博士学位論文（東京外国語大学）

Doctoral Thesis (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

氏　　名	カテウリ　アチチゲ　サンドウニカ　ハサンガニ
学位の種類	博士（学術）
学位記番号	博甲第279号
学位授与の日付	2019年9月25日
学位授与大学	東京外国語大学
博士学位論文題目	Virtual construction of the ethnic self: An analysis of the visual framing of in-/out-group perceptions (of Sinhalese) on social media in Sri Lanka (2009-2018)

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Name of Degree	Doctor of Philosophy (Humanities)
Degree Number	Ko-no. 279
Date	September 25, 2019
Grantor	Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, JAPAN
Title of Doctoral Thesis	Virtual construction of the ethnic self: An analysis of the visual framing of in-/out-group perceptions (of Sinhalese) on social media in Sri Lanka (2009-2018)

Virtual construction of the ethnic self:

An analysis of the visual framing of in-/out-group perceptions (of Sinhalese) on social media in Sri Lanka (2009-2018)

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June 2019

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Dedication

To the humble people of Japan who helped me grow up academically for the past five years

Abstract

This study examines the determinants of Sinhalese ethnic self-image in the post-2009 Sri Lanka utilizing the conceptual framework of ethnocentrism—scaling both in- and out-group/s based on in-group folkways/culture/beliefs. Psychological theories of ethnocentrism assume that between-person variability (individual personality traits) determines one's level of ethnocentrism, while sociological theories advocate various social, structural, and situational factors (i.e., resource-based competition, perceived threat, education, income). Variables like religiosity have been vaguely treated in many studies, while a few predict spurious relationship between religiosity and ethnocentrism. Given that, the present study explores the question, 'to what extent religiosity characterizes ethnic self-image, and predicts out-group antipathy' using publicly available images (N=2033, coded and quantified using visual-content analysis tools) on social media produced mainly by Sinhalese communities online. The present study operationalizes ethnocentrism in a three-choice multinomial logit model—ethnic pride, intolerance or neither — and employs perceived threat (material/symbolic), religiosity (own/perceived out-group) and conspiracy theories as explanatory variables. The results show, first, that Sinhalese are ethnically proud, but none of the three independent variables significantly correlate with ethnic pride. Secondly, while perceived threat accounts for the largest variance of intolerance, the other two variables show a relatively weaker (but statistically significant) effect. Thirdly, although religiosity weakly predicts intolerance, when the interaction between any two independent variables is tested, religiosity increases the salience of the other variables. However, the above findings are drawn from the images produced by communities online, and the present study acknowledges the possible gap between the ontology of online and the offline world. The study concludes that the self-image constructed by Sinhalese is not merely a 'religious Sinhalaness,' and religiosity is not the primary predictor of their out-group intolerance. Instead, material and symbolic threat perceptions strongly affect Sinhalese ethnic self-image, particularly their out-group intolerance.

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Acknowledgments

A PhD journey is not an easy task, especially given the dedication and patience it requires while managing all the other practical issues in life. I have been lucky enough during the last five years to have some great people around me who assisted in many ways to manage many of such practical issues. In that sense, this study is a collaborative product for which I am thankful to many kindhearted people.

First of all, I must thank Professor Hideaki Shinoda, who accepted me as a graduate student in TUFS-PCS back in 2014 and continued to be my main supervisor until today and also Professor Yasushi Hazama who specifically guided me during last three years. I owe a big debt of gratitude to both of them for believing in me and making my PhD journey easier. They spent a lot of time reading many of my long drafts, discussing and giving feedback. I must note gratefully Professor Hazama's excellent, methodical training of data analysis, which familiarized me with many of the much needed technical skills. Working with them gave me confidence, and they were a great support when I was in confusion. I am thankful to Professor Kenji Isezaki, who was always encouraging my approach to research. I am also grateful to Professor Phillip Seaton, and Ms. Etsuyo Arai from South Asia Division-IDE-JETRO, for being a part of my PhD Committee.

I must not forget Ms. Rie Ishida from the PCS office. In addition to her great help for all the academic and non-academic issues, she was a tremendous emotional help, especially during my long stay in Japan. Dileesha, Nuwanthi, Savindhi, Chathumi, Panduka, Shanya, Hinata, Emmanuel, Kimmy, Cathy, Esma, Maisha, Meryam were great friends who helped me survive my PhD and overcome not only academic issues but also personal and emotional issues. I am also very much grateful to the University of Colombo, Department of International Relations. Especially, I am thankful to Professor Nayani Melegoda, Dr. Ajith Balasooriya, and Dr. Maneesha Wanasinghe for encouraging me. I am always grateful to my family back home, the ultimate place of peace. Last but not least, I am greatly indebted to the financial assistance provided by the Government of Japan (MEXT full scholarship) over the previous five years for my graduate studies in Japan.

June 2019, Tokyo

Abbreviations

AME - Average Marginal Effect

AoIR - Association of Internet Researchers

APT - Authoritarian Personality Theory

CMC - Computer Mediate Communication

GoSL - Government of Sri Lanka

LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

MNLM - Multinomial Logit Model

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations

SNSs - Social Networking Sites

TRC - Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

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Introduction

The question that is explored in this study was gradually embedded in the author's mind due to two types of observations. *First*, post-war Sri Lanka can not be considered as an atmosphere with complete harmony between ethnic groups. Instead, we observed a gradual growth of less palatable, occasionally dangerous (and violent) ethnic contentions, including the riots between some sections of Muslims and Sinhala-Buddhists, from Aluthgama riot in 2014 to the Kandy riot in 2018.[1] Many of these ethnic contentions were given a 'religious' label that there is a recent resurgence of religiosity in Sri Lanka, and people have been easily mobilized under different religious flags and communal lines. *Secondly*, we witnessed a dramatic rise of the political importance of digital tools, especially social media, and the parallels between digital/virtual waves of out-group antipathy and actual/real-life waves of out-group antipathy, in the post-war context.

The focus of the present study is the *second* — the virtual wave of inter-communal contentions. To be more specific, the self-image/identity building efforts by ethnic groups on social media and the way it underpins in- and out-group perceptions will be academically analyzed in detail in the forthcoming chapters. While the author accepts that all the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka (Sinhalese, Tamils

[1] These two incidents and several other incidents before 2014 and after, have been discussed in the forthcoming chapters. However, it must be noted that the Easter Sunday Bombings occurred (21st of April 2019) at the very last stage of the present study. As a result, there is no reference to those in the following chapters, except for the *Postscript.*

and Muslims) are profoundly employing virtual tools like social media for various socio-political purposes, due to several practical restrictions (such as the author's language, time and overwhelming amounts of data), the focus of the present study is limited to the way Sinhalese communities online engage in constructing their ethnic self-image on virtual spaces in the post-2009 period up until mid-2018. However, by explicitly focusing on the virtual wave of inter-communal antipathies and group identity construction, the author does not ignore the real-life waves of ethnic relations in the post-war period. Instead, both real and virtual waves are understood as reciprocal or mutually reinforcing.

The most conventional and cumbersome interpretation of these unfolding digital and real-life waves of ethnic contentions is that *increased religiosity causes out-group intolerance*. How accurate is this ordinary generalization? To what extent does *religion* determine post-war ethnic self-image of Sinhalese and their out-group perceptions? More precisely, how can we understand the construction of in- and out-group perceptions of an ethnic group on social media? What factors determine in- and out-group perceptions online? Is it the feeling that their religion is threatened, or are there any other possible, and more critical determinants of identity construction? In the following chapters, the present study answers these questions qualitatively and quantitatively.

The empirical focus of the study

The empirical focus of this study is to examine the graphics/photos posted on social media by Sinhalese communities online who claim that, as a community

Sinhala-Buddhists are always under pressure from the religious fundamentalism of out-groups, various types of threats from out-groups, political misleadings, and conspiracies created by defeated terrorists/local and international actors.

Why does this study have an empirical base on social media?[2] Because, during the post-2009 period, social media (mainly Facebook) became not only a simple method of private interaction, but also a social network of civic action, an informal sub-national institute beyond formal state control, in which many of the social problems have been discussed by ordinary people, and many of the small and even large scale social movements have been organized. By 2017, there were 6 million internet users and 5,500,000 Facebook accounts in Sri Lanka (Internet World Stats 2018; see also LIRNEasia 2019) and Facebook was the most popular social media platform in Sri Lanka (Colombo Digitalmarketers 2017). Also, according to the data provided by the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC) of Sri Lanka, there was a dramatic increase in mobile broadband subscriptions from 2009 onwards. In 2009, TRC recorded 91,359 mobile broadband subscriptions, and by December 2018 it had grown to 5,733,062. In addition to the mobile subscriptions, fixed broadband and narrowband subscriptions in the country, numbered 249,756 in 2009, increased up to 1,530,099 subscriptions by December 2018 (Telecommunication Regulatory Commission 2018). Appendix 1 provides detailed statistics on the growth of mobile and fixed broadband subscriptions, and also cellular mobile telephone subscriptions from 1992 to December 2018 in Sri Lanka.

[2] Chapter 3 discusses the choice of primary data used in the present study in detail.

Given the abundance of mobile telephones, fixed and mobile broadband services in Sri Lanka, which was recorded as one of the cheapest in Asia (DailyFT 2018), that facilitated increased access to the internet, various nationalistic and religious fronts (of all ethnic groups) took the advantage of social media and made it their platform of ideology dissemination. These communities online[3] not only disseminate their ideologies but also contribute to construct and re-construct ethnic identities, and also, arguably, to foster ethnic hostilities. Ontologically, the author assumes that social media reflects a near cross-section of the reality unfolding in the real (offline) world. Many of the real-life communal riots and social media waves of out-group hostilities have been parallel phenomena (i.e. blockade of social media in March 2018, by the president of Sri Lanka after a communal riot erupted in Kandy, between Sinhala-Buddhists and Muslims), and people tend to believe in and act upon what has been displayed on their Facebook 'news feed' on a daily basis.

The Research Questions

To what extent does 'religion' underpin Sinhalese ethnic self-image in post-war Sri Lanka? In other words, what defines Sinhalese self-image in the post-war context up until late 2018? Is it merely a religious self-image or is there more to it? Can we conclude that Sinhalese construct a 'religious Sinhalaness' in the post-war period and 'Sinhala-Buddhism' is the principal character or identifier of

[3] Chapter 3 addresses the conceptual difference between 'communities online' and 'online communities.'

Sinhalaness in the post-war context? Alternatively, is it just a general conclusion that needs qualifiers or specifications?

In order to answer the above questions, the present study addresses the following subordinate questions in the following chapters:

I. What are the most widely used terms to denote or conceptualize ethnic self-image in previous scholarly studies? Out of possible terms such as nationalism, ethno-nationalism, and religious-nationalism, the selection of 'ethnocentrism' as the central analytical framework will be justified by contrasting ethnocentrism with nationalism. The current state of knowledge on the determinants of ethnocentrism, and how religion/religiosity has been understood as a determinant of out-group perceptions or even nationalism in the previous research will be extensively discussed. The controversy, whether religion is the only determinant or are there other possible explanations of ethnocentrism and how to measure ethnocentrism and its determinants quantitatively, will also be addressed.

II. In what ways has Sinhalaness (Sinhalese ethnic self-image) been constructed over history? Previous literature on Sri Lanka, the relationship between religion and Sinhalese nationalism/ethnocentrism, and explanations about Sinhalese ethnocentrism beyond religion will be extensively addressed, specifically by paying attention to pre-war and post-war literature on Sri Lanka.

III. What are the representations of ethnocentrism in the real world and what are the possible sources of primary data, and to what extent are those sources valid and reliable? The widely used primary data sources in the previous literature will be identified in order to position the importance of the present analysis of

social media data to make inferences on ethnic identity. In line with that, the following questions will also be addressed - to what extent does social media become a valid, reliable and justifiable source of primary data for social scientific inquiry into ethnic identity and to what extent is such data produced by social media valid in the context of Sri Lanka?

IV. Does the religiosity of Sinhalese increase their intolerance toward non-Sinhalese? More precisely, does religiosity cause ethnocentrism and out-group intolerance? In addition to religion, are there other possible determinants of Sinhalese ethnocentrism in Sri Lanka? If so, what defines post-war Sinhalaness clearly?

Overview of methodology

The present study, as mentioned above, collects its primary data from social media platforms, and for analytical purposes, employs the tools of content analysis of visual data. In straightforward terms, images/graphics/photos circulated on Facebook (N=2033) and some audience-generated textual contents, are the primary source of data of the present study. Content analysis of images is a two-step process in the present study: First, a preliminary content analysis of the sample of images is conducted based on the 'Grounded Theory Method'—that is, the author first seeks the natural categories emerging from the sample, instead of labeling those on a pre-developed set of categories. Secondly, with that general knowledge of the contents of the images, the author reviews the current literature that can be applied to understand the patterns of narrations, discourses and expressions,

exhibited in the images circulated on social media. Thirdly, based on both the preliminary content analysis and also the review of seminal literature, the author then develops a sound set of categories, sub-categories and coding rules to analyze the contents of the images. Fourthly, using a multinomial logit model, the author designs several statistical tests to draw conclusions.

In addition to the content analysis of the images, the author also conducts a supplementary qualitative discourse/narrative analysis of audience-generated textual contents. This supplementary textual analysis is designed to understand the way ordinary people interacts with the online contents produced by Sinhala-Buddhist activist/nationalist groups.

Objectives of the present study

This study aims to accomplish several objectives; some are empirical and others are theoretical. First, on an empirical basis, this study intends to contribute to the existing literature by analyzing a novel source of data—visuals produced and circulated on social media—which arguably, have not been adequately analyzed or addressed in the political science literature. In the Sri Lankan context, social media largely plays a political role in everyday life of the ordinary people and produces an enormous amount of data with high social scientific validity. Many of the current studies on Sri Lanka[4] and its ethnic contentions are based on traditional sources of data such as diverse forms of traditional archives, interviews of the

[4] These studies will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

public and the elite, and also several anthropological studies based on ethnographic methods. Data produced on social media, especially visual data and how those depict ethnic relations, and disputes are mostly an overlooked field of study in Sri Lanka, in comparison to other conflict-driven contexts in the world. Thus, this study is an attempt to fill that empirical gap.

Beyond this empirical contribution lies a larger theoretical goal. That is to explore the causal factors behind ethnic identity formation and ethnic contentions. The current literature theorizes the causality between religion and ethnocentrism and also between threat perceptions and ethnocentrism based on several prominent theories, such as Realistic Group Conflict Theory, and Social Identity Theory. This study tests the validity of these theories in the Sri Lankan context. Also by testing the above mentioned causal relations, the present study asks, 'whether the post-war 'Sinhalaness' is fundamentally driven by 'religion,' and if so, to what extent, or if not, is there something beyond religion?

Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1 is an overview of the current literature on the construction of ethnic self-image (which we call ethnocentrism) and its determinants. The author reviews the main concepts and theoretical developments related to ethnocentrism and also examines the previous examples of plausible operationalization of the concept in various social contexts/ethnic communities in general.

In chapter 2, the author turns into the literature on Sri Lanka in particular and explores in what ways ethnocentrism and nationalism of Sinhalese and also non-Sinhalese have been historically constructed, theorized and operationalized by Sri Lankan specialists.

Chapter 3 is a comprehensive explanation of the data and the methodology used in the present study. This chapter justifies the primary sources (the logic behind inclusion/exclusion of individual Facebook pages as the primary sources of data), and the sampling method. It also reviews the social scientific validity of the data produced by social media and contextual validity of those data in the Sri Lankan context. This chapter also elaborates on the procedures of content analysis practiced in the present study, such as generating codes/categories, sub-codes and coding rules, which is technically the operationalization of concepts/theories identified by reviewing the current literature.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the statistical analysis of visual data. Except for presenting some of the conclusions drawn upon descriptive statistics, the author's main intention here is to test the collected data on a multinomial logit model (this model fits for categorical dependent variables with more than one outcome), to test the five hypotheses specified in Chapter 2.

While Chapter 4 was paying attention to the visually produced information, Chapter 5, in contrast, pays attention to the textual information, or more precisely some of the textual comments of users (the ordinary people). Thus, in Chapter 5, several randomly selected narratives/discourses unfolding on social networks will be qualitatively analyzed. However, the analysis in this chapter is merely supplementary. It does not provide any causal explanations. Instead, it recognizes

the strong human agency on social media and roughly sketches the way ordinary people interact as a ‘community online.’

The final chapter provides several concluding remarks, including a summary of the ontology, epistemology, and the methodology behind the present study. This concluding chapter also summarizes the research inferences and also the limitations of the present study, along with the avenues for future research.

1

Conceptualizing the ethnic self-image:

The literature review of the dichotomy of ethnic nationalism and ethnocentrism

Ethnic groups construct different perceptions or rather images about themselves (in-group) as well as others (out-group), and in social sciences, such constructions are given different labels. This process of self-image[5] construction does not take place in isolation, but it is essentially a societal and relational process, and as a result, a group not only develops certain consensual beliefs of themselves, but also about out-groups. Thus, a self-image of an ethnic group is not only about what they think of themselves but also of what they think about others. Also, a self-image of a group of people could be multidimensional, may manifest in different forms and most importantly it is time and context specific. An ethnic group might possess multiple self-images, depending on the out-group/s they interact with and also depending on the circumstances they face. In other words, Sinhalese self-image fifty years ago must be drastically different from its current manifestation. Even at

[5] 'Ethnic self-image' or simply 'self-image' has been interchangeably used with the term 'ethnic identity' in this study. The author prefers the term 'self-image' over 'identity' due to its relatively less abstract nature.

present, arguably, Sinhalese may maintain different self-images in different domains simultaneously.

Nationalism, ethno-nationalism, and ethnocentrism are popular concepts widely utilized in the literature to label certain ethnic groups (including ethnicities in Sri Lanka). Due to some of the inbuilt complexities (discussed below), this study avoids employing concepts such as nationalism and ethno-nationalism, instead utilizes ethnocentrism as the central conceptual frame to operationalize the range of consensual beliefs constructed by post-war Sinhalese (about themselves and others) in Sri Lanka. Subsections below define ethnocentrism, the dependent variable of this study, justify its suitability and contrast it with the concepts of nationalism and ethno-nationalism. Moreover, the chapter also focuses on the determinants of ethnocentrism, its psychological and socio-structural basis.

1.1 Ethnocentrism and nationalism

The fulcrum of this study is the concept of ethnocentrism, the dependent variable, which will be used to label the self-image of post-war Sinhalese people. Sumner first introduced the concept of ethnocentrism (1906/1959), and in his own words ethnocentrism is:

> The technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. Folkways correspond to it to cover both the inner and the outer relation. Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity,

> boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders. Each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways, these excite its scorn. Opprobrious epithets are derived from these differences. […] For our present purpose the most important fact is that ethnocentrism leads people to exaggerate and intensify everything in their own folkways which is peculiar and which differentiates them from others. It therefore strengthens the folkways (Sumner 1906/1959:13).

Later, LeVine and Campbell (1972) conducted an experimental study on ethnocentrism, and they provided further clarifications to what Sumner defined as ethnocentrism. In LeVine and Campbell's usage of ethnocentrism, the term refers to "both the ingroup－outgroup polarization of hostility and the self-centered scaling of all values in terms of the ingroup folkways" (1972:8). As LeVine and Campbell identified, Sumner's theory of ethnocentrism has three main facets. First, Sumner identified a number of attributes of social life and hypothesizes that these go together as a syndrome. Secondly, he also posited that this syndrome of ethnocentrism is functionally related to group formation and intergroup competition (which LeVine and Campbell later developed as Realistic Group Conflict Theory, and discussed below), and thirdly Sumner generalized that all groups show this syndrome (LeVine and Campbell 1972:8). Later, based on Sumner's categories as well as on other discussions, LeVine and Campbell produced 23 distinct facets of ethnocentrism. They divided the 23 facets into two main sections as 'attitudes and behaviors toward ingroup' and 'attitudes and behaviors toward outgroup' (see LeVine and Campbell 1972:12-20). The author

further elaborates the 23 facets in Chapter 3 under the operationalization of variables.

Another vital contribution to the concept of ethnocentrism made by LeVine and Campbell (1972) was their elaboration on the types of correlational analysis that can be conducted based on ethnocentrism. “Ethnocentrism can be studied comparatively at several levels of variation: (1) across the cultural groups of the world (2) among the groups of a given region (3) among the diverse outgroup attitudes and relations of a given ingroup (4) across dyadic units of intergroup relationship, that is, two groups considered in relation to each other” by LeVine and Campbell (1972:23-24). The present study associates more with the third and fourth category mentioned above.

Given that, it is necessary to justify the reasons why ethnocentrism is utilized as the central analytical framework rather than other possible concepts such as nationalism or ethno-nationalism? The following section first justifies the choice of ethnocentrism over nationalism and secondly moves on to define the concept in more detail.

1.1.1 Why ethnocentrism and why not nationalism or ethno-nationalism?

The two concepts, ethnocentrism and nationalism, are not identical but partially overlapping. As Sumner (1906/1959) defines, ethnocentrism is “the technical name for this view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it.” Definitions of

nationalism, on the other hand, are quite commonplace, and below the author defines nationalism and its explicit meanings to illustrate why ethnocentrism is preferred in the present study over nationalism.

Acknowledging the fact that nationalism is a state of mind of human beings and firmly rooted in the human behaviors (Shafer 1972), it is also strongly considered as a political doctrine of self-determination (Spencer et al. 1990:283-300; Ahmed 1998:4-7). Ernest Gellner, one of the prominent scholars of nationalism, in *Nations and Nationalism* states that nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent (Gellner 1983:1).

> Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind (Gellner 1983:1).

Gellner's use of nationalism is synonymous with an ethnic group. As he further explains, "[I]n brief, nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones" (Gellner 1983:1). What Benedict Anderson (1983) argues in *Imagined Communities* is also compatible with Gellner's above articulation.

> Anderson's perspective is largely compatible with Gellner's. Both stress that nations and ideological constructions seeking to forge a link between the (self-defined) cultural group and state, and that they create abstract

> communities of a different order from those dynastic states or kinship-based communities which pre-dated them (Eriksen 1993:100).

Gellner's above understanding/definition of nationalism has been adapted as their working definition by some of the later prominent scholars of nationalism such as Hobsbawm (1990:9) and Breuilly (1993). Brass also associates nationalism with ethnicity and believes that both are connected in modern state formation (Brass 1991). However, Eriksen (1993:99), referring to Gellner's above understanding of nationalism, states that the link between ethnicity and state constructed by Gellner is peculiar. "In other words, nationalism, the way the term is used by Gellner and other contemporary social scientists, refers to a peculiar link between ethnicity and the state. Nationalisms are, in this view, ethnic ideologies which hold that their group should dominate a state. A nation-state, therefore, is a state dominated by an ethnic group, whose markers of identity (such as language or religion) are frequently embedded in its official symbolism and legislation" (Eriksen 1993:99).

Based on the above definitions, nationalism itself is a political instrument, in which the fundamental aspiration is self-determination for a particular community. Referring to the South Asian context and particularly to Sri Lanka, Spencer et al. state that, nationalism is understood with the assumption that people are naturally divisible into different kinds—also known as nations— and ideally each kind should have the responsibility for its own governance (Spencer et al. 1990:283-300). In this study, nationalism is understood as:

> [A] sense of belonging to a particular 'nation' with a common origin, wanting to keep that origin, wanting to keep that 'nation' as pure as

possible, and desiring to establish and/or maintain a separate and independent state for that particular nation (Dekker et al. 2003:347).

In other words, nationalism is employed in the present study with its simplest political meaning of self-determination.

However, the most critical question to be asked about "nationalism" is whether the term distinguishes loyalty to a nation-state from loyalty to a group? (Dyrstad 2012:818). Much of the literature remains fuzzy about this and one possible solution is to use the term ethno-nationalism rather than nationalism alone. Ethno-nationalism refers to the "desire to keep the (ethnic) nation homogeneous and separated from other groups, where loyalty to the group is stronger than loyalty to the state" (Dyrstad 2012:818). According to Dyrstad, ethno-nationalism is a concept based on out-group evaluations such as negative stereotyping, in-group favoritism, out-group discrimination, and social distance (Dyrstad 2012:818).

Eriksen, in *Ethnicity and Nationalism,* uses the term ethno-nationalism to refer to the groups who are short of having a state but have more substantial characteristics in common with nations who claim that its members should have the right to their own nation-state or self-determination and should not be ruled by others (Eriksen 1993:13-14). According to his own words,

> Proto-nations [or] so-called ethnonationalist movements…includes Kurds, Sikhs, Palestinians and Sri Lankan Tamils. These groups have political leaders who claim that they are entitled to their own nation-state and should not be ruled by others. These groups, short of having a nation-state, may be said to have more substantial characteristics in

common with nations than with urban minorities or indigenous groups. According to the common terminology, they are ‘nations without a state’ (Eriksen 1993:13-14).

Given the meanings of nationalism and ethno-nationalism, it is also necessary to compare nationalism with ethnocentrism, in order to justify the author’s preference for ethnocentrism over nationalism in the present study. The following section brings out the conceptual contrast between nationalism and ethnocentrism. In the following chapters (Chapter 2, 4 and 5), based on empirical evidence particularly from Sri Lanka, the author further argues why ethnocentrism fits better as the central conceptual framework than nationalism, especially given the social media focus of the present study.

1.1.2 Nationalism vs. Ethnocentrism

When it comes to the difference between ethnocentrism and nationalism, Rosenblatt’s following explanation is quite comprehensive:

> Nationalism and ethnocentrism are similar in the sense that they both usually involve positive attitudes towards an in-group and negative attitude towards some or all out-groups. They do not overlap completely. Nationalism, more often than ethnocentrism, involves loyalty to a politically distinct entity, membership in an elaborately organized and relatively popular social grouping, adherence to a formalized ideology,

> and performance of relatively stereotyped allegiance-expressing behaviour (Rosenblatt 131:1964).

In that sense, ethnocentrism and nationalism/ethno-nationalism are two different phenomena that have different characteristics. The main difference between nationalism/ethno-nationalism and ethnocentrism is the high emphasis on 'self-determination' in the former and relatively less or no emphasis of it in the latter. In other words, mere ethnic consciousness cannot always be conceptualized as 'nationalism' if there is no explicit quest for 'self-determination,' yet ethnic consciousness can be termed as ethnocentrism quite conveniently. This is what Rosenblatt (1964) empathized above as "loyalty to a politically distinct entity," referring to nationalism, which is arguably not central in ethnocentrism.

Thus, the central argument put forward by the author here is that nationalism alone is not appropriate as the central conceptual framework for the analysis of ideas expressed in a platform like social media/Facebook, which constitutes of a variety of expressions of ordinary people that go beyond mere references to political self-determination. Ordinary people could possess the idea of self-determination (which is synonymously identified as ethnic nationalism in the present study), based on what they have experienced or what they have heard, read or learned about the history of their state, or their ethnic group. At the same time, the same people could express ethnic-consciousness with no reference to ethnic-nationalism (self-determination). Thus, ethnic nationalism and ethnic consciousness are not the same, and in order to avoid the narrower focus of the concept of nationalism, the present study prefers ethnocentrism. Nationalism, on the other hand is one of the many constituting factors of ethnocentrism, but not the only one. Preferring ethnonationalism is due to the author's empirical

understanding of complex ideas expressed by people on their ethnic self-image on social media, specifically in the Sri Lankan context. How Sinhalese people classify their own identity in multiple terms and how nationalism is one of many constructs of Sinhalese ethnic self-image will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, based on the primary data collected for the present study.

1.1.3 Ethnocentrism: Its meaning in the present study

Ethnocentrism[6] is thus a more general term, unlike nationalism or ethno-nationalism which are strictly functioning around self-determination. In this study, ethnocentrism is understood as a combination of favorable attitude toward the ethnic in-group and an unfavorable attitude toward the ethnic out-groups (Coenders & Scheepers 313:2003; Adorno et al. 102:1950).[7] Also it is understood as a method of scaling/judging out-group members based on in-group 'folkways' as Sumner articulated. In other words, humans are ethnocentric in their everyday life when they use their cultural background, values, beliefs, or religious affiliation to judge or to make comparisons between the 'self' and the 'other.' This sort of thinking could be harmless on certain occasions, but it could be harmful too. Thus

[6] At this point, it is also necessary to distinguish ethnocentrism from closely associated terms such as prejudice and stereotyping. Prejudice is "an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization" (Allport 9:1954) directed at out-groups, and stereotypes are "the typical picture that comes to mind when thinking about a particular social group" (Lippman 1922). The traditional concept of ethnocentrism differs from prejudice because "[p]rejudice is commonly regarded as a feeling of dislike against a specific group; ethnocentrism, on the other hand, refers to a relatively consistent frame of mind concerning 'aliens' generally. … *Ethnocentrism refers to group relations generally*; *it has to do not only with numerous groups toward which the individual has hostile opinions and attitudes, but equally important, with groups towards which he is positively disposed*" (Adorno et al. 102:1950, emphasis added).

[7] Some other scholars use the term 'ethnocentrism' to mean in-group favoritism only, and for out-group hostility, they use 'xenophobia' (Hammond & Axelrod 2006:927). Forbes (1997) defines ethnocentrism as a balance between dislike of out-groups and identification with in-group, yet, strongly states that ethnocentrism avoids strong connotations of xenophobia (Forbes 1997:159).

ethnocentrism does not connote a completely positive or a negative picture of a certain group of people. For instance, possessing positive attitudes about one's own identity/group does not necessarily yield a negative impact on other groups.

Some of the claims of post-war Sinhalese contain nationalistic imprint without controversy, but their claims are not limited to that. It is not only about their ownership/stake of the country, but also about various other socio-structural and psychological evaluations of both in- and out-group/s which we refer to as Sinhalese ethnocentrism. In other words, this study argues that the post-war ethnic self-image of Sinhalese is 'ethnocentric' rather than simply labeling it as Sinhala nationalism or Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. Such nationalistic sentiments are merely one component of Sinhalese ethnocentrism.

In addition to that, there is an established literature on ethnocentrism explaining how it varies upon psychological motivations of individuals or personality differences between individuals, such as personality traits like authoritarianism (Allport 1954; Adorno et al. 1950), frustration and aggression, negative stereotyping, and in-group favoritism. On the other hand, ethnocentrism also refers to the importance of social or structural currents such as group competition for resources or group-based social hierarchy and oppression (Sidanius & Pratto 1999; Sidanius et al. 2004) that are essentially beyond individual personality differences.

Adorno et al. in *The Authoritarian Personality* emphasize the fact that ethnocentrism is "a tendency in the individual to be 'ethnically centered,' to be rigid in his acceptance of the culturally 'alike' and in his rejection of the 'unlike'" (102:1950), and it "refers to group relations generally" (Adorno et al. 102:1950).

What Adorno et al. argue is that ethnocentrism is principally an individual characteristic, yet shaped by socialization and distally by culture (Leyens & Demoulin 194:2010). Thus, in the present study, ethnocentrism is not merely considered as a concept that refers to psychological motivations of individuals or a 'personality syndrome' (Sumner 1906; LeVine & Campbell 1972), but it is also about inter-group relations, and other social structural elicits (Hammond & Axelrod 2006:927). This elasticity of the concept allows not only psychologists but also political scientists and sociologists to adapt the concepts in their research agendas.

Furthermore, Rosenblatt (1964) compiles some of the recurrent hypotheses on ethnocentrism (inspired by Sumner's early work). Some of such are mentioned below, assuming that such tested propositions are a better way to understand the concept itself, though these will not be tested in this study. 1). The greater the group nationalism and ethnocentrism, the greater is the group homogeneity of attitude, beliefs, language spoken, and ways of behaving, the greater is the group cohesiveness, and the greater are the pressures for homogeneity and cohesiveness. 2). Nationalism and ethnocentrism tend to produce reductions in intragroup social disorganization. 3). Intragroup hostilities, crime rates, and suicide rates drop following an increase in ethnocentrism or nationalism (LeVine & Campbell 1972:21).

At this point, it should be noted that in the following sections and chapters, the author interchangeably uses the terms Sinhalese ethnic self-image, Sinhalaness, Sinhalese ethnocentrism, or everyday ethnocentrism referring to the multiple, overarching constituents of Sinhalese identity which is not limited to nationalistic/self-determination ideology. The idea of 'everyday' ethnocentrism is

specifically utilized to indicate the strong human agency in identity construction on social media platforms. On social media, what we see are the expressions of ordinary people, and their definition of their own ethnic image, which can be best referred to as ‘everyday’ ethnocentrism. Unless otherwise specified, when the author uses terms such as Sinhalese nationalism, Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism or Buddhist nationalism, that necessarily indicates the intention of self-determination of Sinhalese or Sinhala-Buddhists.

1.2 Determinants of ethnocentrism

What determines ethnocentrism? Is it merely pathological and does it solely depend on individual-level personality differences (between-person variability) or could it be explained by group-level structural and situational factors? Sub-sections below revolves around this central question. Personality vs. social-structural/situational hypotheses argue in two different directions. Proponents of personality variables hypothesize that a group of people under consideration are ethnocentric since that group has more people with individual characteristics that associate with ethnocentrism, such as authoritarian personality, specific individual values, anxieties, less education or affiliations with religious fundamentalism. In contrast, proponents of socio-structural/situational variables hypothesize that other characteristics, specific to the given situation or the contexts, such as patterns of intergroup contact, culture, competition, and network diversity overwhelm the above mentioned individual-level variables and affect ethnocentrism. In other words, even if two given situations were to have identical

populations, they could have different average levels of ethnocentrism, as a result of their different situational bases (Moor and Ovadia 2006:2206; Labovitz & Hagedorn 1975:445).

Is the variance of out-group perceptions largely a function of socio-structural/situational factors or does it depend upon the individual's personality? While some scholars recognize that personality-based factors have been largely downplayed by the scholars who study situational variables, such as intergroup contact (Hodson et al. 2017), others acknowledge that the effect of situational factors in shaping out-group perceptions and political behavior may be contingent on individual-level predispositions (Mondak et al. 2010). The present study posits that ethnocentrism (scaling out-groups based on in-group folkways), has both an individual-psychological basis as well as a socio-structural basis. Following subsections provide a conceptual overview of both genres in detail.

1.2.1 Individual-level theories (personality variables)

The most fundamental assumption behind personality variables or individual level theories is that between-person variability is imperative when understanding social phenomena like ethnocentrism, racism, discrimination or violence. In other words, some people are naturally more racist, some have more violent personality than others who are naturally or biologically peaceful irrespective of their group affiliations. Personality refers to "a multifaceted, enduring, internal psychological structure" (Mondak et al. 2010:86). Several psychological theories focus on the internal processes of individuals as the critical

underpinnings of ethnocentrism, racism, and stereotyping. These psychological approaches focus on personality dynamics, basic values of individuals, anxieties, and beliefs, and the level of information processing (Sidanius and Pratto 1999:5).

Freudian Psychodynamic Theory, Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis (Dollard et al.1939), and most importantly Authoritarian Personality Theory (APT) (Adorno et al. 1950) are highly influential psychological theories that have dominated scholarly work until today. According to the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, aggression, that is, the intention to deliberately harm others, results from the individual's frustration at not achieving highly desired goals. What Dollard and others find is that if the source of frustration is an influential person or institution (i.e., one's boss) it is dangerous to express aggression toward such powerful entity, so people often turn their anger against less powerful others (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:5).

In *The Authoritarian Personality,* Adorno et al. (1950) introduce APT. They say that there is a personality syndrome labeled authoritarianism, unifying individuals' social, economic, and political convictions.

> As a psychodynamic theory, APT theorized that authoritarianism resulted from child-rearing practices that humiliated and deprecated the child and predicted parental affection on the child's immediate and unquestioning obedience to the parent. This kind of subjugating environment was thought to predispose children toward thinking of human relations in terms of dominance and submission and to teach a particular orientation toward hierarchy: the verification of those thought of as weak, humane, or deviate (e.g., ethnic minorities) and the

> glorification of those perceived to be strong and powerful. As such authoritarians were hypothesized to hold conservative economic and political views, and also be generally xenophobic, racist, and ethnocentric (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:6).

Despite the dominance of APT, it has also been criticized for various reasons such as the attitude scales it utilizes are subjected to measurement and ideological bias (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:6). More recently, Altemeyer (1998; 2008) develops twenty-two criteria to measure between-person variability of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), which is commonly known as the RWA scale. RWA constitutes of conventionality, traditionalism, and willingness to aggress against norm violators (Hodson et al. 2017:9). Some of the statements in the RWA scale to which respondents have to react are:

> 1. The established authorities generally turn out to be right about things while the radicals and protesters are usually just "loudmouths" showing of their ignorance; 2. Women should have to promise to obey their husbands when they get married; 3. Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us (Altemeyer 2008:11).

In summary, all these theories emphasize the fact that human personality traits matters in politics or out-group perception. While human personality is not entirely redundant, believing solely in the between-person variability of political outcomes such as out-group tolerance/intolerance connotes a primordialist or essentialist assumption that ethnocentrism, racism or violence are necessarily biological givens. In other words, the reason why some groups are more

ethnocentric or more violent than others who are more peaceful is due to what they inherit from biology.

Many scholars have contested this solely psychological orientation. Scholars such as Abel (1941), White (1949), and Faris (1962) note the inadequacy and irrelevancy of psychological-level explanations (LeVine and Campbell 1972:25). As White points out, "warfare is a struggle between social organisms, not individuals. Its explanation is therefore social or cultural, not psychological" (White 1949:132). Mondak et al. articulate, "personality is to a substantial extent rooted in biology, but the expression of personality effects will typically be situational, such as via personality × environment interactions" (Mondak et al. 2010:87). According to Faris,

> […]many prominent and influential investigators of intergroup interaction made an early choice of the wrong path in seeking the explanations in the processes of individual psychology and psychoanalysis…Part of the difficulty appears to lie in defects of knowledge and theory in the above fields, but the more important part stems from failure to recognize the nature of collective processes (Faris 1962:43).

The present study, due to natural limitations emerging from its data, does not test/include personality variables in the statistical analysis. Natural limitations of the data refer to the nature of observations. That is, the present study observes data generated on social media that appear in visual and textual format, and those data are not directly collected from human subjects/ respondents. Personality tests can be only conducted if human subjects are involved in the research.

1.2.2 Situational/socio-structural theories

In addition to the individual-level, psychological theories, exists the group-level, structural theories of ethnocentrism. Structural theories highlight that structural conditions, such as levels of direct competition and threat, in particular, influence people's attitudes towards out-groups (Kunovich & Hodson 187:2002).

Allport is one of earliest to mention the structural base of out-group perceptions, and the following statement provides a clear idea of what he (Allport) means by the terms 'situational' or 'structural.'

> Prejudiced personalities will be more numerous in times and in places where the following conditions prevail: where the social structure is marked by heterogeneity, where vertical mobility is permitted, where rapid social change is in progress, where there are ignorance and barriers to communication, where the size of a minority group is large or increasing, where direct competition and realistic threat exists, where exploitation sustains important interests in the community, where customs regulating aggression are favourable to bigotry, where traditional justifications for ethnocentrism are available, where neither assimilation nor cultural pluralism is favoured (Allport 221:1954).

Allport provides a clear picture of several situational or structural conditions that can affect the variance of ethnocentrism, out-group antipathy and also overall peace between groups, such as the level of homogeneity or

heterogeneity of the society, size of the minority group/s, realistic threats, and competition. Forthcoming sections provide a more detailed explanation of some of the major theories that address above structural/situational factors.

1.2.3 Realistic Group Conflict Theory

Scholars such as Morton Deutsch (1949) and Muzafer Sherif (1966) pioneered the experimental research on intergroup relations emphasizing group rather than individual and psychological variables. However, Realistic Group Conflict Theory was first introduced by Campbell (1965:287,291; cf. LeVine and Campbell 1972:29-42). As stated by LeVine and Campbell, the theory "assumes that group conflicts are rational in the sense that groups do have incompatible goals and are in competition for scarce resources. Such 'realistic' sources of group conflict are contrasted with the psychological theories…" (LeVine and Campbell 1972:29). Some of the major assumptions of Realistic Group Conflict Theory put forward by LeVine and Campbell are as follows:

Real conflict of group-interests causes intergroup conflict;

Real conflict of interest, overt, active or past intergroup conflict, and/or presence of hostile, threatening, and competitive outgroup neighbors, which collectively may be called *real threat,* cause perception of threat;

Real threat causes hostility to the source of threat;

Real threat cause ingroup solidarity;

Real threat cause increased awareness of own ingroup identity;

Real threat increases the tightness of group boundaries;

Real threat reduces the defection from the group;

Real threat increases ethnocentrism;

The weakest group in a local cluster should be the most ethnocentric;

Those groups with the most movable wealth will be most ethnocentric;

Those groups most isolated from their outgroups will be least ethnocentric;

The strongest and most threatening outgroup should be the target of the most ethnocentric hostility from the ingroup;

False perceptions of threat from outgroups cause increased ingroup solidarity and outgroup hostility (See LeVine and Campbell 1972:29-42).

Above are a sample of assumptions introduced by LeVine and Campbell 1972). However, by looking at the above assumptions, several fundamental elements of Realistic Group Conflict Theory can be seen. That is, the theory emphasizes that real groups exist, with a shared identity and shared fate, and real threat also exist based on zero-sum competition over resources. They identify 'false perceptions of threat' as an opportunistic exploitation of the major principle of Realistic Group Conflict Theory and retain it as one of the assumptions.

As summarized by Campbell (1965):

The perception that one group's gain is another's loss translates into to perceptions of group threat, which in turn cause prejudice against the outgroup, negative stereotyping of the outgroup, ingroup solidarity,

> awareness of ingroup identity, and internal cohesion, including intolerance of ingroup deviants, ethnocentrism, use of group boundary markers, and discriminatory behaviour (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:17).

'Threat perceptions' and 'resources stress/competition for scarce resources' are two repeatedly used terms in Realistic Group Conflict Theory. Groups are more greedy and exploitative than are individuals (Insko et al. 2001), and group competition for resources leads to efforts to reduce the access of other groups to resources (Campbell 1965; Sherif 1966; Sherif et al. 1961). The origin of out-group threat perception and competition for resources are thus related. The same argument has been put forward by Gibson who notes that "one of the strongest predictors of inter-group intolerance is that a group is threatening" (Gibson 2007/ 2011:418).

Realistic Group Conflict Theory has also been considered insufficient to explain inter-group relations on several grounds. First, as Sidanius & Pratto (1999) suggest, while the two conditions of Realistic Group Conflict Theory (first that real groups actually exists and have a shared identity and shared fate. Second, it is assumed that the groups believe themselves to be in zero-sum competition over valued resources), are "certainly *sufficient* to produce discrimination and prejudice, [but] they are by no means *necessary*" (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:17). In other words, there could be other reasons beyond threat perceptions or 'realistic threats' which might cause inter-group hostilities. Such concerns have been addressed by some of the parallel theories such as Social Identity Theory and Modern Racism Theory,[8] as introduced below.

[8] See Sidanius & Pratto (1999:16)

1.2.4 Group-Threat Theory

'Group-Threat Theory,' another structural theory of inter-group relations introduced by Blumer (1958) and Blalock (1967), suggests that a sizable minority population living near the dominant group leads to economic and/or political threat (Blumer 1958; Blalock 1967). Group-Threat theory is very similar to Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Kunovich and Hodson 2002:189). Based on Group-Threat Theory, Quillian argues that "collective threat is a function of two factors: the numerical size of the subordinate group relative to the dominant group, and economic circumstances. This group-threat theory conceptualizes prejudice as a largely collective phenomenon in which individual attitudes are crucially affected by intergroup relations" (Quillian 1995:586). Ethnic Competition Theories[9] as well as Ethnic Segregation Theories[10] are also quite related to or complementary to the Realistic Group Conflict Theory and Group-Threat Theory in their focus on 'competition' and 'structural base' of intergroup relations.

1.2.5 Social Identity Theory

[9] Ethnic Competition Theory is a reaction to the failure of modernization theory, which predicted that ethnic distinctions would disappear with industrialization. Ethnic competition theories argue that modernization promotes competition along ethnic lines and increased competition leads to ethnic political mobilization and conflict (Kunivich & Hodson 190:2002).

[10] Ethnic Segregation Theory is also a reaction to the failure of modernization theory, that argues that modernization promotes ethnic segregation and inequality that, in turn, lead to ethnic solidarity, ethnic political mobilization, and ethnic conflict (Kunivich & Hodson 190:2002). See Kunivich & Hodson (2002:190) and Hodson et al. (1994:1535-1538) for a review of Modernization Theory, Ethnic Competition Theories and Ethnic Segregation Theories of inter-group relations.

Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel (1969; 1981) and Turner (1975; 1985; 1987; Tajfel and Turner 2001), poses an argument quite the opposite to the Realistic Group Conflict Theory. According to Social Identity Theory, having real groups with shared history and interests, and having realistic threats are not essential in causing ethnocentrism and out-group antipathy. Tajfel experimented the widespread propensity to favor in-group over out-group and demonstrated that even in occasions where 'minimal groups' exists, that is randomly created groups with no shared real history, interests, or meaning outside the experimental situation. In-group favouritism exists in such situations (Forbes 1997:33). Competition and discrimination occurred between minimal groups (Wetherell 1982:208), who are not divided by any actual conflict of interest, and Tajfel "concludes that realistic conflicts of interests are not a necessary condition for competitive intergroup attitude and behaviour (Forbes 1997:34). As Gibson (2006:666) articulates, Social Identity Theory "asserts that strong ingroup sympathies often give rise to equally strong out-group antipathies, and that, under the right circumstances (but not under all circumstances), these intergroup animosities explode into intergroup warfare."

Realistic Group Conflict Theory and Social Identity Theory are similar in the sense that both pay attention to groups and group-level factors (such as group level competition/identity), but they differ in terms of the importance given to 'realistic threats' or 'realistic conflict of interests' in the first, and the emphasis on 'identity' in the second. As Forbes articulates the same that the first is more 'economic' and the second is more 'psychological' in nature (Forbes 1997:29). Realistic Group Conflict Theory emphasizes how zero-sum competition between groups over social and material resources cause ethnocentrism, war, and violence

or negative out-group perceptions. On the other hand, by Social Identity Theory, Tajfel and Turner (1979) show how artificially created groups (minimal groups), devoid of naturalistic meaning, without any historically shaped interactions or stereotypic beliefs on each other, and also with the absence of zero-sum competition (on which Realistic Group Conflict Theory is established), tend to behave in an ethnocentric and biased fashion toward in-group (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:18; Dovidio et al.2010:14).

Findings of some other seminal studies also espouse the same notion that even when group membership is arbitrarily defined people spontaneously evaluate members of their group more favorably (Otten & Wentura 1999), allocate more resources to the members of their group than members of other groups (Vaughan et al. 1981), and are more hopeful towards members of their group (Dovidio et al. 1997).

1.2.6 Modern Racism Theories and 'New' Symbolic Racism Theory

Modern Racism theories (including 'new' symbolic racism theory) assumes that although blatant and extreme forms of racism are now relegated to the past, there are hidden, symbolic or latent forms of racism still existing in the society and that affect attitudes and behaviors between groups (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:16). What is specifically highlighted here is the principle and implementation gap, or the apparent contradiction between the support for racial equality as a principle but consistent opposition to the implementation of any concrete policies to promote

racial equality (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:16). This theory will be further discussed below in one of the following sections 'symbolic threat.'

Given all these different explanations of inter-group attitudes and behaviors, there is some incongruity of labeling these theories in academia. Some scholars classify Ethnic Competition Theory, Ethnic Segregation Theory, Group-Threat Theory, and Realistic Group Conflict Theory as 'structural theories' (Kunivich & Hodson 2002:187-190). Levine and Campbell (1972) also categorize Realistic Group Conflict Theory as a 'societal theory,' whereas Sidanius & Pratto (1999:15-21) classify Realistic Group Conflict Theory, Social Identity Theory and Modern Racism Theories as 'social-psychological' theories. Forbes classifies Social Identity Theory as a more 'economic' theory and Social Identity Theory as more 'psychological' in orientation (Forbes 1997:29).

However, in order to avoid confusion, in the present study, all the theories mentioned above are understood as more social and structural theories (or simply as sociological theories). They are structural and social because the focus is not the individual personality and psychology, but on the groups, and how groups behave and compete under certain situational conditions, upon either realistic threats/conflicts of interests or more symbolic threats. These theories primarily focus on group position, group conflicts, and group competition but not the individual.

Being informed by various theories of ethnocentrism, the following sections further discuss two extensions of Realistic Group Conflict Theory, and Symbolic Racism Theory. That is real/material threats and symbolic/cultural threats. Real/material threats and symbolic/cultural threat are essential concepts in

the data analysis of the present study. In addition to real/material threats and symbolic/cultural threats, below the author discusses how religion is considered both as an individual level (personality) variable and also as a sociological variable in the past literature. However, in the present study, technically, religion is not considered as a between-person (individual personality factor) variable but as a situational factor/condition of the society under consideration.

Also, as noted above, due to the natural limitations of data (that is this study does not directly observe human respondents as the primary source of data), the present study does not test the individual level variable and its impact on ethnocentrism. Instead it focuses on the societal and structural determinants of ethnocentrism. Though many of the different labels of theories mentioned above are highly influential, the forthcoming analysis is largely drawn upon the Realistic Group Conflict Theory and Group-Threat Theory.

1.2.7 Material (real) and symbolic (cultural) threat

Threat perceptions are a strong determinant of various in/out-group perceptions such as increased intolerance, ethnocentrism, prejudice and xenophobia (Huddy et al. 2005). Also, it is essential to note that these threat perceptions, as it connotes, could be factually correct or not. However, as discussed above, threat perceptions might emerge upon resources stress[11]—the perception that there are not enough resources to go around—and these resources

[11] Yet, on the other hand according to some scholars, even "[i]n the absence of any direct evidence, people typically presume that members of other groups will act competitively and hinder the attainment of one's goals" (Fiske and Ruscher 1993).

may take various forms. This includes more tangible resources, or resources related to physical well-being such as employment opportunities and other economic resources (which are considered real/material resources and will be called material threats in this study) and more intangible, symbolic resources, such as prestige, values and status or religious dominance (these are considered cultural or symbolic in nature and thus called symbolic threats in this study).

Irrespective of the material or symbolic nature, threat perceptions and competition over resources may function at two levels: first, individual-threat— where individuals may feel that the out-group threatens their personal life and circumstances (for example individuals will lose income, government resources due to competition with the out-group). Secondly, the collective-threat — the perception by the dominant group that their group prerogatives are threatened (Quillian 1995:586), or its survival and resources of the group as a whole have been threatened by the out-group/s (McLaren 2003:918). Many of the empirical findings so far support the fact that much of the extreme anti-outgroup perceptions stem not from concerns about resources being taken from the individual but from the in-group (McLaren 2003:918,925; Funk 2000). Gibson (2007/2011) also states that "it is not the direct threat to one's own personal well-being (egocentric threat perceptions) that is crucial, but instead perceived threat to the group and/or society (sociotropic threat perceptions) that is so likely to generate intolerance" (Gibson 2007/2011:418).

Realistic Group Conflict Theory discussed above focuses more on 'real threats' between groups. These real threats are mostly material and individualistic in nature, such as economic resources like individual income or real features of

intergroup relations (Bobo 1983:1198). This could include a percentage of out-group members in a defined environment as well as its socioeconomic conditions such as level of education, income, occupations or unemployment (Oliver & Mendelberg 2000: 574-577). Group-Threat Theory (discussed above) also emphasizes a similar fact that a sizable minority population living near the dominant group leads to economic and/or political threat. In other words 'a sizable minority population' could be a tangible, realistic material threat. Collectively, what is implied by both Realistic Group Conflict Theory and Group-Threat theory is sometimes referred to as 'competition hypothesis' or as 'group-threat' in the the literature.

Symbolic threat, on the other hand, contends that people are not so much concerned about resources distribution, rather they are concerned about threats that other groups pose to their culture and way of life, thus perceived threats to cultural symbols are more important determinant of negative out-group perceptions (McLaren 2003:916; McLaren 2002:557-558). These symbolic threats include moral feelings like the out-group violate traditional values of the in-group (Kinder & Sears 1981:416) or out-group differences in morals, values, norms, standards, beliefs, and attitudes (Stephan et al. 1998:560) or even the presence of out-group religion, religious attire and practices could pose symbolic threats to the in-group (McLaren 2003:917). Symbolic threats are experienced when members of the in-group perceive that their system of value is being undermined by an out-group (Stephan et al. 1998:561).

As some scholars identify, even Social Identity Theory introduced by Tajfel (1981) stresses symbolic threats to the status of one's in-group and their norms, traditions, underling intolerance and out-group hatred (Bloom &

Bagno-Moldavsky 2015:631). Similarly, the very concept of symbolic threats stems from (or profoundly associates with) Symbolic Racism Theories (see Sears 1988; McConhay & Hough 1976; McConhay 1986; Weigel & Howes 1985; Dovidio & Gaertner 1991; Kinder & Sanders 1996; Pettigrew 1989). Symbolic racism is mainly studied in the context of the United States between Blacks and Whites and defined as "a combination of anti-Black affect or emotional antipathy toward Blacks, and certain traditional U.S. values such as self-reliance, individualism, and Protestant work ethic" (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:16). In chapter 3, under the section of operationalization of variables, the author further discusses both material and symbolic threat with further examples.

1.2.8 Religion/Religiosity

Previous research has studied religiosity as a personality trait and also a situational condition of the society and its impact on various out-group perceptions such as ethnocentrism, intolerance, and prejudice. In other words, religion is considered as a personality variable on the basis that while some people are more interested in practicing their religion and church attendance,[12] some others have no or less religious beliefs. Does this between-person variability of religiosity explain out-group perception? The impact of religious affiliation and commitment of the individual, theological conservatism, and frequency of church attendance have been studied extensively (Adorno et al. 1950; Beatty & Walter 1984; Ellison & Musick 1993; Nunn et al. 1978; Stouffer 1963; Sullivan et al. 1982; McClosky &

[12] By 'church attendance,' the author refers to all the religious institutions, not only Christianity.

Brill 1983; Altemeyer 2008). The findings of these studies, however, revolve around different directions, but many are in line with the minimal consensus that religiosity associates more with decreased tolerance, increased ethnocentrism and prejudice (Moore & Ovadia 2006:2208; Adorno et al. 1950:209).

Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice* concludes that, "[I]t is clear that religion bears no univocal relationship to prejudice. Its influence is important, but it works in contradictory directions. The apologists for religion overlook its ethnocentric and self-exalting reference; its opponents see little else" (Allport 1954:455). In *The Authoritarian Personality,* Adorno et al. (1950) reach a similar, yet more detailed conclusion that people who reject organized religion are less prejudiced on the average than those who accept it, yet almost everyone with religious affiliations are not, however, generally ethnocentric (Adorno et al. 1950:209). In addition, they find that the frequency of church attendance also does not explain the variation of ethnocentrism among people who affiliate with religion (Adorno et al. 1950:211-213). The religious affiliation of parents is proven important and "it appears that ethnocentrism tends to be more pronounced in subjects whose parents presented a unified religious front than in cases where the religious influence of the parents was inconsistent, partial, or nonexistent" (Adorno et al. 1950:221).

Religious denomination not only works at the individual-level, shaping their members' political tolerance both directly from the pulpit and indirectly through informal interactions between like-minded people (Billing & Scott 1994), but also as a group-level phenomenon. Scholars have identified empirical evidence linking religion and its association with inter-group intolerance and even outbreak of conflict around the world (Beatty & Walter 1984; Hodson, Sekulic & Massey 1994; Nunn, Crockett & Williams 1978; Stouffer 1955). The present study, utilizes

religion, not necessarily as an individual's personality trait, but as a group construct. In other words, the present study questions whether the group level religiosity predicts its level of out-group tolerance/intolerance.

While accepting the association of religion and group-level intolerance, some other scholars alternatively argue that the resurgence of religion could be linked to increased intolerance, but "increases in intolerance and religiosity are both functions of competition and conflict. In other words, any effect of religiosity on intolerance is expected to be largely spurious" (Kunovich & Hodson 1999:644). Similarly, Eisenstein (2006) finds that "religion has an *indirect* influence on political tolerance wherein increased religious commitment and increased doctrinal orthodoxy both lead to increased *in*tolerance via other variables" (Eisenstein 2006:338).

The present study is largely based on the 'resurgence vs. salience' hypothesis of Kunovich and Hodson (1999), as well as findings of Eisenstein (2006), and focuses on the central question, whether it is the recent resurgence of religiosity among Sinhalese and Sri Lankans in general that causes Sinhalese ethnocentrism and intergroup intolerance, or if not, is it the group competition based on other structural factors that makes religion salient? Alternatively, against Kunovich and Hodson (1999), who argue that religion does not directly cause intolerance (but the relationship is only spurious), can we observe a direct causality between religion and intolerance in the post-war Sri Lankan context?

1.3 Conclusion

While real threats (material threats) are based on the Realistic Group Conflict Theory, Symbolic threats stem from Symbolic Racism Theories. Religious identification can be explained using Social Identity Theory that strong in-group identification predicts positive/negative out-group perceptions. Consequently, this study recognizes the current scholarly contention that what is more significant in fostering ethnocentrism? Is it the material sources of threat ('real' features) as articulated by Bobo (1983) or is it more of an attitudinal function based on symbolic sources of threat posed by out-group/s (Kinder & Sears 1981:416)? Does symbolic threat give rise to the material threat or vice versa (Esses et al. 2005)? By measuring and testing material (real) vs. symbolic threat perceptions, this study attempts to contribute to the current scholarly debates. Also, the present study tests group-threat (real and symbolic threat) against religion/religiosity, and raises the central question that, what explains, and associates more with ethnocentrism? Is it largely a product of competition between groups and consequently resulting threat perceptions or rather is it a product of religion?

2

Accounting for ethnocentrism in Sri Lanka: From the post-colonial to the post-war literature

In what ways ethnic self-image and ethnic consciousness developed in Sri Lanka? How does the current academic discourses on Sri Lanka address Sinhalese ethnocentrism ― the manner Sinhalese think about and scale themselves and out-groups? What determines Sinhala consciousness according to the previous studies conducted by Sri Lankan specialists? This chapter addresses the above questions extensively. The chapter begins with a brief chronological history from pre-colonial to post-war Sri Lanka, along with a basic overview of the demographic, religious and ethnic taxonomy of the country. Subsequently, the second section reviews the primordial vs. post-Orientalist debates on ethnic identity construction overt in the post-colonial literature. The third section reviews more recent (post-war) research findings, mainly several major studies conducted in the post-2009 period on ethnic identity construction, with a particular focus on Sinhalese and the developments of their ethnic consciousness. The chapter concludes forming several plausible hypotheses that will be tested in the forthcoming analysis.

2.1 A historical overview of Sri Lanka and its demography

2.1.1 Sri Lanka from pre-colonial to 2009: A chronological overview

Historically, due to the proximity to the Indian subcontinent, and also as a result of the strategic location on the regional and transcontinental trade routes between South-East Asia and West Asia, Sri Lanka has been influenced by different ancient civilizations such as Greece and Rome (de Silva 1981:2). The influence of India is much more prominent than any other for various reasons. Ethnicities such as Sinhalese and Tamil and religions such as Buddhism, and Hinduism have come into existence in the country due to its proximity and relationships with India. Sinhalese are supposed to be descended from Indo-Aryan immigrants who arrived from north-west India approximately in the fifth century BC (de Silva 1981:6). Tamils in Sri Lanka – also known as Dravidians – are from southern India, as a result of trading relations as well as invasions. For instance, "…in 177 BC, two south Indian adventurers usurped power at Anuradhapura and ruled for twenty-two years, to be followed ten years later (in 145 BC) by another, Elāra, who maintained himself in power for a much longer period – for forty-four years" (de Silva 1981:13). Thus, the formation of Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil Hindu civilizations in Sri Lanka is mostly due to the effects of immigration and invasions.

Apart from those two main ethnic groups, several other immigrants also settled down in Sri Lanka. The arrival of Arab Muslim traders was seen from the eighth century forward (Holt 2011:1; Little 1994:11). Sri Lanka was a focal point of Persian trade, and there were diplomatic relations between Sassanian Emperors and Anuradhapura (Dewaraja 1994:22). By the ninth century, there were Arab

trading communities well established in Sri Lanka especially in the island's coastal towns maintaining cordial relations with the rulers and local inhabitants (Dewaraja 1994:23). Apart from those three major groups of immigrants, the country also experienced prolonged four and half centuries of colonial invasions by the Christian Portuguese (1505-68), the Dutch (1568-1796), and the British (1796-1948), from the sixteenth through the twentieth century (Holt 2011:11).

These arrivals added more diversity to the Sri Lankan polity and highly contributed to the evolution of Sri Lankan society as a distinct, truly plural and multi-cultural entity. Some of the Arab Muslims who arrived mainly for trading purposes settled down in the country after marrying local women. Descendants of the Portuguese, Dutch and British can also be seen even today, though less in number in comparison to Muslims. However, all these immigrants (from Indo-Aryans to the British) brought not only different ethnicities, religions, and cultures but also introduced new economic life – varying from agriculture to modern industries, as well as administrative and political patterns.

With the influence of colonialism, especially following the British tradition, Sri Lanka became one of the very few functioning democracies of the third world and also the first country in Asia to enjoy the benefits of universal suffrage in 1931 (de Silva 1986:2). In the post-independence period from 1948 onward, Sri Lanka experienced massive and extended socio-economic and political turmoil. "…during most of the period since independence Sri Lanka's economy has been either stagnant or expanding at a moderate pace; levels of unemployment have been high; ethnic (including religious) tensions have been all too prominent a feature of social and political life…." (de Silva 1986:3).

Major post-colonial constitutional changes happened several times—in 1972 and 1978. In 1971 and 1977 the country experienced two youth revolts in the form of insurrections that "assumed the proportions of a miniature civil war" (de Silva 1986:3). "During 1988–89 the country experienced considerable political violence… an insurrection led by the radical Sinhalese-based group, the [*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna*[13]] JVP, [which] was crushed by the armed forces with thousands of deaths during 1989–90 (Arunatilake et al. 2001).

1983 marks one of the most virulent cases of communal violence in Sri Lanka (widely known as the most violent incident after 'the 1915 riots' between Muslims and Sinhalese) which is commonly referred to as *Black July* (de Mel et al. 2012:99) of 1983 that paved the way for the civil war which was militarily terminated in 2009. From 1983 onward, the civil war took many forms. "Having started as a guerilla war, by 1998 it had intensified to a guerrilla-*cum*-semi-conventional type of conflict with the LTTE continuing to control large areas in the North and the East" (Arunatilake et al. 2001).

With an unsuccessful record of multiple peace negotiations (including a failed Norwegian-mediated ceasefire agreement), finally, the GoSL militarily terminated the civil war in 2009 which had lasted for nearly three decades. In addition to the loss of thousands of human lives, the war resulted in extended economic costs (Kelegama 1999; Sarvananthan 2007), which are hardly eradicated in the post-war period and need severe institutional reforms (Ganegodage and Rambaldi 2013). However, post-war Sri Lanka enjoys relative stability with the absence of large scale violence. Yet, continuous sporadic

[13] The English translation of JVP/*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* is 'The People's Liberation Front.' JVP is a political party in Sri Lanka which is still functioning actively.

communal riots between ethnic groups are visible (especially between Sinhalese and Muslims, which will be addressed elsewhere in the present study), along with an unstable post-war economy (Athukorala and Jayasuriya 2013).

2.1.2 Demography and ethnoreligious taxonomy of the country

Sinhalese and their ethnic self-image is the primary focus of this study and the following is a brief overview of the internal hierarchies within the Sinhalese group (elsewhere in this chapter, the construction of Sinhalese identity, along with other competing ethnic identities will be discussed in detail). According to the most simplified understanding of contemporary Sri Lankan society, the group of people who identify themselves as 'Sinhalese' is comprised of multiple castes (i.e. *Goigama*/farmers, *Karava*/fishing) and religions such as Buddhists, Christians and Roman Catholics and also an occasionally visible division between regions such as Up-country Sinhalese (Kandyan Sinhalese) and Low-country Sinhalese. This group speaks the Sinhala language as their home language, yet depending on the socio-economic background, an insignificant minority of Sinhalese even speak English as a home language. There are temporal and contextual changes in Sinhalese identity, and they are not the same today as they were one hundred years back.

In addition to Sinhalese, several other non-Sinhalese groups have also been living in Sri Lanka for centuries, mainly Tamils and Muslims. Figure 1 below summarizes the taxonomy of ethnic and religious groups in contemporary Sri Lanka.

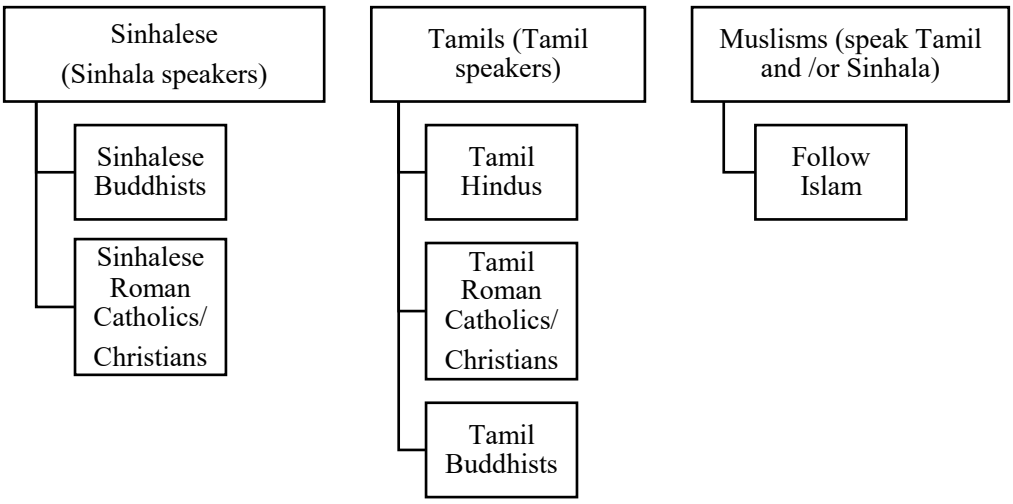


Figure 1- Taxonomy of ethnicity, religion, and language in Sri Lanka (author drawn)

Outlining the demographic composition of the country is also necessary at this stage. Sinhalese comprises 74.9% of the total population according to the Population and Housing Census conducted in 2012 (Department of Census and Statistics 2015:128), and accordingly, they become the demographic majority. Tamils are the largest minority group with 15.3% of the total population (this includes both Sri Lankan Tamils – 11.2% and Indian Tamils – 4.1%). Sri Lankan Moors[14] comprises 9.3% of the population and others (which includes Malay, Burgher, Sri Lanka Chetty, Bharatha, indigenous population such as *Veddas* and also Europeans in Sri Lanka) are 0.5% (Department of Census and Statistics 2015:128).

[14] Until 1971, the Population and Housing Census of Sri Lanka categorized the Muslims living in Sri Lanka as 'Sri Lankan Muslim' and 'Indian Muslim.' From the census of 1981, categorization of Muslims as 'Sri Lankan' and 'Indian' has been abandoned. However, within this study, 'Sri Lankan Muslims' are used to refer to all the Sri Lankans who follow Islam as their religion.

Five major religions are practiced currently – Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Roman Catholic, and Christianity. Buddhists are 70.1% of the total population and Hindu 12.6%, Islam 9.7%, Roman Catholics 6.2% and Christians 1.4% (Department of Census and Statistics 2015:147). Another important factor of the population is the geographical concentration of ethnicities. For instance, Tamils are mainly concentrated in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka, whereas Sinhalese are the majority in all the other provinces except the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Unlike the other two ethnicities, Muslims are not concentrated in one or two regions, but dispersed in all the provinces, scattered as small groups. Only in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka do a considerable number of Muslims live together.

Having reviewed some of the major occurrences of the history of Sri Lanka, along with an elaboration of the demography and the ethnic and religious taxonomy of the country, forthcoming sections address the core questions mentioned at the outset of this chapter. In what ways have ethnic self-image and consciousness developed in Sri Lanka over its history? How does the current academic discourses on Sri Lanka address Sinhalese ethnocentrism—the manner Sinhalese think about themselves and out-groups? What determines Sinhalese ethnocentrism according to the previous studies conducted by Sri Lankan specialists?

2.2 Post-colonial literature and discourses of ethnic identities in Sri Lanka

Scholarly debate on the construction and variation of in-group and out-group perceptions in Sri Lanka is mainly divided between two schools of thought:

Primordialists and post-Orientalists. Primordialists (similar to essentialist) understand that ethnic identities are given, have a perennial phenomenon going back to a specific point of origin (Roberts 2004:2) and "the idea that humans and human institutions… are governed by determinate natures that inhere in them in the same way that they are supposed to inhere in the entities of the natural world" (Inden 1990:2). In that sense, ethnic hatreds are also given and from the time immemorial, identification upon identity differences and related out-group antipathy have been apparent in the Sri Lankan context. On the contrary, post-Orientalist disagree on that primordial basis and argue that, although there could be primary differences between groups, turning those differences into identity conflicts or out-group antipathy are products of modern state models practiced during the post-independence and related socio-structural factors. Post-Orientalists admit substantially the fact that ethnic identities can be given different meanings, constructed or interpreted differently along with specific temporal changes in the polity.

This dichotomy between Primordialism and post-Orientalism reflects the personality vs. socio-structural/situational determinants of ethnocentrism discussed in Chapter 1. Both primordialism and personality trait based explanations hypothesize that out-group hatreds are given, either biological givens or related to human origin. Post-Orientalists, in contrast, place more attention on situational, social and structural factors in understanding the variance of ethnocentrism in a given entity. The following discussion depicts the available Sri Lankan discourse on origins, timing, and determinants of ethnocentrism/ ethnic consciousness in Sri Lanka.

2.2.1 Primordialist reading of ethnic relations in Sri Lanka

Primordialists and post-Orientalists disagree on the timing and processes of the formation of Sinhalese identity formation. For instance, scholars such as Rahula (1956), Dharmadasa (1989; 1997) and Obeyesekera (1997) hold a more or less primordialist position that identity formation took place even before colonialism and they even assert the nature of the political significance of those identity categories during pre-colonial times. In contrast, Tambiah (1986), Gunawardane (1990), Spencer (1990), Nissan and Stirrat (1990), based on a post-Orientalist position, place a high emphasis on the importance of the role of colonial processes in constructing the categories politically relevant/meaningful in Sri Lanka and consider it to be more or less a nineteenth-century production. While many of the above post-Orientalists do not ignore the explicit nature of Sinhala consciousness even before the colonial encounter, what they correctly assert is the fact that "the understanding of the national past as a history of warring 'races' or 'ethnic groups' is a product of colonial reading and interpretation of the chronicles; these readings have been used to structure the present and to pursue contemporary purposes" (Tambiah 1992:131).

Starting from the views of the primordialists, Walpola Rahula draws back to the second century BC and asserts that Sinhalaness echoes religious-nationalism, even before colonialism.

> Dutta-Gamani the son of Kakavanna-Tissa of Rohana [southern Sri Lanka], undoubtedly the greatest national hero of early Buddhist Ceylon,

> organized a great campaign to liberate Buddhism from foreign rule [Elara, a Chola prince who invaded Ceylon in 145 BC]. His war-cry was 'not for kingdom, but for Buddhism.' The entire Sinhalese race was united under the banner of the young Gamani. This was the beginning of nationalism among the Sinhalese. It was a new race with healthy young blood, organized under the new order of Buddhism. *A kind of religio-nationalism*, which almost amounted to fanaticism, roused the whole Sinhalese people. A non-Buddhist was not regarded as a human being. Evidently, all Sinhalese without exception were Buddhists (Rahula 1956:79, emphasis added).

Obeysekere, also with a primordial leaning, claims that in the period before the sixteenth-century (which refers to the pre-colonial period [15]) "there were historically two major opposed ethnic identities, Sinhalese and Tamil. The historical conflicts between Sinhalese and South Indian invaders reinforced and stabilized the Sinhala-Buddhist identity" (Obeyesekera 1997:358).

Similarly, as Rogers (1994) quotes Dharmadasa (1989), the latter also rejects the idea that the political significance of ethnic identities in Sri Lanka is a nineteenth-century production. He (Dharmadasa) argues that "nineteenth century Sinhalese elite did not create new ideologies, but instead articulated old ones in new ways" (Rogers 1994:12). By bringing out textual evidence on the Nayakkar Dynasty in the Kandyan kingdom (1739-1815), Dharmadasa asserts that the 1760

[15] The beginning of European colonialism in Sri Lanka is marked with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505 who ruled the coastal regions of the island until 1658. The Dutch took over the authority of the coastal regions from 1658 until 1797. During both the Portuguese and later the Dutch rule, the Kandyan Kingdom (the interior lands of the island) remained the sole independent indigenous kingdom ruled by the native Sri Lankan kings. The British colonial period started (Sri Lanka was then called Ceylon by the British) in 1796, but still, without the control of the Kandyan Kingdom. Only in 1815 did the British become successful in gaining the full control of the Kandyan Kingdom. After that, the British ruled the entire country until 1948, the year of independence from the British.

rebellion (Moladande rebellion), which was to overthrow the then Kandyan king (Kirti Sri) who was of Nayakkar (Tamil) origin and to replace him with a Siamese (Thai) prince who was a Buddhist with royal blood, was a plan of ethnically informed Sinhalese elite of the Kandyan Court and an aristocracy with the resentment of an ethnically and culturally alien king with heretical, non-Buddhist practices, ruling Sinhalé[16] (Dharmadasa 1997:89-93).

2.2.2 Post-Orientalist reading of ethnic relations in Sri Lanka

The above primordial standpoints have been contested widely by the post-Orientalist scholars. Gunawardana is one of the major proponents of post-Orientalism in Sri Lanka. As he argues, "modern Sinhalese nationalism was the product of racial ideology introduced by the British in the nineteenth century" (in Rogers 1994:11). In *The people of the lion: The Sinhala identity and ideology in history and historiography,* Gunawardana (1990) explains that in pre-colonial Sri Lanka there was no group nationalism among people who spoke the Sinhala language. Instead, they gradually developed group consciousness. Earlier (around the first century A.D.), the label '*Sihalas'* was used to refer to the members of the ruling family, and gradually it was extended to refer to the higher-status people of the kingdom, and later around the twelfth-century it was used to refer to all Sinhala speakers in the Kingdom (Gunawardana 1990:54-64; in Rogers 1994:12). The most important point in Gunawardana's argument is that he clearly distinguishes group consciousness among Sinhala speakers in the pre-colonial time and the linguistic nationalism among the post-colonial Sinhala speakers.

[16]Sinhalé is a local Sinhalese name used to refer to the Kandyan kingdom which was independent during the colonial encounter until it was conquered by the British in 1815.

> Sinhalese group consciousness has been evolving in the period after the formation of a unified kingdom under the control of Anuradhapura [377 BC onwards]. They [historical evidence] enable us to distinguish the Sinhala consciousness of this early period from linguistic nationalism and other types of group consciousness typical of more recent times. Of course, the presence of a common language was a basic prerequisite for the emergence of group consciousness. Buddhaghosa's[17] commentaries speak of a language specific to the island. *However, it is significant that language was not conceived as the crucial criteria or the basis of the Sinhala identity at this time. The Sinhala group consciousness did not bring together all speakers of the language but deliberately left out a considerable section of the linguistic group including the craftsmen-agriculturists and others who performed ritually 'low' service functions*" (Gunawardana 1990: 54-55 emphasis added).

Here, Gunawardana's choice of language should be noted carefully. He uses the phrase 'Sinhala consciousness' but not 'Sinhala nationalism' asserting that the former was a pre-colonial product and he denies the existence of the latter in the pre-colonial times.

> Though the Sinhala identity had been 'extended' earlier to cover 'the inhabitants of the island,' it was during the post-nineteenth century period that it entered the consciousness of the masses, drawing together

[17] Buddhagosha is an Indian Buddhist scholar (flourished 5th century CE), famous for his Visuddhimagga (Pali: "The Path of Purification"), a summary of current Buddhist doctrines. Scholars do not agree about Buddhaghosa's birthplace, but it is known that he traveled to Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, where he discovered many Sinhalese Buddhist commentaries and translated into Pali and communicated to his countrymen. See-https://www.britannica.com/biography/Buddhaghosa.

> that section of the population which belonged to the Sinhala linguistic group through a consciousness overarching their local, regional and caste identities (Gunawardana 1990:76).

Based on this argument, Gunawardana considers Rahula's (1956) claim mentioned above and the like as chauvinist Sinhala writings that depict the campaign of Gamani against Elara as a confrontation between Sinhalese against Tamils (Gunawardana 1990:58; Blood 1990:11). According to Gunawardana, the wars of Gamani (Sinhala prince) vs. Elara (Tamil King)

> do not appear to represent a Sinhala-Tamil confrontation and, as noted already, the development of Sinhala consciousness is a phenomenon observable after the formation of a unified kingdom ruled by the kings of Anuradhapura. Sinhala ideology elaborated in the account of the campaigns of Dutthagamani clearly reflects the influence of the religious identity which evolved with the expansion of and consolidation of Buddhism in the island (Gunawardana 1990:59).

Supporting the same argument, K. M de Silva notes historical evidence of how Sinhala speakers have supported Elara (the Tamil king who must be originally a Tamil speaker) during the Gamini vs. Elara wars (in Blood 1990:12). Spencer (1990), being another strong proponent of post-Orientalist reasoning, states that it is misleading to understand the riots and disturbances in Sri Lanka during pre-colonial times as historically rooted warring 'races' or 'ethnic groups.' In simple terms, as per Spencer, "Sinhala-Tamil conflict is a product of modern politics. To interpret the history of the pre-colonial kingdoms in terms of 'nationalism'—a distinctive ideology of the modern nation-state—is anachronistic and therefore misleading" (Spencer 1990:5).

According to Gunawardana, the colonial/post-colonial construct of Sinhalese linguistic nationalism is profoundly affected by several intellectual processes, such as the growth of racial ideologies among academia, which has a substantial constructive element of modern Sinhalese nationalism. Gunawardana considers that colonialism caused radical transformations of Sinhala consciousness by highlighting the intellectual process overt during early nineteenth century Sri Lanka, where Sri Lankan scholars were influenced by the racialist linguistic theories originating in Europe (Coperahewa 2009:55). Scholars like William Jones, Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, and Max Muller used the terms 'Aryan' or 'Aryan race,' which later developed into a racial theory, to designate the shared origins of languages/people (non-Semitic) of Europe and Asia (especially India) (Gunawardana 1990:70). The view that the Sinhala language is an Aryan language, believing it was derived from Sanskrit (which was also considered as an Aryan language), had a significant impact on shaping the Sinhala consciousness during the early nineteenth century (Ibid., 71-72). In his study of comparative grammar of south Indian languages, Robert Caldwell theorizes that there is no direct affinity between Sinhala and Tamil languages, and the Dravidian family of languages includes Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Canarese, Tulu, and Kadagu but not Sinhala (Gunawardana 1990:72), and thus contributes to the colonial and post-colonial discourse on linguistic consciousness of both Sinhalese and Tamils.

The above argument that linguistic nationalism in Sri Lanka during the early nineteenth century is a result of the rise of racialist linguistic theories in Europe has been contested by scholars such as Dharmadasa and Coparahewa by bringing out evidence from the writings of James De Alwis (1823-1878). As early as 1852, De Alwis had stressed the antiquity of Sinhala language and the greatness

of Sinhala civilization and also the Indo-Aryan purity of Sinhala (Coperahewa 2009:55). In that sense, linguistic nationalism apparent in De Alwis's writings cannot be ascribed to the European source; rather it can be considered as "periodic expression of a continuous ideological tradition" (Dharmadasa 1989:35).

Exponents of racial theories received strong support from physical anthropologists such as M. M. Kunte in 1879 who states that "there are, properly speaking, representatives of only two races in Ceylon – Aryans and Tamilians, the former being divided into descendants of Indian and Western Aryans […] the formation of the forehead, the cheek-bones, the chin, the mouth and the lips of the Tamilians are [*sic*] distinctly different from those of the Ceylonese Aryans" (Gunawardana 1990:74). Rudolph Virchow also recognizes that there are three races in Sri Lanka [the Sinhalese, Tamils and Veddas[18]] and considers the Sinhalese race to be the result of a mixture of Vedda elements and immigrants from India. "There were resemblances between these two groups, but they were both distinct from the Tamils. Though the Sinhala were a mixed race, there was no doubt that the Sinhala face was an importation from the Aryan provinces of the Indian continent" according to Virchow (Gunawardana 1990:74).

Many of the later scholars reject the racial, biological or physical differences between Sinhalese and the rest in the island. For instance Tambaih states, "some enthusiastic but misled Sinhalese, and some gullible foreign journalists who do not do their homework, hold that the Sinhalese are (fair) Aryans and the Tamils are (dark) Dravidians, and thereby impose on Sri Lanka the famous

[18] A group of the aboriginal population in Sri Lanka. Although the size of the population is insignificant, their presence can be seen in certain parts in the Uva Province of Sri Lanka, even today.

divide in India between its "Aryan" north and "Dravidian" south…." (Gunawardana 1990:74).

Nissan and Stirrat (1990) introduce a strong post-Orientalist argument highlighting that Sinhalese nationalism is relatively 'new,' and emerged as a result of the interaction between the colonizers and the colonized (Nissan and Stirrat (1990:39-40). They place more emphasis on the process of modern state formation as the most significant element behind making ethnic groups politically significant.

> [I]n the pre-modern states of Sri Lanka, there could not have been signs of incipient Sinhala—Tamil conflict as understood today because these categories did not bear the *nationalist connotations* that they now bear. The 'state' of the past and that of the present are very different; only the latter is associated with the idea of the 'nation,' an idea which is too often projected back in time (Nissan and Stirrat 1990:26, emphasis added).

Their main thesis is that different state formats generate different senses of collective identities. Since the 'modern nation-state' was not invented and practiced during pre-modern times of Sri Lanka, it is quite unrealistic to claim that identities such as Sinhalese, Tamil or Muslim existed with the same nationalist sentiments and political significance in the past, because kingdoms did not associate with the idea of 'nation,' which is the most substantial supplementary notion of creating nationalist instincts among communities. The wars ostensible in kingdoms in Sri Lanka, according to Nissan & Stirrat (1990), are dynastic wars and,

> Sinhalese-Tamil communal violence dates from after Independence. This is not to say that there were no differences between groups of

> people living in the island: the point is simply that differences of language, custom and religion were made into something new by devices of a modern state… . (Nissan & Stirrat 1990:24).

Thus, in summary, the process of modern nation-state formation has substantially underpinned the construction of Sinhalese nationalism in the post-independence times.

Augmenting the above argument, Tambiah (1986) states that the rise of ethnic nationalism of both Sinhalese and Tamils is a relatively recent manufacture, a truly twentieth-century phenomenon. According to him, the period immediately before the Portuguese and Dutch occupation of the coastal regions of Sri Lanka, the populace was fragmented between three kingdoms, Kotte, Kandy, and Jaffna. "Those peoples lived their lives as components of local or regional sociopolitical complexes rather than ethnic 'Sinhalese' or 'Tamils' as they are conceived today" (Tambiah 1986:8).

Primordialists and post-Orientalists thus disagree on the timing and processes of the emergence of Sinhalese nationalism. The first group argues that Sinhalese were nationalists even before colonialism, from early periods like the Anuradhapura Kingdom starting in 377 BC, citing the prince Duttagamani (Sinhalese) vs. King Elara (Tamil) war. On the other hand, post-Orientalists deny that nationalism being an instinct element of early Sinhalese people. Yet, post-Orientalists hardly deny the explicit Sinhalese consciousness during pre-colonial and colonial Sri Lanka. Post-orientalists admits the existence of Sinhala consciousness in the pre-colonial times, and in addition to that emphasize colonialism, models of the modern state as significant factors shaping Sinhalese nationalism.

2.2.3 The post-colonial Sinhalaness and the civil war (1983-2009)

This controversy (primordial vs. post-Orientalist) popped-up, from time to time, as an explanation of the three decades of war between the LTTE[19] and the armed forces of the GoSL[20] (1983-2009). While the primordial interpretation of the war between the GoSL and the LTTE is an extension of the natural ethnic hatreds between Sinhalese and Tamils which is rooted in their biology or origins, post-Orientalists point out various colonial and post-colonial constructs as the major determinants of the war.

When looking closely at the roots of the armed conflict, 'religion' did not emerge as a primary determinant of the hostilities and the war between the LTTE and the GoSL. Spencer (1990) asserts this idea clearly, by identifying the difference between the riots/disturbances between groups in Sri Lanka during the colonial period (1505-1948) and the post-colonial (after 1948) Sinhala-Tamil conflict.

> Colonial disturbances were usually aligned on religious lines[21]—Sinhala Buddhists attacking Sinhala Catholic; Tamil Hindu attacking Tamil catholic; Buddhist, Catholic or Hindu attacking Muslim; and Muslim attacking all back in return. The first modern evidence of Tamil-Sinhala conflict, *defined in terms of linguistic group*, comes from 1956, the year when major national language reforms were introduced. In simple terms Sinhala-Tamil conflict is a product of modern politics (Spencer 1990:5,

[19] Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
[20] The Government of Sri Lanka
[21] Spencer's articulation of the 'religious basis' of riots in colonial Sri Lanka has been contested by several scholars (i.e., Jayawardena 1970; Jayasekera 1970), which will be addressed in the section below.

emphasis added).

This is not to imply that Buddhism was not an important aspect of Sinhalese identity. Undeniably, Sinhalese believed that 'true' Sinhalese people share a common religion (Nissan and Stirrat 1990:30). Yet, "[n]one of the clashes of the colonial era, however, involved violence between *Buddhists* and *Hindus*…" (Nissan and Stirrat 1990:31). Instead of religious-nationalism, the post-colonial divide between Sinhalese and Tamils stem from the franchise, linguistic-nationalism, and several other socio-economic problems.

Franchise, in other words communal representation in the legislature, was introduced by the British in 1833 by nominating three Europeans, a Sinhalese, a Tamil and a Burgher to the legislative council. This firmly established 'Tamil-ness' and 'Sinhala-ness' as distinct political identities (Nissan and Stirrat 1990:33; Schwarz 1988:6). In addition, the first Sinhala-Tamil communal violence, which erupted in 1956 and 1958, was instigated by growing linguistic-nationalism and issues related to access to land (Nissan and Stirrat 1990:36) in the country. In 1956, the newly elected government led by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike introduced a bill to make Sinhala the official language, and that instigated violence between Sinhalese and Tamils in several places in Sri Lanka including Colombo and Gal Oya. In 1958 "Tamil activists in the north refused to incorporate the Sinhala 'sri' character on to vehicle number plates and began to paint it out [and in return] Sinhala activists retaliated, painting out Tamil language signs in Sinhala-dominated areas" (Nissan and Stirrat 1990:35).

Accepting the existence of other grievances-based explanations to the war between Sinhalese and Tamils (such as standardization of education and the consequent limitation of employment opportunities to Tamils, and Sinhala

colonization of some regions of the country),[22] the main point that distinguishes Sinhala vs. Tamil communal violence from the other examples of communal violence (i.e. Sinhalese vs. Non-Tamils) is that they never fought against each other directly on the basis of their religion—as Buddhists vs. Hindus. Thus, although religion was one of the major characters of Sinhalese identity, arguably the civil war was more of a product of linguistic-nationalism and other socio-economic determinants.

2.3 Ethnic relations after the war: Discourses in the post-war literature

There is a significant change in the ethnic relations in Sri Lanka in the post-war period. The former antipathy between Sinhalese vs. Tamils suddenly transformed into an antipathy between Sinhalese vs. Muslims. In the post-2009 era Muslims were seen or interpreted as the "primary threat" (Schonthal 2016a) to Sinhalese. While one of the manifest reasons for the decreased visibility of Sinhalese vs. Tamil antipathy is due to the sudden vacuum in Tamil nationalist politics with the defeat of the LTTE (Liyanage 2010), what explains the overwhelming hostilities between Sinhalese vs. Muslims, who had cordial relations during the time of the war? How can the major underpinnings of Sinhalaness in this new scenario be explained? Many of the post-war scholars provide different explanations: some say increased religious concerns are the primary motive for conflict, while others have a political-economy oriented reasoning.

[22] For a detailed analysis of the roots of the civil war in Sri Lanka, see Spencer et al. 1990.

2.3.1 The religious rationale

Many of the alternative explanations (such as political-economy oriented, which will be discussed below) have been largely overwhelmed by the religious nationalism based explanations of post-war ethnic rivalries. 'Religion,' either in the form of resurgence or increased salience among both Sinhala-Buddhists and Muslims, is considered the primary factor behind conflicts by many of the scholars. This overwhelming significance given to religion is due to the increased number of communal riots, and sporadic clashes among Sinhala-Buddhists and Muslims with a religious imprint.

Such justifications appear nuanced considering the findings of a recent survey undertaken by an international initiative mapping the most and the least religious countries in the world, in which Sri Lanka is recorded as one of the ten most religious countries in the world. Base on three WIN/Gallup International polls taken in 2008, 2009 and 2015, in which respondents were asked whether or not they felt religious, 99 percent of Sri Lankan respondents answered 'yes' (Smith 2018). According to this survey, Sri Lanka is the most religious country in South Asia, while Afghanistan is the second most religious in the region. Based on this evidence, the effect of religion is not simply redundant but needs further investigation. In the following sections the author reviews how religious consciousness became evidently visible in Sri Lanka as a common feature of all communities (among both Sinhalese and non-Sinhalese).

2.3.2 The nature of religious consciousness and confrontations among Sinhalese and non-Sinhalese in the post-war period

Religious consciousness of Sinhalese and non-Sinhalese in the post-war period mainly appears in the form of conflict between Buddhists and Muslims. As Schonthal (2016a) finds, a court case in 2008 initiated by the leaders of *Játhika Hela Urumaya* (JHU/National Heritage Party) stands out as the first near-post-war national spotlight on the idea that Muslims were a threat.

> The case involved a large housing scheme that had been built to resettle Muslims who had been displaced following the 2005 Tsunami. The scheme was controversial both because of the housing (funded largely by Saudi Arabia) was preferentially given to Muslims and because the scheme was built in the vicinity of the ancient Buddhist temple of Dighavapi. In the context of public outcry against the housing project, the JHU initiated legal action (eventually successful) to declare the scheme unconstitutional. Yet, the impact echoed far beyond the courts: in the publicity and controversy over the Dighavapi Case, one sees a key event in a new formation of Buddhist nationalism, one that constituted Muslims as greater threats to Buddhism than evangelical Christians and that concerned itself not just with conversion, separatism, and Buddhist values but with bio-politics and development (Schonthal 2016a:109-110).

Following the above incident, a series of other incidents against Muslims were visible in Sri Lanka, though it is unlikely that the number of violent clashes

that occurred in the aftermath of the termination of the war has been correctly counted and recorded. The Secretariat for Muslims (SFM), a Muslim civil society organization, documented 538 incidents against the Muslims from 2013 to 2015 (Ahamed 2017), although the nature of those incidents and the degree of violence are not precise. In addition to that, the then Sri Lankan Minister of Justice, Rauf Hakeem, prepared a document to be submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council, in which 240 perpetrations by Buddhists against Muslims were recorded (Holt 2016:206).

Among some of the major cases of violence in the aftermath of the termination of the war, the following incidents received much attention: the destruction of a Muslim mosque in Anuradhapura in 2011 (Haviland 2011), and another attack on Khairiya Jumma Masjid mosque in Dambulla in 2012, which was led by a Buddhist Monk threatening the mosque with destruction (BBC 2012). In August 2013, another mosque was attacked in Colombo's Grandpass district (BBC 2013a). Examples of this violence include attacking Muslim-owned clothing warehouses in the suburbs of Colombo in March 2013 (Asian Tribune 2013) and also Buddhist monks attacking a slaughterhouse in Dematagoda, alleging that calves were being slaughtered inside (illegal in the capital) or that the meat was improperly stored (BBC 2013b).

One of the commonplace interpretations of the religion-based communal disturbances mentioned above is the growth of orthodox Islam in Sri Lanka, and the resistance created by some Buddhist-nationalist groups. Below is a brief overview of the change of religious consciousness among non-Sinhalese, particularity among Muslims. Many scholars have noted the changes of the religious consciousness of Sri Lankan Muslims throughout history, and particularly

in the 1970s onward. According to de Munck (1998), Muslims in the late 20th century redefined their own identity by preferring orthodox Islam and Islamic fundamentalism over Sufism. Sufi practices were visible in Muslim localities in Sri Lanka basically from 1914 until the 1980s.

Sufism was initially introduced to rid rural Muslims of Hindu and Buddhist practices that had filtered into their religious customs. In the 1980s the agents of Tablighi Jama'at arrived with an alternative, global perspective of what it meant to be a Muslim and thus rejected the Sufi-Islamic identity (de Munck 1998:110-132). As per de Munck, in the late 20th century Muslims re-defined their identity from a community-based Sufi-Islamic identity to a more nationalist Islamic identity based on Tablighi Jama'at (de Munck 1998:110-132). In addition to that, "a number of South Asian Islamic reform movements are now active in Sri Lanka, among them Jamaat-e-Islami, Tablighi Jamaat, and Towheed Jamaat" (McGilvray 2016:72; see also Nuhman 2007:174-184; Osella and Osella 2013).

This change was materially implied in the recent past in different forms. One such form is the increased number of mosques, *madrasas,* and other Muslim religious and cultural institutions funded by the inflow of Arab charity in the 1980s (Ali 2014:309). According to Ali,

> As a result of external assistance and internal collections, new mosques were built and old ones were renovated and enlarged, and according to the Sri Lankan Wakf Board website there are at least 1816 mosques of varying size in the country. The actual number should be more than that because not all mosques are registered with the Wakf Board. In recent

years, however, a number of these mosques and *madrasas* have become a source of Buddhist-Muslim tension (Ali 2014:310).

Similarly, Haniffa also argues that Muslims themselves have reconstructed their identity (in the context of the separatist struggle) with the advent of a piety movement (visible through the adoption of uniforms of piety—*Hijab* and *Abhaya* for women, beard and Tablighi Jama'at's large tunic and pants for men), where religion has come to override all the other forms of identity, including language and region (Haniffa 2008:351). Hussein (2019) provides an illustrative description of the increased religiosity among ordinary Muslims in Sri Lanka the recent past as follows;

> Over the past 30-odd years, an insidious change occurred in our [Muslim] community. It's hard to pinpoint when. It might have been when Sri Lanka began sending droves of housemaids to the Middle East in the early 1980s, among them many Muslim women. Many of these women had adopted the abaya and hijab in their countries of employment and, on their return, continued wearing them in Sri Lanka….This strict interpretation of Islam began to take hold. I noticed it the first time a Muslim man refused to shake my hand, and when Muslims began to sprinkle their conversations with religious Arabic phrases. Young Muslim men I knew from the city began going to rural areas to preach on how to practice their faith better. Muslim weddings began to be held in male-only mosques, without the presence of the bride, instead of at home or in hotels. The most visible change was that Muslim women stopped wearing their traditional sari

> or shalwar kameez in favor of the hijab, abaya or niqab. Muslim men soon followed suit. Robes replaced sarongs or trousers, and more of them sported beards (Hussein 2019).

In addition to that, the recitation of *adhan*[23] through loudspeakers in crowded urban areas also incited unrest between Sinhalese and Muslims in Sri Lanka in the recent past.

> *Adhan* recited through loudspeakers disturbed everyone's sleep. Some aggressive Buddhists reacted to this disturbances in a tit-for-tat manner by playing over loud-speakers, even before the Muslim pre-dawn prayer time, taped versions of Buddhist chanting. The issue over this cacophony of competing religious noises went before the Supreme Court, which delivered its verdict on 9 November 2007 disallowing the use of loudspeakers that caused 'annoyance, disturbance, and harm' to other parties (Ali 2014:310).

2.3.3 From Aluthgama (2014) to Kandy (2018)

All these scattered rivalries between Muslims and Buddhists culminated in June 2014, which is referred to as the Aluthgama riot. "An altercation between a Buddhist monk and three Muslim youths who are accused of assaulting the monk" (Haniffa et al. 2014:1) caused widespread communal violence among Sinhalese and Muslims in southern Sri Lanka, specifically in cities such as Aluthgama,

[23] *Adhan* is the traditional practice in Islam to remind prayer time to Muslims by vocally calling them through a specific recitation in Arabic (Ali 2014:310).

Dharga Town, Valipanna and Beruwela on 15th and 16th of June 2014. Some news media reported the amount of physical damage: 88 people injured, 190 houses extensively damaged, 64 houses fully damaged, 66 houses with minor damage, 54 vehicles set on fire, approximately 85 shops attacked, and among these, 40 fully damaged and at least 17 mosques attacked (Zuhair 2014; Harrison 2014).

In the aftermath of the Aluthgama incident, many other small scale communal clashes were apparent, and one of the most outstanding features of those is the higher involvement of social media. For instance, in November 2017, violence erupted between Sinhalese and Muslims in Gintota, a southern coastal town in Sri Lanka. According to the police reports, the incident was triggered by an ordinary road accident where a Muslim woman and her daughter were hit by a motorbike driven by a Sinhalese man which was later settled by the police (Daily Mirror 2017b). However, retaliation for the accident took place the following day and continued with several other attacks between the two groups due to rumors and fake messages on social media, and one woman who was spreading rumors on social media was arrested (Aneez 2017; Daily Mirror 2017b). Similarly, on February 26th of 2018, "mobs rampaged in Ampara on the east coast after a video of a Muslim restaurant-worker confessing to adding 'sterility pills' to food sold to Sinhalese women went viral" (Economist 2018). These are only a few of the recorded incidents of parallel emergence of digital waves of out-group intolerance and real-life waves of out-group violence.

A few days after the violence irrupted in Ampara, triggered by "a death of a Sinhalese man by Muslim men in Kandy" (Freedom House 2018), a wave of riots erupted in Kandy district in the Central province of Sri Lanka, in March 2018. On 6th of March 2018, the GoSL declared a nationwide state of emergency after the

eruption of mob violence between Sinhala-Buddhists and Muslims in Kandy and temporarily barred the access to social networks widely used in Sri Lanka such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and also Viber, stating that these foster hate speech. Justifying the blockade, the President of Sri Lanka stated that, "extremist groups were using social media in the most heinous manner [and] that is why we had to limit it" (Rasheed and Perera 2018). There were numerous recorded and unrecorded narrations circulated on social media parallel to this incident unfolding in Kandy. Some of the heinous expressions of hate speech remained on social media in the aftermath of the disturbances in Kandy and when some of the users reported, incredibly, Facebook responded to the user who reported this post saying it did not violate any guidelines (Center for Policy Alternatives 2018). Later Facebook authorities adopted certain steps to curtail hate speech and other behaviours that endanger ethnic harmony in Sri Lanka (see appendix 2 for details). However, this was the first formal state ban against social media, and also it connotes the idea that 'social media foster interfaith and inter-ethnic disharmony,' inspiring researchers to focus more on social media as a possible source of data for social science research on inter-ethnic relations.

2.3.4 The religious rationale and its gaps

All the above incidents have been given a 'religious' label/explanation, simply because of the religious affiliations of the groups involved. Holt (2016) is one of the strong proponents, who argues that religion is the primary reason or motive behind post-war communal violence in Sri Lanka:

> [I]t is just impossible not to consider the religious factor as central to what has been transpiring, especially when considering how moments of ritual observance, its venues and its temporal occasions, and predominate symbols of religious identity have figured in the unfolding dynamic of contestation (Holt 2016: 197). To be specific, by "religious factor."

What Holt means is the rites and symbols of the religion, which is a cultural artifact. In his own words, "elements of religious culture provide a syntactical element to the generation of emotions that spill over into violent actions undertaken by one community against another" (Holt 2016:210).

In addition, many scholars agree on the fact that the religious dimensions of Sinhalese identity have been sharply increased due to certain developments in the post-war period, such as the formation of Buddhist nationalist movements like *Bodu Bala Sena* [(BBS) Buddhist Power Force], *Sinhala Ravaya* (echo/voice of Sinhalese), and *Ravana Balaya* (Power of King Ravana) and S*inhaLe* (Lion's Blood) movement (Stewart 2014; Ali 2015; Schonthal 2016a; Schonthal 2016b; Silva 2016; Haniffa 2015; Haniffa 2016; Haniffa 2017; Young 2016; Ivarsson 2018). Stewart (2014) notes that the sharp increase of the violence against Muslims since the end of the war is due to the Islamaphobic rhetoric created by these Buddhist nationalist organizations. Haniffa argues that the then regime had endorsed some of the Buddhist monk groups' ideology of understanding minority identity as a threat to Sinhala hegemony (Haniffa 2016:168).

What Silva (2016) argues in his essay needs special attention. Silva, like other scholars, clearly shows the correlation between communal antipathy and Buddhist nationalist organizations:

> [T] he BBS has managed to identify the Muslim community as a villain and a scapegoat because of their visible urban presence, particularly in trade, commerce and religious landscapes and their apparent clannish tendency, inclination for residential segregation, and the newly adopted *hijab, niqab,* and *purdah* as distinctive dress codes among Muslim women (Silva 2016:119).

Silva's most important observation is not just the activities of Buddhist nationalist organizations and the changes of Muslim culture, but about the psychology of ordinary populace in Sri Lanka during the post-war period:

> Although recognizing the crucial role played by the BBS in inciting the Sinhala Buddhist public, we cannot disregard a possible predisposition among sections of Sinhala Buddhist public toward accepting these extremist views and believing some of the vicious rumors that have no factual basis whatsoever (Silva 2016:120).

In his opinion, this religious sensitivity is a predisposition of the public, and the religious nationalists have utilized that strategically.[24]

Ali (2014) notes the changes that occurred within the Sri Lankan Muslim community, specifically the visibility of orthodox Islam, in the recent past that provided raw materials for the above Buddhist nationalists to construct their

[24] In addition to these studies, Spencer et al. conducts an ethnographic study in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka in the closing years of the civil war, and there they explore whether religion causes conflict or are there other avenues to explain its role in a war-affected society (see Spencer et al. 2015).

anti-Muslim rhetoric. Some of the examples are the increased Arab charity donations from the 1980s onward, financial assistance to build mosques and *madrasas* and their increased number, change of the attire of Muslim women in recent decades replacing the traditional Sri Lankan sarong, shirt, jacket, and Fez cap for males, and sari, blouse, and *mukkadu* (the top piece of the Sari thrown over the head) for females, with a mixture of north-Indian or Pakistani and Arabian attire for both men and women, and the visibility of two Islamic orthodoxy movements in Sri Lanka—*Tabligh Jamaat* and Wahhabism (Ali 2014:308-312). However, again, the focus is on religion. The main assumption underneath is the growth of religious orthodoxy and extremism of Muslim identity is undergirding Buddhist-Muslim antipathies.

All the scholars cited above, highlight 'religion' as the primary reason behind communal mayhem in post-war Sri Lanka. While the word 'religion' could mean many things, the special attention has been given to the importance of the emergence of political-religious organizations, and the importance of religious culture (rites, and symbols) in inciting violence between groups. Only Silva (2016), notes the religious sensitivity or religious-predisposition of people as a possible instigator of conflicts.

The studies mentioned above, though purely qualitative in their assessment of the strength of religion, provide several inputs for operationalization of the very abstract concept of religion in the present study. First, 'religion' itself is not a single entity in Sri Lanka (and elsewhere too), and thus practically impossible to measure as a single entity/variable. Second, none of the above studies provides a clear explanation of what sections of religion, in particular, cause conflicts. Do

mere religious affiliations of individuals (consciousness of one's own religiosity) correlate with out-group antipathy? If not, are Sinhala-Buddhists predisposed to be over-sensitive to the religiosity of the out-groups and does that make them intolerant toward other religious groups? None of the studies mentioned above provide a clear explanation for this controversy.

2.3.5 The material rationale: The political-economy oriented discourse

There is a strong record of literature in which the main argument is that communal riots, disturbances and the civil war in Sri Lanka have an 'economic'/ 'political' foundation rather than 'religious.' In this section, extending the above post-Orientalist argument, the author first highlights some of the pre-war literature that considers economic factors as the primary cause of conflict. Subsequently, the second half of this section focuses more on the post-war riots and its political-economic base.

Jayawardena (1970;1984), and Jayasekera (1970), taking the Sinhala-Muslim riots in 1915[25] as an example, unequivocally argue that those riots "had hardly any religious motives" (Jayawardena 1970:229, 224). What Jayawardena argues is that the rise of the prices of goods due to the war (referring to World War I) led to resentment against profiteering by the traders, with the Moor traders becoming a convenient scapegoat. In another essay, Jayawardena extends her argument on the economic basis of the riots, showing how Sinhalese

[25] 1915 riot broke out island-wide, first began in Kandy and then spread through the Central, North Western, Western, Southern and Sabaragamuwa Provinces, in which both Buddhists and Catholics united as Sinhalese attacked Muslims in the course of 9 to 10 days in May-June 1915 (Roberts 1994:183-211).

traders promoted attacks on their Moor rivals during wartime situations when shortages and price rises had nourished popular antipathy towards aliens (Jayawardena 1984: 122-123; Roberts 1994: 1990). Jayasekara (1970), put forward the same argument that, Sinhala newspapers led a vicious campaign against all 'foreign' businessmen especially the 'Muslims' (1970:106) and the communal "disturbances were *essentially* the outcome of numerous accumulated grievances, commercialized rivalries and immediate difficulties caused by rising cost of living," while the religious conflict was an expression of "*basically economic grievances*" (Jayasekara 1970:321, emphasis added).

Commenting on several post-colonial riots and communal disturbances, several scholars maintain the same 'economic' or 'material rationality' further. Nuhman (2016), by evaluating major Buddhist-Muslim clashes that occurred in 1976 in Puttalam, 2001 in Mawanella, and various other post-war scenarios claim that it is not necessarily the cultural practices or religious differences that drive violence against Muslims. However, all these incidents have an essential economic function, such as business competition and concerns of profits (Nuhman 2016:48-52). Nuhman explained the economic rationality behind Sinhala-Muslim riot in Puttalam in 1976 as quoted below. "There was also a demand to shift the Puttalam bus stand close to the Sinhalese settlement. The demand was submitted to the Puttalam government officials by the chief Buddhist monk of the Puttalam Buddhist Centre. …The bus stand had earlier been located close to the bazaar, so it had been mostly beneficial to Muslim businessmen and boutique keepers. It seems that the Sinhalese wanted to disrupt this arrangement to get benefits by relocating it close to their settlements. The bus stand was shifted in January 1976 following a

violent incident between a Muslim youth and a Sinhalese bus conductor" (Nuhman 2016:48).

The political-economy based explanations on post-war contentions extend from the post-Orientalist reasoning—that is, the very nature of the modern state and state apparatus, such as the economic policies and resulting inequalities, cause conflict between groups. The economic policy of the state in the immediate aftermath of war has been highly contested, and it is one of the places where communal contentions stem. The then post-war government undertook a policy of developmental welfarism, implementing development projects in many of the war affected areas, such as *Uthuru Wasanthaya* (Northern Spring) and *Nagenahira Navodaya* (Eastern Revivalism), in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, emphasizing that basic material needs of the people should be satisfied for a long lasting peace (Liyanage 2010:36). Arguing against this, Kadirgamar (2013) states that the neo-liberalist economic policies practiced in the post-2009 period have exacerbated inequitable development, indebtedness, and marginalization of Tamil and Muslim minorities (Kadirgamar 2013).

Sarvanathan (2013), on the contrary states that post-war economic policies of the then government were not 'neo-liberal' but typified 'national socialism.'

> [A] state-led and dominated economic programme is advanced justifying wanton recruitment to the inefficient public services protecting promoting, and even justifying monumental loss-making state-owned enterprises and military-owned economic enterprises as indispensable for national security, national interest, and sustenance of the welfare populist state, and nurturing and promoting enterprises of the majority

> ethnic community (and superiority of the same) by vilifying minority communities (especially the Muslim community) and violently attacking enterprises owned by the Muslim minority using proxy fringe violent groups of deviant Buddhist bigots (such as *Bodu Bala Sena*, *Ravana Balagaya* [*sic*] et al. (Sarvanathan 2013:4-5).

Irrespective of the mismatch of the label given to the policy—neo-liberal or national socialism—the bottom line of the above argument is that the minority population in the country think that they have been treated differently, and their grievances have been exacerbated further during the post-war period due to the socio-economic policy adopted by the then government. Sarvanathan's above statement is a strong declaim that the minorities have been materially discriminated against. Liyanage (2010) notes the undeniable necessity of addressing the problem of underdevelopment in post-war Sri Lanka. Further, he adds,

> *Negenahira Udanaya* and *Uthuru Wasanthaya* are concrete expressions of this developmental welfarist perspective. The strength of this strategy is that it emphasizes basic material needs of the majority of people that have to be satisfied. However, its main flaw as demonstrated in the last elections lies in the fact that people have basic needs like security, and the recognition of identity that are also of an equal existential importance. When those non-material needs are neglected, the experience shows that people tend to interpret the lack of physical and material needs in ethnic terms (Liyanage 2010:36).

Among those who consider the economic basis of conflict, Nuhman (2016), Schonthal (2016a), and Haniffa (2016; 2017) should be paid more attention. While

not denying the involvement of religious nationalist organizations, they consider the economic factors (but not the religion), as the primary motivation behind post-war communal violence in Sri Lanka.

According to Schonthal, what differentiates BBS from its historical counterparts[26] is that many of their claims are clearly business or capitalist in orientation. Simply because of the religious foundation of BBS, Schonthal does not consider that BBS is primarily driven by religion grievances of Buddhists, but what motivates BBS to act in such a way is their capitalist reading of ethnic relations in Sri Lanka:

> What is unique [in the riots in the post-war period], however, is not just the target of the discourse—Muslims, as opposed to the mainline Christians, Tamil separatists, evangelical Christians or NGOs[27] (although all other groups appear as well, to a lesser degree)—but strongly capitalistic tone to many of the BBS's grievances. For the BBS, Muslim threaten Buddhists, among other ways, by distorting and altering the patterns of production, consumption, wealth, demography, and industry in the country. … Muslim economic privileges are imagined to be perpetrated through the manipulation of markets (Schonthal 2016a:111-112).

[26] Among some of the historical counterparts of BBS are *Bauddha Jathika Balavegaya* (Buddhist National Force), emerged in the 1960s mainly against the Catholic influence in Sri Lanka, and *Jathika Hela Urumaya* (National Heritage Party), which emerges as a political party in the general election of 2004, and still existing (see Schonthal 2016a).

[27] Non-Governmental Organizations.

By analyzing the issue of *halal* certification[28] in Sri Lanka which emerged as a campaign in 2012 and 2013, Schonthal further argues that,

> the 'threat' of Muslims is therefore not simply a cultural or territorial or political threat (as Christianity, Tamil separatism, and NGOs appeared to be): it is also constructed as a threat on the logic and mechanics of free market economics, in terms of unfair business practices, the manipulation of markets, and the misrepresentation of consumer demand. As a part of this, Buddhists are configured as victims…. (Schonthal 2016a:112).

Haniffa (2016; 2017) poses a similar argument by analyzing different types of narrations in the aftermath of Aluthgama riot in 2014, and states that the violence is perpetrated against

> Muslim competence, entrepreneurship, and trade facility" (Haniffa 2016:176). Focusing on the *halal* certification issue in post-war Sri Lanka, Haniffa (2017) further argues that, "the ethnic animosity targeting Muslims in contemporary Sri Lanka was precipitated by long-term policies of economic liberalization which, in recent years, have been framed by the logics of neoliberalism (Haniffa 2017:116).

The arguments posed by the proponents of 'material rationality' behind communal violence is clear. That is, people have instrumental judgments, ethnic groups are the same, and conflicts arise when one ethnic group seems to be

[28] "In 2012, the BBS [*Bodu Bala Sena*] objected to halal labels appearing on products on retail shelves, arguing that it was an imposition of the practice of one religious group onto citizens of other religions, They state that while halal labeling was permissible for export purposes, if practiced locally it should be restricted to Muslim-only shops, perhaps run by mosques, and not forced on those who were not Muslim" (Haniffa 2017:116).

threatening the profits and the market share of another. Schonthal (2016a) above slightly noted the difference between material vs. cultural threats and the way those provoke ethnic hatreds. Liyanage (2010) noted that not only material but also other non-material needs of people should be fulfilled, otherwise tensions explode in ethnic terms in multi-ethnic societies. However, one of the common limitations is that apart from Schonthal (2016a) none of the above studies pay enough attention to clearly distinguish commercial/profit/market-oriented precipitations of communal riots from other material sources such as land, education, and demography. Also, previous studies fail to address the relative importance of material vs. non-material threats. Non-material threat essentially includes 'religion,' yet there are many other forms of non-material threats beyond religion. The present study will be addressing these voids extensively in the forthcoming analysis.

2.4 Limitations in the current literature and the hypotheses to be tested

Having evaluated the historical formation of group consciousness and sentiments of nationalism, the latter part of this chapter mainly reviewed the most recent findings and interpretations of post-war ethnic antipathies in Sri Lanka. There are two contested opinions. The first group of scholars highlights the increased religious dimension of ethnic identities, and narrate how it caused out-group intolerance. The second group, in contrast, explains out-group intolerance as a function of capitalism, and emerging competition for various types of resources between ethnoreligious groups.

However, there are several limitations in the current Sri Lankan discourse discussed above when it is compared to the general literature discussed in Chapter One. First, the definitions and operationalization of 'religion' vary in each study: in many of the studies, it is the emergence of Buddhist nationalist organizations and the rhetoric created by such movements against the perceived symbolic threat posed by religious rites and symbols of out-groups. In addition, one study slightly identifies people's predisposed sensitivity/dislike for other religions, but that explanation has not been properly supported by empirical evidence. None of the studies discussed in the present chapter adequately explain, whether it is the in-group religious consciousness of Sinhalese that cause out-group intolerance or is it the way they perceive out-group religions, what lies at the bottom of the conflict.

Secondly, when it comes to the capitalism centered arguments, basically commercial rivalries and economic/business competition have been considered the primary motive behind violence and vandalism in much of the Sri Lankan literature, while other non-material/symbolic threats have not been extensively addressed, which are equally essential determinants as discussed in Chapter 1. In order to minimize these gaps, below the author creates several plausible hypotheses to be tested later in this study.

Based on the knowledge of previous studies (and also upon the preliminary content analysis of the sample of images[29]), the present study finds that in addition to religiosity, threat perceptions (both material and symbolic) and conspiracy theories also recurrently appear in many of the visual expressions of Sinhalese ethnicity on social media. Religiosity, threat perceptions, and conspiracy theories

[29] Preliminary content analysis is shown in Table 1 in Chapter 3.

are relatively distinct from each other[30] and thus the author predicts that each may create different variances on ethnocentrism. Three hypotheses below test the effect of each variable, when other variables are not controlled for.

H1 - Religiosity accounts for the largest variance of ethnocentric messages on social media in post-war Sri Lanka.

H2 - Threat perceptions account for the largest variance of ethnocentric messages on social media in post-war Sri Lanka.

H3 - Conspiracy theories account for the largest variance of ethnocentric messages on social media in post-war Sri Lanka.

In addition, this study poses a counter-argument that threat perceptions (based on competition over scarce resources) over out-groups could have a greater impact on post-war ethnocentrism of Sinhalese than the independent effect of religiosity itself. Therefore, the author hypothesizes that when threat perceptions (and conspiracy theories as well) are controlled for, religion alone is unable to create out-group antipathy. The credibility of the above argument can be assessed by testing the following hypothesis.

H4- When threat perceptions and conspiracy theories are controlled for, the effect of religiosity on ethnocentrism is weakened.

Furthermore, one could also argue that religiosity, threat perceptions and also conspiracy theories may interact and that interaction effect augments each variable's impact on ethnocentrism. Specifically, the author hypothesizes that interaction between religion and threat perceptions, and also the interaction

[30] Pairwise correlations are as follows: religiosity, threat perceptions r=.218; religiosity, conspiracy theories r=.052; threat perceptions and Conspiracy theories r=.535.

between religion and conspiracy theories increases religiosity's effect over ethnocentrism.

H5 - When religiosity and threat perceptions/religiosity and conspiracy theories are interacting together, the resulting variance of ethnocentrism will be stronger.

2.5 Conclusion

Having outlined the chronological history of Sri Lanka and the basic ethnic, linguistic and religious taxonomy of Sri Lanka, the latter parts of the present chapter reviewed the Sri Lankan literature that explains the determinants of ethnocentrism. The chapter clearly identified the gaps between Sri Lankan and the general literature review (in Chapter 1). Specifically, the way individual determinants of ethnocentrism such as religion and threat perceptions have been defined and operationalized in the Sri Lankan literature is less elaborative with weak empirical evidence. In order to fill such gaps, the author creates several plausible hypotheses above which will be tested later in this study. The next chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the data collection and analysis, and also the procedures are undertaken to operationalize the main independent variables identified during the literature reviews in Chapter 1 and 2.

3

Data and methodology:

The manipulation of social media data and the operationalization of variables

This chapter consists of four main sections. The chapter starts with a brief overview of traditional and new media. Secondly, it provides an overview of the data collected from social media, the methodological justifications behind the collection and usage of the data. The third section is about the methods of data analysis. Fourthly, the chapter focuses on the operationalization of the data, and that is connected to the theoretical overview provided in the previous two chapters.

3.1 Traditional vs. new media

Understanding the division (similarities and differences) between traditional and new media is vital to understand the empirical basis of the present study. Traditional media is commonly identified as print and broadcasting related media, while new media is internet/web/digital based. Among the new media, there is a specific genre, which is commonly identified in the present study as social media. There are various definitions as well as various types of social media. For instance,

McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017:18) compile the following types of social media; social networking sites (Facebook, Linkedin), bookmarking (Delicious, StumbleUpon), microblogging (Twitter, Tumblr), blogs and forums (Wordpress), media sharing (YouTube, Pinterest), social news (Reddit), collaborative authoring (Wikipedia), web conferencing (Skype), Geo-location based sites (Foursquare, Tinder), and scheduling and meeting (Doodle, Google Calendar). When defining social media, many researchers agree on the user- or consumer-generated nature of its content (Gruzd et al., 2012; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Xiang and Gretzel 2010). Based on various studies on social media, McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017), produced the following definition: "Social media are web-based services that allow individuals, communities, and organizations to collaborate, connect, interact, and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modify, share and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible" (2017:16-17).

There are certain specific qualities of new media that particularly increase the importance of studying and researching them. New media or Internet-based communication is far more interactive than traditional media. Interaction here means not only the one-way communication of traditional media, but also the two-way communication in new media. In other words, in traditional media, the information flow is one-way, where people receive the information produced by individual media companies. In new media, not only do the mainstream companies/activists/authorities produce information but also people actively engage in both production and consumption, which is commonly referred to as the 'prosumer culture' of new media.

In new media, audiences have more selectivity and control over what they consume or what they are exposed to. As a result, new digital communication

technologies have shifted the media control from the center (a few, dominant, mainstream media institutions) to the periphery (millions of geographically dispersed individual users) (Metzger 2009:563). Also, the social connectivity of the audience is higher in new media. Audience members are interacting with each other, facilitated by the novel functions on new media applications such as commenting, sharing, and forming short to highly extended conversations online. In addition, media portability or the wireless nature of media consumption is another feature with the abundance of various forms of mobile devices (see Metzger 2009 for a detailed discussion on this).

The features of new media discussed above are not exhaustive. Media studies scholars extensively address the structural differences as well as audience usage differences of new media and traditional media and the effects of those.[31] Some of the specific features and effects of new media will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters, specifically in Chapter Four and Five along with the data analysis when necessary. Also, the way new media data have been addressed in cultural studies will be discussed in some of the following sections though briefly.

3.2 Data used in the present study: An overview

In the present study, both textual and visual contents generated on social media are considered the primary data analyzed in following Chapter 4 and 5. Chapter 4 analyzes *visual* contents (images) produced and circulated by mainly Sinhalese communities online, while Chapter 5 mainly focuses on *textual* comments

[31] For a detailed discussion see Silverstone 1999.

generated by the audience. Thus there is a clear division of the empirical focus in each chapter.

The specific focus of the present chapter is to understand the *images* (visual messages) posted on social media (during the post-war period) by some of the Sinhalese communities online who claim that Sinhala Buddhists are consistently under pressure due to fundamentalist activities, threats from extremists groups, misleading comments by politicians, conspiracies created by defeated terrorists, and foreign intervention. In that sense, the present study is not about an 'online community' but a 'community online.' Understanding this dichotomy is essential when making inferences based on social media data.

> A study of a particular newsgroup, of a particular virtual world, of a type of behaviour in a social networking site, of a linguistic pattern in a microblog, of a particular kind of linking pattern on blogs: these are all examples of research concerned with online communities. These studies are notable because online communities, online identity, online linguistic patterns, cyberculture(s), relationships that emerge through CMC [computer-mediated communication(s)], and various other online human social interactive elements *will be central, core constructs that the research tries to explain* (Kozinets 2010:64, emphasis in original).

In contrast, the present study analyzes a 'community online.' Studies based on 'communities online,'

> [E]xamine some extant general social phenomena whose social existence extends well beyond the Internet and online interactions, even though those interactions may play an important role with the group's

membership. Studies of communities online take a particular social or communal phenomenon as their focal area of interest and then extend this, arguing or assuming that, through the study…something significant can be learned about the wider focal community or culture and then generalized to the whole (Kozinets 2010:64).

3.2.1 The logic behind the selection of primary sources of data

Facebook is an immense source of data. Hence further clarifications are necessary on the specific logic behind the data collection. As noted above, among several social networking sites, Facebook is specifically chosen due to its high popularity in Sri Lanka (see Figure 1 below). By 2017, there were 6 million internet users and 5,500,000 Facebook accounts in Sri Lanka (Internet World Stats 2018) and Facebook was the most popular social media platform in Sri Lanka (Colombo Digitalmarketers 2017). Since there are enormous public Facebook pages suitable for consideration, the author, first, manually searched naturally formed[32] public Facebook groups/pages with names stemming from the words *Sinhala, Sinha,* or *Sinhale,* and also pages with other names evidently dealing with Sinhalaness and ethnoreligious matters of Sinhalese. This search was largely informed by similar studies conducted in the past (such as Stewart 2014; Samaratunge and Hattotuwa 2014; Wickremesinhe and Hattotuwa. 2015). It is also

[32] In the field of 'Netnography,' the naturally formed online communities or sites refers to virtual communities/sites/conversations not initiated by the researcher for the purpose of research and data collection, but ones that were already available online, before the researcher's inquiry started (see Kozinets et al. 2014).

necessary to mention here that the author avoided Facebook pages in the Tamil language due to the author's inability to read/write Tamil language.

Various parties have authored different Facebook pages with similar topics/themes. For the purpose of data collection, out of a long list, the author first shortlisted a few pages based on the number of followers (fan-base) of each page. Pages with more than 10,000 followers were considered for data collection for the present study. However, the author further evaluated the suitability of the shortlisted pages based on common standards provided by similar studies.[33] To be more specific, the author's decision of the selection of primary data sources was primarily informed by the following criteria; (1) *relevance* - they (Facebook pages/communities online) relate to the research focus and questions, (2) *active* - they have recent and regular communications, (3) *interactive* - they have a flow of communication between participants, (4) *substantial* - they have a critical mass of communicators and an energetic feel, (5) *heterogeneous* - they have a number of different participants, (6) *data-rich* - offering more detailed or descriptively rich data (Kozinets 2010:89).

The shortlisted Facebook pages are more or less similar in terms of *relevance.* Their concerns are equal, and the main themes they discuss are similar. However, when further evaluating the shortlisted Facebook pages upon the above criteria of Kozinets (2010:89), it was evident that a particular page has one of the largest fan-base in Sri Lanka which is close to 800,000 followers (the author anonymizes the name of the pages based on research ethics), while the fan-base of other pages ranges from 10,000-80,000. In addition to its massive fan-base, the

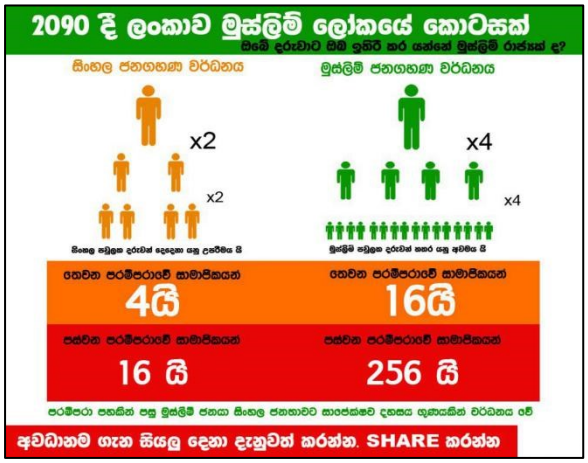
[33] The author declares that the selection of this particular Facebook page was not affected by any subjective motives of the author. The process of inclusion/exclusion of certain Facebook pages from the analysis was entirely based on the scholarly justifications provided in this chapter.

particular Facebook page also appears more *active* (in terms of the frequency of posting online), more *interactive* (in terms of the interactivity of the followers/followers' active engagement with the posts with high interaction statistics such as likes, comments, and shares). Also, it is *data rich*, due to the higher frequency of posts and also the variety of the data. As the author noticed, the aforementioned page not only posts images, descriptions, links, and videos related to Sinhala ethnoreligious matters but also often addresses more general topics such as entertainment, health, and education. This variety of topics could be one way to attract more fans.

Chapter 4 analyzes 2033 images collected from the Facebook page mentioned above with the higher fan base. A sample of images have been reproduced below (see Image 1). Why does this study particularly focus on analyzing 'images' but not other forms of expressions such as links, or videos? Because, the most engaging post type of the selected public Facebook pages is photos, relative to the videos and links shared. This sample of 2033 images is considered as a properly representative sample since the author collected 'all' the publicly available images (during 31st of January 2011 until 25th of July 2018) posted on the page. At the time of data collection, this particular page had no publicly available posts published before January 2011. By collecting 'all' images publicly available, this study avoids the risk of selection bias. Thus, no publicly available image during the specified period above has been excluded. Data

collection was done manually by the author, and later content analysis was also conducted manually.[34]

In chapter 5, the author pays more attention to the audience-generated textual comments posted under randomly selected images published on several public Facebook pages shortlisted for the present study. Methods of textual data analysis will be separately reviewed in Chapter 5 later. The present chapter only reviews methods of visual data analysis.



[34] Although content analysis (coding process) was conducted manually by the author, the qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA was used as a tool of systematizing the content analysis and also to store the images.

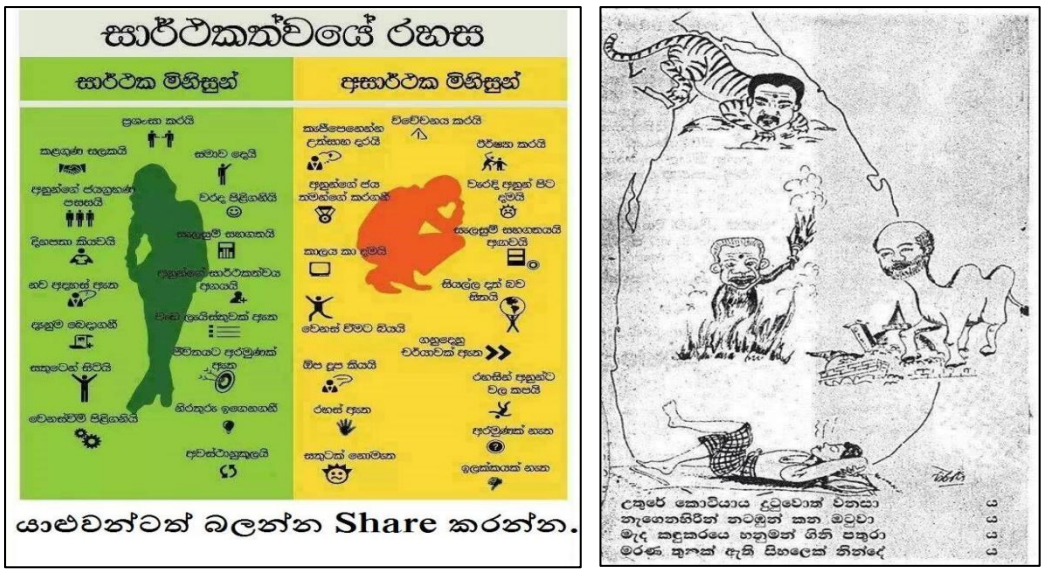


Image 1. Types of visuals on social media

(The six images reproduced here are not a properly representative sample of the 2033 images analyzed. The author randomly selected a few images for the readers' ease of understanding of what it means by 'images/graphics' in the present study).

However, none of the individual Facebook accounts were observed or used for data collection in the present study. The data collected from public Facebook groups/pages have been de-identified based on ethical/sensitivity concerns, which will be discussed in one of the following sections.

As discussed above, popularity among the audience is one of the primary criteria of inclusion/exclusion of a specific Facebook page in the present study. The social validity of the ideas promoted by a certain Facebook page largely depends upon its fan-base. The above notion that, validity can be gauged by popularity could be contested on the grounds of cultural studies (considering social media, Facebook in particular as a popular cultural site, which is discussed in detail below). On the one hand, what we see on cultural sites, such as mass media, are decided upon the 'profit' they make, which might not reflect the real demands of the people. On the other hand, popular culture rests on both production and

approval (MacCabe 1999:76), and the popularity of songs, films, images or dramas are technologically created, especially on the fact that how often those are broadcasted, circulated or published by media companies. In that sense, popularity collides with availability, because, the ordinary people have no control over the decisions of the media companies.

However, this argument is not necessarily valid in the case of social media, and specifically in terms of Facebook, because, people have more control and selectivity on what they see, and what they are exposed to than in other traditional electronic media like television, or radio. Masses have the freedom to 'like' and 'follow' particular media content on new media, and that choice is not controlled by gatekeepers relevant to traditional media (such as frequency of broadcasting particular media content based on its profitability, which is a decision beyond the control of its audience). Thus, what we identify as 'people's control' on new media (and on Facebook) could be gauged by the number of followers and interactions (i.e., sharing, commenting, and liking the posts).

On that basis, the author considers that, the ideology disseminated by the Facebook page that has the highest number of followers, with the highest amount of public engagement and interaction, becomes one of the most powerful cultural site of pedagogy, in which people learn, are actively engaged in, and become agents of ethnic identity construction.

3.2.2 Nature of the sample of images

Images collected for the present study, are essentially two-dimensional, yet take various forms. Some of the images consist only a photograph of humans, animals and natural environments. Some take the form of artwork (either hand-drawn or digitally created drawings or a combination of the two). Others are a combination of the above. Some images consist of only written text without any other visual content. The selected images are considered to be a representative sample. That is, not all most all the 2033 images are about Sinhalese identity or its characteristics, but a significant amount of images serve different other identity-free purposes such as entertainment, health-related images (i.e., educational images on healthy habits, healthy food). This representative-ness might be increasing the audience attraction to the Facebook page.

The majority of the images consist of textual content (words, sentences or paragraphs) embedded on to the photograph or the drawing as an internal caption. In other words, in many of the images, textual and visual contents appear simultaneously, where the textual contents are written in Sinhala language and occasionally in English, Tamil or Arabic languages or a combination of two or more languages. As the author understands, these textual contents upon images necessarily guide people to frame their understanding on a particular topic. However, in order to identify the data used for the present study, 'images' or 'graphical images,' have been interchangeably used. The author avoids one of the widely used terms in the prosumer culture of social media—memes—which has a humorous connotation. Such humorous memes were mostly invisible in the selected site.

Another important feature of the images gathered for the analysis is that they consist of (mostly) 'perceived' ideas of the in-/out-groups. In other words, many of the images present how Sinhalese 'think' or 'imagine' the in-/out-group, and also on certain occasions, how they 'imagine' their bygone history. Some scholars have identified the presence of "gossip and rumor" (Silva 2016:125) in many similar social media platforms. Thus, the author acknowledges that the ideas presented or facts disseminated through these images might not be well verified, factually or technically correct information. However, measuring the level of factual correctness of the data is not the focus of the present study, but to see the way they digitally construct Sinhalese ethnic self-image virtually. Whether there is a factual basis or not, once disseminated to a largely populated and interactive platform like Facebook, this information mostly constructs stereotypes.

3.2.3 Natural limitations of the data

There are several limitations of the present data collection. One of the natural limitations is that the data produced on social media does not necessarily reveal the socio-economic aspect of the people who created those data. For instance, many of the widely used control or moderating variables such as age, gender, income, region or level of education are not available in the collected sample of data. In a typical study that uses human respondents, such data can be easily collected. However, the importance of such information highly depends on the main research questions under investigation. Since the current study does not

raise questions such as to what extent gender or income levels affect ethnocentrism, the absence of such data can be justified.

As mentioned above, this study mainly collects only images posted on Facebook (as analyzed in Chapter 4), and some textual contents have been separately focused on in Chapter 5. Studying visuals on social media has been a relatively overlooked field of analysis, yet it has been gaining attention and prominence recently.

> [A]s an object of research the visual has lagged behind the text-only aspects of online communication or the structural elements like hyperlinks. …The visuals add levels of trickiness to such analyses: first in accessing the images, videos, or other linked and embedded files, and then in studying them which requires more individual intervention and interpretation (Highfield and Leaver 2016).

Thus, the priority is the image, and its visual message. Therefore, apart from the textual contents embedded on the image (internal text), all the other textual contents outside the image (external text) such as comments and descriptions were avoided in the statistical analysis in Chapter 4. This avoidance of external text is pragmatic, due to the large number of observations (N=2033), which would produce an enormous amount of textual contents to be analyzed. Also, this study does not analyze videos published on Facebook. While admitting the fact that videos are also a form of visual expression, in order to maintain the homogeneity of data under analysis, only images have been collected. Also, the number of videos published during the designated period is relatively insignificant when compared to the number of images analyzed.

3.2.4 Ethics behind data collection and analysis

Having explained the procedures of data collection, the nature of data itself and the limitations, it is also necessary to comment on the ethical concerns behind handling the collected data. The present study collects data from an internet-based platform (SNSs), employs visual and textual analysis to examine auto-archived data in those sites, and thus officially, the present study can be considered as 'internet research' as AoIR[35] Ethics Working Committee defines (AoIR 2012:3). There are specific ethical concerns that should be observed in internet research as in any other field, specifically in terms of minimizing the possible harm it can cause. Some of the significant concerns, such as whether the research is dealing with human subjects or not, informed or perceived consent on cyberspace, the controversy of public vs. private data, are addressed in the following discussions.

First, the author considers that the present study is not 'human subjects research,' which is the litmus test that gauges the nature of ethical review one should undergo.

> Human subjects research is research in which there is an intervention or interaction with another person for the purpose of gathering information, or in which information is recorded by a researcher in such a way that a person can be identified through it directly or indirectly (Kozinets 2010:141).

[35] AoIR stands for Association of Internet Researchers.

In other words,

> If information is collected directly from individuals, such as an email exchange, instant message, or an interview in a virtual world, we are likely to naturally define the research scenario as one that involves a person. If the connection between the object of research and the person who produced it is indistinct, there may be a tendency to define the research scenario as one that does not involve any person (AoIR 2012:7).

Thus it can be concluded that "[i]f the research involves collecting and analyzing existing documents or records that are publicly available, this research qualifies a human subject exemption. Much of the archival, observational research in a netnography would therefore be of this type" (Kozinets 2010:141).

However, the author does not deny the fact that there are persons somewhere in the process involved in producing these social media contents (the ones who generate visuals/posts and ordinary people who interact with those and make comments/share/like), and there could be possibilities of revelation of particular identities through the collected data. In order to avoid such possibilities and the resulting harm, the author de-identifies all the public Facebook pages from which the data were collected, along with the identities of the individuals who have been interacting with those Facebook pages. Not only images and textual contents have been de-identified in the following discussions, but also they have been stored having de-identified. Thus, no internet links or any other references to individuals or group identities are available in texts as well as in the storage. In that way, the possible privacy-related harm is minimized as much as possible.

Also, as once mentioned above, the author intentionally avoids observing or collecting data from social media accounts of individuals, since individual behaviour online is not the focus of the present study. The purpose is to see how 'communities online' construct ethnic identities based on auto-archived, *publicly* available data produced by such communities. Having said that, another related question emerges, whether *public* Facebook pages are really public and as a result, whether the necessity for 'informed consent' can be ignored?

The above should be answered based on the nature, context, and purpose/s of the selected Facebook pages. The utmost intention of almost all the selected Facebook pages is to increase their fan-base (number of followers) and to disseminate their message/ideology as far as possible. Due to that intention, they purposely make their pages *public* (meaning both followers and non-followers can see what they publish). Due to this intentional *public* posting, the author assumes that they have no concerns or expectations on both 'informed consent' and 'perceived privacy.' Based on the *public* nature of images and textual contents, the author considers the data as '*public* text,' and the present study is similar to a traditional archival study that analyzes *publicly* available visual or textual records/contents. Based on these justifications, the author considers that the very *public* nature of their Facebook postings indicates their 'implied consent.'

Moreover, two crucial sets of questions remain. First, are data taken from social media a valid, social scientific sample of data for research? Is there a social validity for the data produced by social media? Do social media make a real impact on shaping the everyday lives of ordinary people? Secondly, on what basis can the visual message expressed by each image be objectively analyzed? While a message expressed through text is relatively straight forward, on what basis have visual

expressions been analyzed quantitatively in the present study? The rest of this chapter provides answers to these crucial methodological questions, and finally, the chapter concludes by operationalizing of concepts identified in the previous chapter.

3.3 Social media data and its social scientific validity

Can data gathered from social media be used to make reliable (social) scientific inferences? Do people and their attitudes really get influenced by what is published on social media? How to assess the impact of social media on the everyday lives of ordinary people? What are the available scholarly explanations? The social scientific validity of social media data (images in the present study) is seen in the following three ways. First, do the contents published on social media reveal something about the people who published them? Second, is there an impact of specific contents published on social media on its viewers? Thirdly, to what extent is social media influential in the Sri Lankan context? The validity of the primary data collected for the present study revolves around the three critical questions above, and following subsections review the current discourse about them.

3.3.1 Social media: A self-image building platform

The first question above can be answered academically based on what Ervin Goffman (1959) argues in his *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

According to Goffman individuals in their everyday life 'perform' or 'present' themselves to others, and thus control the impression others form of themselves (1959: preface). According to scholars who are currently studying human behaviour online, it is a similar process that is going on in social media where individuals present or construct their virtual self-impression. Mendelson and Papacharissi, studying human behaviour on social media, mention that

> [I]n everyday life, people consciously or unconsciously work to define the way they are perceived. … Contemporary scholars from variety of disciplines argue that identity is performed, in its many iterations, in contexts that are both visual and real, mediated or not, offline or online (Meldelson and Papacharissi 2011:252).

In an era of social networking sites (SNSs) or social media, this phenomenon of 'performing' one's self-image is widely overt. In that sense, "Facebook is a contemporary means of introducing the self and performing one's identity" (Meldelson and Papacharissi 2011:252). Many other scholars have also conducted research based on various online sites ranging from social media accounts, websites and blogs as important cultural sites for social data, along with the idea that human behaviour online is not something that is academically dismiss-able accounting those as mere 'fun', but self-presentational and promotional (Duguay 2016:2), and a means of reaping "personal gains—both monetary and self-actualizing…" (Abidin 2016:2). This confirms what Goffman argued that humans consciously manage their personal front in everyday life. Specifically, many scholars have studied the increased importance of text and image sharing online as a contemporary means of identity construction and the

online world itself as a greater room for identity experimentation (Liu 2008; Marwick 2015; Highfield and Leaver 2016; Baulch and Pramiyanti 2018).

Since this study is about how group identity is expressed or rather constructed through the online publication of images, it is necessary to justify the validity of visual data. Visual representations in general (whether or not those appear online or in social media) have been considered a valuable and effective means of soliciting information about various intrapsychic structures, wishes, and fantasies, behaviors and emotions, body image concerns, interpersonal relationships, and experiences (Yeh and Huang 653:1996). Photographs, one of the means of visual representations are considered as a real and authentic portrayal of reality tied with the idea that seeing is believing (Kuhn 27:1985).

When it comes to online platforms, there is a growing literature on images on social media for instance selfies (Frosh 2015; Marwick 2015; Senft & Baym 2015; Tiidenberg 2015; Tiidenberg & Gómez Cruz 2015; Rettberg 2014; Wendt 2014) and visuals in general such as profile pictures, everyday snapshots and other created and curated media (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott 2014; Miller 2015). Many of the above studies are ranging from self-presentations of people to more complex issues of sexuality, gender, and commerce.

Many of the mainstream studies dealing with ethnocentrism so far have not utilized social media data. Traditional data sets have always been based on either student samples or in more recent cases, *Mechanical Turk*[36] samples. The present study identifies this as an empirical gap that should be addressed. Even if

[36] This is one of the crowd-sourcing marketplace that makes it easier for individuals and businesses to outsource their processes and jobs to a distributed workforce who can perform these tasks virtually. This could include anything from conducting simple data validation and research to more subjective tasks like survey participation, content moderation, and more.

there are a few studies based on visual data, those have been limited to the visuals produced by traditional news media (Griffin 2004; Neumann and Fahmy 2012; Parry 2011; Schwalbe et al. 2008), but not social media data. Undeniably, there is a growing literature in this particular area of study that examines social media data, and its visuals in particular.

Ritzer et al. (2012) note that, "the rise of social media has led to the expansion of prosumption practices by creating an environment in which internet users can simultaneously produce and consume digital content" (Makhortykh and Sydorova 2017:364). Visuals published on social media have been successfully utilized as primary data in many related fields ranging from security studies (Hansen 2011), social movements and civic action (Novak & Khazraee 2014; Hamdy and Gomaa 2012; Doron 2016; Loader et al. 2014), identity construction (Baulch & Pramiyanti 2018; Buckingham 2008; Papacharissi 2010) and conflict studies (Makhortykh and Sydorova 2017).

3.3.2 Social media: Its impact on humans (users) and their social life

The second question raised at the outset of this discussion is, whether there is a real impact of contents published on social media on its viewers? This question can be answered, first, by considering social media as a constituent of popular culture. Based on the understanding of cultural studies angel, social media is a cultural site that is pedagogical (Dolby 2003:266), in which people produce/shape/ share meanings, and learn about the world (Tomlinson 1999:18-19).

Secondly, empirical evidence produced by social experiments proves the impact of these cultural sites (social media) on people. Scholars who study intergroup contact through media have found out that, by observing an in-group member interacting with an out-group member (which is conceptualized as vicarious contact), viewers tend to believe those characters as real, and their interactions mirror real contact with real out-group members and also tend to emulate what they see (Dovidio et al 2011; Harwood et al 2013:71; Schiappa et al. 2005). Thus, images circulating on social media, explicitly portraying either positive or negative contacts with the out-group, create the vicarious contact effect on its viewers. The effects of vicarious contact are highly consumed as real by the viewers who have no opportunity to make direct contact with out-groups.

In addition to the vicarious contact effect, posts on social media can create emotional contagion. A controversial experiment done using Facebook users shows how emotional contagion can happen through social media. According to the findings, emotional contagion happens outside of in-person interaction between individuals by looking at the reduced positive and negative emotions on the News Feed (of personal Facebook account). When positive expressions were reduced, people produce fewer positive posts and more negative posts; when negative expressions were reduced the opposite pattern occurred (Kramer et al. 2014).[37]

Having stated how vicarious contact and emotional contagion happens on social media, the effects of images should be stated in particular. Images have higher social and political power (Highfield and Leaver 2016). Digital images can drive political acts and protests (Novak & Khazraee 2014) and also as mentioned

[37] This study has been criticized by many scholars on the basis that Facebook users have been used for the experiment without their consent and thus considered as controversial. See Flick (2016) for related information.

above, visuals are an important means of presenting and fashioning online identities (Highfield and Leaver 2016). Specifically intrinsic qualities of visual contents such as indexicality, iconicity and syntactic implicitness give them the potential of framing and articulating an ideological message (Messaris and Abraham 2001:220), and also immediacy, circulability, and ambiguity of images on media turn those into powerful means of social construction of security issues (Hansen 2011:55-58). Images are usually processed faster than texts, but are capable of generating immediate emotional responses (Schwalbe and Dougherty 2015:142) and have a higher degree of memorability which makes their impact higher as compared with verbal ones (Parry 2011:1189). With the rise of social media and its prosumer turn, visuals are quickly reproduced and disseminated (Makhortykh and Sydorova 2017:364) due to its inbuilt interactivity and participatory potentials in comparison to traditional media such as newspapers (Hamdy and Gomaa 2012).

3.3.3 Social media: Its validity in the Sri Lankan context

While it was evident in the previous sections that contents published on social media (images in particular) have a substantial social impact, to what extent is social media influential in the Sri Lankan context? How closely related are the online behaviors of Sri Lankans and their offline, face-to-face behaviors in daily life? The validity of the collected data to make scholarly inferences on Sri Lanka largely depends upon the level of importance given to Facebook by Sri Lankan users. This section reviews the validity and importance given to Facebook by Sri

Lankan users and to what extent it has mobilized Sri Lankans on communal lines. The following discussion is divided into three main sections. The first section addresses the level of digital connectivity in Sri Lanka; the second section focuses on the nature of digital activism in Sri Lanka and its real-life repercussions. The third section focuses on the way scholars on post-war Sri Lanka have included social media in their analysis.

The level of digital connectivity of Sri Lankans is one of the most fundamental necessities to gauge the social importance of data gathered from social media.

> To some Sri Lankans, Facebook is the internet. Affordable data packages… allow people across the socio-economic spectrum to access the platform. As its user base has grown and continues to grow, so has the likelihood of it being misused by those seeking to divide and harm (Sayrah 2018).

By 2017, there were 6 million internet users and 5,500,000 Facebook accounts in Sri Lanka (Internet World Stats 2018) and Facebook was the most popular social media platform in Sri Lanka (Colombo Digitalmarketers 2017). Figure 2 illustrates the popularity of 7 major social media sites in Sri Lanka from January 2015 until April 2019. The wide gap between the popularity of Facebook and other sites stands as the primary justification of selecting Facebook as the main source of data for the present study.

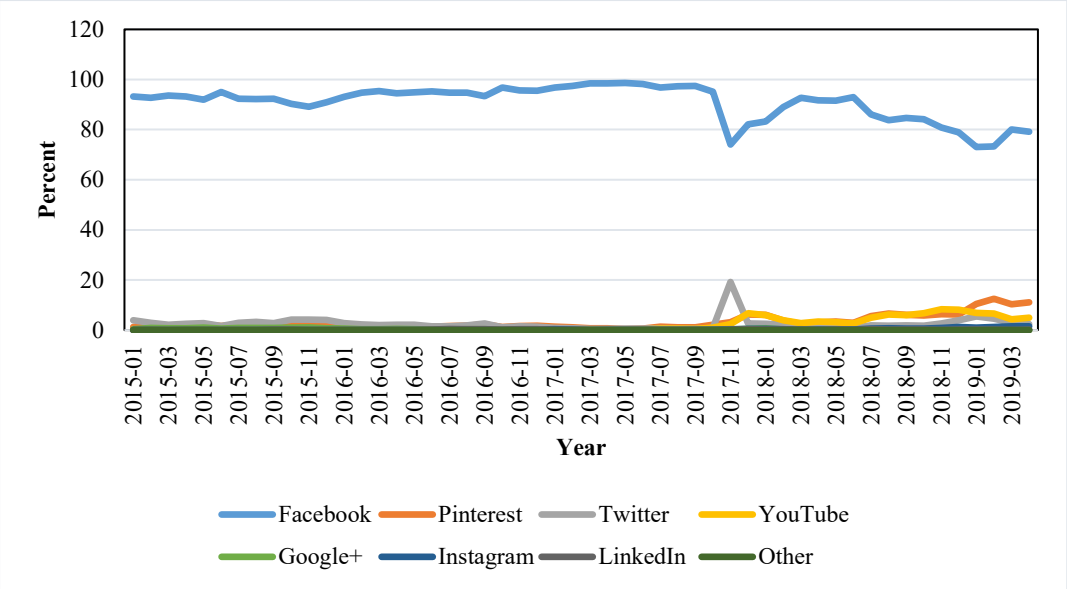
Concerning the level of digital connectivity, Sri Lanka is the cheapest fixed broadband service providing country (DailyFT 2018) in Asia. In the year 2018, Sri Lanka's internet penetration increased by 32% (Internet World Stats 2018). Mobile

penetration has risen from 96% in 2012 to 126% in 2017 (DailyFT 2017). As the census data suggests, younger age groups had a more significant percentage of computer literacy, with ages 15-19 at 60 percent, 20-24 at 55 percent, and 25-29 at 45 percent (Department of Census and Statistics 2017). Besides, irrespective of the relatively low infrastructure developments in war-affected areas such as Northern and Eastern Provinces, 31 percent of households in Vavuniya District accessed the internet in 2017, which is the second highest rate of internet access in the country after Colombo District (Department of Census and Statistics 2017).

Secondly, digital activism is on the rise in Sri Lanka. For instance, 'hash-tag activism/campaigns' (using the hash-tag symbol [#] for a particular purpose on social media), is one of the common practices among Sri Lankan social media users. For instance, #IVotedSL campaign was visible during the local government elections in February 2018 together with #LGPollSL[38] with many of the first-time voters sharing photos of themselves participating.

[38] See https://twitter.com/groundviews/status/962284287809785856

Figure 2. The popularity of major social media sites in Sri Lanka



Source: Statcounter 2019

Also, #lka70[39] campaign was visible in February 2018 in order to celebrate the 70 years of independence. #DisappearedSL[40] was used by activists to draw attention to the protests of the families of the disappeared across the north and east. #sinhale[41] (Lion's Blood referring to Sinhalese people) campaign was one of the prominent, and widely used tags not only on Twitter but also on Facebook, and it received much attention not only among the general public but also among scholars (see Ivarsson 2018).

In addition to this sort of widespread activism, some of the conspicuous socio-political occurrences in the country explicate the social and political power of Facebook in Sri Lanka. On 6th of March 2018, the Government of Sri Lanka

[39] See https://twitter.com/hashtag/lka70
[40] See https://twitter.com/hashtag/disappearedsl
[41] See https://twitter.com/hashtag/sinhale?lang=en

(GoSL) declared a nationwide state of emergency after the eruption of mob violence between Sinhala-Buddhists and Muslims in Kandy and temporarily barred access to social networks widely used in Sri Lanka such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and also Viber, stating that they foster hate speech. Justifying the blockade, the President of Sri Lanka stated that, “extremist groups were using social media in the most heinous manner [and] that is why we had to limit it" (Rasheed and Perera 2018). Before that, on February 26th of 2018, “mobs rampaged in Ampara on the east coast after a video of a Muslim restaurant-worker confessing to adding ‘sterility pills’ to food sold to Sinhalese women went viral” (The Economist 2018).

Similarly, in November 2017, violence erupted between Sinhalese and Muslims in Gintota, a southern coastal town in Sri Lanka, and according to the police, this was triggered by rumors and fake messages on social media and one woman who was spreading rumors on social media was arrested (Aneez 2017). Even in 2014, the involvement of social media in spreading fear and racism has been recorded when widespread Sinhala-Muslim riots occurred in Aluthgama (Harrison 2014). In response to the spread of misinformation and instigation of communal violence, Facebook authorities are now altering their information management policies (Frenkel 2018; see appendix 2 for more details of Facebook responses to the issues in Sri Lanka and the steps taken to address those).

In addition to the above real-life examples, scholars have also begun to note the importance of mobile internet and social media in post-war communal relations in Sri Lanka. Ali (2015) and Stewart (2014) are two of the earliest to note social media activism and the way they shape ethnic relations in post-war Sri Lanka. According to Ali, one of the unique features of post-2009 Muslim-phobia in Sri

Lanka is that "it is taking place in the era of social media, which facilitates the spread of anti-Muslim memes faster and wider within the Buddhist middle class and youth mindset" (Ali 2015:495). Stewart notes the social media presence of some of the religious nationalist groups and how those construct inter-ethnic tension (Stewart 2014:249-251).

Silva notes that,

> social media, including Facebook and Twitter, are mobilized by sympathizers of the BBS[42] to disseminate selected hate messages that usually target Muslims and evangelical Christian groups. The hate messages, especially those causing moral panic among people with Sinhala-Buddhist sensitivities, are often further intensified and made potentially explosive through gossip and rumor… (2016:125).

By interviewing some high-level figures of a Buddhist nationalist group in Sri Lanka, Schonthal explains how post-war Buddhist nationalist groups are concerned of modern digital technology and global outreach of their campaigns (Schonthal 2016a:111).

Johansson identifies social media activism among some of the Mulsim political parties in Sri Lanka, specifically during election times and the way they use Muslim symbols on social media (2016:72). However, the author identifies that not adequate studies have been conducted on the way non-Sinhalese construct their ethnic self-image online, and a clear research gap exists. In addition to that, two of the recent reports produced by the Center for Policy Alternatives of Sri

[42] BBS refers to *Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Strength Army/Buddhist Power Army).*

Lanka directly address the nature of post-war social media campaigns and activism in Sri Lanka. *Liking Violence: A study of hate speech on Facebook in Sri Lanka* (Samaratunga and Hattotuwa 2014), and *Saving Sunil: A study of dangerous speech around a Facebook page dedicated to Sgt. Sunil Ratnayake* (Wickremesinhe and Hattotuwa 2015) address how hate speech has become one of the most visible phenomena in some of the social media campaigns.

Ivarsson (2018) conducted an inspiring study that focuses on one of the popular campaigns, the *SinhaLe* (meaning 'Lion's Blood,' which was mentioned above as one of the hash-tag campaigns - #sinhale) which gained momentum among social media users. Her focus is the way the everyday nationalism of Sinhalese is revealed through young Sinhalese social media users in Sri Lanka. She conducts an ethnographic study, and as she reports,

> Many informants recognized the paradox inherent in enjoying greater freedom of expression while realizing that this allowed hatred and immoral behaviour to flourish. Some saw ethno-nationalist campaigns like *SinhaLe* as positive because they exposed social problems and strengthened the sense of community among Sinhala-Buddhists, but others saw them as deepening ethnic and religious divisions in Sri Lanka as a whole (Ivarsson 2018:11).

Ivarsson finds how powerful social media is as a tool for constructing previously non-existing ideas in the minds of the youth.

> The ethnography shows that it was through social media, particularly Facebook, that the *SinhaLe* campaign made its way into the everyday lives of youth. It is unlikely that the informants interviewed would have

> become so aware of these extremist ideas if they had not been active users of social media. Those who support *SinhaLe* and the BBS believe they have access to a 'truth' of which others are ignorant. The nationalist material that they are exposed to plays into their identity formation and worldviews (Ivarsson 2018:12).

Further, Ivarsson's study is informative in two other aspects. First, Ivarsson correctly notes the incongruity of ideas expressed by ordinary people on social media. On social media, people express contradictory views on out-groups in different contexts, as they do in real life situations. Secondly, many of the young people 'like' and 'share' posts made or shared by their friends due to peer pressure. While this, to a certain extent, explains their identity, the contents of the post are not always the critical factor that motivates them to re-post or 'like' (Ivarsson 2018:12). Thus, like any other source of data, social media also provides a partial view of the world, although social media data expose the researcher to the greater public than any other traditional data sources.

3.4 Approaches to analyzing visuals

Having analyzed the social scientific validity of data generated on social media, both in general and specifically in the context of Sri Lanka, the following sections address, on what basis the visual message expressed by each image can be objectively analyzed. For that purpose, this study uses the current knowledge on different approaches to analyzing visual data. A range of systematic methods exist for the analysis of visual data such as content analysis, symbolism, structuralism,

cognitive anthropology, and ethnomethodology (Ball & Smith 1992:3). This study uses content analysis as the tool of analyzing images based on the following justifications.

3.4.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis, one of the widely cited systematic and empirical tools that have been developed to analyze documentary data (Ball and Smith 20: 1992), is chosen over other methods due to its inherent merits that facilitate the purpose of the present study. First, content analysis is "an empirical (observational) and objective procedure for quantifying recorded 'audio-visual' (including verbal) representation using reliable, explicitly defined categories (values on 'independent variables') (Bell 2001:13). Thus, content analysis has been widely accepted as an apt method to analyze visual data in particular.

Second, it allows "quantification of samples of observable content classified into distinct categories" (Bell 2001:14). According to Berelson (1952), who is one of the pioneers of the modern version of content analysis, content analysis is a highly quantitative tool (Berelson 1952:18) although there are emerging non-quantitative methods of content analysis (see Schreier 2012). Since the present study intends to analyze data statistically, the pro-quantitative venture of content analysis is an advantage.

Third, content analysis can be conducted with a relatively high degree of objectivity. After selecting relevant documentary sources, the next step in the

process of content analysis is to devise the analytical categories[43] and formulate a set of coding rules. Categories and the attached coding rules for each category are the very objective basis of content analysis. The set of categories are the central part of the analytical process—they should be representative of and sensitive to the research questions; should be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive as well. Coding rules, on the other hand, are devised to deal with ambiguities of any given content. If a given item is ambiguously appearing to fit into two or more categories, on such occasions coding rules provide proper instructions to treat the problematic item. Thus, coding rules mostly consist of decision rules. These categories and coding rules minimize the subjectivity of the coder (the person who is involved in coding) affecting the final results. It avoids opportunities of interpreting the contents, and coding is done in a more or less unobtrusive/mechanical manner that increases the objectivity. "In principle, different analysts using the same categories and rules would obtain identical results…of any given body of data" (Ball & Smith 1992:21), which increase the reliability of the analysis.

Also, one of the most important aspects of content analysis in this manner is that only the manifest content (that is obvious, palpable and self-evident content) is considered and coded, but not the latent content. This has been criticized by scholars using other methods such as Symbolism and Structuralist approaches to

[43] Fragmentation of a given content/message into pieces has been criticized on a scholarly basis that although the categories could be designed in accordance with a particular theoretical approach, the same set of categories might not reflect the reality. In other words, "the category system may or may not correspond to the categories that members of the society employ to understand the communicative message" (Ball and Smith 1992:27). In order to avoid this criticism, this study at the very outset of the data analysis took an inductive approach or rather utilized the knowledge on Grounded Theory Method, and categorized data upon the natural themes emerging through the data without employing any theoretically informed categories. Also, other approaches to visual data analysis such as Symbolism and Structuralism does not prefer fragmentation of the message, instead "[a]n appreciation of communication content in its totality" (Ball & Smith 1992:28) is preferred.

content analysis. “The essence of symbolism lies in the recognition of one thing as standing for (re-presenting) another, the relation between them normally being that of concrete to abstract, particular to general” (Firth 1973:15) and structuralists’ standpoint is more or less the same, that “a sign consists of two elements, the signifier (the material object, word, or picture) and the signified (the meaning ascribed to the material object, word or picture). Hence the structuralist slogan: A sign is always thing-plus-meaning” (Ball and Smith 1992:32, 46). For instance, a beard may symbolize masculinity in a specific social context while something else in another society. The other alternative for the objective and quantitative content analysis of visual representations is the cognitive anthropological and ethnomethodological approach. Treating human beliefs, concerns, and practices as ethnographic data that is related to its context is one common feature of both ethnographic and anthropological approaches. The main idea behind both these approaches is that “people’s experience of the seen world is culturally shaped and socially constituted and mediated” (Ball and Smith 1992:55). Typical content analysis lacks this context-specific meaning construction of a given set of data and also it does not consider the symbolism beneath the surface.

In what ways, were the manifest content (that is obvious, palpable and self-evident content) identified and coded in the present study? Below, the author provides practical examples of the way coding was conducted. One of the major convenient factors was that, the majority of the images consist of a direct message along with a short textual content. This can be considered as an internal caption (i.e. an image picturing one or more soldiers comes with written text saying that there is a conspiracy against Sri Lankan war heroes; another image portraying some of the ruins of ancient hydraulic civilizations of Sri Lanka states that ancient Sinhalese

were highly skillful; another image depicting cow slaughter conducted by Muslims, consist a textual content that cow slaughter is an uncivilized practice). This sort of image that has internal textual contents can be easily coded without controversy.

However, there were several specific occasions that the author had to use cultural knowledge and context-specific knowledge to make meanings. For instance, in the sample, the lion image reappeared frequently. The lion image has been a historically used symbol to refer to the Sinhalese community, and their bravery (see Gunawardana 1990). The Lion image, in the Sri Lankan context and culture, is hardly used to refer to other non-Sinhalese communities. Thus, 'Lion stands for Sinhalese' is a clear symbolic fact and in the coding process it was considered as an obvious, palpable and self-evident content (several other examples of practical issues emerged in the coding process, will be discussed in the forthcoming sections when necessary).

In summary, the present study codes only manifest and obvious messages rendered from the images, since coding latent contents creates controversies. Thus, content analysis is primarily limited to what is expressly communicated by some document rather than the motives animating the construction of the document or the responses that persons make to it (Berelson 1952:16; Holsti 1969:12-14; Ball and Smith 1992:21). Specifically, in a study, that deals with sensitive aspects of humans such as identity, group or religious affiliations, and also when the researcher is also affiliated to the socio-cultural world under investigation, images could be highly polysemantic and deciding the meaning of the image become controversial. To avoid such complexities and also to maintain the objectivity of the data analysis, categorization upon coding rules is highly helpful. Finally,

content analysis permits processing large amounts of data spread over a long period, which is another merit of it (Ball & Smith 1992:25).

Having determined the research problem, and also having decided the documentary sources (data) to be analyzed (as indicated in the previous chapters), the next step is devising the categories and the coding rules. On what basis have the categories and related coding rules been determined? Being informed by the theoretical and conceptual discussion in the previous chapter and similar studies, the sections below explicate the central analytical categories designed for the present study and also justify on what basis those categories have been created.

3.5 Operationalization of variables

What social scientific concept/s are best suited to frame post-war Sinhalaness? Some of the recent studies on Sri Lanka have used certain concepts to identify post-war Sinhalese ethnic physique,[44] yet this study takes a more inductive approach. It does not start with already available generalizations about Sinhalaness, instead undertakes a data-driven approach to find out the best-suited frame that describes the collected data. First, a preliminary content analysis was conducted to make sense of the collected data. Data were examined for its properties, and those were grouped and regrouped. Most frequent symbols, attitudes, and expressions of self (in-group) and others (out-group/s) were noted to see emerging patterns.

[44] This was discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Secondly, that knowledge of the collected data was compared with similar phenomena in the established body of literature to conceptualize and to construct an operational definition of Sinhalaness.[45] This process is also called 'open coding' by Netnographers, where "the researcher labels the categorized data by 'emic,' field level meanings, and then group these categories into other abstract categories. The ultimate goal of open coding is to reach a theoretically relevant understanding of the phenomena of interest" (Kozinets et al. 2014:270).

Table 1. Preliminary content analysis of in-/out-group sentiments expressed in the sample (n=2033)

Sentiments	**Frequency**
Sinhala-Buddhists have been endangered	645
There is a conspiracy against Sinhalese (launched/encouraged or sponsored by the government or other local/international parties)	275
Muslims are a threat to Sinhalese/ Buddhism (Sri Lanka is gradually getting Islamized (demographic threat)/ Sri Lanka should not be Islamized, Muslim business should be boycotted, Muslims are extremists, unwelcoming attitudes toward Muslim refugees in Sri Lanka)	307
Intolerant, conflicting (violent/non-violent), prejudiced perceptions against Muslims	312

[45] This is simply a preliminary content analysis, but not the final. For this preliminary data analysis, the knowledge of 'Grounded Theory Method' was very much helpful, although the author does not claim that the entire study was based on Grounded Theory. It is the same phenomena that Brubaker and Cooper (2000:4-5) identify as studies of identity are often occupied by 'categories of analysis' conducted from above, as opposed to 'categories of practice,' constructed from below by being embedded in the everyday life of people.

Intolerant, conflicting (violent/non-violent), prejudiced perceptions against Tamils	299
The country (Sri Lanka) belongs to Sinhalese people	135
Sinhalese people are skillful/ethical/cultured/peace loving/ tolerant	61
Sinhalese are essentially Buddhists	128
Association of the bravery of Sinhalese with the lion image	107

Source: Author Drawn

In the list compiled above, social and structural as well as psychological and personal evaluations of in-group and out-group can be seen. For instance, sentiments of group pride and bravery, or in-group love, favouritism, can be seen existing independent of feelings of resentment or intolerance towards out-groups. However, in some of the images, of course, in-group love and pride are coexisting with anti-out-group sentiments. Stereotypes and prejudice, exclusionist attitudes, and also feelings of perceived threat (based on competition for resources and some other cultural sources), protectivism can also be identified. What explain these different facets of the self-image of Sinhalese and how can a unified conceptual label be formed to denote these closely interconnected set of sentiments? There could be many possible competing conceptual labels both positive and negative, such as ethnocentrism, nationalism, and ethno-nationalism (as the author discussed in details in Chapter 2). Based on the justifications provided in Chapter 2, the present study chooses ‘ethnocentrism’ to collectively denote both in-group consciousness along with out-group perceptions of Sinhalese.

3.5.1 Measuring ethnocentrism: The dependent

LeVine & Campbell (1972) influenced by Sumner's early work (1906/1959), enumerate the features of the ethnocentric syndrome[46] as mentioned in Table 2. There, variables on in-group perception and out-group perception have been separated on the basis that the two are functionally related and all of these dimensions of group differences will show positive correlations with each other, for instance, 'the more in-group peace, the more out-group hostility' (LeVine & Campbell 20:1972).

Table 2. Facets of ethnocentrism

Attitudes and behaviours toward ingroup	**Attitudes and behaviours toward outgroup**
1) See selves as virtuous and superior	2) See outgroup as contemptible, immoral, and inferior
3) See own standards of value as universal, intrinsically true	5) See outgroups as weak
4) See selves as strong	6) Social distance
8) Sanctions against ingroup theft	7) Outgroup hate
10) Sanctions against ingroup murder	9) Sanctions for outgroup theft or absence of sanctions
12) Cooperative relations with ingroups members	11) Sanctions for outgroup murder or absence of sanctions against outgroup murder

[46] Present study does not consider ethnocentrism as a 'syndrome,' since syndrome connotes that it is highly problem of individual personality rather than a result of various social and structural processes.

14) Obedience to ingroup authorities	13) Absence of cooperation with outgroup members
16) willingness to remain an ingroup member	15) Absence of obedience to outgroup authorities
18) willingness to fight and die for ingroup	17) Absence of conversion to outgroup membership
	19) absence of willingness to fight and die for outgroups
	20) virtue in killing outgroup members in warfare
	21) Use of outgroups as bad examples in the training of children
	22) Blaming of outgroups for ingroup troubles
	23) Distrust and fear of the outgroup

Source: (LeVine and Campbell 1972:11-12)

Coenders & Scheepers (2003) measure ethnocentrism using survey data gathered from 22 countries in 1995. They operationalize ethnocentrism — favourable in-group perceptions and unfavourable out-group perceptions — labeling the first as nationalism and the second as ethnic exclusionism. Nationalism in their study does not incorporate political-ideological striving for an independent nation-state, and also they do not distinguish between a positive attitude toward one's ethnic in-group and a positive attitude toward one's country because they focus on the attitudes of members of ethnic majority within each country (Coenders & Scheepers 314:2003). They measure two dimensions of

nationalism— chauvinism and patriotism[47] — the first indicating the view that one's own ethnic in-group and country are unique and superior and the second indicating the notion that the love for and pride in one's people and country, an attachment based on critical understanding (2003:322). Ethnic exclusionism has been operationalized in their study as negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities, immigrants, political refugees and also by considering criteria used to exclude those from the in-group membership (2003:324).[48] Collectively, the interaction between unfavourable perceptions on out-groups (ethnic exclusionarism) and favourable in-group perceptions (nationalism) is called ethnocentrism by Coenders & Scheepers (2003).

Massey et al. (1999) in a similar study undertaken on former Yugoslavia, measures favourable in-group and unfavourable out-group perceptions by operationalizing 'ethnic nationalism.' There, "

> Respondants were asked their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale with six propositions measuring ethnic nationalism: 1. nationality should be a central factor in choosing a marriage partner; 2. nationality mixed marriages are more unstable than other marriages; 3. Every nation should have its own state; 4. People can feel completely safe only when the majority belong to their nation; 5. Among nations it is possible to

[47] Sumner, along with ethnocentrism, also defines patriotism and chauvinism. Patriotism is "loyalty to the civic group to which one belongs by birth or other group bonds. It is a sentiment of fellowship and cooperation in all the hopes, work, and suffering of the group" (Sumner 1959:15). Patriotism can be further seen as blind and constructive patriotism (former meaning rigid and inflexible attachment to the country characterized by unquestioning positive evaluation, staunch allegiance, intolerant of criticism and the latter meaning a healthy sentiment, identified as attachment to the country characterized by support for questioning and criticism of current group practices (Staub 1997; Schatz et al.1999; Coenders and Scheepers 2003:323; Kosterman and Feshbach 1989:261).

[48] See Coenders & Scheepers (2003:324) for detailed indicators of nationalism and ethnic exclusionism that were collectively used to measure ethnocentrism.

create cooperation, but not full trust; 6. Without leaders every nation is like a man without a head (Massey et al. 1999:679).[49]

They use the terms 'intolerance' to denote greater support for these sentiments and 'tolerance' to denote less support for these sentiments (Massey et al. 1999:675). Although this is a typical measurement drawn from the theoretical base of nationalism, tolerance/intolerance indicated by the six criteria pertain to be included in the measurements of Sinhalese ethnocentrism.

Gibson, on the other hand, defines intolerance as the unwillingness to put up with disagreeable ideas and groups (Gibson 2007/2011). In contrast to that, tolerance consists of elements such as recognition of the real problems of discrimination, and evaluative feelings such as minorities fit into the host society and make positive contributions and willingness to welcome more immigrants or to support minorities (Côté & Erickson 2009:1664-1665). According to Gibson, interracial tolerance is "surely mutual respect, and a fundamental component of mutual respect is the willingness to judge people as individuals, and not brand them with group stereotypes" (Gibson 2006:676). Another name for this concept (intolerance) is simply old-fashioned prejudice, which may be defined as revolving "around a readiness to dislike and derogate others belonging to a group because of their membership in the group" (Sniderman et al. 2000:24).

In many of the studies discussed above, ethnocentrism has been operationalized as a more than one outcome variable. For instance, LeVine & Campbell's (1972) study it is 'attitudes and behaviors toward in-group' and 'attitudes and behaviors toward out-group.' In Coenders & Scheepers's (2003)

[49] Same indicators have been utilized by Kunovich & Hodson (2002:194) to measure ethnic prejudice.

study it is 'nationalism/ethnic exclusionism.' Being informed by those, the present study also presents Sinhalese ethnocentrism in a trichotomous manner as ethnic pride, intolerance (explicit/implicit) and neither. Ethnic pride is used to code images with favourable attitudes towards own group with no manifest indication of out-group intolerance. Intolerance is understood with the minimum definition provided by Gibson, "unwillingness to put up with disagreeable ideas and groups" (Gibson 2007), with the emphasis that some of the images express explicit out-group intolerance while other express implicit intolerance, which is discussed below.

Table 3. Operationalization of ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism	
(i) Ethnic Pride	1. Sinhalese are skillful 2. Sinhalese are cultured 3. Egocentric (proud to be a Sinhalese; Sinhala-Buddhists should be protected) 4. Sinhalese are brave
(ii) Intolerance (explicit/implicit)	<u>implicit</u> 5. Sinhalese are followers of Buddhism 6. Sri Lanka is a Sinhala-Buddhist country 7. Buddhist monks are the guardians of Sinhalese 8. Sinhala language is important/central 9. State patronage to Sinhala-Buddhism 10. Descent matters in Sinhalese ethnic membership 11. Sinhala country (long residence matters)

	12. Armed forces - Government armed forces as a part of Sinhalaness explicit 13. Anti/unwelcoming out-groups, migrants, settlers from outside
(iii) Neither	Images that do not belong to any o the above are coded under this category

Source: Based on content analysis of the collected images (n=2033). See Appendix 3 for detailed coding rules.

However, when considering the subcategories under intolerance in Table 3, one could argue that except the subcategory 13, others do not necessarily resonate Gibson's definition of intolerance. Instead, subcategories 5 to 12 express strong attachment to the in-group, and also the benefits expected from the strong in-group affiliation. Yet, Gibson (2007) suggests that strong attachment to group identity may create out-group intolerance. Considering the findings and definitions set by past research, the present study acknowledges that subcategories 5-12 may not necessarily stand for 'explicit' intolerance, thus those can be more precisely labeled as 'implicit' intolerance, while category 13 is relatively more explicit intolerance.

Collectively, both sub-categories, 'ethnic pride' and 'intolerance (implicit/explicit)' consist of 13 dummy variables (subcategories) as shown in Table 3. However, it should be noted that, the thirteen dummy variables mentioned in Table 3 naturally emerged during the content analysis. In other words, those are not arbitrarily applied by the author or not created based on any previous studies. Only the two labels 'ethnic pride' and 'intolerance (implicit/explicit)' were given based on previous literature mentioned above for the ease of analysis.

One of the practical issues that emerged during the coding process was some of the in-group perceptions of ethnic pride simultaneously appeared with some of the components of intolerance. In such situations, since coding is done in a mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive manner, only the 'main' message in the image is taken into consideration. The main message in any given image usually appears in bigger fonts or images and in a more highlighted way. Also, Coding rules created for each dummy variable were observed to delineate the controversies (as compiled in Appendix 3 and 4). Finally, ethnocentrism is presented as a three-outcome variable: ethnic pride, intolerance and neither. A three-choice Multinomial Logit Model (explained below) is applied for data analysis to examine which independent variable associates more with ethnic pride, intolerance and neither.

3.5.2 Measuring Independent variables

Religion

When measuring the level of religiosity of Sinhalese as well as Sri Lankans in general, measurements designed by previous research were considered, especially meanings given to specific terms such as religious commitment through behavioral measurements such as frequency of church attendance, personal prayers (Kellstedt et al. 1996; Eisenstein 2006; Massey et al. 1999:682), religious affiliation as in whether or not a person belonging to a particular religion (Stouffer

1995), and religious beliefs, orthodoxy and fundamentalism (Sullivan et al. 1982; Eisenstein 2006). Thus, religiosity, in this study, means all the three distinct and interrelated aspects of religion: religious belief, religious belonging, and religious behaviour.[50] When measuring religiosity all the three aspects are cumulatively measured in one variable called 'level of religiosity.'

The two subcategories, (i) religiosity (own) and (ii) religiosity (perceived out-group) are ultimately measuring the religiosity of Sinhalese. In other words, by own religiosity, the author means the way Sinhalese people portray their own religion. By perceived out-group religiosity, the author measures the way Sinhalese people perceive the religiosity of non-Sinhalese (non-Buddhists). Cumulatively, the independent variable 'religiosity' measures to what extent a particular group's religious identification predicts its level of ethnocentrism (and out-group intolerance). The religious identification here resonates the Social Identity Theory (the strong attachment to a particular group). Appendix 4 further elaborates the coding rules for these two categories.

However, similar to above, here also practical concerns emerged when coding. Specifically, some images appeared in a manner (though numerically few) that they fit into both categories (own religiosity/ perceived out-group religiosity). In such occasions, based on the coding rules, the author attempted to extract the main message that is given higher emphasis.

[50] Many of the scholars have conceptualized religion having these three distinct dimensions: belief, belonging and behaviour (Carwardine 1993; Jelen 1991, 1993; Kellstedt 1993; Kellstedt et al. 1996; Wuthnow 1998).

Table 4. Operationalizing the level of religiosity

Level of religiosity
(i) Religiosity (own)
(ii) Religiosity (perceived out-group)
(iii) No religiosity

Source: Author drawn. See Appendix 4 for detailed coding rules for each subcategory.

Perceived threat

The present study operationalizes 'perceived threat' by measuring symbolic (cultural) and material (real) threats to groups along with the meaning and measurements adapted by McLaren (2003:919; 2002:558). Yet, one reservation is that this study does not distinguishes "threats to individual" as in Gibson's (2006)[51] or McLaren's (2003)[52] designs. Instead, McLaren (2002) dichotomizes the independent variable —threat perception— as a realistic and symbolic threat by using two representative items as mentioned below:

1. People from [these] minority groups abuse the system of social benefits.

2. The religious practices of people from [these] minority groups threaten our way of life.

[51] Gibson (2006:701) measures threat in three sub-dimensions and clearly distinguishes individual and group level threats:
1. Sociotropic threat [group-level] - dangerous to the normal lives of people; dangerous to the society; angry towards the group; likely to affect how well my family and I live; unwilling to follow the rules of democracy.
2. Group power - powerful; likely to gain lot of power in the [country - name].
3. Egocentric treat [individual-level] - if got power, would reduce my freedom; if got power would reduce my security; if got power, everything would change.

[52] McLaren measures threats to individual using economic and non-economic indicators such as perceptions of the risk of losing one's job and income, life satisfaction and also gauges a group-level threats distinguishing economic/status based threats and symbolic/cultural threats (McLaren 2003:918-919).

Here, the social benefits are a measure of concern for resources being taken by other groups, while religious practices gauge general fears of cultural degeneration (McLaren 2002:558). In another study, McLaren (2003:919) clearly distinguishes items of economic and symbolic threat:

Economic/status based threats

- In schools where there are too many children from these minority groups, the quality of education suffers.
- People from these minority groups abuse the system of social services
- The presence of people from these minority groups increases unemployment in [country]

Cultural/symbolic threats

- People from these minority groups are enriching the cultural life of [country] (those who disagree are considered to be more threatened)
- The religious practices of people from these minority groups threaten our way of life

Quillian (1995:591), based on an early work of Blumer (1958), Blalock (1967) and Lieberson (1980), hypothesizes that dominant groups get threatened when they feel that their prerogatives are threatened by the subordinate groups, when they perceive subordinate group as a demographic threat and when the economic conditions of the host country are precarious. Although Quillian (1995) does not distinguish explicitly symbolic/cultural and economic/material threats in particular, the above mentioned are indubitably material in nature.

Stephan et al. (1998) in a study of attitudes towards immigrants in Spain and Israel, measures realistic and symbolic threat using the following items. The measure designed for realistic threat consisted of the following items: the threat of crime, job loss, and economic costs and social services, as well as items on drugs, public schooling and access to medical care (Stephan 1998:565). Some of the sample items/statements are "Moroccans should not receive social assistance destined for Spaniards; Moroccan immigrants are increasing the crime in Spain; immigrants from Russia take away jobs from the Israelis; the immigrants from Ethiopia pose health hazards to Israelis." A 10-point Likert type scale was used to record the responses of the respondents. Stephan's measurement of symbolic threat includes items such as perceived differences in values and beliefs. Some of the examples are, the religion of the Moroccans is not compatible with our religion; our way of life is not being modified by Moroccan immigration (reverse scored); the Ethiopian aliya damages Israeli culture; the values and beliefs of Russian immigrants regarding work are quite similar to those of most Israelis (reverse scored) (Stephan et al. 1998:565).

Informed by the above classifications, this study labels perceived threat perceptions derived upon economic and tangible resources as 'material threat' and other more intangible, cultural resources based threat perceptions as 'symbolic threat.' Table 5 exhibits how out-group threat perceptions of Sinhalese have been operationalized in this study.

Table 5. Operationalization of threat perceptions

Perceived Threat	
(i) Material threat	1. Military threat (threat of possible violence) 2. Demographic threat 3. Resources based threats (Threat based on competition for land, employment opportunities, education opportunities and other economic activities like banking and retail businesses)
(ii) Symbolic threat	4. Threat to religion 5. The threat is Sinhalese themselves 6. Sociotropic threat in general (threat to culture, values, symbols, prestige, and practices of Sinhalese) 7. Threat based on other objective judgments (without mentioning any specific resource at stake)
(iii) No threat	No mention of perceived threat in a given image

Source: Author drawn. See Appendix 4 for detailed coding rules.

Conspiracy Theories

Conspiracy theories are not a variable that has been included in many of the mainstream research designs of intolerance or ethnocentrism mentioned above. However, when the author conducted the preliminary content analysis, conspiracy theories were well visible in many of the images as mentioned in Table 1 above. Therefore, the present study considers 'conspiracy theories' as a naturally emerged independent variable in the Sri Lankan context. Based on that justification,

conspiracy theories are included in the statistical design to adjudicate to what extent perceived conspiracies determine Sinhalese ethnocentrism.

Theoretically, conspiracy theories are a form of expectancy or anticipation people possess about others. These could be apparent either in individual or intergroup relations. One such expectancy apparent in inter-group relations is "the belief in a conspiracy against one's group" (Leyens and Demoulin 2010:198). The belief of the presence of functioning conspiracies is a common reality in many of the societies in the world. For example, 27% of respondents in a door-to-door survey of black adults in San Bernardino, California, agreed with the belief, that ''HIV/AIDS is a man-made virus that the federal government made to kill and wipe out black people" (Bogart and Thorburn 2005:213). The point here is that "conspiracy theories explain bad group outcomes by blaming another group. Things happen as if people thought: 'it is not our weakness but your viciousness'" (Leyens and Demoulin 2010:198). Believing in the availability of out-group led conspiracies against the in-group feeds, reinforces or at least help to maintain the latter's ethnocentrism.

According to the preliminary analysis of Sinhalese sentiments on their self-image (see Table 1 above) some conspiracy theories are apparent such as 'the Government of Sri Lanka has formed a conspiracy against Sinhalese' or 'there is an international conspiracy against Sinhalese.' Many of the conspiracy theories that appeared on the images were rendered in the form of 'rumor.' The author is aware of the possibility of factual inaccuracy or unreliability of such conspiracy theories. However, the original purpose here is not to gauge whether it is factually correct or not, but to measure the impact of such rumors/conspiracy theories. Thus,

the following two categories have been designed to measure the presence or absence of conspiracy theories in any given image.

Table 6. Operationalization of conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theories	
(i) Conspiracy theories	Local or international conspiracies against Sinhala-Buddhists
(ii) No conspiracy theories	No mention of conspiracies in each image

Source: Author drawn. See Appendix 4 for detailed coding rules.

3.6 Other control variables

Many of the previous studies cited above have used some of the common control/moderator variables such as gender, income, age, level of education or location (urban/rural or region). As once noted above, due to the natural limitations of the data, the present study does not employ these variables. What is indicated by 'natural limitations of the data' here is that the observations or respondents are not humans but images or textual contents in those images. Although these images/textual contents are human generated, they do not necessarily reveal the background, age, gender, income or education levels of the ones who created them. Since none of the research questions of the present study require such variables to make inferences, the author does not consider the absences as a critical obstacle.

3.7 Multinomial Logit Model

Data collected for the present study will be analyzed using a three-choice Multinomial Logit Model (MNLM). Hence the following is a brief overview, linking it to the details of the present study. MNLM is widely used in discrete choice analysis (Small & Hsiao 1985:619). Specifically, this model is appropriate when the available choices have no order, and the categories are thus nominal in nature (Long 1997). For instance, MNLM can be used to analyze the determinants of the choice of destination of high-school graduates, one-year after graduation from the high school. The set of choices could be private four-year college, public four-year college, private two-year college, public two-year college, employment or unemployment (Nguyen & Taylor 2002). Another example could be the determinants of one's choice of employment: white collar, blue collar, craft, and menial. Here, none of the choices are in a particular order and thus fits to be analyzed in a MNLM.

Similarly in the present study, out of the sample of images collected, any given image has the chance of containing either an ethnocentric expression or no-ethnocentrism in it. Yet, here ethnocentrism is not treated as a binary choice but as a three-choice model. If a given image contains an ethnocentric expression, it is further considered to be categorized under one of the following choices - 'ethnic pride' if that image contains one of four indicators (dummy variables) mentioned under ethnic pride. Or it will be categorized under 'intolerance' if it consists of one of the nine dummy variables designed for intolerance. If a given image consists of no signs of both 'ethnic pride' and 'intolerance,' such an image is categorized

under ‘neither.’ ‘Ethnic pride’ or ‘intolerance’ are coded as ‘1’ and ‘neither’ is coded as ‘0.’

Likewise, all the given images have been coded for the three explanatory variables—religiosity, perceived threat (material and symbolic), and conspiracy theories. For instance, if the main message of a given image reflects one of the dummy variables under material threat or symbolic threat, then such images are coded as ‘1’ and those that do not express any threat perceptions are coded as ‘0.’ Since all the images are coded in a mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive manner none of the images fall under material and symbolic threat categories and no-threat category simultaneously. When there are ambiguities, coding rules are used as decision rules. Also, when there are multiple messages, only the main message is coded. Same procedures are observed when coding for religiosity and conspiracy theories.

3.8 Conclusion

The main intention of this chapter was to provide an overview of the sample of primary data collected for the study, along with an overview of content analysis, the tool used to analyze the visual data. The latter part of the chapter operationalized the dependent variable—ethnocentrism and its determinants, the independent variables—religiosity, perceived threat perceptions and conspiracy theories. Finally, the chapter reviewed the Multinomial Logit Model, the statistical model which will be used to calculate the results of the data produced by content

analysis of visual images. A non-linear multinomial model is used in the present study because the dependent variable (ethnocentrism) takes a multinomial form with three outcomes—ethnic pride, intolerance and neither. The next chapter presents the findings drawn upon the three-choice multinomial logit model. However, in addition to the statistical inference,[53] the next chapter yields several insights based on descriptive statistics incurred from visual data.

[53] Statistical analysis of data was conducted employing the statistical package STATA 15.

4

The visual construction of Sinhalese ethnic image on social media: A quantitative analysis of the determinants of Sinhalese ethnocentrism

To what extent does religiosity account for the variance of post-war ethnocentrism in Sri Lanka? Is it the *primary* determinant or is/are there any other possible explanation/s? The present chapter answers these questions, first by presenting the descriptive statistics, and secondly based on inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics explore several recurrent features of the post-war ethnocentrism of Sinhalese. Inferential statistics, on the other hand, explore to what extent 'religion' explains the variance of ethnocentrism.

4.1 Descriptive statistics: Everyday ethnocentrism among post-war Sinhalese

The following discussion is based on descriptive statistics and it mainly answers the question, 'what is *new* in the post-war Sinhalaness?' In other words, while some features of Sinhalaness are historical products that continue to the future,

there could be specific qualities that are uniquely produced in the post-war period. Such new features will be paid more attention below.

The word ‘everyday’ is used here to indicate the strong agency of ordinary people in social media from which the sample of images was collected for the present study. The most frequent categories in the analysis below, are the most widely seen, consumed and interacted with (in the form of liking, sharing, commenting) in the prosumer culture of social media. This prosumer turn largely manipulates the construction and self-classification of self identity among ordinary Sinhalese people. However, in order to avoid confusion, it must be noted that the following section only discusses some of the selected dummy variables (see Appendix 3 for detailed coding rules) that constitute Sinhalese ethnocentrism in the post-war period. However, descriptive statistics and explanations are only an entry point. Beyond that, the main focus of the entire study is to analyze the correlations and causality between ethnocentrism and other explanatory variables (perceived out-group religiosity, own religiosity of the in-group, material threat, symbolic threat and conspiracy theories), which will be discussed later in the forthcoming sections.

As shown in Figure 3, by definition an ethnocentric observation, in the present study, is either ethnically proud or intolerant. Sinhalese construct their ethnic pride (or in-group love) basically through self-appraisal of their skills, bravery, cultured-ness and also by exhibiting some ego-centrism (Appendix 3 explains the details of each of these). While appraising the skills, bravery and cultured-ness of present-day Sinhalese, an overwhelming feature of many of the images categorized under ethnic pride is the expression of nostalgia for the past—

the bygone proud history, the great hydraulic civilization of the precolonial Sinhalese kingdoms, and frequently exaggerated and fantasized skills and bravery of the Sinhalese people.

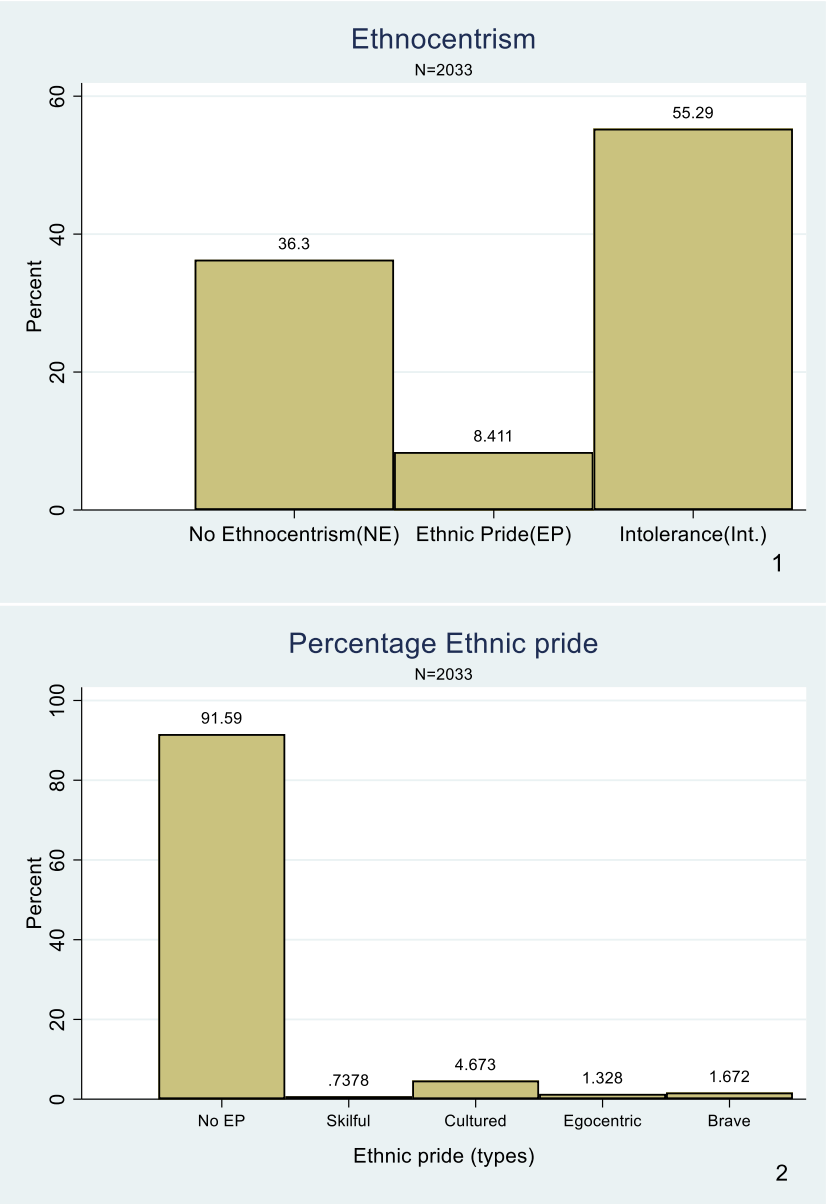


Figure 3. Percentage Ethnocentrism and its types (ethnic pride and intolerance)

See Appendix 3, for descriptions of each sub-type/coding rules of Ethnic pride.

This sort of ethnic pride, or in-group love, is what Wickramasinghe (2009;2013) conceptualizes as "return to the heritage." The post-conflict state is

patriotic, post-war Sri Lanka is obsessed with the idea of "heritage," which is a narrative reconstruction of the past influenced by (or rather imitating) the Sinhala literati of the early-20th century, who were anti-colonial and critical of the British rule (Wickramasinghe 2013:92). Many of the expressions categorized under 'ethnic pride' have close affinities with the belief of common ancestry or the myth of common ancestry. Wickramasinghe notes how this 'heritage' practice/construction takes place in popular culture as in post-war films, TV-shows, novels and some other print media (2013:96), but social media has been largely overlooked. Filling that gap, the findings of the present study show that narrative reconstruction of the past as 'heritage' is apparent on social media too, which we technically identify here as 'ethnic pride.'

Construction of 'ethnic pride' is not the only form of Sinhalese ethnocentrism that many Sri Lankans encounter in their everyday usage of social media. It has a second face too, which we identify here as 'intolerance.' Intolerance is the unwillingness to put up with different ideas or groups, or certain downward out-group perceptions, which might be implicitly or explicitly expressed, as identified under the nine dummy variables (see Appendix 4). Out of the nine dummy variables, the most explicit form of out-group intolerance is indicated by the dummy variable 'anti-out-group' as shown in Figure 4. Numerically, the 'anti-out-group' category characterizes a larger part of Sinhalese intolerance toward out-groups. However, all the other eight dummy variables are more implicit or partial forms of intolerance. As noted in Chapter three, those can be interpreted as strong in-group identification that implicitly ignores the plurality of the society.

The most explicit form of intolerance, that is anti-out-group attitudes, or unwelcoming out-groups, includes the visual depiction of negative relations between in and out groups, and explicit resentment towards practices, culture, and habits of members of out-groups. 'Anti-out-group' perceptions have not been discussed in detail here since it is not a uniquely post-war feature of Sinhalaness. Anti-out-group perceptions are the norm in a society that has been ethnically divided for decades (from colonialism onward, which was discussed before). It is a historical construct, but not something that is newly invented in the post-war period.

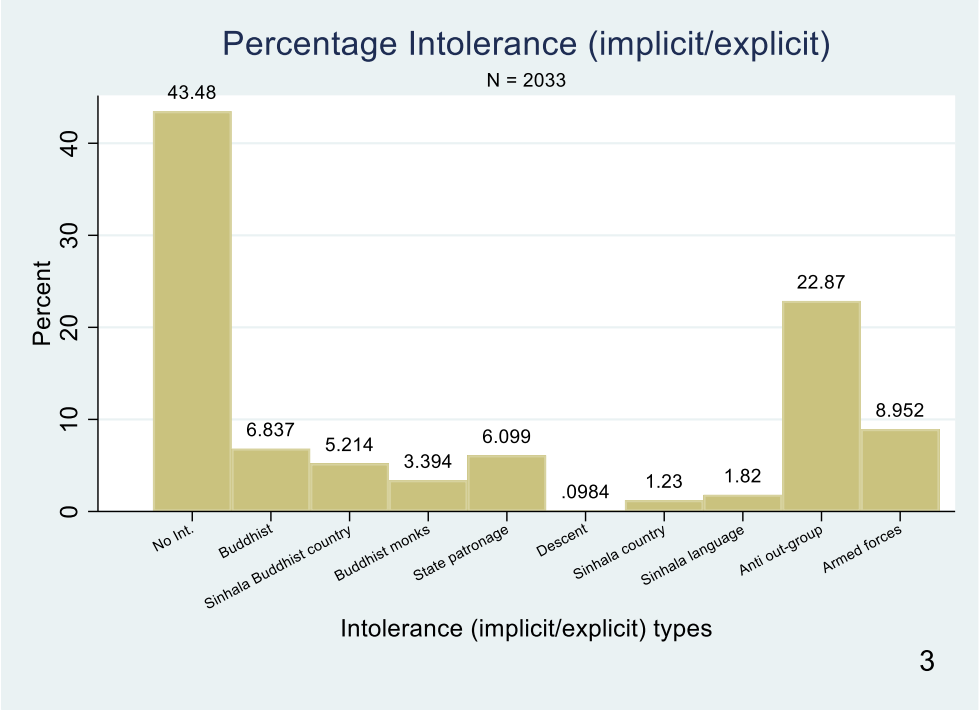


Figure 4. Sub-types of intolerance

See Appendix 4, for descriptions of each sub-type of intolerance.

4.1.1 Depiction of armed forces and war: post-war militarism and memories of war

When answering the question, 'what is *new* in post-war Sinhalaness, the overwhelming visibility of armed forces in the sample of images cannot be ignored. Although numerically the dummy variable of 'armed forces' is smaller than 'anti-out-group' variable (see Figure 4), the former's qualitative validity is considered strong here. Many of the images in the sample depict the government security forces as a representative of Sinhalese people or their bravery and extol martial virtue as a duty/instinct quality of Sinhalese people. To be more specific, the images, on the one hand, express the damage occurred due to the war and the cruelty of the LTTE, and on the other hand, portray the heroism, masculine pride and fearlessness of the state security forces and war as valor. However, qualities like heroism have been illustrated in a manner that it spills over to the entire Sinhalese populace.

Supplementing Sinhalaness by creating annals with government armed forces, is a result of two widely overt post-war forms of rhetoric in Sri Lanka: labeling one's own soldiers as 'war-heroes' and the campaign against 'alleged war crimes.' Specifically, with the 'alleged war crimes' rhetoric in the society, a large majority of the images have contoured the war itself as a 'just war,' and the armed forces as virtuous, humane and also charitable. The word charitable is used here as a qualifier, because many of the images portray soldiers' benevolent and sympathetic treatment to Tamil civilians during the war, not as a part of their profession, but as an exceptional quality of Sinhalese (as charity), extolling it as an

innate feature of the Sinhalese ethnic group, to which majority of the soldiers belong to. In some images, textual expressions such as 'Sinhalese army' (*Sinhala Hamudáwa*) can be seen (although technically the armed forces represent the GoSL, but not an ethnic group). Thus, the images ethnicize armed forces, re-affirm the defeat of the LTTE, depict the humanity of the acts of the LTTE, and the bravery embodied by the soldiers.

By this kind of portrayals of war, soldiers and related rhetoric, social media platforms either consciously or unconsciously sustain, first, post-war militarism, and secondly, memorialization of war. Militarism is an ideology (Chenoy 1998:101), a process that begins before the war and might last longer in society after the last guns have fallen silent. Because it is an ideology, it steeps into the institutional structures and specifically the ways of thought (de Mel 2007:12). The difference between militarization and militarism is that the former is a more material process, while the latter is more of an ideology (Chenoy 1998:4-5). In the process of militarization, people and things gradually become controlled by the military, or come to depend for their well-being on militaristic ideas, and in such societies the military takes ascendancy over civilian institutions, rely upon police to regulate civilian movements, solve security problems, and defend or expand boundaries in the name of national security (Enloe 2003:3). "It is through militarization that the ideology of militarism, which mediates aggressive, hyper-masculinist, militant solutions to conflict, and justifies violence and terror, is ushered into our institutions and ways of thought" (de Mel 2007:12).

Similarly, many of the images portray soldiers and their presence in the public spaces, engaging in civilian activities, and holding bureaucratic positions as natural and necessary. Military presence (such as army camps) in the North and

East and some of the military personnel holding diplomatic positions have been praised and narrated as necessary. Acceptance of militarism was more or less the mainstream position in the Southern Sinhala community in the post-war period, and social media also reflect the same. Many of the graphic images take the form of 'educating' its viewers with justifications of why the military presence is still an essential part of the post-war period. A variety of people, including some political figures and activists, who criticize the continuing militarism, have been criticized as traitors of the nation.

Another most noticeable feature of the images is that war and soldiers have been used as a commodity or as a marketing tool during post-war election campaigns. Some of the images request the public to vote for a particular politician/political party for the security of the armed forces (specifically from international war crime allegations). Some of such claims are highly personalized and specific in nature. For instance, some images depict upper body portraits of some soldiers (who have been facing investigations under Sri Lankan law) and request the public to vote for a particular politician/political party for the safety of that soldier. As the author noted, the frequency of such images posted during election periods is higher (for instance during late 2014 and early 2015) than the other periods. Thus, social media has been a widely used political tool to indoctrinate the populace to create a consensual community.

In addition to that, many of the images usher the ideology of militarism into the future. During the war, the Sinhalese psyche was primarily occupied by certain war-related rhetoric, such as "[it is the] dutiful mothers who sacrifice their sons for the war, brave youth who defend the nation and its territorial borders as heroes and martyrs, pious Buddhists who protect their faith and nation" (de Mel 2007:58). As

shown in the sample of images, the same Sinhalese psyche with the same rhetoric persists in the post-war period as well. For instance, there are a significant number of photographs in which Sinhalese mothers proudly embrace their military sons. Adding to that, what is new in the post-war era is the persuasive rhetoric of the campaigns critical of alleged war crimes, in which war heroes have been hailed, and those who speak against have been portrayed as cowardice and treason.

However, one can assume that the post-war militarism (and the visibility of militarism on cultural sites such as social media), might diminish with time. Figure 5 summarizes the percentage of images depicting 'armed forces' (with the meanings/rhetoric/expressions discussed above), per each year. As the data indicate, militarism has not decreased with time. However, the author accepts that a period of 8 years is probably not adequate to observe the decline of a well-established phenomenon like militarism, especially in a highly war-torn society like Sri Lanka.

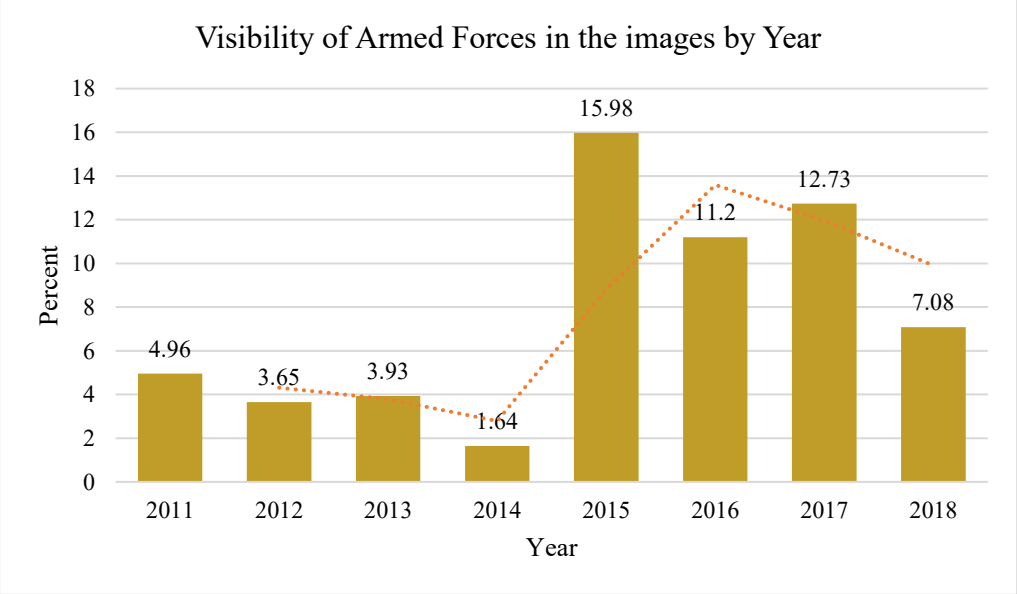


Figure 5. Distribution of the visibility of armed forces in the sample of images by year

Percentages have been calculated based on the number of images produced in each year.

Closely associated with the concept of militarism emerges the other most imperative aspect of the images, that is war memories. Official, as well as non-official, memorialization of war has been a long-established tradition in Sri Lanka, both among the government security forces and the LTTE (see de Mel 2007; Perera 2016). The same tradition continues in the post-2009 period, as evidently overt in the images analyzed, in which war monuments, statues, commemorative plaques, military parades, late and current military leaders are abundant. de Mell (2007), analyzing TV programs, advertisements, personal narratives and several other types of popular culture, identifies the way both the state and the LTTE practiced war memorialization during and before (a period spanning the late 1980s to 2005) the three decades of civil war in Sri Lanka, and particularly, she recognizes how 'memorialization' through popular culture sustains a larger process of 'militarization' of the society.

In another study, Perera (2016) conducts a rigorous sociological analysis of visual war memories in Sri Lanka from 2000 until 2014. This study includes visual data such as built environments (i.e. War monuments), natural environments (natural ruins of war), as well as works of visual artists in Sri Lanka. Yet, none of the previous studies note the role of social media[54] and its visual contents, in not just mediating, but also reproducing and ushering militarism and war memories to the future, which needs further in-depth research.

[54] A report compiled by the Center for Policy Alternatives-Sri Lanka studies the popular social media campaign against the alleged war crimes of a particular soldier belonged to the government armed forces of Sri Lanka. This study's focus is more on hate speech rather than mining the way militarism and war memorialization is socialized through social media (see Wickremesinhe and Hattotuwa 2015).

The idea of memory plays a critical role in what we mentioned at the very outset as beliefs of common ancestry or the myth of common ancestry when referring to ethnic pride, through which group solidarity is constructed. However, through specific processes, specially undertaken by states, certain memories become established while others are erased. Maintaining memory in that sense is essentially a political tool if states intervene. In contrast to such state constructed/sponsored memories of war, the present study understands social media as a cultural site that acts as a critical sub-national/ non-state institution of maintenance and erasure of the memory of war. What we see in the gathered sample of images is the war memories of the ordinary Sinhalese without any formal state sponsorship or involvement.

Here, the theoretical dichotomy that whether the memory is something individual or social/collective is not discussed in detail, since the present study is not primarily designed to examine post-war memories extensively. However, for the purpose of clarity, this study understands that memory is mostly a burden that individuals carry, yet the most primal individual memories have been framed socially. Thus, it is difficult to make a distinction between what is individual and what is social/collective memory (Halbwachs 1992; Olick 2007; Perera 2016).

As de Mel (2007) and Perera (2016) studied, there are several major types of war memorials, both formal and informal, ranging from state-sponsored war monuments and museums to other memories constructed by informal and non-state actors such as independent visual artists, filmmakers, or writers. Social media, though overlooked by many, is a vast space for storing portable war memories as the collected sample evidence. None of the previous studies address the portability of the war memories. These portable war memories on social media are unique

because the data are auto-archived, can be accessed or re-posted by the public at any time, and can be enjoyed or viewed anywhere, unlike other war memories which either need state approval, sponsorship, or that need to be visited.

In the collected sample of images, several types of stakeholders of the war have been memorialized: (1) the soldiers, (2) the enemy (the LTTE), (3) civilian victims, (4) war-time political leaders, and (5) remnants of war (that include both physical constructions of war monuments by both in- and out-group and natural remnants of war, i.e. ruined buildings of war in the war-affected areas). Memories of the soldiers are the most frequently seen and most substantially constructed. Perera argues that,

> […]except in monuments in camps and a few exceptions in public space, all post-war monuments indicate an absence of reference to individuals killed in war; civilian monuments have never been a serious preoccupation in Sri Lanka; artworks usually narrate mega-narratives of violence and memory, and not too often micro-narratives of individual experiences[55] (Perera 2016:285).

The sample of images also portray mega-narrative rather than micro or individual stories and sufferings of war except for a few cases.[56] Soldiers are portrayed as a mega collective, at military parades in particular. In contrast to that, the memory of wartime political leaders has been carefully maintained in many of

[55] Perera (2016:149-204), discusses in detail how individualized war monuments built up during the war, such as the mushrooming of 'Bus-stand war monuments' in Sri Lanka, which were constructed by the family members of soldiers who were dead or missing in the battlefield. As Perera argues, in the post-war scenario, such personal constructs of war memories are largely absent.

[56] These few cases of individual stories of soldiers are related to the campaigns critical of alleged war crime rhetoric which was discussed above. Certain soldiers are visually depicted in the sample as innocent victims and hailed as war heroes. In addition to that, photos of some of the elite level army officials have been repeatedly circulated as heroes. However, the real stories of soldiers (either elite or grass-root level), are not given much attention in the collected sample.

the images as larger upper-body portrayals, along with the figures of soldiers. Memories of the LTTE cadres who died during the war can be seen in a fewer number of images, portrayed with a negative imprint. Pictures of certain post-war LTTE memorials have been depicted as treason or as international/local conspiracies. Visual memories of the civilians who died during the war are the least visible in the sample, except in a few photographs that depict the bombings of unarmed civilians by the LTTE in public spaces outside the war zone (i.e., Colombo).

In addition, pictures of post-war construction of war monuments, military parades during state celebrations of war victory, plaques, and statues are abundant in the collection. Interestingly, some such war monuments have been verbally personified in the pictures. For instance, picturing some children looking at a state built war monument in the background, the textual content in the foreground expresses the following idea- 'the kids are in search of their fatherly love/company by the war monument,' indicating the social value of war memorials in a post-war society.

However, what is discussed above is strictly 'Sinhalese war memory' (since this study mainly collected data from Sinhalese communities online), though this might not be the memory of other non-Sinhalese communities. Specifically, during the first weeks of May, as the author personally observes, parallel to the state-sponsored *Rana Viru* (heroes of war) Commemoration day,[57] many such war memorial graphics come up on individual Facebook 'news feeds,' since many

[57] Each year, 18th of May is celebrated as the 'Remembrance Day' of war victory and the ones who died during the war in Sri Lanka.

Sinhalese tend to share such artifacts online, as a sign of personal tribute to the ones who won the war.

However, this virtual (online) trend of remembering the entire war as a collective victory of all the armed forces and certain political leaders attempts to erase the memories of the grassroots level soldiers and pains of ordinary citizens. Erasure of individual stories and sufferings (which is the reality of any war) ultimately ushers a beautified and fantasized memory of the war to the future. Such a beautified or fantasized visual narrative is also convenient, since many of the Sinhalese consumers (or prosumers) of this type of social media have not directly experienced the realities of war in the battlefield or the so-called border-villages, except those who experienced car/human bombs in the South or who have family members as soldiers. However, to sum up, in an ontological sense, the war memories in the online social world and the offline real world have no fundamental mismatch when the present findings and the findings of previous studies are compared. The only difference is that the former has a stronger public agency and appeal and foster portability war memories more than the latter.

4.1.2 Descent and caste

Interestingly, descent or descent based attributes (such as being born to Sinhalese parents, and other biological attributes such as skin color, or other physical features) are the least highlighted in the sample. Even some social attributes such as internal caste hierarchies or regional divisions (i.e., up-country/low-country Sinhalese) are largely invisible in the collected set of

images. Why are images consisting of internal hierarchies not apparent in the selected sample? Is it because the Sinhalese who hitherto practiced such internal hierarchies have abandoned those in the post-war period?

The viability of internal hierarchies cannot be entirely rejected because caste, for instance, is widely practiced by contemporary Sinhalese people, specifically in their private domains such as marriage. The long-established tradition among Sinhalese to specify the caste they belong to in matrimonial advertisements published in weekend national newspapers is one of the best sources of evidence (see Appendix 5). This means that in the institution of marriage caste is used as a selection criterion to filter the possible partners of marriage. Also, the main regional division among Sinhalese—*Udarata Sinhala* (Up-country Sinhalese/or Kandyan Sinhalese) and *Pahatharata Sinhala* (Low-country) has a minor value in private affairs (like marriage) and such regional consciousness was completely absent in the sample. According to Rajasingham-Senanayeke (1999: 112-114), and Tambiah (1986:101-102), "in Sri Lanka, many of those who had hitherto called themselves as 'Kandyan' and 'Low Country' abandoned these regional identities to unite in a cohesive 'Sinhala' identity. The result was the transformation of Sri Lanka's multipolar ethnic demography into a bipolar one" (Chandra 2012:3).

Having said that, if caste is practiced in the personal domain, why is it invisible, particularly, on highly political-cultural sites such as the selected communities online from which the author collected data? As mentioned at the very outset, either consciously or unconsciously, Facebook pages (or any other sites) preoccupied with the construction of a cohesive Sinhalese identity do not

disclose internal hierarchies or divisions, and also such hierarchies are not given any political significance. More technically, Chandra (2012:13) recognizes this as activation of different ethnic identity categories in different domains. In other words, an individual who belongs to the Sinhalese fishermen caste *(Karawa),*[58] which is considered as 'low' in Sinhalese society, becomes activated in his/her marriage, yet if the same person contests for a regional or national election, his caste identity rarely comes into play in contemporary Sri Lanka.

4.1.3 Naming the post-war Sinhalaness: Sinhalese or Sinhala-Buddhist?

In contrast to descent, caste, or regional differences discussed above, religion (Buddhism) continues to characterize Sinhalese ethnocentrism in the post-war period (to avoid confusions, in the following descriptive evaluation, some religion-related dummy variables categorized under 'intolerance' will be discussed. Religion, or more specifically, perceived out-group religiosity and perceptions of own religiosity among Sinhalese, are two main independent variables analyzed in the present study, and causal relations between those and the ethnocentrism will be tested later). Claims such as the necessity of state patronage for Buddhism, the association between Sinhalaness and Buddhist monks, and also claims that Sri Lanka is primarily a Sinhala-Buddhist state, are outstanding among those (see Figure 4). Specifically, the historical as well as contemporary political involvement/potentials of Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka that has been noted by

[58] See Roberts (1982) for a detailed description of the Sinhalese caste system.

many previous studies (Young 2016; Raghavan 2016; Smith 1967) continue to be visible even in the post-war context.

In addition to that, the persistent rhetoric that Sinhalese are essentially Buddhists and Sri Lanka is a Sinhala-Buddhist state needs further investigation, which has been widely contested in the previous literature. For instance, according to Gunawardana (1990) and Liyanagamage (1968), the unified Sinhalese ethnicity ceased to exist in the 11th century.[59] During the Polonnaruwa kingdom[60] "there are indications that not all the members of the [Sinhala] group … were Buddhists" (Gunawardana 1990:64), and there was evidence of people being converted to the Virasaiva sect of Saivism (Liyanagamage 1968:128). In accordance with that, the first religious split of Sinhalese ethnicity occurred during the Kingdom of Polonnaruwa, with the emergence of both Sinhalese followers of Saivism and Sinhalese followers of Buddhism.

In contrast, according to Obeyesekere (1997/1990), the first split of the Sinhalese ethnicity occurred only in the sixteenth century with the arrival of the European powers. The Sinhalese ethnicity ceased to exists, due to the emergence of Catholic and Protestant Sinhalese (Obeyesekere 1997/1990:355). There was one ethnic identity before the arrival of the colonial powers, which he identified as 'Sinhalese ethnicity,' but after,

[59] Referring to the Anuradhapura kingdom Rahula (1956:79) states that, "[e]vidently, all Sinhalese without exception were Buddhists."

[60] A supplementary note on the chronology of the ancient, precolonial kingdoms of Sri Lanka: The first kingdom of Sri Lanka is considered to be Anuradhapura kingdom (377BC-1017AD), followed by the Polonnaruwa Kingdom (1056-1236). Between the two periods, there was a South Indian occupation of the country. After the Polonnaruwa Kingdom ceased to exist, the capital of the Kingdom moves from the dry zone to the wet zone and from 1232 to 1505; we observed the emergence and decay of several kingdoms, basically ruled by native kings. The colonial rule started in 1505 with the arrival of the Portuguese, and the Dutch in 1656 and finally the British in 1796. Sri Lanka obtained independence from the British in 1948.

> [T]he old Sinhalese ethnic identity split into several sets: Sinhalese Buddhists versus Sinhalese Catholic; Sinhalese Buddhist versus Sinhalese Protestant; Sinhalese Catholic versus Sinhalese Protestant. There developed, then, three separate Sinhalese identities each distinguished by religion. Furthermore, these identities were characterized by regional, occupational and class differentiation (Obeyesekera 1997:367).

Obeyesekera, here draws us into a critical confusion whether an independent 'Sinhalese' identity still exists or rather is it a Sinhala-religious identity fashioned by each religion?

What he argues is that after the arrival of Europeans the old, single Sinhalese ethnicity ceased to exist since it was split into several parts. Therefore, the ethnicity now we encounter in Sri Lanka is not really Sinhalese ethnicity but Sinhalese Buddhist ethnicity (Obeyesekera 1997:381-383).

> [I]s the ethnic identity *Sinhalese* or is it *Sinhalese Buddhist*? My own view is that it is the latter. The Sinhala Buddhists today perceive the Sinhala Christians as not only non-Buddhists, but also in a sense of non-Sinhalese, for their Christian cultural markers is viewed as alien. To affirm their Sinhalese identity, the Christians have adopted national dress for their rituals, have taken up Sinhalese (but not strictly Buddhist) calendrical rituals like New Year (Obeyesekera 1997:381).

Although strongly affirmed above, further substantial evidence is necessary to prove whether Sinhalese Buddhists perceive Sinhalese Christians as a separate ethnicity. Based on the empirical evidence gathered for the present study (see Figure 4), the images show no consensus of naming the ethnicity of Sinhalese. For

instance, while some of the images recognize Sri Lanka as the country of Sinhala-Buddhists, and others considers it merely as a Sinhala state considering all the Sinhala speakers as members of the Sinhalese ethnic group. What is interesting here is not the factual accuracy/inaccuracy of the claim that Sri Lanka is a Sinhalese state/Sinhala-Buddhist state, but Sinhalese self-classification of their own identity. Given this, a question arises, whether the Sinhalese and Buddhist people are identical in the post-war period?

Some of the images coded under the category 'Buddhists' (see Figure 4), which carries the extended meaning that Sinhalese people are essentially Buddhists (see Appendix 3), simultaneously bear several rhetorical/or euphemistic implications such as Sinhala-Christians as an out-group, and to be a true Sinhalese one must follow Buddhism. In that sense, being Buddhist and being Sinhalese is not two but one and implies that all Sinhalese are Buddhists. Yet, in contrast, there are some images in the sample, and various other recent empirical evidence in the real world (see Appendix 5) exemplifying the way Catholics/Christians in Sri Lanka classify themselves as Sinhalese. Thus, there is no consensus in the empirical data gathered, whether the ethnic identity of Sinhalese should always be affiliated with 'Buddhism.'

The above discussion mainly focused on the most frequent claims and rhetorical expressions of post-war Sinhalese that simultaneously reveal the emerging patterns of their everyday ethnocentrism. Among the two major forms of ethnocentrism, 'ethnic pride' does not necessarily indicate out-group intolerance or exclusion, while 'intolerance' is mostly about downgrading or exclusion of out-groups. In that sense, ethnic pride is relatively a harmless construct, although it is not necessarily free from the notion of 'blind patriotism,' an uncritical, rigid

attachment to one's group (Coenders and Scheepers 2003). Having said that, while descriptive statistics are only an entry point, inferential statistics below, provide a deeper understanding of the gathered data.

4.2 Inferential Statistics: Results based on a Multinomial Logit Model

As briefly explained in Chapter 3, ethnocentrism is a multinomial variable, with three outcomes—ethnic pride, intolerance (explicit/implicit) and no ethnocentrism (a given image has the chance to fall into one of the three categories)— which will be analyzed in a three-choice Multinomial Logit Model (MNLM). Coefficients or Relative Risk Ratios calculated by MNLM are relatively difficult to interpret because those are calculated in comparison to a base category. Therefore, this study chooses to calculate average marginal effect as presented in Table 7. 'Marginal effect' measures the change in the probability of an outcome, for a change in one independent variable, holding all other variables constant. Because there is a distribution of marginal effect in the sample, for the purpose of interpretation, a summary of this distribution can be calculated. One such summary statistic is Average Marginal Effect (AME). AME is the best summary of the effect of a variable. Because it averages the effects across all cases in the sample, it can be interpreted as the average size of the effect in the sample (see Long & Freese 2014; Long 1997).

Table 7.Multinomial Logit Estimation of Ethnocentrism: Religiosity, Threat perceptions, and Conspiracy theories

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	EP	Int.	EP	Int.	EP	Int.	EP	Int.	EP	Int.	EP	Int.	EP	Int.	EP	Int.
No religiosity	Reference						Reference		Reference		Reference		Reference			
Religiosity (own)	-0.00421	0.0383					-0.00999	0.0871***	-0.0172	0.103***	-0.0136	0.0796***	-0.0112	0.108***		
	(0.0141)	(0.0241)					(0.0141)	(0.0179)	(0.0143)	(0.0177)	(0.0140)	(0.0181)	(0.0137)	(0.0201)		
Religiosity (p.o.g)[a]	-0.0672**	0.471***					-0.0522**	0.265***	-0.0575**	0.277***	-0.0255	0.304***	-0.0558**	0.469***		
	(0.0138)	(0.0219)					(0.0192)	(0.0405)	(0.0193)	(0.0406)	(0.0411)	(0.0575)	(0.0165)	(0.0229)		
No threat			Reference				Reference		Reference		Reference				Reference	
Material threat			-0.0327*	0.674***			-0.0290	0.635***	-0.0183	0.524***	-0.0467**	0.610***			-0.0214	0.488***
			(0.0173)	(0.0265)			(0.0180)	(0.0294)	(0.0209)	(0.0368)	(0.0208)	(0.0346)			(0.0393)	(0.0615)
Symbolic threat			-0.00312	0.711***			0.00803	0.654***	0.0299	0.539***	-0.000146	0.642***			0.00165	0.563***
			(0.0135)	(0.0167)			(0.0147)	(0.0218)	(0.0187)	(0.0295)	(0.0194)	(0.0257)			(0.0361)	(0.0556)
No conspiracy theories					Reference				Reference				Reference		Reference	
Conspiracy theories					0.00519	0.543***			-0.0303*	0.149***			-0.0394**	0.489***	-0.0239	0.244***
					(0.0126)	(0.0222)			(0.0177)	(0.0214)			(0.0121)	(0.0170)	(0.0454)	(0.0711)
N	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033	2033

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

EP- Ethnic Pride; Int.- Intolerance (implicit/explicit); Religiosity(p.o.g)[a]- Religiosity (perceived out-group)

In Table 7, the average marginal effect of the presence of religiosity/threat perceptions/conspiracy theories on the probability of observing ethnocentrism (either in the form of ethnic pride or intolerance) in a given image has been calculated. According to the results shown under Model 1, 2 and 3 in Table 7, it is clear that religiosity shows a relatively weaker effect upon ethnocentrism in comparison to threat perceptions and conspiracy theories. In other words, perceived out-group religiosity increases the probability of observing intolerance by 47 percentage points, while material and symbolic threat perceptions increase the probability of observing intolerance by 67 and 71 percentage points respectively. Even the effect of conspiracy theories (AME=0.543 at $p<0.01$) are slightly stronger than religiosity itself. Thus, many of the ethnocentric images circulated on social media have been overwhelmed by both material and symbolic threat perceptions. Based on these results, hypothesis 1 and 3 are not supported. Religiosity and conspiracy theories do not account for the largest variance of ethnocentric visual messages that appear on social media. Instead, (perceived) threat perceptions appear relatively stronger.

Results shown under model 1, 2 and 3 are limited since those have no control variables. For instance, the effect of religiosity shown under model 1, could be influenced by some other variables. Therefore, in model 4 we regress religiosity by controlling threat perceptions, and in Model 5 we control both threat perceptions and conspiracy theories to see the real effect of religiosity devoid of other influences. The two Models (4 and 5) produce similar results in terms of the effect of religiosity on ethnocentrism. When threat perceptions and conspiracy theories are controlled for, the previous effect of religiosity (shown in Model 1) reduces. Now, perceived out-group religiosity increases the probability of

observing intolerance only by 26 percentage points when threat perceptions are controlled and by 27 percentage points when both threat perceptions and conspiracy theories are controlled (which was 47 percentage points in Model 1).

Considering threat perceptions, Model 4 and 5 yield somewhat different results. When only religiosity is controlled, threat perceptions increase the probability of observing an intolerant visual message by 63 (material threat) and 65 (symbolic threat) percentage points. This effect is considerably reduced when both religiosity and conspiracy theories are controlled (material threat — 52 and symbolic threat—53 percentage points). Thus the effect of threat perceptions is largely controlled by conspiracy theories than religion.

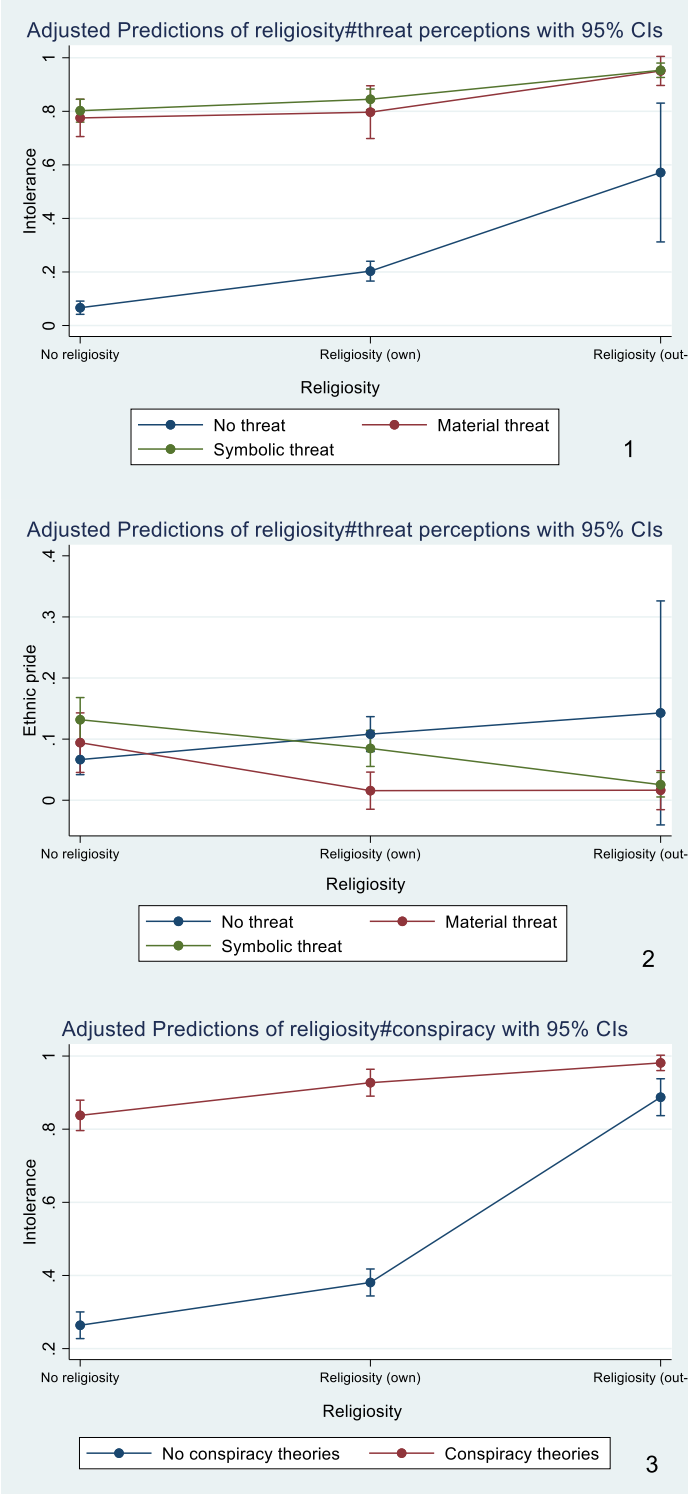
By comparing the values of each variable in Model 5, it is clear that religiosity, threat perceptions, and conspiracy theories show positive and highly statistically significant impact on intolerance, but some are stronger than others. It is overt that material and symbolic threat perceptions account for the largest variance of intolerance relative to the other two factors. This comparison supports the 4th hypothesis. Although religiosity has a positive and statistically significant effect on intolerance, once religiosity is allowed to function alone by removing other factors from the context, the real effect of religiosity is weakened. This is not to establish that religiosity is completely redundant in its capacity to drive intolerant (implicit and explicit) out-group perceptions, but the effect of religiosity is mostly reduced when threat perceptions are controlled for. This indicates that many of the ordinary conclusions such as 'increased religiosity is the *primary* reason for out-group antipathy' need to be refined further. The effect of religion is

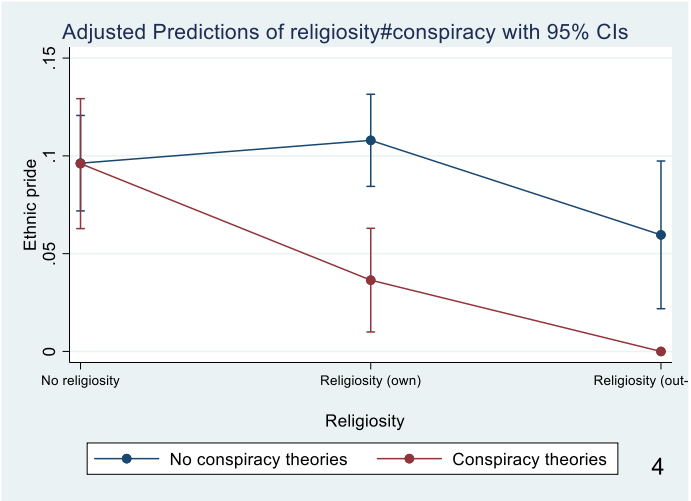
significant, yet, it is also necessary to note that when threat perceptions are controlled, the importance of religiosity is largely weakened.

These findings lead us to examine the 'interaction effect' between each variable. Technically, the purpose and the logic behind calculating the interaction effect between two variables is to see whether the synergy between the two factors instigates the power of each other in creating changes on ethnocentrism, rather than testing their separate effect because, in the real world, we can never expect either threat perceptions, religion, or conspiracy theories to function autonomously. Model 6 in Table 7 calculates the interaction effect between religiosity and threat perceptions. Model 7 shows the interaction effect between religiosity and conspiracy theories, and Model 8 is the interaction effect between threat perceptions and conspiracy theories. By comparing the results in Model 5 with Models 6 and 7, it is clear that interaction produces a higher variance in intolerance, and thus, the 5th hypothesis is supported. What this means in practical terms is that threat perceptions, and conspiracy theories become stronger when each of those interacts with religion than those function alone.

Figure 4 better illustrates the interaction effect with more details. Each graph illustrates the adjusted predictions for the probability of observing either ethnic pride or intolerance in a given image when either religiosity and threat perceptions or religiosity and conspiracy theories are interacting. This facilitates a deeper understanding, allowing us to answer detailed questions such as, 'does the effect of religiosity vary with the level of threat perceptions/conspiracy theories, or are there any specific occasions where the effect of religiosity is more visible?' which will be addressed below.

Figure 6. Adjusted predictions of the interaction effect.





Graphs are based on Model 6 and 7 in Table 7.

4.2.1 Ethnocentrism and its dyadic function

As mentioned at the outset, ethnocentrism is a multinomial variable with three outcomes—ethnic pride (or in-group love), intolerance (implicit or explicit dislike toward out-groups) and also neither of these. Do ethnic pride and intolerance function in a similar pattern? Figure 6 (and also Table 7) clearly illustrates that the three determinants—religiosity, threat, and conspiracy theories—act differently upon ethnic pride and intolerance. In that sense, ethnocentrism functions clearly in a dyadic fashion.

First, except perceived out-group religiosity, all the other independent variables do not show any statistically significant impact on ethnic pride (see Model 5 in Table 7). Only perceived out-group religiosity significantly decreases (AME=-0.0575 at $p < 0.01$) the probability of observing ethnic pride in any given image. Secondly, in-group religiosity and material threat, both have an approximately similar negative effect on ethnic pride yet not statistically significant. Effect of symbolic threat is positive, yet statistically insignificant. None of the above independent variables can be singled out in its effect on ethnic pride.

In contrast, all the independent variables tested above are statistically significant on implicit/explicit intolerance. More precisely, some forms of religiosity and some forms of threat perceptions become stronger than others in their impact on intolerance. What these findings infer is that while in-group pride insignificantly and weakly varies according to religiosity and threat perceptions, out-group indifference strongly and significantly varies according to the same factors. In that sense,

empirically, ethnic pride, and implicit/explicit intolerant out-group perceptions have two different sources of origins.

4.2.2 Type of religiosity on out-group intolerance

As defined at the operationalization stage, a given image could express any of the following forms of religiosity—religiosity of the in-group; perceived religiosity of the out-group; or no expressions of religiosity at all. Theoretically, both in-group and perceived out-group religiosity ultimately is a measure of the religious consciousness of Sinhalese. However, the questions are, in what ways are 'religiosity' important according to the current findings? Moreover, are these three forms of religiosity caused by a similar variance of ethnocentrism, or are there significant differences?

First, both perceived out-group religiosity (AME=0.277 at $p<0.01$) and own-religiosity (AME=0.103 at $p<0.01$) independently predict out-group intolerance. Secondly, as shown in Model 6 and 7, when both threat perceptions and conspiracy theories are interacting with religiosity, the latter has the capacity to increase the salience of the former.

Thirdly, as shown in Figure 6, the type of religiosity starts to matter, especially on occasions when both threat perceptions and conspiracy theories are weak/absent. In such situations, only perceived out-group religiosity determines a higher level of out-group intolerance. What does this mean in the practical word? While it is quite natural to expect social media to produce ethnocentric messages corresponding to incidents causing (perceived) material and/or symbolic threat to the in-group, when there are less or no such material or symbolic threats to be highlighted, religiosity has

been strategically utilized on social media to render intolerant ethnocentric messages about the out-groups.

In a similar study, Kunovich & Hodson state that,

> While it is clear that religiosity is often associated with intolerance, is it accurate to state that religiosity causes intolerance, or is there some other structural condition or process that mobilizes individuals along religious lines and increases intolerance? Based in the theoretical work of Coser (1956), Barth (1969), and Olzak & West (1991), we suggest an alternative approach focusing on the role of competition and conflict in generating intolerance. Specifically, we argue that competition and conflict increase the "saliency" (Olzak & West 1991) of religious identification and increase ethnic intolerance. Religiosity, then, is simply one career of group identity, and although it might be associated with intolerance, it does not directly cause intolerance (Kunovich & Hodson 1999:644)

The present findings do not necessarily reject the direct causality between religiosity and ethnocentrism/intolerance as Kunowich and Hodson have stated above. But, quite contrary to what Kunowich and Hodson (1999) argued above, the present findings show that religiosity 'increases' the salience of perceived material/symbolic resource-based threat (Model 6 in Table 7) in the Sri Lankan context.

What do these findings imply about social media behaviour in Sri Lankan? While people who possess either material or symbolic threat perceptions naturally become more ethnocentric, highlighting perceived out-group religiosity can

effectively instigate intolerance among people who possess fewer threat perceptions towards out-groups at a certain moment. A similar effect can be seen with conspiracy theories. When there are fewer conspiracy theories to be highlighted, perceptions of out-group religiosity has been used on social media to instigate out-group intolerance.

What these findings infer is that the type of religiosity matters. Sinhalese, the in-group, show out-group intolerance, mainly upon their perceived out-group religiosity. In other words, not the consciousness of their own religion, but the way they imagine/perceive the religiosity of out-group members matter. What is important here is that 'perceived' out-group religion is not necessarily an indicator of the level of religious consciousness among out-group members. Instead, it measures the religious consciousness of Sinhalese themselves. It reflects how irritable or capricious Sinhalese are, not necessarily due to the matters of or challenges to their own religion, but upon the real or imagined religiosity of out-groups. Attesting how real or mythical this 'perceived' out-group religiosity is another level of investigation which is beyond the basic scope of the present study.

4.2.3 Threat perceptions: Individual effect of material vs. symbolic threat

As discussed in the conceptualization chapter, the perceived threat has been categorized further into two main sections as material and symbolic threat perceptions. A material threat emerges basically from the competition between groups upon scarce, measurable and tangible resources such as job opportunities, opportunities for education, demographic factors, competition for land, and other forms of wealth. The symbolic threat is cultural, immeasurable, and intangible in contrast. For instance,

usage of a particular language/s by minority groups, national anthem or flags, or even certain practices/customs or cultural habits could generate symbolic threat perceptions among Sinhalese. There is a scholarly debate regarding both material and symbolic threat perceptions, which has the most substantial effect upon ethnocentrism (Bobo 1983; Kinder & Sears 1981:416; Esses et al. 2005; Stephan et al. 1998). Thus, we face the theoretical dilemma of whether both implicit and explicit out-group intolerance in post-war Sri Lanka is fundamentally due to material or symbolic threat.

As per the findings of the present study, both material and symbolic threats seem equal in their higher impact on intolerance and lower impact on ethnic pride. In other words, the present findings do not facilitate claims such as material threat is stronger in the Sri Lankan context than symbolic threat or vice versa. Thus, in post-war Sri Lanka, both material and symbolic threats are equally visible on social media, which imply the fact that the fluctuations of Sinhalese ethnocentrism and their out-group intolerance, in particular, is mainly upon both types of threat perceptions.

As aforementioned, it is clear how strongly and equally material and symbolic threat perceptions predict ethnocentrism on social media. Therefore, both Realistic Group Conflict Theory (where material/real threats have been given importance) and Symbolic Racism (where symbolic resources have been highlighted) are valid at least in the case of Sri Lanka.

Previous studies find that the importance of symbolic threat over material threat could be highly context specific (Stephan et al. 1998:570; Kinder & Sears 1981:428). For instance, the level of the cultural gulf between groups, position or status of the out-groups in a society (i.e., permanent residents vs. temporary immigrants), and also the size of the out-group itself decides what type of threat will

persist (Stephan et al. 1998:570). In the case of Sri Lanka, and particularly in the post-war context, out-group intolerance arises between Sinhala-Buddhists and Muslims, where of course, the two communities possess different cultural heritages although they have a shared history and land for decades. These differences in religious and cultural practices precipitate symbolic threat. Simultaneously, material threat also has equal explanatory power, due to the realization that all the material resources are for shared usage among all ethnic communities. Thus, the certainty that post-war Sri Lanka will remain a multi-ethnic community sustains both perceived material and symbolic threats.

4.2.5 The importance of the findings in the Sri Lankan context

Chapter 2 addressed the way previous studies on Sri Lanka understand colonial as well as post-colonial communal disturbances into either material or religious compartments. Table 7 allows us to compare the relative importance of 'material' and 'religious rationality' and the results complement the material rationality over religious. Yet, the present study considers that focusing only on material and religious causality behind collective identities and disturbances is a narrower approach, specifically in a context like Sri Lanka. It was to avoid such narrower focus, the present study introduced both symbolic threat and conspiracy theories as explanatory variables. The following discussion first explains the way the present study contributes to the traditional 'material' vs. 'religious' rationality, and subsequently argues that such mono-causal interpretations are partial.

Statistically, as Table 7 (Model 5) clearly illustrates, when comparing religiosity (own/perceived out-group) and material threat, the latter strongly predicts more variance in Sinhalese ethnocentrism and out-group intolerance (implicit/explicit). In that sense, the material rational, which was espoused by many previous studies (Jayawardena 1970, 1984; Jayasekera 1970; Schonthal 2016a; Haniffa 2016, 2017; Nuhman 2016), is further supported. In other words, post-war Sinhalese ethnic psychology is more prone to out-group intolerance upon perceived material threats than perceived out-group religiosity.

However, what should be noted here is the definition of 'material rationality' used in the previous studies. Many of the post-war studies cited above (such as Haniffa 2016, 2017; Nuhman 2016), defined 'material' narrowly in financial terms. In other words, the primary emphasis was on the perceived financial threats posed by profit-maximizing business attempts of out-groups. Only Schonthal (2016a) notes how other non-financial, but still material features, such as perceived demographic threat or competition for lands, configure out-group perceptions. Yet, none of those studies have empirically tested the effect of all these material threats. Given that limited definition, the present study extends the definition of perceived 'material threat' in the Sri Lankan context by combining not only financial/wealth, but also demography, competition for education, lands, and jobs, and also the perceived military capacities of the out-groups.

In addition, many of the previous studies dealing with 'material' and 'religious rationality' pose a strong qualitative claim that religion and ideology are epiphenomenal superstructures but not foundations of conflicts. Religion is understood as the "immediate cause" but not the "ultimate cause" (Roberts 1994:190-191) of riots and communal disturbances. The findings of the present study,

(based on the interaction effect shown in Model 5 and 6 in Table 7), suggest that when religion interacts with threat perceptions or conspiracy theories, the resulting impact of threat and conspiracies are stronger. In other words, the presence of the religious factor increases the salience of threat perceptions and conspiracy theories. Although these findings do not necessarily distinguish whether or not religion is an 'immediate' or 'ultimate' cause, it clearly suggests the mobilizing capacity of religious claims.

Besides contributing to the 'material' vs. 'religious' rationality, the present study's main point of departure is in its emphasis on the role of 'symbolic threat' perceptions (AME=0.539 at $p < 0.01$) and 'conspiracy theories' (AME=0.149 at $p < 0.01$) on out-group intolerance. Both symbolic threat perceptions and conspiracy theories show a statistically significant effect. As Roberts suggests, understanding communal riots or conflicts merely based on material vs. religious dichotomy is a "trap" (Roberts 1994:191). [61] Specifically, by 'symbolic threat,' the author emphasizes the importance of other factors that cannot be strictly counted as 'religious' or 'material.' Such as, the symbolic usage of flags, the problem of the national anthem being sung in multiple languages, or seeing public name boards in the Arabic language in public spaces create severe communal tensions in a country like Sri Lanka. Thus, instead of promoting a mono-causal determination of ethnic riots, the present findings support a broader understanding of multi-causality, while admitting the fact that some determinants are stronger than the others.

4.3 Conclusion

[61] This has been espoused by several other scholars such as Rogers (1987b), and Fernando (1970), Blackton (1970) specifically in terms of the 1915 riots.

Based on the statistical tests performed above, the present study produces several significant findings. First, the type of ethnocentrism matters. While intolerance (implicit/explicit) widely varies upon religiosity, threat perceptions, and conspiracy theories, on the contrary in-group love, which we refer to as ethnic pride, does not. Secondly, all the three determinants tested in the present study positively cause ethnocentric psychologies among Sinhalese, although threat perceptions appear stronger in comparison to religiosity and conspiracy theories. Also, possession of material and symbolic threat perceptions show indiscriminately similar impact in creating both implicit and explicit out-group intolerance.

Thirdly, not religion per se but perceived out-group religiosity makes Sinhalese more intolerant. In other words, the higher consciousness of the level of religiosity of the members of the out-group predicts more intolerance among Sinhalese than their consciousness of their own religiosity. In summary, the findings facilitate three roles of religiosity in the Sri Lankan context: First, religion predicts out-group intolerance (though relatively weaker). Secondly, when interacting with threat perceptions/conspiracy theories, religion has the capacity to heighten the effects of other independent variables. Thirdly, religion becomes a strong predictor of ethnocentrism especially on occasions when weaker levels of threat perceptions and conspiracy theories are functioning.

In addition to these major findings, the extended definition of material threat, facilitated by the present study, which consists of tangible, and measurable public goods such as education, employment, population size and wealth, is highly related to the post-Orientalist discourse mentioned above. Post-Orientalists argue that ethnic

hatreds are based on colonial encounter and subsequent modern state formation process and its by-products (Tambiah 1986; Gunawardane 1990; Spencer 1990; Nissan and Stirrat 1990). Situational/socio-structural factors, such as resource-based competition, and specifically material threats arising from competition for jobs, educational opportunities, and demographic matters became incipient in Sri Lanka mostly due to nature of the 'state' model founded in the post-independence (communal representation in the legislature and formation of ethnic parties) and the policies adopted by various post-independence governments. Violence based on ethnic lines dates only from independence because it is the post-independence state models that espoused the division of public goods upon ethnic proportions. Thus, the individual tendency to prefer different cultures, religions, or languages were turned into something new by the devices of the modern state (Nissan & Stirrat 1990:24).

Finally, all these results were drawn upon a sample of images collected from social media, and thus, the conclusions are primarily about the virtual/online construction of ethnic pride and out-group intolerance. The abundance of intolerant expressions on social media cannot be merely confined as a digital or virtual phenomenon, but it has spillover effects. Besides social media's 'digital/virtual' basis, exists a 'social' basis 'of' the people and 'by' the people, that is beyond the control of mainstream state narrations/or constructions of social identities. The validity of the above conclusions should be seen on this basis because social media is presumably a 'social' entity than 'digital,' and thus it reflects a near cross-section of what is befalling in the real world.

5

A supplementary (small data) analysis of audience-generated contents on social media

In the context of the computational turn of social sciences and humanities, and with the development of algorithmic processing of large sets of data produced on social media, which is commonly known as ‘big data’ analysis, the importance of small samples, specific stories and corpuses (which can be technically called ‘small data’), have been somewhat overlooked. This chapter intends to pay more attention to such small data (selected stories/written text), in order to drill deeper into specific stories unfolding on social media to draw inferences on Sinhalese ethnocentrism and its determinants. In that sense, this chapter is supplementary to the main analysis and findings of the previous chapter (chapter 4).

5.1 A conceptual overview of everyday ethnocentrism and social media

The agency of ordinary people, the way they consume and prosume those visual depictions of Sinhalaness will be analyzed in the forthcoming sections, which was not covered in the previous chapter. When looking at social media through the conventional media studies dichotomy of information producer and consumer, what

was analyzed in Chapter 4 above is more or less the information producer's (the admins of Facebook pages) point of view of Sinhalaness. In other words, the analysis in the previous chapter is completely based on the visual images produced by the Sinhala-Buddhist activists, and thus their portrayal of Sinhalese ethnocentrism.

This inadequacy of not properly exposing how ordinary people consume the stories shared on social media can be seen on some of the previous studies that employed social media data. For instance, Stewart (2014) analyzes how certain Buddhist nationalist groups graphically portray the Muslim 'other' on Facebook and social media, but his analysis does not expose the way Facebook users consume those portrayals. Haniffa in one of her most recent studies on *halal* troubles in contemporary Sri Lanka, elucidates the methods used in relation to the online data collection and analysis, "[w]hen the halal controversy was gaining momentum I tracked BBS press conferences and collected newspaper articles and YouTube footage of BBS rallies and television appearances" (Haniffa 2017:118). These studies are simply two of the many, and in both cases, the strong agency of ordinary people on the internet has been overlooked.

Why is it important to study the way ordinary people interact with social media contents in a study of group identity construction? As Hobsbawm (1990) notes in *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780,*

> [T] hey [nationalism and 'national question'] are, in my view, dual phenomena, constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless also analyzed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist. If I have a

> major criticism of Gellner's work it is that his preferred perspective of modernization from above, makes it difficult to pay adequate attention to the view from below. This view from below, i.e. the nation as seen not by governments and the spokesmen and activists of nationalist (or non-nationalist) movements, but the ordinary persons who are the objects of their action and propaganda, is exceedingly difficult to discover (Hobsbawm 1990:10-11).

It is the "assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist," that is considered as 'everyday' nationalism or rather everyday ethnocentrism in the present study. Social media, to a certain degree, makes the exceedingly difficult discovery of people's thoughts that Hobsbawm identified above, somewhat smooth. By analyzing audience-generated[62] data on social media, the author attempts to trace how ethnic self-image is understood or constructed from below. The following sections first elaborate the technical division between 'big' and 'small' data in the contemporary social sciences and the importance of each. Secondly, the chapter summarizes randomly selected stories on social media along with the comments made by the audiences. Finally, based on those data, some insights are drawn on everyday nationalism and ethnocentrism in contemporary Sri Lanka. The same ethical standards described in Chapter 3 are maintained further in the data collection and analysis for the following discussion.

Although the present study accepts that information 'producer vs. consumer' dichotomy which is explicit in traditional media is now a vague reality in new media along with its prosumer culture, the focus of the following sections is explicitly on the

[62] In order to distinguish the ordinary people from the admins of individual Facebook pages, the present study uses the technical terms 'audience-generated' or 'user-generated' interchangeably. In the present chapter both terms refer to ordinary people who consume social media daily.

activities of fans of some selected Facebook pages. The agency of the ordinary people and the way they think, imagine, express, and discuss ethnic identities can be traced mainly by analyzing the audience-generated textual discourses on social media.

5.2 Big data vs. small data in the social sciences and social media-based research

Understanding the difference between 'big data' and 'small data' is fundamental to the forthcoming textual analysis of Facebook audience-generated data (texts/discourses/stories). By definition, big data are huge in volume (consisting of terabytes or petabytes of data), high in velocity (being created in or near real time), and diverse in variety in type (being structured and unstructured) (Kitchin 2016). Small data differ from big data in several aspects such as volume, exhaustivity, resolution and indexicality, relationality, velocity, variety, flexibility, and scalability. Kitchin (2014a; 2014b; 2016) provides a comprehensive comparison of small and big data, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 8. Comparison of 'small' and 'big' data

Characteristic	**Small data**	**Big data**
Volume	Limited to large	Very large
Exhaustivity	Samples	Entire population
Resolution and indexicality	Coarse & weak to tight & strong	Tight & strong
Relationality	Weak to strong	Strong
Velocity	Slow, freeze-framed	Fast
Variety	Limited to wide	Wide
Flexibility and scalable	Low to middling	High

Source (Kitchin 2014a; 2014b; 2016)

Considering the above dichotomy of small and big data, the analysis of 2033 images in the previous chapter should also be technically categorized under small data analysis, characterized by the 'limited to large' volume of data and manual collection of data, despite its attempt to be exhaustive by collecting all the images produced between 2011 and 2018, and the assistance gained from software packages when processing data.

Given that, the present chapter analyzes a relatively smaller amount of data produced by consumers of several Facebook pages. Why is it important to analyze a selected smaller sample of audience-generated contents? The answer to this question

is in the understanding of qualitative vs. quantitative methods of research and its positivist and post-positivist ontological assumptions. In the positivist and quantitative venture of chapter 4, a relatively substantial set of visual data was gathered to see the emerging patterns of and associations between the data, assuming that the larger the sample and the closes to the size of the population, the higher the generalizability and validity of the findings.

In contrast, quantitative methods are assumed to be capable of capturing intentions, subjectivities, and experiences, as well as historically situated phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Jensen 2002). Different scholars have addressed the controversy of what is more productive (between using big data vs. small data approach) when making inferences on new media.

> The problem of the very expression of 'Big Data' is that it tends to direct attention to the sole size of the dataset, as if the scale of a sample was the ultimate indicator of how reliable the conclusion drawn from its analysis might be. While the volume of data is not the only dimension in Big Data research designs, some of their advocates clearly express an empiricist (and positivist) confidence in the fact that data abundance provides direct access to 'social reality' (Kitchin 2016; see also Kitchin 2014; Manovich 2012).

Borgman (2015) provides a different definition of big and small data, focusing not on the size of the sample but the level of insightfulness,

> [D]istinguishing between big and little data is problematic due to the many ways in which something might be big. […] Data are big or little in terms of what can be done with them, what insights they can reveal, and the scale of analysis required relative to the phenomenon of interest […] (2015:6).

Having analyzed a relatively 'big' data set in Chapter 4 statistically, the capacities of such analysis is clear. Statistical inference is useful to see the emerging patterns of a larger data set to make conclusions about the society in which those were produced and also to see what factors characterize the majority of the images, associations between images and the correlations and causalities as well.

> Identifying large-scale patterns can be useful, but it can also overlook how people do things with Twitter, why they do them, and how they understand them. Quantitative studies often determine connections and networks and interpret them 'objectively' ex post facto, based on statistics and numbers. Instead, qualitative research seeks to understand meaning-making, placing technology use into specific social contexts, places, and times (Marwick 2013:119).

Thus, both quantitative and qualitative techniques have different capacities and limitations. The forthcoming sections focus more on people, the way they understand, consume, and reproduce meanings constructed on social media.

5.3 Methodology of data collection and analysis

This chapter takes a qualitative venture to drill deep into audience-generated data on Facebook to yield inferences on Sinhalese ethnic self-image (ethnocentrism). Audience-generated contents or data on social media (specifically on Facebook) could take several forms. First, the user interaction statistics—that is the number of likes, shares, comments on items posted on a particular page on Facebook. Second, the

contents of the textual or graphical (i.e., stickers, or GIF[63]) comments made by the audiences on a particular item on Facebook. The author's attention here is on the second mentioned above—the textual comments posted by the audiences. Data were collected from several selected public Facebook pages identified in Chapter 3, and have been de-identified here.[64] Having said that, the following sections provide a brief overview of several established qualitative methods utilized for analyzing textual contents of social media communities.

5.3.1 Narrative and discourse analysis in social media research

Narrative analysis, in straightforward terms, is a method developed to analyze stories. "It explores how people story their lives [and] understand the complexities of personal and social relations" (Esin et al. 2014:203). Narrative analysis could be applied to literary texts, or other stories in diverse contexts such as daily conversations such as between friend or during dinner time, in classroom settings to other more formal occasions such as job interviews (Ochs & Capps 2011), or as in the present case activities on social media. Narrative analysis, irrespective of its theoretical or methodological orientation, or "whether it is addressing biographical life stories, or dealing with the linguistic or discursive structure of stories, or describing various levels of positioning performed by narratives, *tends to focus on participants' self-generated meanings"* (Esin et al. 2014:204, emphasis added). The focus of the narrative analysis could differ depending on the theoretical orientation of the

[63] A lossless format for image files that supports both animated and static images.
[64] See Chapter 3 for the rationale behind the selection of *public* Facebook pages and the ethics behind de-identifying those.

researcher. For instance, a researcher based on social constructionist approach might emphasize that narratives themselves consist of socially constructed meanings, in contrast to the self-generated meanings or as expressions of individuals' internal states (Squire et al. 2008:5). Such a constructionist approach will also focus more on the socio-cultural and historical context of stories (Esin et al. 2014:207).

In the context of the online world or in social media, narrative analysis is a widely used method of data analysis. To be specific, conventional narrative analysts identify certain features of the stories circulated on social media involving "fragmentation and open-endedness of stories, exceeding the confines of a single posting and site and resisting a neat categorization of beginning-middle-end. They also involve multiple authoring of a post, as it may become shared across media platforms. In addition, there is a tendency for reporting mundane, ordinary and in some cases, trivial events from the poster's everyday life, rather than big complications or disruptions" (Georgakopoulou 2016).

Closely related to narrative analysis is the 'discourse analysis,' which focuses more on the language use or words used by people to construct meanings. As Hall articulates, discourse analysis focuses on "the production and circulation of meaning through language" (Hall 1997:1), or "the close study of language in use" (Taylor 2001:5), while narrative analysis is more concerned with the structure, content, and function of the stories people tell about their experiences (Riessman 1993; Mishler 1995). The focus of discourse analysis, in contrast, is to "gain a better understanding of how the use of language (that is to say, the choice of words, grammatical constructions and various rhetorical strategies) is implicated in the construction of particular version of events. Discourse analysis is very much concerned with the effects of discourse, with what discourse can do and as a result, discursive research is

primarily interested in discourse itself rather than the individuals who use it" (Willig 2014:343). According to Dunn and Neumann (2016), in discourse analysis, researchers "interrogate the persistence of certain linguistic signs and tropes, their transformations over time, as well as ruptures in the discourse that exposed marginalized voices and subjugated knowledges" Dunn and Neumann (2016:4).

5.3.2 Netnography

In comparison to the narrative analysis of stories or discourse analysis, netnography is a recent introduction to the field of online data analysis. In comparison to the less restrictive or less-methodical practices of narrative analysis, netnography has certain procedural practices or a relatively clearer definition. Netnography is the online (or the digital) version of ethnography. The latter is based on certain major practices such as personal engagement with the subject, in-depth understanding of a particular culture or a social setting using a cocktail of methodologies. "[P]articipant observation is the most common component of this cocktail, but interviews, conversational and discourse analysis, documentary analysis, film and photography all have their place in the ethnographer's repertoire" (Hobbs 2006:101).

Netnography, which is also referred to as 'virtual ethnography' (Hine 2000), is another addition to the above repertoire of ethnographic methods. It includes,

> [P]articipant-observational research based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communication as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal

> phenomenon….The use of the term netnography in that case would represent the researcher's attempt to acknowledge the importance of computer-mediated communications in the lives of culture members, to include in their data collection strategies the triangulation between various online and offline sources of cultural understanding. (Kozinets 2010:60).

In netnography, specific basic protocols have been observed when collecting and analyzing data. For instance, data collection does not mean mere appropriation of data or compiling contents dispersed throughout a particular online platform, instead involves

> [C]ommunicating with members of a culture or community. That communication can take many forms [such as netnographic interviews, email interviews, participant observation, netnographic field-note data and many other forms, see Kozinets 2010:95-117]. But whichever form it takes, it entails relevant involvement, engagement, contact, interaction, communication, relation, collaboration and connection with community members…" (Kozinets 2010:95). Data produced in this manner is known as 'elicited data,' that is data produced by the researcher and the members of the social media community (Kozinets 2014:267). Data analysis process in netnography is inductive, using specific procedures such as coding, noting, abstracting, being informed by other more established methods such as Grounded Theory Method (see Strauss and Corbin 1990). These methods aim at a detailed examination of a whole by breaking it into constituent parts (Kozinets 2010: 118). In addition to these, a deeper cultural understanding of both online platform and the offline cultural world to which it belongs to, real-time engagement with the online cultural context, and being site-specific are required practices in netnography (Kozinets 2014).

The data collected and analyzed through either netnographic, narrative, or discourse analysis techniques are essentially small data, as we discussed above. They are small because the number of observations is limited in comparison to the actual number of participants in a particular online/social media site and also insignificant in the statistical sense. As a result, these data can be manually handled, without much assistance from algorithmic processes of computers. Yet, on the other hand, these small data are considered as 'thick data,' a term used to indicate detailed and dense descriptions of the cultural practices under study (Geertz 1973), or the "sticky stuff that's difficult to quantify—emotions, stories, worldviews—that get stripped through the processes of normalizing, standardizing, defining [and] clustering that makes massive datasets analyzable by computers" (Wang 2016).

5.3.3 An integrated approach

Being informed by the narrative, discourse and netnographic techniques of approaching, collecting and analyzing social media data, and also with the knowledge of qualitative vs. quantitative techniques of content analysis discussed in a previous chapter, the present chapter creates an integrated approach to analyzing data. The author randomly selected a small number of images publicly posted on several Facebook pages operated by various Sinhalese communities online. The focal point here is the way ordinary people engage in and respond to the story or the meaning expressed through the images produced by others. The analysis here is less methodical than in Chapter 4. The author does not conduct quantitative content analysis here. Instead, the main message posted by each image, the comments posted

by users, their word choice, and meaning construction, and also the stories they develop, and the way stories are evolved with multiple audience-engagement will be analyzed in details. The purpose of this analysis is not necessarily to draw firm causal conclusions but to illustrate the way people engage in meaning construction on social media, and to depict how Sinhalaness have been expressed or articulated by the ordinary users on social media. A researcher's active involvement/engagement with online communities, or in other words, online participant observation suggested by netnographers, will not be observed in the present study. Instead, the author is only a passive observer and appropriator of social media data.

5.4 Vignetting the stories: Discourses of the audience

Image 1: Education

The image consists of a photograph of a letter issued by the Department of Examination-Sri Lanka, informing the minimum marks required to pass the Grade Five Scholarship examination which is annually conducted by the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka for students enrolled in public and private schools. The original purpose of this examination is to identify outstanding students, admit them to 'city' schools or more 'popular' and 'highly ranked' schools and to provide financial assistance (bursaries) to economically disadvantaged students.[65] The letter announces the cut-off marks relevant to the examination conducted in August 2017.

[65] See UNESCO (2015) for details.

In two columns, cut-off marks for Tamil medium and Sinhala medium students have been mentioned separately based on each district. The photograph is posted on Facebook with a lengthy description stating how unfair it is to have a higher cut-off mark for Sinhala medium students and relatively lower cut-off mark for Tamil medium students. For instance, a Sinhala medium student who is based in Colombo district should have a minimum of 164 marks to pass the examination, while a Tamil medium student in Colombo should get a minimum of 156 marks to pass the examination. A Sinhala medium student based in Mullaitivu district (a war-affected district with relatively lower economic growth and in which Tamils are the majority in terms of the size of the population) have to have a minimum of 161 marks while a Tamil medium student needs 154 marks. Overall, the minimum score a Tamil student should achieve is lower than a Sinhalese student.

The post comes with a severe (textual) criticism of the government and its unfair treatment to the Sinhalese students. In the textual description (written in Sinhala language) that is posted along with the photograph, the phrase "avenging the Sinhalese students" is used disapproving the minimum marks set for Sinhalese and Tamils. Tamil is the language used by the majority of the Muslims and Tamils in Sri Lanka, and this particular post considers that the government unnecessarily favors both Muslim and Tamil students. The post is 'liked' by 840 followers, and it has 107 user-generated comments.

As pointed out at the outset of this chapter, the focus of the analysis here is the comments created by users and the way they build up a story, their word choice and the direction of their expressions. According to the comments analyzed by the author, the majority of the users consider minimum scores (based on the language of instruction) as "unfair." Following are some of the comments posted by the users with

reference to the above mentioned image; “the country is a Sinhala-Buddhist state, and if a real Sinhala-Buddhist government/president rules it, this sort of discriminatory practices would not take place”; “the government is favoring Muslims in order to be in power, to get Muslim votes”; “Tamils have taken the Sinhalese lands (paddy fields), and the Muslims dominate the market, and Sinhalese are now helpless”; “this sort of discriminatory practices cause ethnic conflict”; “A Tamil person should be appointed as the Commissioner General of Examinations in Sri Lanka, since Tamils are relatively impartial and honest than Sinhalese and Muslims.”

Audience-generated comments are entirely compatible with the argument put forward by the image and its description. When abstracting the above comments based on the knowledge produced by the previous chapter, a strong line of Sinhalese ethnocentrism appear in the nationalistic claims such as, “the country is a Sinhala-Buddhist state.” In addition, the idea that out-groups are a material threat (in education, land, and market) is overwhelming. Also, the way stereotypes on out-group have been constructed is visible. As quoted above, one Sinhalese user stereotypes that Tamils are relatively “impartial and honest” than Muslims and Sinhalese, and in another comment a derogatory term— “*hambaya”* — has been used to refer to Sri Lankan Muslims.

Image 2: Territorial concerns

This image consists of a hand drawn-human figures, one Tamil and one Muslim. Both are male, and the Tamil person is sketched in a way that he carries the Northern Province of Sri Lanka on his shoulder, and the Muslim person is carrying

the Eastern Province on his arm. Their ethnic identities can be easily recognized based on the patterns of their attire. On the bottom end of the image, it is written in the Sinhala language "the unseen death of Sinhalese." This image has 1800 'likes' and 55 comments.

The majority of the audience-generated comments are compatible with the main idea of the image. Following are some of the selected comments: "Tamils celebrated the dead LTTE soldiers [*maha viru*] recently, and no Sinhalese leader stopped that," "some of the family members of main Sinhalese political leaders [referring to a leading politician of Sri Lanka] got married to some of the main figures related to the LTTE," "this is the end of the Sinhalese," "it is the Sinhalese political leaders who cause territorial disintegration of the country." Usage of the stereotypical word *"koti"* (meaning Tigers, which is used to indicate the meaning 'terrorists' in the Sri Lankan context) to refer to Tamils and the LTTE is quite common. In contrast to the above, some of the users have stated the following idea, "until the people of Sri Lanka are divided upon communal and religious line, it is quite easy for any politician to fool the people and do whatever they want. So, we should be united as Sri Lankans."

Image 3: Violence

This image has no visual contents. It only consists of text (in the Sinhala language). The main message of the image is to criticize (image was posted on November 2011) an act of violence of Muslims, where Muslims (referred to as extremists in the image) had inhumanely beaten two Sinhalese school children (male).

According to the image, the school children stole something in Balapitiya city (a southern coastal town in Sri Lanka), and Muslims retaliated in response by beating the perpetrators instead of taking them to the police. The image poses a doubtful remark whether this act of violence is an organized crime against Sinhalese, and also reminds the readers of similar acts of violence by Muslims in the recent past. This image has 34 'likes' and 25 comments.

Audience-generated responses are entirely compatible with the main message of the image. Almost all users agree on the idea that Muslims are performing violence against Sinhalese. Similar to the images mentioned above, the common derogatory terms used to refer to Muslims '*Hambaya', 'Thambi'* and *'extremists'* are widely seen in the comments. In addition, "Muslims are racists," "Muslims should be completely removed/chased away from the country as we did to the LTTE," "Muslims are more dangerous than Tamils," "we (Sinhalese) should boycott Muslim business," "Sinhalese should rise against Muslims" are some of the audience-generated comments.

Image 4 and 5: Soldiers

Image 4 depicts a portrait of a former army soldier. The textual contents (in the Sinhala language) around the portrait express the idea that the government does not loo after the soldiers who have committed their lives for the sake of the security of the country during the battle against the LTTE. This post has 17100 'likes' and 871 user-generated comments. Image 5 also deals with a similar issue depicting two

portrait-style photographs of soldiers. Image 5 has 5300 'likes' and 132 user-generated comments.

Among the comments generated by the users, many have admired the 'bravery' and 'skillfulness' of the Sri Lankan army. Majority of the users agree that the government is "betraying" the soldiers who fought for the country, instead of protecting them. Lengthy descriptions of the way some of the political leaders in western countries attempted to block the then government's military activities against the LTTE can also be seen among the user-generated comments. Some users directly identify "war heroes as an asset, a typical asset of the Sinhalese."

Image 6: Religious sites

In this image, two photographs have been graphically combined. One positioned on the top of the image, shows a Bo tree[66] (Bodhi tree). The tree has grown extremely close to one of the main roads connecting Colombo and another adjacent city. The atmosphere around the Bo tree depicts a crowded, urban setting. Some signs of road construction can also be seen. The second photograph depicts a Muslim mosque, which is also constructed extremely close to the main road and as written in the image, it is located in Eheliyagoda, Ratnapura district. In addition to the graphic content, the textual content (written in Sinhala language) of the image expresses the following idea: "The government is ready to cut down the Bo tree to make the road wider, but they did not touch the Muslim church when widening the road next to it." Also, the

[66] This tree (*Ficus Religiosa)* is considered sacred by Buddhists since Buddha sat under the shade of a similar tree when he attained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya (current Gaya, West Central Bihar State, in India).

image raises the question, “why does this government continuously take avenge against Buddhists? If you are against it, please share the post.” This post has 10400 ‘likes’ and 685 comments. In the external textual description posted along with the image, the then Minister of Urban Development and the then Minister of Megalopolis and Western Development have been mentioned as the two responsible authorities.

The user-generated comments can be divided into three main sections. One group of users are against the idea of cutting the Bo tree based on its environmental value. Some of such comments are, “the government is cutting down all the trees and make it a concrete city, in which we will not be able to breathe,” “there is a special value of Bo trees according to quantum physics.” The second group is against the idea of cutting the Bo tree based on its religious value. They highlight how ‘ancient’ this particular Bo tree is, how true Buddhists are always environmentally friendly, and if the government destroys it, they have to face the ‘karmic’ justice. The third group of user-generated comments is focusing on the factual accuracy of the information given in the image. One of the users, identifying herself as a Buddhist, states that the location of the mosque is incorrectly mentioned in the post, and during road constructions in the area of Eheliyagoda, no Muslim mosque or Buddhist temples were removed. Upon that, several other users also have joined the conversation and admit the factual inaccuracy of the post.

Image 7: A Muslim feeding a cow

This particular image consists of a photograph of a Muslim male feeding a cow in an urban, business setting. The man is wearing a *taqiyah* (the white colour cap worn by

Muslims). On the top right corner of the image, a textual content written in the Sinhala language (with bigger font) can be seen, which says; “a rare incident.” On the bottom of the image, in a smaller font but still in a clearly visible manner, the producers say, “share if you admire this.”

The user-generated comments are diverse for this image. Following are some of the comments. Among some of the comments that appreciate the activities shown in the image - “some of the Muslims are good and innocent irrespective of their religion,” “people cannot be judged by their religious affiliation, even some Buddhists are very bad,” “real Buddhists are not criticizing other religions.” In contrast some dubious users commented in the following way - “I never trust these *Thambis* [Muslims],” “he is feeding the cow to make it fat, and probably he will slaughter it soon,” “it is in this friendly manner that they [Muslims] are trying to conquer our country.”

Image 8: Extinction of Sinhalese

This image consists of a photograph of some of the instant food/snacks/beverages (such as packets of noodles, ice-cream, sausages, powdered milk, pizza, and some of the world-famous brands of soft drinks) widely consumed in Sri Lanka. Many of the brand names are clearly visible to Facebook users. The picture comes with a title saying, “if we continue to eat artificial food, the Sinhalese race/nation will be extinct in ten years.” This title is placed on the top of the graphic image in bigger letters. On the bottom of the image, another description is on a relatively smaller font, which is presented in the form of a statement (with double quotation marks) delivered by an

Ayurvedic physician (along with the name of the person). That statement also expresses the same idea that artificially created food causes malfunctions in the human body (i.e., heart attacks/diabetes), and peculiarities in the genetic system, and if the trend continues, Sinhalese will be extinct in another ten years. The producer also requests the users to 'share' the post and "inform the nation." In addition to the textual contents within the image, there is a long external description which is also written by the administrators of the Facebook page. This post has 6500 'likes' and 160 audience-generated comments.

Unlike in many of the previous images, in which audience-generated comments were mostly compatible with the main message produced by the image, in the present image a clear division of opinions can be seen among users in their response to the image. Users who believe in the fact that these food cause extinction of Sinhalese have generated the following comments: "there were strong Sinhalese men in the past during the great hydraulic civilization of Sri Lanka, and they did not eat this sort of instant food"; "the country belongs to Sinhalese people, and others have no right of it"; "please refer to the following link and read the benefits of natural food." However, the most significant aspect of this post is that majority of the users have raised some questions against the post—"if these foods are in low quality and if these are not good for human consumption, how does it only affect Sinhalese, but not the other ethnic communities?" Many of the users were interacting with each other on the comments thread responding to the questions raised by others. One user says, "do not be deaf, it does not only affect Sinhala people, but also affects every human being." Another one adds "all human lives are equal," and another user says "this food will not cause sterilization, but it will cause certain health issues" responding to a conversation on 'extinction of Sinhalese.'

Another important aspect of the conversation inspired by the present image is that some of the Muslim users (based on their user name) were also engaged in the conversation. They also raised the question that if the food is not in good quality, it equally affect other non-Sinhalese too. While some of the users (who could be Sinhalese based on their user names) were positively responding to such comments, some others used negative, derogatory terms such as "*hambaya"* or "*thambi"* in their responses. In addition to the above comments, which are either positively or negatively related to the main message of the image, some of the users expressed ideas that have no apparent link with the image. On the other hand, some other users were using humor and sarcasm to look down upon these virtual conversations, debates and fights as useless and time-consuming.

Image 9: Muslim Business

The post consists of a photograph of a poster pasted on a wall in an urban setting. The poster only consists of textual contents written in the Sinhala language. No images can be seen. It says, "True Sinhalaness means buying only from Sinhala shops/businesses during the upcoming Sinhala New Year season." Sinhala New Year (also referred to as Sinhala-Tamil New Year) is a local festival celebrating the New Year in April every year, by both Tamils and Sinhalese people in Sri Lanka. Buying new clothes, repairing/renovating houses, cooking traditional sweets, and visiting friends and relatives with gifts are some of the common, traditional practices during this time. As a result, consumerism increases during the first few months of every year. It is a well-known fact that in Sri Lanka clothing industry or business is mostly

dominated by Muslim businessmen, and the poster is indirectly asking Sinhalese people to boycott such Muslim-owned businesses.

While many of the respondents have commented agreeing to the main message of the image, several have pointed out the weaker customer-care of Sinhalese businesses, the way Sinhalese shopkeepers look down upon their customers, and their impoliteness, in contrast to higher and friendlier customer relations of Muslim shopkeepers. Some other members of the audience responded in a different direction saying that "buying from Sinhala or Muslim businesses is not the problem, but the real problem is we do not have enough money for shopping."

5.5 Audience-generated data and human behaviour online: An analysis

For what purpose/s were the stories depicted in images and user-generated comments under each image were carefully described in the previous section? Because the opinions of ordinary social media users matter. The way they use language matters. Their word choice matters. The way users interact with each other matters. All these aspects reveal an important face of everyday ethnocentrism of Sinhalese. Paying more attention to individual stories, and carefully analyzing those are the very purposes of 'small data' analysis as already mentioned at the outset of this chapter.

In chapter one, the author distinguished the fundamental differences between the concept of 'nationalism' and 'ethnocentrism.' To repeat it, while nationalism is essentially a political/territorial oriented idea aiming at self-determination for a particular group of people, ethnocentrism does not necessarily focus on achieving a

nation-state. Rather, it is more about how the members of the in-group think that their folkways are at the center of everything and scale others relatively. In chapter four, based on the content analysis of visuals, the author illustrated the range of in- and out-group perceptions possessed by contemporary Sinhalese and argued that nationalism related sentiments are only one out of many. The different types of user-generated comments depicted above further support this argument. Below, the author notes the stereotypes and nationalistic sentiments among Sinhalese social media users, based on their textual utterances. Also, the author recognizes the inconsistencies, incongruities, and incompatibilities between different users on the same issue. These inconsistencies and incompatibilities of opinions among the ordinary people that the author label as everyday ethnocentrism.

Sinhalese construction of stereotypes on out-groups can be easily traced on social media. Technically, stereotypes, do not necessarily connote a negative meaning. Stereotypes are "the typical picture that comes to mind when thinking about a particular social group" (Lippman 1922). Thus, there could be both positive and negative stereotypes of a specific individual or a community. Similarly, as described above, Sinhalese Facebook users construct both positive and negative stereotypes about out-groups (Muslims, as well as Tamils).

Concerning Muslims, some of the most frequently used terms are "*Hambaya," "Thambi"* and "Muslim extremists." These terms are used with negative connotations. These negative remarks are not recent constructions, but have a historical basis, and have been historically transmitted. Dewaraja (1994) notes the genesis of the word *Hambaya* in her famous historical text, *Muslims of Sri Lanka: One Thousand Years of*

Ethnic Harmony. The Sinhalese people use *hambankarayo* to refer to Coast Moors.[67] *Hamban* is derived from *Champan,* a Malay word, meaning 'boat.' *Karayo* is a Sinhala word meaning 'men' (Dewaraja 1994:46).

Today, *hambankarako* has been further shortened as *hambayo,* and it is widely used on social media and also in other offline discussions with a derogatory connotation to refer to Muslims. *Thambi* is a Tamil word meaning 'younger brother.' Sinhalese use *Thambi* to refer to Muslims (but not Tamils), often with a derogatory connotation. The Sinhala term *Muslim/Islam anthawadeen,* meaning Mulsim extremists, became widespread among Sinhalese due to the growth of orthodox Islam in Sri Lanka (discussed in Chapter 2), and global occurrences such as ISIS, and also even before that, when the Taliban destroyed Buddha statues in Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan. On the other hand, as discussed under Image 7 above, several positive expressions can also be noted (i.e. "some of the Muslims are good and innocent irrespective of their religion," "people cannot be judged by their religious affiliation"), although it is still controversial whether or not these positive utterances have developed up to the level of 'positive stereotypes.'

In addition to stereotypes on Muslims, the user-generated comments consists of both positive and negative stereotypes on Tamils. While the stereotypical usage of the word *"koti"* (Tigers) negatively refers to Tamils, in contrast, a Sinhalese user once compared the honesty and impartiality of Tamils with the other communal groups as follows: "a Tamil person should be appointed as the Commissioner General of Examinations in Sri Lanka, since Tamils are relatively impartial and honest

[67] Moor is another term to refer to Muslims in Sri Lanka. Coast Moor refers to the Muslims who arrived from India. Coast Moors are also known as Indian Moors in official documents in Sri Lanka. Until 1971, the Population and Housing Census of Sri Lanka has categorized the Muslims living in Sri Lanka as 'Sri Lankan Muslim' and 'Indian Muslim.'

compared to Sinhalese and Muslims." Qualities like impartiality have been ethnicized here, and ethnicizing skills and other human characteristics have been a long-standing practice in Sri Lanka. As revealed in some of the user-generated comments, strong Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist sentiments have also been expressed by the audiences. Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist state, it should be governed under a real Sinhala-Buddhist president, evidencing the strong attachment to own-group identity.

However, it is also noticeable that the nature and intensity of audience responses (in the form of prejudices/stereotypes) depend on the nature of the narration of the post/image. For instance, almost all the comments under Image 3 show strong nationalist sentiments, while many of the statements under Image 8 try to construct a counter-narrative against over-ethnicizing the low-quality food effects on Sinhalese. Under Image 9, while some of the users agree with the main message conveyed by the post (which requests Sinhalese people to boycott Muslim owned businesses), several other Sinhalese respondents comprehensively explain why they prefer transactions with Muslim owned businesses, based upon the higher customer-care of Muslims.

Another important observation is the inconsistency of opinions among the audiences. People's opinions are not only inconsistent but also contradictory in terms of their in- and out-group perceptions. Some people are easily instigated by the narration posted by an activist group online, or by looking at the way how fellow users are responding, while others are not. While constructing Tamils as "Tigers" (*koti* = terrorists) under one Image, in a different context, Tamils have been portrayed as "fair and impartial." Ivarsson (2018), in her digital ethnographic study of Sri Lankan youth, also recognizes the same inconsistencies of opinions.

> […] on Facebook, a person might simultaneously be a supporter of the political opposition, post Buddhist memes of non-violence and also aggressive anti-Muslim propaganda. In other words, just as they do in 'real-life,' people may express contradictory views in different context (Ivarsson 2018:12).

What explain these inconsistencies of in- and out-group perceptions?

First, the articulation of inconsistent, and often contradictory opinions of in- and out-groups is the very nature of ordinary people, which we identify as everyday ethnocentrism here. In certain occasions, they are proponents of strong Sinhala-nationalism, yet in other settings and contexts, they are keen humanitarians who advocate the ideas of human equality that has no ethnic boundaries. That is why Hobsbawm stated, "this view from below, i.e. the nation as seen not by governments and the spokesmen and activists of nationalist (or non-nationalist) movements, but the ordinary persons who are the objects of their action and propaganda, is exceedingly difficult to discover" (1990:10-11).

5.6 Conclusion: Implications for the future of new media

The above inconsistencies of human behaviour online and the variance of both in- and out-group perceptions depending on the nature of the message/narrations posted on social media indicate the changing scenario of new media usage and its social impact. In media studies, the term 'agenda-setting' is widely used to refer to the public 'agenda-setting' capacity of the traditional media, where news media has the power to

select what to disseminate to the public. The main assumptions of 'agenda-setting' theory is that news audiences have a limited array of sources of information, and news media present a relatively uniform agenda of issues at any given time (Chaffee and Metzger 2001). In the face of new media with the diversity of internet-based information channels and the ability of the users to be selective and customize their exposure to issues, 'agenda-setting' theory is challenged (Bennett and Iyengar 2008). In that sense, the previous media-to-public flow of information is now reversed to a greater extent to public-to-public (Metzger 2009:567-569).

Given this new venture of media behaviour, what does the inconsistency of out-group perceptions indicate? First, people enjoy immense freedom of expression on social media to state what they think or assume about others on social media. People act as their own gatekeepers (Metzger 2009:568). However, the credibility or factual correctness (misinformation) of what is posted on SNSs is problematic, but irrespective of the factual basis people tend to shape their minds based on what they see on their Facebook 'news feed' (or any other platform) daily. As Metzger states, "social media may enable individuals to increasingly take their cues from each other rather than from mainstream media" (2009:568).

Thus, people tend to set agendas as they wish, select, and highlight some issues than others, and also act upon those. The narratives produced on social media could be mere rumors, but those get wings when posted online, spread fast, and get interpreted, and re-interpreted. "[A]s people self-select, learn about, and identify strongly with particular issues online, they may be more motivated to act on those issues" (Bimber et al. 2008). Also, "the portability and social connectivity of new media can help connect politically motivated individuals and inform them about when and how to act on issues" (Metzger 2009:569).

Secondly, closely related to the above, scholarly concern is emerging regarding whether people's over-engagement in online social media communities makes them unable to expose themselves to alternative opinions in the real world. Specifically the idea that social media creates a 'filter bubble' of contents (or an 'echo-chamber') that decreases people's likelihood of encountering ideologically cross-cutting news contents based on algorithmic curation and personalization systems (Spohr 2017) used by various social media applications could affect inter-ethnic relations in real-life circumstances. These concerns needs to be addressed further in future psychological as well as political scientific studies.

In conclusion, the main focus of this chapter was the behaviour of the audiences based on their comments published under particular images posed on selected communities online. The way people narrate ideas, interact and make meanings on online platforms were discussed above. Contradictory opinions and stereotypes of both in- and out-groups are visible online, more or less equal to what we see in the real world.

Conclusions

"The new media are not ways of relating to us the 'real' world; they are the real world and they reshape what remains of the old world at will." —

Marshall McLuhan

The ontological debate incited by McLuhan in the above statement, which was overwhelmingly apparent throughout the previous chapters too, is an interesting point to start this 'concluding' section. The debate is whether the social world of real-life (face-to-face) interactions and the social world of the digital/internet interactions are the same. Can we see a clear distinction between the offline world and the online world? Does the study of the online provide only a partial view of social reality? As per McLuhan, a Canadian philosopher and professor of media studies (who died a few decades before the inception of World Wide Web, and social media), there is no such difference between new media and the real world, and the distinction is false.

On the other hand, Robert V. Kozinets, who is the founder of Netnography (that is doing ethnographic research in online platforms), possesses a less radical approach than McLuhan and states that "…if netnography offers only a partial view of many online-offline phenomena, the reverse is also true. That is, in the current environment - and increasingly in a rapidly computerized and mobile Internet world -

many social activities cut across both online and offline worlds" (Kozinets et al. 264-265:2014; Kozinets 2010; Garcia et al. 2009; Miller and Slater 2000). Kozinets admits that nothing provides a perfect, holistic understanding, yet the essence of his argument is that, given the overwhelming nature of the 'internet of things' in the present world, the online-world is necessarily a strong constituent of the contemporary real world.

Linking both Kozinets and McLuhan to the present study, the entire study depends on data produced on social media, particularly its visual artifacts, with the most fundamental assumption that in- and out-group perceptions are something that is constructed not only in the offline world but also in the online world. Based on that, social media data have been manipulated to examine the nature of in- and out-group perceptions of some Sinhalese communities online and its determinants. In- and out-group perceptions and determinants of those have been a well-studied field in the social sciences, yet, not using the data produced on the digital interface (that is the online-word we mentioned above), but using the data from the so-called real world. Thus, what is new in the present study is that it presents a glimpse of the digital patterns of in-and out-group perceptions in the online world from sa social scientific viewpoint.

However, still the ontological debate exists, whether what we see in the digital spaces such as Facebook is the reality that we experience in the real world, and also is there a real distinction between the so-called real world and the digital? This study only focused on the ontology of in-/out-group perceptions in the digital world but does not explain the causal directions between online in-/out-group perceptions and offline in-/out-group perceptions (that is whether the real-life contentions between people inspire social media contentions or vice versa), which should be addressed in

the future research. Yet, as aforementioned, particularly in chapter 3, there is no controversy on which the online world and social media have empirically proven psychological and social effects. Even in the case of Sri Lanka, there were several incidents, as we discussed above, in which the role of social media and its hate speech contents and misinformation directly underpinned communal antipathy between communities in the recent history.

Referring to the technique coined by Kozinets—Netnography—which is the online version of ethnography, and knowing the latter's affiliation with 'participant observation,' how to and where can the present study be positioned? Is this a netnographic analysis of in-/out-group perceptions? Also, what does it mean by 'participant observation' in online, mainly social media-based research? There are a few factors that netnographers recommend: first being site-specific, second having a deep cultural understanding of the site to be analyzed (and thus being inductive), and third participating and collaborating with the actors in the selected site and experiencing and gathering data rather than mere appropriation of data (Kozinets et al. 2014).

The present study is site-specific. That is, among various types of digital sites,[68] only Facebook has been chosen, and even further, only several specific Facebook pages/groups were selected (upon scholarly justifications) for an in-depth review. Secondly, the author understands the culture, language, idioms, symbols, and the rhetoric used in the selected site and even the histories behind them. Thirdly, quite contradictory to what has been suggested above, the author is not a collaborating/active participant observer, but a passive observer who appropriates

[68] Kozinets lists many types of netnographic field sites, including bulletin boards, chat rooms, play spaces, virtual worlds, blogs, wikis, audiovisual sites, social content aggregator sites, and social networking sites (Kozinets 2010).

naturally occurring data (instead of designing an online community/platform for the purpose of data collection). This prevents positioning the present study under netnography.

However, what should be highlighted here is that the author purposely carried out the passive appropriation of data that is naturally occurring and publicly available as many other non-ethnographic researchers do in social sciences, for some major reasons. The author's intention was not to intervene in the natural processes occurring in the real world (or rather the digital world) but to be an objective observer as much as possible. This does not undermine the cultural affiliation of the researcher to the researched context. As the author personally believes, in this sort of analysis, cultural sensitivity to the field site is essential, yet, that sensitivity should not be used subjectively when drawing inferences from data. This is somewhat critical, and controversial, especially as the primary data used here are 'images,' which highly increase the possibility of being subjective since images facilitate interpretation more than any other form of data. As elaborated in Chapter 3, with the knowledge of semiotics, representations vs. objective and quantitative approaches to content analysis of visual data, the present study avoided interpreting the latent meanings behind images, and only analyzed the manifest contents, based on the codes, categories and coding rules designed both based on an 'inductive/grounded approach' and also being informed by previous studies. However, the author neither considers that latent contents are unavailable in the sample of images nor that they are academically redundant, yet due to the high sensitivity of the themes under consideration (i.e., religion/ethnic images), interpretation could reduce the validity and reflexivity of the ultimate inference drawn.

Concerning the above, it is also necessary to reflect on the coding process. The coding was done in a mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive manner. That is, any given image has the chance of being coded under one of the three ethnocentric observations: ethnically pride, intolerant (implicit/explicit), or neither. Thus, no single image was coded for both ethnic pride and intolerance simultaneously. One could argue against this sort of coding, which appears somewhat mechanical since some graphic images might have included both elements of ethnic pride and intolerance. Such complexities were handled based on the coding rule, which essentially depended on which element is stronger than the other to delineate their definitive features.

Also, some of the conclusions have been drawn upon a qualitative analysis of descriptive statistics, but counting the frequencies of a particular phenomenon was not merely the intention of the present study. Beyond that stand the structural patterns, and correlations, which can only be inferred through inferential statistics. Unveiling such patterns were also facilitated by the large number of observations in the sample. It is on this basis that the author conducted a quantitative approach to content analysis of the images. Although quantitative analysis of two-dimensional *visual* data could be controversial, "[p]aradoxically, it is the more neglected quantitative tradition of content analysis of visual material, where sample sizes are generally far larger, which provides the best opportunity to investigate structural categories and processes (Emmison and Smith 2000:58).

Major findings and the contribution to the current literature

Having reviewed the ontology, epistemology, and the methodology carried out in the previous chapters, it is also necessary to reflect on some of the inferences drawn. As mentioned repeatedly, the most fundamental aim of the entire study was to examine the way in-/out-group perceptions (ethnic self-image) have been constructed on social media and also to understand what determined those perceptions in the Sri Lankan context. Based on the data, two types of ethnic self-images have been identified—ethnically proud, and intolerant (implicit and explicit), which we collectively named as ethnocentrism. Among the major determinants, symbolic and material threat perceptions, religiosity (perceptions of own religion and perceived out-group religiosity), and conspiracy theories are prominent and responsible for different variances of ethnic pride and intolerance. Out of all the determinants, both symbolic and material threat cause the strongest variance in ethnocentrism, and the effect of religion is relatively lower. These main findings directly address one of the most ubiquitous questions in post-war Sri Lanka, which we raised at the beginning of this study—*is religion or religiosity the primary instigator behind communal rage?* Symbolic and material resources based threat perceptions are stronger in constructing communal antipathy in Sri Lanka more than religion itself, during the first decade after the war.

Yet, the role of religion is not entirely redundant. As per the findings, religion is not only a statistically significant determinant of out-group intolerance but also when interacting with threat perceptions/conspiracy theories, it has the capacity to increase the salience of the latter's effect. Also, occasions with weaker threat perceptions/conspiracy theories or people who possess weaker threat perceptions/conspiracy theories can be easily instigated upon religious claims. This is one of the major empirical contributions to the literature. The bottom line is that

perhaps religion is easily overemphasized and fanaticized, or used as a convenient tool of communal mobilization in a society full of perceived material/symbolic disparities and conspiracy theories.

In addition to that, on theoretical grounds, the present study addresses one of the most engulfing debates in the literature, the 'material rationality' vs. the 'religious rationality' behind communal antipathy. The findings support the 'material rationality' more than the 'religious.' However, one conceptual caveat of holding the strictly dichotomous material vs. religious understanding of conflicts is its deliberate ignorance of 'other' factors that are not essentially material or religious. This limitation has been addressed in the present study by operationalizing the two additional independent variables ─ symbolic threat perceptions and conspiracy theories. Many of the previous studies on Sri Lanka fail to conceptualize/operationalize the existence of 'other' threat perceptions beyond the 'material' threat and 'religion.' Thus, such 'other' threats have not been empirically addressed (and measured) in the scholarly literature on Sri Lanka. However, beyond Sri Lanka, the greater literature on inter-group relations have well conceptualized and operationalized both 'symbolic' threat and 'material' threat as explanatory variables. Specifically, the Realistic Group Conflict Theory that recognizes the real/material base of conflicts, and the Symbolic Racism and Social Identity Theories that recognize the symbolic and cultural roots of conflict have been tested in the present study. As mentioned above, both 'symbolic' and 'material' threat are proven equally important in Sri Lanka.

Understanding the multi-causality of communal riots/conflicts in the present research design was facilitated by its inductive approach to data analysis. In other

words, instead of applying already established codes/categories, the author examined the naturally emerging categories in the sample, which facilitated a more nuanced and broader research design. The research design is well established in the current literature, and also it has not been unnecessarily restricted by the current knowledge. Specifically, the inclusion of conspiracy theories and 'symbolic' threat was basically due to the natural categories that emerged through the preliminary data analysis. Although awareness of past literature is essential, research designs should not necessarily be limited and restricted by prior knowledge in order to facilitate new variables, new generalizations, and new theory building.

The avoidance of using the mainstream term 'nationalism' to denote both ethnic pride and intolerance of Sinhalese, and instead considering those as constituents of ethnocentrism, is considered as another major contribution of the present study. The majority of the seminal studies on Sri Lanka understand the Sinhalese ethnic self-image as nationalistic, with related mainstream terms such as Sinhalese nationalism, Sinhalese ethno-nationalism, Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism or Buddhist nationalism. As defined in chapter 1, the concept of nationalism always yields the idea that people are naturally divisible into different kinds—also known as nations— and ideally each kind should have the responsibility for its own governance (Spencer et al. 1990:283-300). This, in other words, is the quest for self-determination. However, one of the major weaknesses of the concept of nationalism is that it ignores the possibility of the existence of 'group/ethnic consciousness' without necessarily claiming for self-determination.

Especially when it comes to the Sinhalese, as the discussions (and evidence) in both Chapter 4 and 5 indicated, purely a nationalistic claim that, 'Sri Lanka is a

Sinhala-Buddhist country/ the country of Sinhalese' is only one out many other forms of identity claims. Nationalism (be it Sinhalese or Sinhala-Buddhist or any other ethnic community) is only one aspect of their ethnic self-image, but not the only one. Direct claims for self-determination and claims/hopes of an ethnically homogeneous nation are not entirely invisible in the collected set of data. Yet, along with those incongruously emerges the prospects for coexistence, conspiracy theories, fears, and threat perceptions of out-groups. That is because, quite paradoxical to the triumphalism generated by the victory of the war, the Sri Lankans are now better realized of the ineluctable ethnic heterogeneity of the country. Reacting to that paradox, what constitutes the ethnic mindset is not only nationalism but the question 'who should be at the *center* of everything in the future of the country?,' which we consider here as 'ethnocentrism.' Ethnocentrism in that manner accommodates ethnic-nationalism, and also ethnic-consciousness, where the former associates with self-determination but not the latter. Thus, by choosing ethnocentrism (as discussed in Chapter 1), this study attempts to question the accuracy of unspecified usage of the concept of 'nationalism' in the Sri Lankan context.

Prospects for future research

First, as illustrated within the entire study, within the 'mediated' environment of social media both in- and out-group interaction (contact) can be seen in different forms, which needs further psychological as well as sociological investigations. In the previous discussions, social media was identified as a platform that allow users to interact with each other. User interactivity in this manner is highly crucial in a plural

society like Sri Lanka because as was clearly visible in the previous chapter, not only Sinhalese users but also non-Sinhalese users have participated in online conversations based on a given image. People who have never seen each other suddenly engage in conversations, debates, or arguments on virtual platforms, and this is one of the forms of how inter-group contact takes place in the digital era. This can be termed as 'mediated contact' with a real out-group member via computer or other technology (Harwood et al. 2013:77).

The 'contact hypothesis,' in general, suggests that positive attitudes toward an out-group grow as the contact with out-group members increases, provided that the contact is of the right kind (Côté & Erickson 2009:1666). Some other scholars note that positive media portrayals of interactions and relations between in-group and out-group members (parasocial contact) (Schiappa et al. 2005) can potentially change the intergroup orientations. Given that, three types of contact can be observed in relation to social media (based on the above analysis of visuals and audience-generated comments). First, users directly (through computer mediation) interact with a real out-group member when commenting on a particular post. Second, even in the absence of a real out-group members, users see different pictorial depictions of out-group members (i.e., Image 2 and 7 above in Chapter 5), and that could affect their real-life contacts with out-group members. Thirdly, users see pictorial depictions of the way an in-group member and a member of the out-group are interacting, which can be technically labeled as parasocial contact. More substantial research is necessary to gauge to what extent online 'contact' foster or damages inter-group contact in real-life settings in plural societies like Sri Lanka.

Secondly, there is an inadequate amount of literature on the post-war ethnic self-image of both Tamils and Muslims in Sri Lanka, and their online and offline

image construction. Many of the available studies only focus on Sinhala-Muslim riots in the post-war scenario. In addition to that, more in-depth studies are necessary to understand the continuity and change of other non-Sinhalese ethnic identity/self-image and the nature of their ethnocentrism, both online and offline. Although the present study is limited to Sinhalese communities online (due to the language limitations of the author), the frameworks used in the present study can be extended to such research.

Finally, further studies are necessary to understand the ontological differences between online and offline social realities. For instance, questions such as 'to what extent do the out-group perceptions articulated in online worlds and offline worlds differ and in what contexts?' needs to be further addressed. Also, the causality between online activism and offline violence is still an area of controversy that needs further empirical evidence. The author understands the necessity of 'experimental research designs' in this particular field for a more nuanced understanding of human behaviour, both online and offline.

Postscript

On 21 April 2019 (Easter Sunday), a little-known extremist Islamic group conducted a series of coordinated suicide bombings at several Christian churches and luxurious hotels in Colombo and Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, horrifying the entire country and the world, and killing more than 250 civilians. A few days after the attack, 'Islamic State' claimed responsibility, further terrifying the locals and international visitor further making the country feel insecure.

As discussed above, previous studies on Sri Lanka have noted and discussed various reasons behind the sporadic disturbances between some of the radical Muslim and Sinhala-Buddhist organizations, but no one predicted a terrifying attack of this scale, something that Sri Lanka has not experienced in her thirty years of civil war. Having a history of Buddhist-Muslim disturbances in the aftermath of the termination of the war, small to large scale communal violence between the two religious groups were apparent (i.e., disturbances in Aluthgama 2014 and Kandy 2018), but the Easter Sunday attacks aimed at Sri Lankan Christians were the least expected. However, the incident will be recorded as a turning point of the socio-political and economic trajectory of Sri Lanka, with a 'new' challenge of curbing 'new' forms of terrorism and extremism.

The bombings took place at the very last stage of the present study, and as a result, none of the above discussions have any reference to it. However, in relation to the 'social media' focus of the present study, the Easter Sunday tragedy has a few implications. First, while the act of terrorism and extremism belong to the real world,

the way ordinary citizens reacted, especially on social media, in the wake of the bombings needs special attention. The most noticeable was the temporary ban imposed on social media by the GoSL several times after the incident, in order to curtail the spread of hate speech and civil unrest in several places in the country. Reportedly, several cases of disturbances were triggered by Facebook posts published by ordinary people after the bombings, and the police arrested a number of people for inciting interfaith rage on various online platforms such as Facebook (see Ada Derana 2019). However, many people in Sri Lanka are now aware of alternative methods of social media access during such bans, indicating the limitations of traditional state apparatus in the face of modern technology. Social media posts containing fear, threat perceptions, uncertainties, suspicion and also agony, sorrow, and frustrations of security are continuously produced and shared by people.

Secondly, sharing misinformation and fears of possible future attacks have become the norm, which jeopardized many of the daily activities during the first two/three weeks after the bombings. Besides the factual accuracy/inaccuracy of the information, the current situation of terror embedded in the minds of ordinary Sri Lankans stimulates researchers to recollect the level of terror during the last stage of war (2006-2009), when there was a high risk of suicide bombings in Colombo and the suburbs. During that time, with the absence of social media, people only consumed information produced by traditional media and it is worth questioning to what extent the presence of social media today is responsible for 'cultivating' fear and insecurity in the society. This sort of speculative concerns needs to be empirically addressed in future research.

Thirdly, similar to the findings of the present study, the perceived threat posed by the out-group has dramatically increased on social media in the wake of the

bombings. Based on the fear and uncertainty incited by terrorism, social media users started expressing their suspicion over the members of the out-group directly through their posts, memes, and comments. According to many of the user expressions, former 'perceived' threat has now become 'real.' Nationalists/racists of all ethnic/religious groups gained *de facto* legitimacy on both online and off-line worlds in the wake of the attacks and communities are again desperately divided on the online platforms (as well as offline). Infrahumanizing the out-group was clearly visible. A strong antipathy, in the form of an 'online movement' emerged on social media against some practices of Muslims, requesting the government to ban *Niqab* and *Burka* in Sri Lanka, which finally led the government to ban all sorts of face-covers that hinder individual identification (BBC 2019). However, what is necessary to understand here is that threat perceptions are reciprocal and equally felt by all ethnicities/religions indiscriminately. Thus ultimately hinders the stability of the country.

Social media belongs to people, with lesser state control and limited organizational measures to curtail possible harm. As discussed at the end of Chapter 5, the information flow has been reversed. Instead of media-to-public, now it is public-to-public. In the wake of a national tragedy, people themselves set agendas, cultivate fears, threat, hate and uncertainties more than love and harmony. While the problems of terrorism, extremism, and attempts curtail them are unfolding in the real world, on social media many people tend to reflect an exaggerated and unrefined version of such real world issues. The danger is that instead of relying on verified sources of public information, ordinary people tend to act (emotionally) upon what they see on social media, without verifying the source and its credibility.

While admitting the fact that the problem itself is not the presence of social media applications, but the way people utilize it and for what purposes, some critical

questions remain to be addressed by the researchers: Does human behaviour on the online world really divides them in the real world on ethno-religious lines? In other words, do communities online psychologically fragment people's natural capacity to get along with other communities with different opinions? In what ways should new media be controlled or not? Moreover, what constructive (and innovative) measures should be taken to educate the younger generations in a fragile ethno-religious environment like Sri Lanka for responsible usage of new media and technology?

13 May 2019

Appendices

Appendix 1: Cellular mobile telephone/Mobile broadband/Fixed broadband and narrowband subscriptions in Sri Lanka from 1992-2018

	Cellular Mobile Telephone Subscriptions	Mobile Broadband Subscriptions	Fixed broadband/ narrowband subscriptions
1992	2,644	-	-
1996	71,029	-	2,504
2009	14,264,442	91,359	249,756
2018 (provisional)	32,528,104	5,733,062	1,530,099

Source: Telecommunication Regulatory Commission 2018.

Appendix 2: Facebook initiatives to curtail misinformation and hate speech in relation to Sri Lanka

(The quoted information below were provided by the Center for Policy Alternatives [CPA], Sri Lanka, via email correspondence on 13 September 2018. Therefore, the author acknowledges that the full credit of gathering and compiling the following information goes to CPA).

In the wake of the communal disturbances in Kandy (March 2018), a group of civil society organizations in Sri Lanka wrote an open letter to Facebook, requesting them to take measures to minimize the harm occurred and the possible future harm.

See the letter -

https://groundviews.org/2018/04/10/open-letter-to-facebook-implement-your-own-community-standards/

"Following the open letter, Facebook responded to us (see here for the email: http://groundviews.org/2018/04/12/facebook-responds-to-open-letter-from-sri-lankan-civil-society/) and committed to hiring more Sinhala language content reviewers for their Community Operations team, and improving and developing AI tools, as well as engaging with civil society. We noted in our reaction to that letter that Facebook had not offered the same solutions as had been offered in other regions.
Facebook then met with a number of civil society organizations who had signed the open letter in a discussion held under Chatham House rules, where they took the participants through their Community Standards document (which they had recently made public).

Following the interaction, a number of developments occurred for Sri Lanka - one, a recruitment ad was placed for a Public Policy Manager looking specifically at Sri Lankan content, as well as a Policy Programmes Manager. Facebook also began working with civil society to learn a number of Sinhala slurs and swear words to add to its lists - https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/south-asia/article/2149659/facebook-staff-learn-sinhala-insults-after-sri-lankas-anti
Facebook also recently announced that Sinhala will be added to its automatic translation services.

https://twitter.com/groundviews/status/1039732588179582978

Facebook also recently rolled out a misinformation policy beginning in Sri Lanka. We have to say that we were not informed about the policy when it was rolled out and it came as a surprise when it was reported in the media, as no one in Facebook had been in touch with civil society in Sri Lanka before it was rolled out. While we found the decision to remove misinformation from the platform in countries like Sri Lanka where there was a risk of real world harm a progressive one, we also had reservations around how sustainable the proposed solution, which would put the onus on civil society organizations, would be. We continue to reiterate that strong language support in Sinhala and Tamil will be the most sustainable way to deal with misinformation on the platform. We were also concerned given the speed at which misinformation can spread.
http://groundviews.org/2018/07/20/on-facebooks-new-misinformation-policy-for-sri-lanka/

Although it is too soon to say how successful the policy will be, we do note that it is a positive development given the lack of response from Facebook in the past.
Facebook's Transparency report has some figures on how many posts have been removed globally, though this isn't specific to Sri Lanka (https://transparency.facebook.com/community-standards-enforcement#hate-speech)" (CPA, 13 September 2018).

Appendix 3: Coding rules and dummy variables of ethnocentrism (the dependent)

Ethnocentrism (ethnic self-image or perceptions of in- and out-groups)	
Ethnic pride	
1. Skilful	Sinhalese are skillful - technical skills, brainy, have a proud history or historical heritage
2. Cultured	Sinhalese are cultured - ethical, honest, kind
3. Egocentric	Proud to be a Sinhalese; Sinhala-Buddhism should be protected
4. Brave	Usage of lion image to show bravery; usage of historical figures as an evidence bravery; or any other indication of bravery
Intolerance	
Intolerance (implicit)	
5. Essentially Buddhists*	Sinhalese are essentially Buddhists (and implicitly considering Sinhala-Christians as an out-group); to be a true Sinhalese one must follow Buddhism (Images portraying Sinhala-Buddhists without the above idea have not been coded under this)
6. Sinhala-Buddhist country*	Sri Lanka is a Sinhala-Buddhist country; the owners of the country are Sinhala-Buddhist people by default
7. Monks (Buddhist)*	Images that create a connection between Buddhist monks and the survival of Sinhala-Buddhists are coded with this label, ex: Buddhist monks are guardians of Sinhalese. (monk images without the above idea have not been coded under this)
* Mere showcase of images related to Buddhism such as religious sites, or images of Buddha,	

people practicing religion, church attendance or any other image with Sinhala-Buddhist implication have not been coded under 5, 6 and 7 unless there is manifest expression of the ideas mentioned in those three categories.	
8. Sinhala language	Sinhala language is important/central along with the implicit idea that other languages are less important
9. State patronage	State patronage to Sinhala-Buddhism. This label is applied to visuals that express one or more of the following preferred forms of stage patronage to Buddhism: only Sinhala-Buddhist person should be (or better to be) the king, president, rulers, ministers of the country; Sinhala-Buddhists should be specially treated or prioritized by the rulers, government; best fitting rulers are always Sinhala-Buddhists; leaders should always support Sinhala-Buddhism. Visual contents unwelcoming leaders from minorities have been coded under this.
10. Descent	Descent matters in Sinhalese ethnic membership; Images in which main message stresses the importance of genealogy to be a Sinhalese
11. Sinhala country (long residence matters)	Expression that the country belongs to Sinhalese (with no mention to Buddhism as in the above code no.6.)
12. Armed forces	Basically this code contains images of government security forces. Graphics that directly or indirectly express the army as a representation of Sinhala people, their protection and interests or armed forces as a part of Sinhalaness, Sinhalese bravery.
Intolerance (explicit)	
13. Unwelcoming outgroups, migrants, settlers from outside	Explicit anti out-group attitudes; explicit negative relations between in and out groups; explicit resentment towards practices, culture, habits of members of out-groups
Other or no reference to ethnocentrism (ethnic pride/intolerance)	

Source: Author drawn

Appendix 4: Coding rules and dummy variables used for the three main independent variables - level of religiosity, perceived threat and conspiracy theories

1. **Perceived threat (material/symbolic)**	
Symbolic threat	
a. Threat to religion	If either an out-group's religious practices or any other attempts of the members of the out-groups are perceived as a threat to Buddhism, such visual expressions can be coded under this category. What is meant by threat to Buddhism is the danger over its dominance in the society or its future and survival in Sri Lanka or threat to religious rights of Sinhalese. This includes representation of controversial religious sites contested by both Muslims and Buddhists and also Sri Lankan Buddhists' claims to protect international Buddhists/Buddhist sites.
b. Threat is Sinhalese themselves	Seeing some Sinhalese as betraying or disloyal to Sinhalese themselves
c. Sociotropic threat in general	Threats to culture, values, symbols, prestige and practices of Sinhalese. For instance ideas such as out-group/s as dangerous to the normal lives of Sinhalese society, out-groups as threatening to the independence of Sinhalese
d. On subjective judgments	Expressions of perceived threat without mentioning any tangible or intangible resources at stake (i.e., sentiments of the group power of the out-groups without mentioning the source of power/ or out-group/s will gain power in the future)
Material Threat	

e. Military threat	Capacity to wage violence
f. On demography	Large or increasing minorities; influx of migrants or refugees
g. Resource based competition	Such as land, education, employment opportunities, economic opportunities, and access to other public goods
h. No symbolic or material threat	No mention of symbolic or material threat
2. **Level of Religiosity**	
a. Religiosity (own)	Following three indicators can be coded under this category: 1. Religious beliefs - expressions of various levels of religious beliefs and practices. 2. Religious belonging - people were portrayed as belonging to a particular religion. 3. Religious behaviour - portrayals of church attendance, private/group prayers, religious education, any other religiously affiliated practices or usage of religious symbols.
b. Religiosity(perceived out-group)	Following three indicators can be coded under this category: 1. Religious beliefs - expressions of various levels of religious beliefs and practices. 2. Religious belonging - people were portrayed as belonging to a particular religion. 3. Religious behaviour - portrayals of church attendance, private/group prayers, religious education, any other religiously affiliated practices or usage of religious symbols.
c. No religiosity	No mention of religion

3.Conspiracy theory	
a. Local/international conspiracy	Government or international agents (or any other) have formed a conspiracy against Sinhalese or Sinhala-Buddhists
b. No conspiracy theories	No mention of conspiracy theories

Source: Author drawn

Appendix 5: Matrimonial advertisements published in weekly newspapers in Sri Lanka (a sample taken from the national English newspaper *The Sunday Times* (Sri Lanka) on 03rd March, 2019.

THE SUNDAY TIMES PLUS
Sunday, March 03, 2019

Matrimonial

32 years old 5' 7" in height studied in Ladies Girls' School permanently employee in Australian adjacent company, inherits a land Post Accountant (CIMA-UK, ACMA, MBA Graduate) pretty daughter, Retired B/G parents seek suitable virtuous son. B15973 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156987-1

35 years educated employed in State Service pretty daughter, seek suitable partner. No caste barriers. With assets. 0344549041 B15931 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156270-1

38 5' 2" near Capital City Executive pretty daughter, looking for virtuous son, assets 30 M. Write all details & copy of the horoscope. sethwewa@gmail.com B15965 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156817-1

89 June born Nugegoda resident 5' 2" in height studied in Capital City Leading School, J'pura University Management Graduate, CIMA, employee in Private Company, good looking virtuous daughter. Looking for equally educated highly employee partner. Daughter inherits substantial assets. Around Colombo special. Contact only non malefic horoscopes. B14952 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T146385-1

A suitable partner with sober habits, professionally qualified and well employed here or abroad is sought by parents G/B Colombo for their pretty daughter fair and slim figured 5' 4" in height, born October 1979 with much younger looking pleasing personality and noble character, working in Leading International Airline Cabin Crew holding Senior Post with attractive perks. No differences. Please reply with horoscope. Email: wstd31@gmail.com B14596 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T143686-1

ACADEMICALLY & professionally qualified partner is sought by G/B parents for their daughter, 1985, 5' 3", pretty, well mannered, qualified with PhD from USA. Reply with details & horoscope. Email: chandra1955@yahoo.com B14340 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T141979-1

ACADEMICALLY and professionally qualified

COLOMBO resident Southerners Buddhist Govi 1987/06 height about 5' English Graduate Teacher daughter, parents seek Graduate son. Father a Medical Consultant. Rahu 1, Kethu 7. proposalgle@gmail.com B15950 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156623-1

COLOMBO respectable parents - Kandyan G/B mother & Vellala Christian father seek a qualified well mannered son for their only daughter 1989 born Doctor working in the UK educated at a Leading School in Colombo & Reputed Universities abroad. B14431 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T142713-1

COLOMBO suburbs G/B parents seek an academically qualified G/B son for their pleasant daughter State University educated Software Engineer in a Reputed Company, born in 1990 5' 3" inherits valuable assets. Reply with family details and horoscope. djaya01390@gmail.com B15941 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156362-1

EDUCATED Bank Engineer, Doctor, Businessman Attorney-at-Law son is sought to Bodu 78.3.5 born 5' 3" height slim bodied beautiful Attorney-at-Law daughter money and blocks of land owned write those in Manushya, Devaganaya B15993 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T157454-1

ELDERS seek a suitable gent with sober habits owning house and property and vehicle for a professionally qualified lady divorcee innocent party 50 years of age. Please forward all details in First instant. B15430 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T149634-1

G/B 29 pretty Lawyer from respectable family with substantial assets professional or businessman preferred. Migration considered. Kuja in 7 house. propsal393@gmail.com B15901 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T155084-1

G/B respectable Business parents seek partner for their beautiful daughter 24 years old who has been brought up with Buddhist values. 5' 7" height educated at a Leading School in Colombo. She

KEGALLE Bodu 27 5' 3" Medical Faculty Final Year daughter, Retired parents seek Doctor/ Engineer son. B15059 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T147155-1

KIRIBATHGODA, Makola situated new two storied house with 12P land, 4 rooms, 2 B/Rooms, verandah, light fittings, boundary wall and roller shutters, big garden, 2x2 tile, 2km to Highway, 160lakhs. 071-4328730, 0776526759. B15884 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T154568-1

KURUNEGALA Bodu Govi eldest daughter of a Doctor Couple 28 years of age employed at Air Lanka, parents seek suitable partner. B15934 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156308-1

MOOR parents from Colombo seek suitable partner for their 23 years old daughter, 5' 3", pretty and well mannered. Grew up in Middle-East and Graduated in U.K with a BSc Degree in Bio-Medical Sciences. Hoping to do Post-Graduated Studies Overseas. Currently in Sri Lanka. Partner should ideally be a professional willing to migrate if opportunity arises. Open to Overseas proposals as well. Please email: reach.majeed1@gmail.com B14886 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T145857-1

MUSLIM parents seek groom for 26 years daughter. Contact No: 0114953489 B15425 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T149605-1

NORTH West B/G 1979 July fair Government Director BSc Graduate 5' in height unmarried daughter, looking for same caste unmarried partner. B15962 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156799-1

NUWARAELIYA Buddhist 35 years old 4' 7" in height Graduate Government employee fair daughter, Business parents seek suitable partner from Central & Western Province. B15913 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156123-1

PARENTS seek for their daughter 21 years old educated at a Leading School in Colombo very

Groom

1971 August born (Age 47+) Sinhala Govi Buddhist middle class never married 5' 3" in height healthy hygienic young looking pleasant vegetarian non smoker teetotaler religious minded University educated Chartered Accountancy LI LII completed non employed person seeks a lady. Age caste immaterial. Divorcees, widows also considered. Horoscope consider. T.P. 0115720202 Email: propo720202@gmail.com G14867 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T145752-1

1983 Bodu Govi height 6' smart only son working in USA respectable parents seek daughter with permanent residency in USA. He owns a house in Nugegoda and Rome. Other income in Sri Lanka. wubcdo@hotmail.com G14471 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T142925-1

1986 Colombo Bodu Govi 5' 8" in height an International Marketing Manager of Reputed Firm qualified son, parents seek qualified & beautiful daughter. G14977 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T146566-1

1986/10 Kandy Buddhist Auditor in Recognized International Company, drawing above 70 salary. NS/TT smart son 5' 11" in height. He owns a 2 storied house, seek daughter employed in State Sector (Nurse/ Teacher preferred). No barriers. 0815650055 G15240 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T148124-1

1988 5' 7" with PR Australia Buddhist Salagama educated devoid of vices pleasant looking son. Own a new 2 storied house. Invite truly pretty daughter. G15925 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156221-1

1988 Bodu Govi Galle & Colombo 5' 9" BSc, MSc, MAIQS qualified decent family smart son, Chartered QS, high salary in Dubai Government employee in European Company. Shani 7, Puwasala Nekatha, Gemini Lagna matching. Retired mother seeks educated below 27 years B/G family pretty daughter. Send all the details with copy of the horoscope. Email: mrproposals88@gmail.com G15981 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T157088-1

1988 January born 5' 8" Wahumpura Kula Colombo employee Engineer son, parents seek 1990 or below born, educated pretty daughter. G15920 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156183-1

BORN in 1994 May Buddhist Govi/ Matara Durawa 5' 10" in height fair complexioned with slim body running a building materials & hardware business in a own building opposite a Leading Institute for youngest son out of 4 sons in the family TT/NS devoid of all vices ex Executive currently Businessman father and mother looking for a Teacher or a non working daughter. 0112915014 G15466 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T149880-1

BUDDHIST parents seek a fair, slim, very pretty, educated (Doctor/ Engineer/ Lawyer or other) daughter below 25 from a respectable family, for their 28, 5' 9", NS/TT, handsome, Green Card Holder son, working as a Senior Software Engineer at a Reputed Company in USA. Owns a business, modern vehicles, house and many assets in Sri Lanka and USA. Contact number needed. pathir1970@gmail.com G15895 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T154881-1

CATHOLIC parents from Colombo suburb seek a well mannered partner good at cookery and house keeping with Sinhala Catholic values for their only son 30 years, six footer, holding an Executive Job in Private Sector. diwaro89@gmail.com G14178 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T138464-1

CHRISTIAN Sinhala parents from Colombo suburb seek attractive educate devoted Christian daughter for their handsome son 32 5' 8" who is a Software Engineer in a Reputed Company, inherits substantial assets. G15892 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T154877-1

CHRISTIAN parents seek a decent good looking slim employed partner for their son 32 kind and well behaved Bank Officer 5' 9" tall N/S T/T, with house in Colombo suburbs. Preferably Sinhalese or Burghers or from mixed families. Email: rohiabey200@gmail.com Tele: 0112687824 G15967 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156827-1

CLOSE to Kandy Bodu Govi 1987/12 born 5' 8" in height businessman son owning house, paddy fields, business location, vehicles & transportation services, mother seeks religious & working/ non working daughter of moral values. (Teacher profession ideal) G14897 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T145992-1

COLOMBO - Battaramulla permanent resident own 2 storey house - employee in private bank 1981, aquarious lagna, smart son parents looking for pretty, educated daughter. (Email: dd.rpks@gmail.com) (T/P-0112879302) G15900 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T155058-1

COLOMBO 1993/10 born BSc Engineer of Moratuwa University 5' 9" in height handsome teetotaler son educated at a Reputed Buddhist School, values & Sri Lankan culture owning assets, respectable parents seek Engineer/ Doctor/ Lawyer

KANDY upcountry Buddhist Govi born in 1982 Nov. 5' 8" in height educated attached to Police service with well mannered qualities with pleasing personality inherits a house and other properties religious for son. Mother looking for around Kandy Matale similar cast from a average family employed or expecting with moral qualities a kind daughter. 0812376353, 071 8259818. G14549 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T143385-1

KOTTAWA 1983/08 born 6' in height handsome Bank Executive Officer eldest son, a qualified & beautiful bride of moral values is sought. G15139 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T147802-1

MATARA Bodu Govi 1982 January born Business inherits a land from Colombo & properties, mother seeks a suitable partner. Kuja Shani Dosha in the horoscope. Write with copy of the horoscope. G15643 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T151325-1

MIRIGAMA suburb born in 1994 5' 10" in height Buddhist Govi pursued education @ an International School, Owner of a Machinery Importing Business from China, modern house, a vehicle, only son of the family, devoid of all vices, TT, for fair complexioned son, looking for a daughter of a Business family or a Teacher daughter. One sister is a Lecturer of a University. G15479 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T149942-1

MOTHER seeks Educated fair complexioned daughter for her son 1987 June 5' 9" Colombo University Degree holder (IT MBA) senior Executive software Architect Educated in a leading Buddhist College owned to house modern vehicle property (Mituna Lagna Kuja Budha-1) Brother a Bank officer. G15937 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T156344-1

NEAR Capital City B/Karawa Executive Level employee parents, fair smart devoid of all vice Colombo Leading School studied MBA Graduate, Government adjoining University Permanent Lecturer, high salary, looking for 29 years old 5' 6" in height slim pretty educated daughter. Send family details with copy of the horoscope. weddingproposal2016we@gmail.com G14573 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T143535-1

NEW Zealand G/B mother seeks slim kind hearted daughter for her academically and professionally qualified son Graduated in Cardiff UK, height 5' 6" 35 years a Food Scientist by profession and after 7 years of service, currently employed as a Medical Transcriptionist in Auckland. Reply only by email with horoscope. Caste immaterial. (Kala Sarpa Yoga horoscope are more favorable) Contact No: +642108471090 agaschitra@hotmail.com G14286 C/o Sunday Times, P.O.BOX 2047 Colombo T141469-1

Note: The sections highlighted in yellow indicate several caste categories practiced by Sinhalese in the contemporary Sri Lanka (but not exhaustive). The term'Buddhist *Govi*,' the abbreviated G/B or the term '*Bodu Govi*,' all indicate the *Govigama* or the farmers' caste and their religion Buddhism. In addition to that '*Salagama*,' '*Durawa'*, '*Karawa'* are also some of such Sinhalese low-castes. Also, '*vellala'* is considered as the highest caste among Tamils in Sri Lanka, which is not a category of Sinhalese caste. As indicated above, some people tend to identify themselves as 'Sinhala Catholic,' which is not a caste category, but a religion-based sub-division of Sinhalese ethnicity, as some scholars have argued (see Obeyesekera 1997:381).

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