizes the moral panic into an organized reaction.

With the bill as it was proposed, those marked as irregular could be held in custody for up to one year until their admission is determined (*National Post*, 25 October 2010, p. A6). Irregular arrivals would be prevented from applying for permanent resident status or sponsoring family for five years (*National Post*, 25 October 2010, p. A6). Their claims could be reassessed at any time during the process to "see whether they could be shipped home or still need protection" (*Toronto Star*, 24 October 2010, p. A20). Finally, they would receive less health care coverage than they would have prior to the bills' introduction (if passed) (*Toronto Star*, 24 October 2010, p. A20).

These changes thoroughly punish smuggled people, who might be desperate enough to flee a country before waiting several years for their refugee claim to be processed. In the history of transnational asylum seeking, many have used human smuggling at some point in their journey, especially in countries most worth fleeing. To treat it as an irregularity decontextualizes a long history. To punish it in this manner is a reaction to the fervor and hostility of moral panic.

Up to this point I have depicted the ways in which Tamils are stigmatized in Canadian news media. My next task is to determine if and how this stigmatization affects

young Tamil people living in Canada. The next chapter is a look at the possible legacies this coverage has on young Tamils in Canada. This analysis of possible legacies stems from two discussion groups and five interviews with young Tamils living in Canada and the ways in which their lives have become partially framed by this moral panic; the impact of stereotypes in how Tamils are profiled by the mainstream and how some Tamils profile other Tamil people; and the need for change.

## Chapter 6 - Focus Groups and Interviews

"Tamil Tigers. People see that you're Tamil and they say, 'Oh, so you're a Tamil Tiger?' I think to myself, 'No, no, I'm just Tamil.'" These are the words of Vikram, one of ten research participants in my discussions with Tamil youth. In Chapters 4 and 5 of my analysis, a critical discourse analysis of almost 450 Canadian newspaper articles covering two key Tamil-related events, I have established that there is a pervasive stigmatization of Tamil people in Canada carried out by public officials, journalists, experts, and a significant number of the public at large. This stigmatization has portrayed Tamils in Canada as dangerous, rule-breakers, fraudsters, and has strongly conflated the general Tamil population in Canada with Tamil Tigers, a group recognized as a terrorist organization by most of the world. Tamil youth, in particular, have been called a "poisoned generation" by security expert John Thompson in the National Post (Libin, 14 August 2010, p. A1).

Vikram and the other nine research participants have been instrumental in answering the second part of my research question: How has this stigmatization, if at all, affected Tamil youth?

The data collected in this second stage of qualitative research illuminate the ways in which crystallized stereotypes affect Tamils and Tamil youth, signs of double consciousness, and a desire to overturn stereotypes and push young Tamil Canadians into the professional and political positions necessary to make a positive difference in Canadian multiculturalism. As stated in Chapter 3, this analysis was conducted using a phenomenological approach to illuminate the lived experiences of the participants as told by Tamil youth. The discussion groups and interviews produced the rich detail needed for this type of analysis.

Following this section will be an introduction of the participants, including their pseudonyms and educational background. Succeeding that section is an analysis of the

crystallized stereotypes of Tamils in Canada and how they affected these Tamil youth. The next section will be a closer look at the effects of these stereotypes, particularly in the ways in which they manifest as double consciousness for some participants. There is followed by a discussion of how these young people might and do work to overturn these negative stereotypes.

## 6.1   Meet the participants

Each of the participants in this project were between 18 and 28 years of age; were born or have Tamil parents born in Sri Lanka; had lived in Canada for at least five years; had attended at least one event organized by a college or university Tamil student association in the Greater Toronto Area; and had graduated from or was attending a post-secondary institution. These participants represent generations 1.5 and 2 of the Tamil diaspora in Canada.

All participants have been assigned or selected pseudonyms to protect their identity.The four female participants were Lukshmina, Nirosha, Priyanka, and Sharmila. Lukshmina, Priyanka, and Sharmila had all recently graduated from university, while Nirosha was enrolled in a college program. Sharmila was enrolled in a Master's of Public Health at a Canadian university at the time of these discussions.

The six male participants were Anand, Rajsingam (Raj for short), Simbu, Sudarshan (Sud for short), Vijayakanthan (Vijay for short), and Vikram. Raj, Sud, and Vijay generally went by shortened versions of their real names, so their pseudonyms were given the same treatment. Anand, Raj, Simbu, and Vijay had each recently completed their undergraduate programs at universities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). During the time of the discussions, Anand was working on a Master's in Engineering and Simbu was enrolled in an

MBA program. Vikram and Sud were entering the final year of their respective college programs.

The lived experiences of the participants revealed a much greater connection to the May 2009 demonstrations than the landing of the MV Sun Sea. In fact, the participants scarcely mentioned the MV Sun Sea at all. This made sense since all of the participants lived in Toronto.

## 6.2 Crystallized stereotypes

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, many claims were made against Tamil activists and Tamil migrants by Canadian newspapers. Among those many claims, several of them were woven throughout the two coverage periods to the point of becoming stereotypes. In those stereotypes Tamils are generally depicted as "bad immigrants", but specifically they are portrayed as rule-breakers, fraudsters, and Tamil Tigers (i.e. terrorists or terrorist sympathizers). By being linked directly with images of Tamils, these stereotypes crystallized throughout the coverage through sheer repetition and the process of polarizing "Us" from "Them". Broadly based, these "Us" and "Them" groups were good, innocent, lawful "Canadians" and rule breaking, fraudster, Tamil Tiger "Tamils".

With these distinctions made, it was fair to ask my participants: *Do you struggle with being Canadian and Tamil? Do these two identities seem to mesh together well, have a neutral relationship, or is there a conflict?* I did not expect participants to answer these questions directly as they are complex and multidimensional. They met my expectation by providing a great deal of insight on the elements that might cause a conflict or clash of identities. Chief among those insights were the many negative stereotypes of Tamils and Tamil youth: crooks, gangsters, thugs, fraud, and Tamil Tiger. The term "fraud", in particular, was mentioned half a dozen times

and was even exclaimed by Raj when his group listed stereotypes. Fraud was an important stereotype in the MV Sun Sea coverage and remained an important theme in our discussions.

On the other hand, only one positive stereotype was mentioned explicitly, that Tamils are "hardworking," as stated by Vijay. Throughout the discussions it became clear that my participants' parents had instilled the sensibilities of a strong work ethic and high aspirations into their children. These discussions illuminated a characteristic of many Tamils in Canada that was not illustrated in the MV Sun Sea coverage, as the xenophobeconomic response was based on the fear of freeloading immigrants. When I asked the group about other positive stereotypes, Sud replied, "The positive stereotypes are [usually] attributed to older Tamil people." Sud's insight was particularly poignant as the discussions illustrated that many negative Tamil stereotypes are aimed primarily at Tamil youth. While it was to be expected that the participants would speak from their own perspective, Sud's insight was reflective of the general sense that youth are among the most scrutinized social group by media, the state, and police (Cohen 2002; Hall et al. 1978).

### 6.2.1 "Tamil Tigers... that's all they'll say"

The conflation of Tamils in Canada with Tamil Tiger terrorists was prevalent in both the Tamil protests and MV Sun Sea media coverage periods. This conflation served as a way of limiting the possible representations of Tamils. This stymied view of Tamils resulted in a standoffish approach from the Conservative government in working with protestors in 2009, a view of protestors and asylum seekers as criminal elements, and the need to address a security issue with the arrival of the MV Sun Sea. This conflation may not have the same effect on the Tamil youth in these discussions, but it is still relevant to their lives.

Many of the participants mentioned this conflation or direct likening of Tamils in Canada with Tamil Tigers. Nirosha revealed that when customers at her place of work find

out or assume that she is Tamil or from Sri Lanka, they usually talk or ask about the Sri Lankan civil war. "It's like they don't know anything about Sri Lanka other than the war," Nirosha elaborated. Given the series of large demonstrations educating and raising awareness amongst Canadians about the conditions in Sri Lanka before and leading up to the conclusion of the civil war, this might be somewhat expected. However, considering that the war ended in 2009 and the discussions were conducted in 2012, this narrow reference point for Tamils is growing increasingly thin.

The more prevalent reference point for Tamils is that they support or even are Tamil Tigers. "Tamil Tigers!," exclaimed the female participants in a discussion about stereotypes. "That's all they say," said Lukshmina. "It's whatever they see on the news... that's what they say," Nirosha added. Simbu and Anand clarified that "They" meant "mainstream Canada" or "White people".

While I quoted Vikram to open this chapter, it is worth restating his point: "Tamil Tigers. People see that you're Tamil and they say, 'Oh, so you're a Tamil Tiger?' I think to myself, 'No, no, I'm just Tamil.'" Vikram explained that this happened to him a lot, "It's something that always comes up, the whole Tamil Tiger thing and protests." However, he did say that older people tend to talk about Sri Lanka more as a beautiful country, presumably because they had vacationed there before the outbreak of the civil war. With the civil war now over, it is possible that younger generations of Canadians will grow to see Sri Lanka and Tamils beyond associations with the war and LTTE, though the impressions of my participants suggest this is a long way away.

Even though the Tamil Tiger comments popped up in their lives at a steady pace, these Tamil youth did not see them as a direct relation to being called a "terrorist". "It's not like [people are saying], 'Oh, you're Tamil so you're a terrorist,'" explained Simbu. The male

participants made a note of agreeing with Simbu's claim, "It's not as bad as Muslims have it… because [the LTTE] haven't done anything here." It was evident that the participants applied a more complex meaning for the LTTE than those expressed in the news coverage. To them the LTTE was not simply a terrorist group, because they also appeared to have been fighting for Tamil civil liberties and independence. In this sense, they might not have equated being called a "Tamil Tiger" with being called a "terrorist", even if this is was the intended sentiment.

While the Tamil Tiger conflation does not appear to them explicitly in their day-to-day lives, the participants admitted to it being a problem when taken up in media. With experts calling Tamil youth in Toronto a "poisoned generation" and the children of "hardcore LTTE people", these ten Tamil youth exhibit a relationship with the LTTE that is tenuous at best. When I asked the participants what the Tamil Eelam flag meant to them, their answers centered on community, freedom, and hope. The female participants talked about the Tamil Eelam flag representing a community, like the way a Canadian flag represents people in Canada. They stressed that it was not about being militant or even about the LTTE, but rather as the flag of the sought after Tamil state. Each of the participants agreed that the protests were necessary, describing them as a way of building awareness for the humanitarian issues in Sri Lanka.

However, similar to my analysis in Chapter 3, they all agreed that this is not what is portrayed in media. "The mainstream thinks it's about a terrorist group… That's what the media portrayed, so this flag is automatically associated with the terrorist group," said Sharmila. Lukshmina took up this point adding, "It's like now after the protests and the Gardiner, everyone [thinks] they know what that flag means."

While the four female participants knew and could tell the difference between the Tamil Eelam flag and the flag used by the LTTE, that knowledge and distinction was not the same for the male participants. Only three of the six male participants knew of the two distinct flags and they all tended to agree that the flags might be too similar to tell apart. The three male participants that did not know of the distinction assumed that the flags were both LTTE flags. Still, the meanings they projected on the flag were similar to those of the female participants.

When I asked my participants if they would use the flag in a demonstration all but Nirosha said they would not. Simbu flatly stated, "I think anyone holding that flag is going to look like a Tamil Tiger." Sud echoed that sentiment saying, "If you want to avoid the terrorist stereotype, you shouldn't be using the flag." Simbu and Sud seem to suggest that the protestors should avoid using the flag rather than expecting Canadian media, public, and politicians to understand the nuances behind the flags. On top of the flag's misguided association with terrorism, Sud had another reason to not want to hold a flag assumed to belong to the LTTE. Sud recalled a childhood memory where armed LTTE members robbed his family. "I don't condone what they did… the methods that [the LTTE] used were a problem," added Anand. This sheds light on a complex relationship that is often overlooked because of monolithic statements that posit the Tamil diaspora as unquestioned supporters of the LTTE.

Vijay offered an elaborate answer on why he would not use the flag, explaining that when Canada proscribed the LTTE as a terrorist organization it meant that anyone using the flag had no platform to stand on. In light of the political context, Vijay argued, "Strategically, [using the flag] is a stupid thing to do." Like Vijay, Nirosha conceded that Canadians and news media had the wrong idea about the flag. However, she wanted to take up the task of

explaining what the flag actually meant rather than not using it at all. Nirosha wanted to re-appropriate the meaning of the flag from how it has been represented in Canada, adding, "I would want people to know that it doesn't represent terrorism, it's our flag... It's about representing ourselves [and our community]."

While being called a "Tamil Tiger" mostly seemed to be a minor annoyance in their day-to-day lives, the ten participants found that the "Tamil Tiger" comments are a problem when it comes up in reference to Canada's large, diverse Tamil community. The participants highlighted confusion about Tamil politics and the ability of Tamils to congregate under a common flag and identify as a community, as the biggest detriments to the conflation of Tamils as Tamil Tigers and the Tamil Eelam flag to the LTTE flag.

## 6.3    Double Consciousness

Chapters 2 and 3 discussed the role of double consciousness in my research and outlined the concept's different meanings. One is the state of feeling part of two different groups (in this case as Tamils in Sri Lanka and as Canadians in Canada), but truly belonging to neither one. Second is the sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others, usually through the eyes of the oppressors (Dubois, 1989). My interpretation of double consciousness is that it is a fluid lived experience rather than an essentialized feature. The presence of double consciousness is contingent on socially constructed discrimination and polarization.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I have demonstrated that significant opinions of and in the media established a pervasive sentiment in which Tamils in Canada were viewed as an "Other". I anticipated that Tamil youth might feel both kinds of double consciousness after completing my critical discourse analysis, where very clear "Us" and "Them" distinctions between "good Canadians" and "bad immigrants" (or "bad Tamils") were illustrated in a

definitive moral panic. In my discussions and interviews, there was sufficient evidence to suggest both types of double consciousness were at play. Some of these Tamil youth felt caught between two groups (Tamil and Canadian) and there were several signs to indicate that they may be experiencing the Duboisian double consciousness, by which they may be judging themselves and their worth through the eyes of the dominant mainstream culture that establishes them as "Others". This was evidenced by parents' tactics for diverting their children from other Tamil youth, practices to obscure their Tamil identity to employers, and in profiling other Tamils based on crystallized stereotypes.

### 6.3.1 Reintroducing "Gavan" Paranchothy

In Chapter 2 there is a discussion about the suspicions and concern of the effects of double consciousness on a Tamil Conservative MP candidate. Born Thayan Raghavan Paranchothy, throughout the process of his campaign, Paranchothy eventually shortened his name to Gavan Paranchothy (Reinhart, 14 April 2011). As I posit in Chapter 2, Paranchothy's pattern of name changes, coinciding with his candidacy for MP, also coincides with less than desirable images of Tamil protestors and asylum seekers in Canadian news media. This had the double-edged effect of making Paranchothy appear as more mainstream and less Tamil. Vijay, a follower of Paranchothy on one of his various social media accounts, remembers Paranchothy as being very involved in the 2009 Tamil demonstrations. "If you googled his full name," said Vijay, "with all the stuff that was happening [with the protests], you would see that he was representing Tamil people at the protests and stuff. So… he wants to distance himself." This is one of the possible effects of the May 2009 coverage on a public figure, but what about the way these stereotypes and images impact Tamils out of the public eye?

### 6.3.2 (Not) being Tamil at work

In our conversations about stereotypes, several participants voiced their own strategies or their parents' advice about shortening their names or avoiding identifying themselves as Tamil. In terms of simple name shortening, Raj, Sud, and Vijay each do it voluntarily. Vijay even goes an extra step, shortening his full name, Vijayakanthan, all the way down to "VJ" on his resumé. Each claimed that it was just easier for the people they worked with. However, Raj elaborated on part of his decision, "[There are] underlying factors, too. Like if they see a person with a long name, they might have stereotypes or preconceptions about that group." Relevant to this topic but coming up later in our discussion Sud explained, "I don't want to be defined by my ethnicity." For Sud this amounted to being "more Tamil" when he is at home rather than in public. Raj's awareness to stereotypes and preconceptions and Sud's compartmentalized heritage are indicative of double consciousness: being pulled between two identities and external projections becoming internal dispositions.

While Raj, Sud, and Vijay shortened their names of their own volition, Priyanka's mother had long since shortened her own name for work and urged her daughter to do the same. "My mom told me that I should try to have more of an English name when applying for jobs. She said, 'Can you make it any [less] recognizable (i.e. less Tamil sounding) and maybe shorten your last name?,'" Priyanka said, recalling the advice. Sharmila's mother had similar advice, but was focused more on concealing her daughter's Tamil or Sri Lankan heritage in a general manner. Sharmila explained that her mother told her that if someone asks if she is Sri Lankan, Sharmila should ignore their question or tell them that she is of a different heritage. Sharmila was unsure of why her mother gave her this advice, but generally followed it while at work.

Likewise, in an attempt to avoid the connotations with negative Tamil stereotypes, Lukshmina explained, "I don't put that I'm bilingual in Tamil and English [on my resumé]. I *specifically* take that out. Because you know how there's a Tamil stereotype? I don't want that to be their first impression." She added that being bilingual in Tamil and English was not required by her job, but that seemed to be more of an afterthought based on the inflection of her voice compared to her first reason. Even with a small sample size of ten, several participants' actions ranged from tepid name shortening to deliberate attempts to obscure their Tamil heritage from employers and co-workers to avoid perceived and anticipated judgment.

### 6.3.3 Tamils profiling other Tamils

Along with some participants or their family members viewing themselves through the eyes of others, there were signs that some Tamils might be profiling other Tamils based on these crystallized stereotypes. This was evidenced by Priyanka and Sharmila's parents' efforts to keep them from going to "Tamil schools" or from attending events that would have "congregations with Tamil people".

Priyanka said that prior to going to high school, her parents did not want her to go to her home school, citing that there were more Tamils there than the alternative school. Priyanka's mother thought there would be more gangs at the "Tamil school", so as Priyanka explained, "She sent me somewhere where there wouldn't be a lot of Tamil people." In the end, despite going to a school with fewer Tamil students, Priyanka's closest friends were almost exclusively Tamil. Shared interests, language, and, ironically, the rules set out by parents played big factors in her friendship bonds.

Similarly, Sharmila's parents sheltered her from these so-called "Tamil schools" and from Tamil programs. As Sharmila explains, her parents thought, "Anywhere where there

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would be a congregation of Tamil people there would be problems... Even now they still have that mentality." Lukshmina said her parents did similar things, even though she expressed a desire to join more Tamil programs. Each of the female participants seemed to see that the problems their parents anticipated were more youth-related problems than Tamil problems, but their parents did not seem to make the same distinction. While this might seem to simply be a way to shield their daughters from boys, it seemed to be like Tamil boys specifically who were of concern. As Sharmila insightfully asserted, "I think guys are more judged based on their ethnicity than girls... there are more stereotypes against guys, Tamil guys, than Tamil girls."

However, even with her insight into the hefty weight of those stereotypes, Sharmila was not immune to acting on those stereotypes. In her job as a cashier at a large department store, she said that she was "always extra cautious with Tamil guys" because she had been "scammed" two or three times in the past. Two or three times over thousands of customers served seems pretty minimal, but the profiling persisted. In comparison to other customers she said, "I wouldn't think a White guy would use a fake credit card." "Profiling" was not a word used by the research participants, but it appeared to be what they were practicing.

Here is where things begin to tie together. With the Tamil diaspora's steady and sometimes intense exposure to negative stereotypes about Tamils from Sri Lankan and Canadian news and political sources, it is understandable that this kind of profiling and "Othering" self-view of Tamils might occur. For instance, Lukshmina had her own story about credit card fraud profiling. She stated that she was asked for photo identification when using a credit card at another department store. She said that she knew that it was because she was Tamil, that she "just had that feeling". Lukshmina's example illustrates that the "fraud" stereotype is not restricted only to young Tamil men. While men seem to be more

prone to being stereotyped in this manner, it seems pervasive enough to be more than a gender-specific issue.

When I analyzed the data gathered from my fieldwork with young Tamil people, I kept Sharmila's insight on the disproportionate ways in which Tamil men are affected by these stereotypes. When I asked the female participants about Tamil stereotypes, racism, and xenophobia on both a concrete and abstract level, they were very vocal and forthcoming with information. When I asked the male participants the same things, they had a difficult time expressing explicit stereotypes and elaborating on them. However, through the course of the hour-long discussion, they were able to talk more about them as time went on. The female participants saw stereotypes, racism, and xenophobia as a structural issue affecting the Tamil community.

On the other hand, the male participants located them primarily on an individual basis until Simbu and Vijay, in particular, conceptualized them as a community-based issue. While these differences could be related to groupthink, follow-up questions in a one-on-one format suggests otherwise. Even when the discussion on stereotypes opened up, the male participants were more dismissive about their impact and seemed to shrug them off as business as usual. I argue that the male participants might be so exposed to the negative stereotypes that they had generally become desensitized to them. This desensitization is worrisome because there is the potential that these negative depictions of Tamil males will not be seen as structural issues, becoming internalized dispositions and anxieties. Changing these sentiments can be more and more difficult as public issues become increasingly private matters.

## 6.4 Strategies for change

The ten participants could each recognize that there was some need for change based on current perceptions of Tamil people in Canada. Where change should begin and how it would be structured varied, ranging from personal responsibility to a community response and educational to professional or political. These strategies for change illuminated that double consciousness is not a fixed state of being and that some relief may be found.

### 6.4.1 *Self centered*

Sud located the need change at an individual level, placing the onus on Tamils in Canada to adapt: "I think people who are more secure with themselves won't be bothered... It's the people that aren't that are the ones who feel like they would lose their identity in another culture... That's not really adapting to another culture." He explained that his family usually referred to him by his full name and that speaking Tamil was something he did primarily at home. Sud admitted, "I'm more Tamil when I'm at home then when I'm out." Sud later addressed this point more directly, saying, "I don't want to be defined by my ethnicity." Sud's comment alluded to a public and private divide and possible obscuring of his Tamil heritage.

Sud appears to be internalizing an issue, of which he has deemed a public misconception, as something he must personally resolve. As a result, it would seem that the odds are stacked against him. While Sud may not have a troubling anxiety regarding his Tamil identity, it is possible that he compartmentalizes his Tamil identity exclusively to something he is at home as a way of avoiding judgment. In any case, Sud's experiences indicated the duality present in double consciousness. He expressed the pull between two group identities, the place each identity was reserved for, and the matter of his ethnicity as being a public issue. Perhaps of greatest concern is that Sud placed the onus of change on

the individual and their need to adapt, meaning that problems of belonging are framed as psychological or personal troubles than societal problems.

As I have demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5, questions of Tamil belongingness are indeed issues at the societal level and placing them at a personal level would be misguided. The next two strategies for change take aim at media influence and class structures.

### 6.4.2 Media-made misconceptions

The female participants located these problematic perceptions at a structural level and thought they would be best resolved as a community effort. They believed the best approach would be education-based and were primarily focused on changing the perceptions of the Tamil Eelam flag. The female participants thought Tamils could teach other Canadians about the meaning of the flag and its importance to their community, serving as a marker for belonging and catharsis rather than terrorism. While Nirosha thought this could be done in future demonstrations, Lukshmina, Priyanka, and Sharmila thought it needed to be something explained in media. "It's like [newspapers] write these stories with 'facts' without even checking to see if they're right or not," Lukshmina said when referring to the misconceptions and stereotypes applied to the Tamil community. Similar to my own analysis, it was evident to them that newspapers and other mainstream media sources were responsible for driving these misconceptions and fueling stereotypes. For these young women, the issue revolved around meaning making and the resolution would come from re-appropriating those meanings in mainstream media.

While this group of women focused primarily on mainstream media as the source where change must be made, there was no mention of alternative media sources as a method of change. McRobbie and Thornton (1995) claim that in our multi-mediated world, "So-called folk devils now produce their own media as a counter to what they perceive as the

biased media of the mainstream" (568). Griffiths (2010) finds these opportunities exist for gothic subculture in the wake of the Columbine shooting. This is certainly true in some regards, as Tamils in Toronto have a newspaper and television station (Tamil Vision International) as sources to counter the negative images of Tamils. However, these media sources are almost exclusively in Tamil language, meaning that they do not address the Canadian public at large. This is still a vital tool in quelling the possible anxieties within the Tamil community, but it is an insular audience that these sources reach. This is why mainstream media was cited as the location for change. Visibility was an important aspect for change with the female participants, as well as the strategies for change suggested by Simbu in the discussion with the male group.

### 6.4.3  *Taking Tamils to the top*

Simbu, an MBA candidate, expressed the need for change at a community level, as well. Instead of informing and changing the opinions held by journalists, media corporations, and public officials, Simbu posited that Tamils in Canada needed to enter their ranks to make lasting change. Simbu's idea was a two-pronged approach: (i) have Tamil Canadians elevate their community's status through educational and professional excellence; (ii) have Tamil Canadians enter positions of power to better represent their community's interests.

The group of six men all agreed at varying levels of intensity that there were either a lack of opportunities for Tamils in the job market. When I asked if they felt that opportunities were blocked from them they said no, but the rest of the discussion suggested otherwise. While they did not explicitly express the notion that opportunities were being blocked from them, they agreed that, as Raj bluntly stated, "White people favour White people." Simbu believed that Tamils were not well enough established in Canada yet,

explaining: "[White people] are up there. We're striving to get up there, too... We need the extra push. If I ask my family members, 'Can you help me get a job here or there?' they'll say, 'Yeah, come work with me at the factory or Tim Horton's.'" When I asked Simbu more about the explicit goal he had in mind, he first clarified that it was not because he was out to prove anyone wrong. Instead, it was about putting Tamil people in prominent places so they can create lasting, visible, and influential images of Tamils in Canada.

In his own academic and professional experiences, Simbu cited not 'knowing the ropes' as a major obstacle. He explained that Tamils in Canada needed pathways for success because high aspirations needed to be matched with knowing how to reach them. In other words, they lack cultural and social capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986). So while opportunities might not be specifically blocked from Tamils, they might still be just as unavailable to them. Vikram expressed similar feelings, saying, "Their parents are new and might not know about how things are done... I would want to inform [Tamil youth] to help them make better decisions." Simbu, Vijay, and Vikram all expressed what Simbu called "an extended obligation to help Tamil people." When I asked more about why he thought Tamils needed to solve Tamil problems, he replied, "If we don't do it, then who else is going to do it?"

Simbu's words strike a chord: "If we don't do it, then who else is going to do it?" Combined with his assessment that Tamils rank lower on an ethnic-based scale of perceived status, he paints the Tamils in Canada as a group that must fend for itself. The answer could be that many Canadians showed their true colours in making folk devils out of Tamil protestors, Tamil migrants, and arguably, all Tamils in Canada. Perhaps because of these reactions, Simbu believed that only other Tamils are capable and willing to help the Tamil community: "Our people are struggling back home [in Sri Lanka]... Why couldn't the

Canadian government help [in May 2009]? Because we don't have any people in power. That's why we need to help people get into these positions, so they can help."

## 6.5    Closing comments

My discussions and interviews with ten Tamil youth illuminated a number of problematic, direct or indirect, outcomes of newspaper coverage that had positioned Tamils in Canada as folk devils. Negative stereotypes associated with Tamils, such as fraud and the conflation with Tamil Tigers, are expressly shared between the newspaper coverage of the May 2009 protest, the arrival of the MV Sun Sea, and the experiences of these Tamil youth.

As a way of coping with these negative stereotypes and anticipated perceptions, some of these young people have obscured their Tamil heritage in the work place by not listing speaking Tamil as skill or shortening or Anglicizing their names. While I provided a public figure, Gavan Paranchothy, who had shortened his own name, it is concerning that Tamils outside of the public eye feel pressure to do the same thing. Male participants, in particular, were simultaneously the most exposed to and most desensitized to these stereotypes.

Several participants have expressed frustration with being called or viewed as a Tamil Tiger. They found the conflation or confusion to be borne out of ignorance, primarily because mainstream media sources incorrectly reported the Tamil Eelam flag to be the flag representing the LTTE. Mainstream media drew a great deal of their ire, though it was also the location many felt Tamils could re-appropriate their flag and explain prior perceptions were incorrect.

Finally and most concerning, some participants have displayed patterns that suggest they make the same negative projections on other Tamil people that were held in the newspaper coverage. As I argued above, with negative stereotypes of Tamils being so

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ubiquitous in Canada and Sri Lanka, it would be difficult for them not to internalize these perceptions. In a sign of double consciousness, the participants that profile other Tamils are viewing people within their own ethnic group as "them", seemingly leaving the profiler's own identity in abeyance.

Ten participants is a small sample and most racial and youth groups are associated with a set of negative stereotypes. However, some of these participants' actions display the potency of these stereotypes and how they manifest. Even with the Tamil community's own media possibly mitigating the worst of the stereotypes, the ubiquity of negative Tamil stereotypes in mainstream media have made a noticeable impact. Several of these participants are taking actions and expressing feelings that are in accordance with double consciousness, by which they judge themselves through the eyes of others and feel pulled between their Tamil heritage and Canadian identities.

The following chapter will conclude this project, providing suggestions of future research considerations and a review of my findings.

# Chapter 7 - Conclusion

## 7.1 Research questions reviewed

Some of my best friends are Tamil. These life-long bonds helped to motivate this project just as much as panic-riddled headlines like "No sympathy for Tamil protestors" and "On the lookout for Tigers" did. There is no question of whether or not Tamil protestors and Tamil migrants were stigmatized in these respective events. The question of whether they were stigmatized was obvious through a preliminary scan of the May 2009 protests and MV Sun Sea coverage. The next question was *how* they were stigmatized. This led to my research question: How are Tamils stigmatized in Canadian news media? After conducting a critical discourse analysis of 445 newspaper articles in six local and national newspapers, there were strong trends exhibiting a process by which Tamil activists and migrants were stereotyped and made into a folk devil, "Other", and "Them" group. These outcomes were achieved primarily because newspapers had polarized them as "bad immigrants". In many instances, these labels went beyond ways to describe Tamil activists and migrants and were extended to most or even all Tamils in Canada.

This stigmatization represented more than just inert labels for Tamils. These labels began to form and harden during the May 2009 protests, creating distinctions between Tamils as "bad immigrants" and the Canadian public as good and innocent citizens. On the one hand, since there was no organized legislative response to the protests, it could not be considered a moral panic according to the criteria I established in Chapter 2. This was the criteria of *legacy*: (i) an attempted or successful reform of policy or law; or (ii) intensifying the practices and/or punishments of already existing laws. On the other hand, the May 2009 protests represented the precursor to an episodic moral panic that was established through the proposal of Bill C-49, the official response to the MV Sun Sea in October 2010. This

second episode drew upon the extensive database of stereotypes and images of Tamils as rule breakers, possible terrorists or terrorist sympathizers, and "bad immigrants" that stemmed from the May 2009 coverage. The proposal of Bill C-49 institutionalized the fears, stereotypes, and boundaries of the moral panic.

Not satisfied with only knowing how Tamils were stigmatized, I wanted to find a way to assess the possible impact of the coverage by speaking to Tamil youth about their experiences. This led to the second part of my research question: How does this stigmatization, if at all, affect Tamil youth living in Canada? This was my investigation of how Tamils experienced the moral panic's legacy. The primary reason I chose youth was because they represented generations 1.5 and 2 of Tamils in Canada, meaning that they were caught in between their ties to Sri Lanka and Canada. What I found was that the stereotypes found in the newspaper coverage resonated with the Tamil youth I spoke with, causing some of them to obviously or inadvertently obscure their Tamil heritage (especially in the workplace) and/or causing some to profile other Tamils using a similar set of stereotypes found in the coverage (i.e. fraud).

## 7.2    Theory and methodology

In Chapter 2, I outlined moral panic theory as the theoretical and empirical framework for analyzing and organizing my data. A simple definition of moral panic is "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (Cohen, 1972, p. 9). My work is heavily influenced by the model used by Cohen to assess moral panic over Mod and Rocker youth in the UK during the 1960s. Cohen's model outlined four *phases* of moral panic: warning, impact, inventory, and reaction. To complement Cohen's model, I also make use of the five *elements* of moral

panic outlined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009): concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionality, and volatility.

Cohen's model is useful for understanding the phases of a moral panic, which are the actual stages that occur. These phases are not linear as they often create a feedback loop, but they can sometimes operate as mini-eras within a moral panic. Goode and Ben-Yehuda's model has a more clearly defined nomenclature and outlines that moral panics can wax and wane over several episodes. They also make disproportionality the crux of verifying whether or not a moral panic has occurred. Disproportionality is "the implication that public concern is in excess of what is appropriate if concern were directly proportional to objective harm" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 40). While Cohen finds this to be part of the panic, he does not make it an explicit benchmark. In any event, the linchpin of each model is the differentiation between the "Us" group and the "Them" group. These differences are based on the perception of deviance and their perceived differences are exaggerated to disproportionate levels. This distinguishes the "Them" group as an "Other" or folk devil through stereotypes and overgeneralization.

With the way moral panic is often overused by pundits, politicians, and the public, I have proposed adding a final component to assessing a true and full moral panic. This final component, *legacy,* can fit in either Cohen or Goode and Ben-Yehuda's model. Moral panics can be very volatile and the fervor or peak of the moral panic can rise and disappear very suddenly. However, if a moral panic is about deviance, I argue that the panic can only be understood as fully-fledged if an organized, lasting stand is taken against the behavior deemed to be deviant. Legacy can be operationalized as (i) an attempted or successful reform of policy or law; or (ii) intensifying the practices and/or punishments of already existing laws. Legacy is the organized response to the panic by introducing new means of social

control, serving as the boundary marker for what is acceptable and what is not. Legacy also counteracts the business of news media, by which some stories may be over-reported due to the nature of the content (i.e. crime, scandal) or because nothing else particularly newsworthy occurred. These kinds of highly visible, oversaturated, and ultimately inconsequential events can be distinguished as *flashpoints* to their true moral panic counterparts.

Moral panic theory is inherently a theory of social construction. In Chapter 3, to determine how the panic was constructed I explained my use of the principles of critical discourse analysis outlined by Van Dijk (1993). First, this approach required an important sense of social, economic, and political context, such as post-9/11 security and war on terror, global recession, the so-called failure of multiculturalism in Europe, and Islamophobia and accompanying xenophobia. Second, this method required an understanding of who has access to create discourse, such as journalists, experts, and representatives of the state (i.e. politicians and police). Third, is the awareness required to undertake a project so heavily focused on discourse without being encumbered by the sheer volume of data. A careful balance was struck to maintain sense of the narrative as a whole, while also analyzing the specific choices made by journalists and editors regarding the rhetoric, sources, and document types they used. Taking cues from Van Dijk and Flyvberg, I frequently took a step back from the discourse analysis to connect the discourse to practice, to pay attention to "why" (and not just "what") certain things had been said or written in the newspaper articles, and to connect the discourse analysis to my theoretical framework.

7.3    Findings from media analysis

Taken together, the combination of theory and methodology I used for this study revealed a moral panic occurring with the MV Sun Sea coverage. In Chapter 4, I examined

how the May 2009 coverage largely denounced Tamil demonstrators as "bad immigrants" for shutting down the Gardiner Expressway and protesting a war far removed from most other Canadians' lives. The story of their demonstration on the Gardiner Expressway was over-reported and their numbers exaggerated. Their tactics were seen not only as dangerous and innovative, but as the beginning of a new age of protesting for Tamils and any other future demonstrations. While Tamil activists were compared to "good immigrants" who protested solely in Ottawa, they were also contrasted with "innocent citizens" of Toronto, further establishing the "Us" versus "Them" roots in the episode.

Through a long series of demonstrations, the activists were urging Canada to help bring peace in Sri Lanka. During the demonstrations, many were carrying the Tamil Eelam flag. This flag was incorrectly labeled as the flag of the LTTE, a proscribed terrorist group in most of the world and the separatist organization fighting the Sri Lankan government at that time. Along with a series of dubious word choices, the flag was instrumental in conflating Tamil activists with Tamil Tiger terrorists.

While the May 2009 protests were not a moral panic on their own, they represented the precursor episode. This Tamil Tiger stereotype and the perception of Tamils as innovative rule-breakers carried over into the coverage of the MV Sun Sea more than one year later with much more dramatic results. This was the focus of Chapter 5.

In August 2010, when the MV Sun Sea arrived in British Columbia carrying 492 Tamil migrants, the episode that would end in a full-fledged moral panic began. While newspapers had earlier outlined the way "good immigrants" and "bad immigrants" protest issues occurring in their country of origin, the Sun Sea coverage outlined how "good" and "bad" immigrants enter Canada. The passengers aboard the MV Sun Sea were suspected of

paying human smugglers for their journey. Those human smugglers were thought to be the LTTE.

The primary driving force behind this panic was the heavy conflation between the Tamil migrants and most Tamils in Canada with Tamil Tiger terrorists. This severely limited the way in which the arrival of the Sun Sea could be interpreted and the response to it could be constructed. This is no more evident than in the official response from the Canadian government. Rather than the Minister of Immigration, it was the Minister of Public Safety who took point on handling the arrival of nearly 500 people that would immediately claim asylum. In fact, the first official quote from the Minister of Immigration did not appear until four weeks after the first article on the Sun Sea appeared. The initial coverage of the ship, especially in national newspapers, framed it exclusively as an issue of security, terrorism, and national sovereignty.

The second framework for understanding the panic was the recession-based xenophobia (or xenophobeconomic) response expressed by journalists, public officials, experts, and members of the public. A significant portion of the coverage suggested that these Tamils had committed fraud or jumped a queue to "take advantage" of Canada and its social services. With the Sun Sea seen as a test boat, with more surely to arrive, concerns over security and social services spending resulted in a number of responses. Many simply said the ship should be turned back. Others suggested an off-shore refugee processing center that would deny migrants of this nature rights under the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The official response came in late October 2010 with the proposal of Bill C-49. This bill had taken several forms before it was passed, but the proposal of the bill is enough to satisfy the legacy component of moral panic. Bill-C49 was the institutionalized response to the panic. It recommended a new class of refugee claimant and to punish

migrants for paying human smugglers on their journey (i.e. delays in making claims, longer times in custody, and fewer health benefits). As a result of continued coverage and the institutionalized response, the rule-breaker stereotype and conflation with Tamil Tigers crystallized.

Due to the nature of moral panic, escalation and innovation are almost always presumed. This is why protests in Toronto and a boat of migrants in British Columbia were seen by many as new or unique, unprecedented, the tip of the iceberg, or signs of broken systems. The truth is that there was nothing particularly unique about either instance. Other groups had blocked highways during demonstrations or protested in Toronto while addressing the federal government. Likewise, people had appeared on Canada's vast coastline on boats claiming asylum and many refugees or asylum seekers require the services of human smugglers during their journeys. In fact, boat people were responsible for settling Canada. However, with reference to the context, it is possible to see why new boundaries are being made and re-made.

From these findings it becomes clear what moral panic theory and critical discourse analysis reveal and conceal. Moral panic theory and news media have a tendency to focus on visible and prominent figures rather than the general population. As such, there are many more comments from journalists, politicians, and experts than the Canadian public. This kind of analysis can also pay more attention to high profile actors in the panic, overlooking the active side of the folk devils involved. To resolve these deficiencies, I have tried to highlight public responses by way of quotes and letters in newspapers. I made a point of quoting "Them" side advocates in both media chapters. However, with the passengers of the MV Sun Sea not available to speak for themselves within these sources, they were represented almost exclusively through spokespeople for the CTC and various immigration

lawyers. I also worked to resolve this underexposed position by turning to the experiences of the youth themselves, providing a deeper level of insight into the direct effects of these moral panics.

## 7.4 Findings from discussions and interviews

Providing a voice to the "Them" side was a central to my discussions and interviews with Tamil youth in Chapter 6. My goal was to hear what they have to say directly rather than mediated through newspapers or other voices. As I explained in Chapter 3, focus groups can sometimes be prone to groupthink. As a way to counteract that, I followed up with half of the participants in interviews. By examining the meaning-making processes of youth themselves, this unique contribution was meant to nuance and expand upon the critical discourse analysis done on the media representations in Chapters 4 and 5.

This helped in assuring all voices were heard. The results of this fieldwork found a connection between the newspaper coverage and the lived experiences of these ten Tamil youth. While these participants created group knowledge, they seemed to realize that what they had thought were individual experiences were experiences they shared with others. Without presenting any of my findings, the participants named many of the stereotypes found in the coverage. These stereotypes resonated with them in various ways.

First, there was a great deal of frustration expressed for the narrow view that all Tamils are thought to be Tamil Tigers. The instances they recalled displayed that the confusion between the LTTE flag and Tamil Eelam flag was something they could connect with. The four female participants expressed great displeasure that the flag meant to represent the Tamil community was thought to represent a terrorist organization. One of the male participants found that the misconception limited the ability to express Tamil politics in Canada. Of all ten participants, only one would use the flag during a demonstration.

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Second, the group also mentioned other stereotypes, such as fraud, crook, and gangster. One participant observed that these stereotypes tend to be applied to Tamil youth more often than older generations. More than half of the participants admitted to obscuring their Tamil identity in the workplace, whether it was by shortening their name, not identifying as a speaker of Tamil language, or by not answering whether or not they are Tamil if asked. These practices were signs that indicated that some of them were experiencing the effects of double consciousness. There were very clear examples of the participants judging themselves through the eyes of the dominant mainstream culture that establishes them as an "Other", as well as instances of feeling pulled between their Tamil heritage and Canadian identity.

More than just judging themselves, some participants showed signs that they might be profiling other Tamil people with these stereotypes as a frame of reference. For instance, one participant, working as a cashier for a department store said she was often wary of scams when young Tamil men used credit cards with their purchases. Three participants also revealed that their parents would often prevent them from joining Tamil programs or attending a high school with a large number of Tamil students.

One of the more troubling aspects of their lived experiences was that the male participants seemed to treat discrimination as business as usual. They appeared to simultaneously have the most exposure to these stereotypes, while being the most desensitized to them. The significance of this finding is that the steady exposure has seemed to be what has desensitized them. This puts the onus of dealing with the status quo on these young men, thereby obscuring the social structures that stigmatize them in the first place.

The unique contribution of supplementing my critical discourse analysis with discussion groups and interviews has clearly connected moral panic with lived experiences.

My research has uncovered the presence of double consciousness for at least some members of generations 1.5 and 2 of the Canadian Tamil diaspora, with many of their experiences corresponding with the pervasive elements of stigmatization found in two episodes of a moral panic.

## 7.5 Future projects

From this research project, I have identified at least three larger projects worth undertaking. First would be a study of Canadian immigration and refugee policy since 2010. As I have outlined here, recent changes in refugee policy were at least partially, if not primarily, the outcome of the Sun Sea Tamilphobia panic. This would also include a review of the fates of the passengers from the MV Sun Sea, including how many were granted refugee status and the duration of their time in the CBSA's custody. In particular, this would partially measure the most significant marks against them in the newspaper coverage: the legitimacy of their claims and the question of "queue jumping". Taken together, this proposed project would be a review of the disproportionate coverage and reactionary measures taken because of the moral panic, including the possibility of opportunistic agenda setting by the Conservative federal government.

Second, would be studies of cross-cultural and future episodes of the Tamilphobia moral panic. The crystallized stereotypes coming from the May 2009 protests and Sun Sea coverage may be easily lent to future events involving Tamils in Canada. Future episodes will surely have an impact on the Tamil diaspora, just as I have illustrated in my research on the existing two episodes. With seemingly familiar characters, future episodes will be able to draw from this cache of dubious tropes. Further episodes may introduce new stereotypes or fortify existing ones.

Similarly, studies such as mine should be conducted on an global scale, particularly in India, Thailand, and Australia. If pervasive sentiments like those found in Canada exist throughout the world, it would signify that Tamils might be viewed as an international pariah. The results of these cross-cultural studies may or may not widen the scope required for the rehabilitation of these damaging stereotypes and images. These studies might also help to further explain why some Tamils travelled to Canada rather than countries in closer to proximity to Sri Lanka.

Third would be more research on double consciousness and Tamils in Canada. I suggest keeping the focus on youth, particularly their actual and anticipated experiences in entering the job market. The ten participants of my study were from the Greater Toronto Area and their experiences connected much more with the May 2009 demonstration coverage than the MV Sun Sea. A similar study with Tamil youth in British Columbia would seemingly reveal more about the legacy of the MV Sea episode. Furthermore, the results of my study are worth evaluating on a greater scale, especially with participants in a wider variety of economic classes and educational backgrounds. The participants of this research project were all college or university educated and many had exhibited signs of double consciousness. It would be worthwhile to measure the presence and severity of double consciousness in Tamil youth without post-secondary education.

## 7.6    Contributions of the project and final thoughts

This project succeeds in making a contribution to the sociology of deviance and media studies with my contribution to moral panic theory (i.e. the addition of the legacy component). My findings will hopefully contribute to future projects in youth and immigration studies, with the hope of repairing the damage done through this moral panic. My exploratory discussions with young Tamils indicate that some have a sense of frustration

over feeling judged and misunderstood based on their ethnicity. As my participants indicated, young men may be most vulnerable to these feelings. One outcome is that some Tamil Canadians may feel an increased sense of anxiety, twoness, or as Du Bois (1989) writes, "two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (5). If future episodes of this moral panic occur, there is a high likelihood that these feelings will become further internalized. In 2012, the City of Toronto proclaimed May 10th to be the Will To Intervene Day (Ford, 2012). Marking the third the anniversary of the Gardiner Expressway demonstration, the proclamation was a respectful gesture to the Tamil community. The rest of Canada should now follow suit.

**Appendix I**
**List of acronyms**

CBSA – Canadian Border Services Agency
CIDA – Canadian International Development Agency
CTC – Canadian Tamil Congress
LTTE – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (often referred to as "Tamil Tigers")

**Appendix II**
**Research participants**

**Anand**
- Male; mid-20s; Master's in Engineering

**Lukshmina**
- Female; early- to mid-20s; bachelor's degree

**Nirosha**
- Female; early-20s; currently attending college

**Priyanka**
- Female; mid-20s; bachelor's degree

**Rajsingam**
- Male; mid-20s; bachelor's degree; shortens name to Raj

**Sharmila**
- Female; mid-20s; bachelor's degree; worked as cashier; enrolled in Master's program in Public Health

**Simbu**
- Male; mid-20s; bachelor's degree; enrolled in MBA program

**Sudarshan**
- Male; mid-20s; attending college; works part-time as salesperson

**Vijayakanthan**
- Male; early- to mid-20s; bachelor's degree; shortens name to Vijay or VJ

**Vikram**
- Male; mid-20s; attending college; works part-time as salesperson

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