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Santos, B. (2006). From El Salvador to Australia : A 20th Century Exodus to a Promised Land [PhD Thesis]. Australian Catholic University.

<https://doi.org/10.4226/66/5a94b67b5e4c7>

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**FROM EL SALVADOR TO AUSTRALIA:
A 20TH CENTURY EXODUS TO A PROMISED LAND**

Submitted by:

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B.A.; Dip. Rel. Sci.; M. Soc. Sci. (Family Studies)

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

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2006

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ABSTRACT

El Salvador, the smallest and the most densely populated state in the region of Central America, was gripped by a civil war in the 1980s that resulted in the exodus of more than a million people. This thesis explores the causes that led to the exodus. The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part contains a historical and theoretical analysis of El Salvador from the time of conquest until the 1980s. An examination of the historical background of the socio-economic and political conflict in El Salvador during this period sets the scene for an account of the mass exodus of Salvadorans in the 1980s. The second part of the thesis involves a qualitative study of Salvadoran refugees, which concentrates on their experiences before and after arriving in Australia. The study explores both the reasons for the Salvadorans' becoming refugees and their resettlement in Melbourne.

In an effort to explain some of the reasons for the socio-economic and political conflict in El Salvador in the 1980s, some concepts and ideas from different theoretical perspectives are utilized: modernisation theory, world-systems theory, dependency theory, elite theory, *Foco* theory of revolution and economic rationalism. The historical account covers the period from the expansion of the European world economy in the 16th century up to the political conflict of the 1980s. When the Salvadorans began to arrive in Melbourne, the micro-economic agenda in Australia was based on economic rationalism. This shifted the focus away from the state and onto a market-based approach that emphasised vigorous competition and foregrounded a non-collective social framework. The changes to policies in the welfare and immigration areas resulting from this shift are examined for their impact on the resettlement experiences of Salvadoran refugees.

The United States foreign policy is also delineated because of the impact it had on the political, economic and social situation in El Salvador. The thesis focused on the time-period from the 1823 Monroe Doctrine to the era of the Cold War of 'containment of communism'. The Catholic Church has also played a major influence in the political, social and religious life of Salvadorans. The changes that occurred in the post-1965 renewal of the Catholic Church were influential in the political struggles in El Salvador.

The second part of the thesis involves a qualitative research study of a small group of 14 Salvadoran refugees. Participants were selected from different professional, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. The study examines their flight from El Salvador, their arrival in Australia and their long-term experiences of resettlement. Tracking the experiences of refugees over a considerable period of time has seldom been the focus of a research study in Australia. The Salvadorans have been under-researched and no longitudinal studies have been conducted.

The Salvadorans who took part in the study became refugees for diverse reasons ranging from political/religious reasons to random repression but certainly not for economic reasons. Their past experiences have influenced their resettlement in Australia and their attempts to build their lives anew have been fraught with difficulties. The difficulties in acquiring a working knowledge of the English language have often led to a downgrading in their professional and employment qualifications, isolation from the mainstream community and the experience of loneliness for the older generation. In addition, many of the participants still experience fear both in Australia and in their home country when they return for a visit. The findings indicate that the provision of extra services, such as counselling, could facilitate their resettlement and integration into Australian society.

DECLARATION

This thesis does not contain material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for examination in any other course or accepted for an award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee.

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Beatriz Santos

16th November, 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like the *conquistadores*, who travelled to the New World, this thesis embarked on a journey of exploration. Not by boat and treacherous seas, but through the written pages of many authors. However, I would like to express my sincerest and deepest gratitude to the following persons, who have accompanied me on this journey:

Associate Professor Ruth Webber, principal supervisor, who gave her invaluable assistance in the development of the thesis from its inception, provided corrections and insights by generously reading each chapter and offering constant encouragement.

Dr. Klaus Serr, co-supervisor, who made me aware of the existence of some of the theories, his helpful comments and cooperation in guiding the progress of the thesis.

Dr. Carla Lipsig-Mumme, Professor of Sociology, Monash University, for her helpful comments.

The 14 Salvadoran participants, who gave me their time in sharing the many painful experiences of their tragic history and received me with warmth into their homes.

The former Provincial of the Stella Maris Province, Sr. Dianne Dalle-Molle, and her Council for having given me the trust and permission to embark on this new missionary project and my community for their love and encouragement.

The library personnel, who rendered assistance in locating resources and answered many queries. The libraries accessed were: in Canberra - the National Library and the Chifley Library (Australian National University); in Melbourne - the Raheen Library (Australian Catholic University); the State Library of Victoria; the Baillieu, Giblin and Educational Resource Centre Libraries (University of Melbourne); Matheson and Economics Libraries (Monash University) and Borchardt Library (La Trobe University).

The many persons, who contributed in assisting me with their computer expertise, comments, photocopying services and to the many friends, who supported me in many different ways.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| AIFLD | American Institute for Free Labour Development |
| AGEUS | General Association of Salvadoran University Students (founded 1927) |
| ANSESAL | National Agency and Special Service of El Salvador |
| ARENA | National Republican Alliance |
| BPR | People's Revolutionary Bloc |
| BW | Bretton Woods System |
| CACM | Central American Common Market |
| CALD | Culturally and Linguistically Diverse |
| CDHES | Human Rights Commission of El Salvador |
| CEB | Ecclesial Base Communities |
| CELAM | Latin American Conference of Bishops |
| CES | Commonwealth Employment Service (now Centrelink) |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| COMADRES | Mothers of the Disappeared |
| CONIP | Coordinating Body of the People's Church |
| CRM | Revolutionary Coordination of the Masses |
| CRSS | Community Refugee Settlement Scheme |
| DIMIA | Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs |
| DoH | Department of Housing |
| ECLA | U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America (also known as CEPAL) |
| ER | Economic Rationalism |
| ERP | People's Revolutionary Army |
| FAL | Armed Forces of Liberation |
| FAPU | United Popular Action Front |
| FARN | Armed Forces of National Resistance |
| FD | Democratic Front |
| FDR | Democratic Revolutionary Front |
| FECCAS | Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants |
| FECMAFAM | Committee of Mothers and Families of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated |
| FENASTRAS | National Federation of Unions of Salvadoran Workers |
| FFV | Farmers' Federation of Victoria |
| FMLN | Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front |
| FPL | Popular Liberation Front |
| GATT | General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now WTO) |

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| IHSS | Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| ISI | Import Substitution Industrialisation |
| ISTA | Salvadoran Institute of Agrarian Transformation |
| LP-28 | Popular Leagues-28 February |
| MLP | Popular Liberation Movement |
| OAS | Organisation of American States |
| ORDEN | Nationalist Democratic Organisation |
| PCN | National Conciliation Party |
| PCS | Communist Party of El Salvador |
| PDC | Christian Democratic Party |
| PRTC | Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers |
| RCC | Rescue Coordination Centre |
| RRWG | Refugee Resettlement Working Group |
| TAFE | Technical and Further Education |
| UCA | University of Central America 'Jose Simeon Canas' (founded 1965) |
| UCS | Salvadoran Communal Union |
| UDN | Nationalist Democratic Union |
| UES | University of El Salvador (founded 1841) |
| UGB | White Warriors Union (death squad) |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| U.S. | United States |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| WB | World Bank |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Australia is an isolated island in the Southern Hemisphere. It has had a long history of accepting offshore refugees, but the large influx of onshore asylum seekers is a relatively new phenomenon. At times Government authorities can be caught by surprise when people arrive on its shores to seek asylum. Although Australia accepted boat people as refugees in the mid-1970s, around the time of the Vietnam War, there was long lull before there was an increase in the number of arrivals until 1999. This escalation in numbers caused increasing concern in Government circles as was evidenced by the reaction in the community to the arrival of people claiming to be refugees who were trying to get to Australia by boat in 2001 from the Asian region. It triggered parliamentary debates, dominated the news media and challenged Australia's immigration laws, policies and attitudes.

A sea rescue operation, which is still reverberating as a current event, occurred on 26th August, 2001 when the Rescue Co-ordination Centre (RCC) of Australia sent a Mayday call. The Captain of the Tampa, a large Norwegian cargo ship, intercepted and changed its course of navigation to rescue 438 men, women and children from a sinking boat. While there is a maritime law to rescue people at sea, the obligation of where to land them is not clear. Australia also has strict rules and prohibitions about entering its territorial waters so it led to the decision that they were to be landed on Christmas Island and Nauru to undergo processing. This became known as the Pacific solution (Marr & Wilkinson, 2003). The Tampa crisis sparked a series of political debates in Parliament. Many saw these people as economic migrants and queue jumpers without visas rather than as refugees fleeing oppressive regimes and in need of protection and assistance. Had these boat people landed in Australia, they would be considered as onshore claimants for refugee status. While recent media attention and public debates have focussed on onshore refugees, the vast majority of refugees arrive from offshore. Although their arrival has not been subjected to the same media scrutiny, they have nevertheless had to cope with settling in a new country with vastly different cultural heritages. The subject of this study is on offshore refugees, who arrived in Australia in the 1980s, from El Salvador and who were granted permanent residence.

The phenomenon about refugees is not new but the world has witnessed an unprecedented scale of mass movements of people fleeing their home countries. The 20th century stands out as having produced three major refugee crises according to the comprehensive analysis done by Zolberg et al. (1989). Two of them were caused by the two world wars in Europe and the third crisis began to develop in the less-developed countries in the 1960s. This was not attributed to poverty or underdevelopment but due to generalised violence, civil wars and armed conflicts. It has also been aggravated by conditions related to processes of decolonisation and the changes in the global-economy under conditions emanating from developed countries. People were forced to escape and

resulted in tens of millions of innocent civilians being killed in their home countries or in the process of fleeing (Kushner & Knox, 1999). This is what happened to El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 1920s, as a consequence of World War I, the refugee crisis became an international problem and needed to be dealt with on an international level so the League of Nations was created. However, no global networks of institutions, laws and systems were created until 1950 (Ruthstrom-Ruin, 1993). The necessity of establishing a global network to assist in the protection and resettlement of refugees became evident when the flow of refugees increased after World War II. The creation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950 proved to be an important development. The UNHCR passed the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees that defined the concept of a 'refugee'. Due to the increasing numbers of refugees fleeing their home countries during the 1960s, an expanded definition was ratified in the 1967 Protocol, which covers the current refugees (Holbron, 1975; Goodwin-Gill, 1996). At present there are 145 countries that have signed one or both of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol (UNHCR, 2004) and Australia is a signatory of both.

Initially the UNHCR was given a three-year mandate to protect refugees, who came from Europe, but it has expanded its mandate to five yearly intervals to meet the growing needs of refugees worldwide. After 50 years of refugee work, the UNHCR continues to assist more than 20 million people in every corner of the world (UNHCR, 2000). Most of them are found in the poorest nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Loescher, 1993; Leopold & Harrell-Bond, 1994; UNHCR, 2000). In addition to protecting refugees, the UNHCR is also expected to find durable solutions to the refugee problems. These are: voluntary repatriation to their home countries, local integration in the country of first asylum and resettlement from the country of first asylum into a third country, such as Australia. As a signatory of the UN Convention, Australia accepted refugees from El Salvador in the 1980s and 1990s.

Australia is considered a land of immigrants, the same as the United States and Canada. While the Europeans became the refugees in the first half of the 20th century as a consequence of two world wars, in the 1970s a large influx of refugees began arriving in these above-mentioned countries from various parts of the world. They were fleeing their countries to escape violence, political turmoil, civil unrest and persecution. Most of them came from Africa, Asia and Latin America and were culturally, racially and ethnically different from the populations of the host countries. Compared to the host countries, they also came from less-developed countries and have neither extended families nor community support groups in these countries (Stein, 1986). This is true for the Salvadorans, who came to Australia.

In the 1980s the UNHCR became involved in the Central American region for the first time due to insurgency and counter-insurgency conflicts. There were three separate wars in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador (UNHCR, 2000). Historically, these three countries have experienced violent political struggles since Independence from Spain in 1821 culminating in civil wars in the latter half of the 20th century. There was an enormous loss of lives and more than a million refugees had fled from these three countries to neighbouring countries, the United States and other parts of the world (Ferris, 1987). Australia's response to this political crisis was to accept refugees from these three countries in the 1980s, but most of them came from El Salvador, the focus of this study. The reason for the larger intake from El Salvador was that the civil war was prolonged and a high percentage of the population was dispersed and needed resettlement. (The 2001 Census Data [by country of birth]

reveals that there are 9,696 Salvadorans, 283 Guatemalans and 701 Nicaraguans residing in Australia).

El Salvador is the smallest and the most densely populated country in the Central American region. Little is known about the pre-conquest era of El Salvador except that the country was inhabited by a group of indigenous people, the *Pipiles*, probably related to the Aztecs of Mexico. Based on the history of other civilizations, it is presumed that the indigenous population had well-established traditions of culture, arts, religious practices and language as well as a system of government. They would have subsisted on agriculture, mainly maize and beans, and lands were held in common (Leon-Portilla, 1991). With conquest, Spain transmitted not only the socio-economic and political structures that were functional in Europe but also the Catholic religion and the Spanish language (Russell, 1984; Wiarda, 2001). For purposes of this thesis, the historical background of El Salvador will begin with the conquest of the Americas and the expansion of the European world-economy in the 16th century.

Some analysts (North, 1985; Paige, 1997; Lauria-Santiago, 1999) have claimed that the historical pattern of dominance by the landed elite was the cause of the political conflict of the 1980s. This could be attributed to events occurring in the mid-19th century when coffee became 'king' and dominated the export economy. However, a closer analysis revealed that the cause of the political conflict could be traced back to the time when El Salvador was incorporated into the European world-economy in the 16th century. It is therefore important to outline the historical events that led to their seeking asylum in Australia. Many factors contributed to the political instability in El Salvador: the legacy of colonial rule, the continuing expansion of the world-economy, the political system of the country, the foreign policy of the United States (U.S.) and the radical changes in the Catholic Church in the late 1960s. This thesis is about Salvadoran refugees, who resettled in Melbourne, Australia between 1986-1989. The political, economic and social history of El Salvador provides the backdrop for understanding the plight of the people during the civil war of the 1980s and the resettlement difficulties of the refugees, who came to Australia.

Because of the complexity of the social, economic and political situation of El Salvador throughout its history, no single theory provides a satisfactory tool to analyse the events that led to the refugee crisis. In an effort to explain some of the reasons for the socio-economic and political conflict in El Salvador in the 1980s, some concepts and ideas from five theoretical perspectives¹ are utilized:

- modernisation theory
- dependency theory
- world-systems theory
- elite theory,
- *Foco* theory of revolution.

During the latter half of the 20th century, political scientists and economists struggled to explain why some countries developed and others became underdeveloped. **Modernisation theory** is but one of many explanatory theories that emerged during the latter part of the 20th century and was particularly popular in the United States (So, 1990; Hettne, 1995). Proponents of this theory claimed that development was an evolutionary process, which some countries had gone through successfully

¹ These theories are covered in more detail in Chapter 2.

but the same process could be undergone by any society. This theory is presented to serve as a backdrop for the following two theories.

At the time of the economic crisis in the 1960s and 1970s, two theoretical perspectives emerged to explain the situation: dependency and world-systems theories. Analysts (Frank, 1967; 1969; Cardoso, 1973; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Dos Santos, 1998), whose arguments are based on **dependency theory**, theorise that countries on the periphery did not develop and industrialise (as suggested by the proponents of world systems theory) but rather stayed underdeveloped and dependent on the core countries. Despite its limitations, this explanation is helpful in providing some insights in understanding the problems of El Salvador because it allows one to trace the source of the problem from the 16th century as well as to explore the reasons why the country failed to become economically stable and independent. Another advantage of using some of the ideas and concepts of this perspective is that some of the social scientists, which expound the dependency viewpoint, come from Latin America and are familiar with the situation in their part of the world. Although none of them come from El Salvador, their first hand interpretations of events in Latin America provide an alternative perspective from those who look at the situation from a core perspective. To take an historical perspective, it can be seen that before one can grasp the situation in present-day El Salvador, it is necessary to examine the colonisation of the country by Spain. The socio-economic and political structures transmitted by Spain were institutionalised and continued for the next 500 years in spite of the changes that have occurred both on the national and international levels. While this theory looks for explanations from the perspective of developing countries, the relationship between developing and developed countries can be more effectively viewed through another theory, namely world-systems theory.

Wallerstein (1974, 1979), a major proponent of the **world-systems perspective**, provides some useful insights into how world systems have influenced international relationships and national policies and practices. In explaining the capitalist system, he uses a three-tier stratification of the different countries in the modern world-system: core, semi-periphery and periphery, as explained in the next chapter. In Wallerstein's view, the expansion of the world-economy in the 16th century, introduced a system of oppression and exploitation into the capitalist system, which has continued to this day. This means that there is a reliance on cheap labour for labour-intensive agriculture to produce raw materials in order to accumulate capital for the core countries. El Salvador is considered a country on the periphery because it produces raw materials and provides cheap labour for the core countries. This is a useful way of conceptualising the economic status of countries but provides an incomplete analysis and interpretation of the economic situation of the countries concerned. This theory is later linked up with globalisation and the economic rationalism of Australia in relation to the policies and programmes for refugees.

The expansion of the European world-economy was led by Spain, a country on the periphery in relation to Western Europe at the time of the conquest of the Americas in 1492. There was a need to acquire more lands because the feudal system in Europe was in crisis. Gold and other precious metals were also needed to defray military expeditions. The *conquistadores* were able to acquire gold and silver not only for the reigning monarchs of Spain from some Latin American countries but were also able to enrich themselves. However, El Salvador lacked these precious metals but had fertile soil that was propitious for agriculture, and therefore it gradually developed a monoculture type of

agriculture, used for export, but became dependent on cheap labour (Lauria-Santiago, 1998; 1999). This system did not improve the living conditions of the majority of the population, instead it created an elite group, who managed the economy and traded directly with the core countries.

Cardoso and Faletto (1979), who view the situation from the dependency perspective, claim that the success of the economy between the core countries and the countries on the periphery is attributed to the internal alliances formed between the countries. The internal alliances were made with the core countries by a small group of elites, who claimed to be descendants of the *conquistadores*. The role of the elites in the economy of El Salvador was paramount to its development and some concepts of **elite theory** have been used. Elite theory establishes a link at what is happening within the country and how this relates to the wider world. This theory starts by examining what is happening within the host country and looks out to wider contexts. This is a reverse starting point to that of world-systems theory, which starts from the world-economy and then narrows down to looking in. This theory was formulated in 19th century Sicily and was initially used for the political system of that country to justify the existence of the oligarchy. However, this thesis has used it to understand the role of elites in the economic system and in the political system from mid-19th century El Salvador.

While some of the interests between those who dominated the world-economy and those who managed the economy of El Salvador coincided, this was not the case in respect to the relationship between the local people and those who belong to the Salvadoran elite. The extreme disparity between the rich and the poor has been the cause of constant rebellions and political violence from the mid-19th century. The earliest recorded protests occurred in 1833 and others followed well through the end of the century but in 1932 the first peasant revolution was declared. It has been estimated that about 30,000 peasants were killed, although the revolution only lasted for a month (Anderson, 1971; North, 1985). As a consequence, the indigenous population was forced to go underground and the people were 'forced' to stop practising their cultures and traditions in order to become less visible and to avoid being singled out by the military and subsequently tortured or killed. This revolution became a watershed in the history of El Salvador, a tremendous revolutionary struggle of political significance and a symbol of martyrdom that set the scene for the 1980s civil war, which caused the exodus of more than a million of the population.

While there were rebellions in the mid-19th century, it was only in the 1970s that different guerrilla and popular groups began to form, although a small group was still in existence from the 1930s Communist Party (PCS). The formation of guerrilla groups and their role in changing the socio-economic and political structures is explained through the use of **Foco theory of revolution**, which was framed during the Cuban Revolution of 1959 (Guevara, 1961; Debray, 1967; Sinclair, 1998). The leaders of the revolutions usually came from the middle class sector of society, notably from the University of El Salvador (UES). In 1980 the different groups amalgamated and became known as the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). The FMLN was further reinforced when other popular organisations under the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) became part of the movement in 1981. It became known as the FDR-FMLN movement because of its military and political component. While the FDR was dissolved in 1987, FMLN became a political party in 1994 (Montgomery, 1995; McClintock, 1998; Grenier, 1999). Because of the involvement of some students, lecturers as well as peasants in guerrilla groups, the Armed Forces and Death Squads targeted

students, teachers and peasants in general and many were killed, tortured, imprisoned or 'disappeared'. While this is true, many teachers and students, who were not involved in guerrilla groups, also suffered the same fate. In spite of limited resources, the FMLN movement was able to oppose the government to reach an agreement in ending the civil war that led to the signing of the peace treaty on 16th January 1992.

Another key element necessary in understanding the interweaving causes of the civil war in the 1980s is the leadership role of the Catholic Church and its stance against social injustice. It is efficacious to do this by tracing its historical beginnings from the 16th century. The spread of the Catholic religion outside Europe began concomitantly with the expansion of the European world-economy so the Church hierarchy enjoyed the same privileges as the *conquistadores* and later the elites. However, the Catholic Church introduced new social teachings in the late 1960s. The Latin-American Bishops were alarmed when they suddenly realised the extreme disparity between the rich and the poor. This led them to make a 'Preferential Option for the Poor' in 1968. The Church then became more vocal about social injustices being committed against the poor during this period. In El Salvador, the Church defended the poor and took a stance against the social injustices being committed by the Government. This led to the systematic persecution of the Church from 1977 and many priests, including the Archbishop of San Salvador, and members of religious or church groups were killed, tortured or expelled from the country. Many peasants involved in the Christian Base Communities (CEBs) and those who worked as catechists and/or lay ministers also suffered the same fate because they were labelled as subversives and/or communists (Lernoux, 1980; Berryman, 1984; Whitfield, 1994). Many were fortunate enough to flee the country and became refugees, some arriving in Australia.

Last but not the least is the significant role played by the United States in supporting the government of El Salvador in the 1980s. This relationship is explained by examining U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. To prevent any European intervention by France and England in the Western Hemisphere, the United States passed the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. The United States was also convinced that it had a mission to 'spread democracy' but its inability to expand further territorially led to the decision to claim a 'sphere of influence' for its own. In 1904, the Roosevelt Corollary was passed that made the United States not only the 'defender or protector' of the Western Hemisphere (Central and South America) but also had the power to intervene in case any country should occupy Latin America (Bemis, 1943; Smith, 2000). During this period no U.S. intervention occurred in El Salvador until the political crisis of the 1980s.

A change, however, occurred after the two world wars of the 20th century because the Soviet Union (USSR) had become powerful and communism was perceived to be a threat. This led the United States to adopt a foreign policy of 'containment of communism' during the era of the Cold War. The world was then divided into two ideological blocs of: Capitalism/Democracy (U.S.) and Communism (USSR) or East-West relations (Laloy, 1988; Senarclens, 1995). Although the United States stated that it was keen to spread democracy in the region by 'containing communism' it also supported military dictatorships and thus prevented democratic processes from continuing in Latin American countries. This also meant transforming economic structures so the United States could promote free trade and investments in Latin America (Smith, 2000). El Salvador was therefore caught in the quagmire of East-West relations in the 1980s (Shaw, 1986) and the political crisis that ensued

was interpreted as communist infiltration. Thus, the United States provided not only military and economic aid but also trained military personnel to combat communism. This aid sustained the war that lasted almost 12 years (Deng, 1993; Binford, 1996). As a result, more than 75,000 people were killed, about 9,000 were 'disappeared', more than half a million were displaced within the country, thousands were tortured and/or imprisoned and more than a million (25%) of the population dispersed to neighbouring countries and other parts of the world, including Australia, and became known as 'refugees'.

Against this background of oppression, exploitation, repression and persecution, refugees resettled in Australia from 1982. The way that people see and relate to other people and institutions (both Government and semi-Government) is embedded in the history, religion and culture of their people as well as in their individual experiences. This thesis argues that only a partial understanding can occur if a researcher focuses on the effects of the trauma on the resettlement process without taking into account the different ways of relating to each other and to society. The culture and history of the Salvadoran people need to be examined to see how years of oppression taught the people certain survival strategies, including the ways in which they deal with authority. Techniques, which may have been successful in their home country, where there were frequent uprisings and rebellions, may not be as helpful to Salvadoran refugees as they confront a new and very different social milieu.

AIMS OF THE THESIS

The overall aims of this thesis are to examine and analyse:

1. The historical context of the socio-economic and political structures in El Salvador that led to the oppression and exploitation of the majority of the population from the 16th to the 20th century, which led to the exodus of refugees from El Salvador.
2. The impact of policies and practices in Australia in relation to resettlement of refugees from El Salvador and to link service provisions to pre-arrival experiences.
3. The pre- and post-arrival experiences of a select group of refugees, who have resettled in Melbourne, Australia through a qualitative research study.

Mapping the Thesis

The thesis has been divided into two parts. Part I explores the history of El Salvador from the time of conquest in the 16th century to the events that forced refugees to flee their home country in the 1980s and their subsequent resettlement in Melbourne, Australia. It also examines how colonisation and the Catholic Church influenced the ways in which the people related to Governments and people in authority. To put into context the plight of Salvadoran refugees in Australia, it was expedient to trace the historical background of their country and to examine how the laws and regulations that prevailed affected them. Their complex and tragic history has played a part in their lives and this has had a profound impact on their resettlement process.

There are a number of interconnecting themes that run through the thesis, each of which provides important information that helps us to understand the issues that Salvadoran refugees experienced in resettlement. These themes are developed in Part I of the thesis and include:

1. A description and analysis of relevant theories that help explain why the civil war occurred and why El Salvador remained a country on the periphery in spite of its success in the export of crops that were in demand in the world-economy.
2. A brief history of El Salvador from the time of conquest to the time when the refugees fled from their country in the 1980s.
 - *This section includes relevant material about the role of the Catholic Church in El Salvador. Religion was connected to politics and oppression of the native people for a long period in El Salvador. A thorough understanding of Salvadoran people is incomplete without an examination of the role of the Church.*
 - *Also included is the role of U.S. intervention in the political system of the country. This is important because military and economic aid from the United States supported the Salvadoran government and sustained the war that led to the exodus of more than a million of the population.*
3. An exploration of the culture and survival strategies developed by the local people over centuries of oppression and the extent to which these were further developed during the civil war.
 - *This is particularly important because of the link between one's past history and their understandings and taken for granted assumptions are brought into a new but different milieu.*
4. A brief discourse on the immigration programmes and services in Australia provides background information in respect to the status of migrants and refugees in this country.
 - *When the first Salvadoran refugees began arriving in Australia, the micro-economic agenda was based on economic rationalism. Globalisation and economic rationalist policies are delineated in respect to the programmes and policies that are related to the resettlement experiences of refugees at that time.*

Part II of the thesis, which is the research component, describes the experiences of refugees prior to coming to Australia, their arrival experiences and their resettlement. It examines the link between their experiences prior to coming to Australia with their settlement experiences. A group of 14 participants, who were interviewed about their lives in El Salvador and Australia, supplied detailed narratives about many of the things that happened to them in both settings and provided a graphic picture of life in a country at war and how they managed to survive. Their stories form the basis for Part II of the thesis.

In addition, the research component examined those practices and services that helped Salvadoran refugees to cope and adapt to their new country. The thesis sought to explore the impact of post-traumatic stress on the refugees both before they left El Salvador and after they arrived in Australia. In short, the thesis looked at background factors, the refugee flight, the resettlement process and the ways in which these were interwoven.

Results of the study indicate that fear had become internalised in the refugee population because of the massive and random repression they experienced in their home country and that this fear played a part in the ways that they related with each other and those in authority. Fear had become endemic for them and was ever present during their latter time in El Salvador and as refugees

in flight. This fear, accompanied by memories of death, loss and humiliation affected their ability to resettle in Australia. Their fear of authority and distrust of strangers help explain their reluctance to access services, to make connections and to form friendships with people with whom they have no clear relationship. The lack of skills in the English language also contributed to their resettlement problems in Australia.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THESIS

Some experts and social scientists in Australia have created awareness in the public forum about the needs of refugees. In 1980 the Australian Academy of Social Sciences held a symposium on 'Refugees: The Challenge of the Future' (Price, 1981). However, research on the experiences of refugees in Australia, especially minority groups, is still very limited. Most of the research on experiences of refugees has focused on larger groups, such as the Indo-Chinese refugees, and only a few studies (Hosking, 1990; Langer, 1990; 1998; 2000; Pittaway, 1991; Julian et al., 1997) have been done on Latin American refugees, including El Salvador. Little is known about studies that link flight and resettlement (Joly, et al. 1992). The thesis is significant because it:

- Explores the historical background of El Salvador in order to understand more fully why Salvadorans became refugees in the 1980s.
- Presents some of the experiences of Salvadoran refugees in their home country and in Australia so they do not become a 'people without history' (Wolf, 1982).
- Gives 'voice to the voiceless' because very little is known about experiences of refugees, especially those who belong to minority groups as do the Salvadorans.
- Links flight from El Salvador with resettlement in Australia.
- Assists in planning the provision of extra services, such as counselling, to facilitate resettlement in Australia.
- Looks at the plight of refugees, their difficulties in resettlement and the lack of family and community support.
- Examines how the social and political milieu from which the Salvadorans have come, impacts on their resettlement process in Australia.

While the thesis seeks to trace the causes of the refugee exodus from the socio-economic, political and religious perspective, it also attempts to show that difficulties in family life among Salvadoran refugees could be traced back to (a) its colonial heritage; (b) its centuries of domination by a core country; and (c) the teachings of the Catholic Church. These factors, accompanied by the impact of war and human rights abuses committed by the Government in the 1980s all compounded on the refugee experience. The refugees came to Australia with a historical 'baggage', which influenced their inability to easily adapt into Australian society.

The research component of the thesis is significant because the experiences of refugees in Australia have seldom been the focus of a research study and it links the relationship of flight with resettlement. Such information will contribute to the body of knowledge that informs policy makers and Governments about refugees, their backgrounds and their post-arrival experiences. More specifically it:

- Develops an understanding of why people from a war-torn country become refugees and how these experiences affect their resettlement in Australia.
- Makes policy makers more aware of the needs of refugees and what types of services can be offered to address their difficulties.
- Increases an awareness of the need to have services provided specifically for refugees.
- Explores a way of extending a more welcoming attitude of hospitality to people, who arrive as refugees without friends and/or relatives in the host country.

LIMITATIONS OF THE THESIS

The thesis has focused mainly on the socio-economic, political and religious history of El Salvador and why the Salvadorans became refugees in the 1980s. While the Catholic religion has influenced the lives of the Salvadoran people, there is a need to explore how they practice their religion when they resettled in Australia and how they have adapted to the changes. Because of the difficulty of achieving a working knowledge of English, little is known about how people, who belong to a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)² group, communicate and socialize in a dominant English-speaking country. The Salvadoran refugees and other refugee groups, who are new on the Australian scene, provide an unlimited arena for future research studies. While the thesis provides an analysis of some aspects of globalisation and its effects on Salvadoran politics and society in the historical context, the thesis cannot do justice to all the socio-economic and political complexities of the global system.

While the research component of the thesis makes a significant contribution in understanding some of the experiences of Salvadoran refugees only a small group was interviewed. As a result, the findings are only a snapshot of a small sample and no generalizations can be made. The thesis was only able to cover some issues that related to the exodus of refugees in the 1980s and given the small sample, further research can look at other issues.

The next chapter explains the theories used in analyzing the historical background of the socio-economic and political systems of El Salvador from the 16th to the 20th century. This historical analysis is necessary to understand how the system of oppression and exploitation was institutionalized in El Salvador and finally caused the refugee exodus in the late 20th century.

² Previously referred to as Non-English Speaking Background (NESB)

PART I: THE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF EL SALVADOR

CHAPTER 2: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis argues that to understand the political crisis in the 1980s in El Salvador that led to the refugee exodus, it is important to trace the socio-economic and political history of the country and its links with developed countries. This involves exploring both the historical events as they impacted on the people, as well as the people's responses to them. It also involves examining the refugees' experiences in El Salvador, their initial arrival experiences as well as the settlement process and the ways in which these three stages of their lives inter-relate and impact on each other.

A number of theories can be used to explain why El Salvador remained an underdeveloped country while others developed and became industrialised. However, no single theory adequately explains the course of history in this context. For this reason a number of theories have been utilized and this chapter will briefly outline the main assumptions behind these theories accompanied with some of the drawbacks and criticisms. Two theories –dependency theory and world-systems theory address the situation of El Salvador in relationship with other countries in the world. These theories start from the wider world context and look into the situation of El Salvador. These two theories are useful in explaining why El Salvador did not modernise but became dependent on developed countries and was held ransom to the needs of other nations' economic and political requirements. This explains why the people became poorer and landless. However, modernisation theory was a forerunner of dependency and world-systems theories and helps provide the context for their development. It serves as a backdrop to the two theories used in this study to explain the crisis that occurred in the 1970s.

The above theories, while providing some insight, do not explain adequately the internal instability in El Salvador and the reasons for the civil war. It is therefore necessary to look elsewhere to provide such explanations by using elite theory and *foco* theory of revolution. Elite theory establishes a link between what is happening economically and politically within a country and the wider world. This theory starts by focussing on the host country and looks out to a wider context, a reverse starting point to that of world-systems theory, which starts from the world-economy and then narrows down to looking in at a host country. *Foco* theory of revolution also focuses primarily at the internal happenings of the target country but explains why people rebel against established structures at a particular time in history. While the other theories focus on the economy and development of the country, this theory is a response to the effects of an economy that exploits and oppresses the poor. An explanation of modernisation theory is therefore necessary to understand the reasons why El Salvador did not become an industrialised and developed country.

MODERNISATION THEORY

During the latter half of the 20th century, political scientists and economists struggled to explain why some countries developed and others became underdeveloped. A number of theories were put forward; all of which had followers and critics. After World War II the United States had become a world leader and was keen to improve the economy and political independence of many Third World countries. It also wanted to prevent these countries from becoming communist. This was the period when modernisation theory became popular in the United States. Experts such as economists and analysts from the universities, the government and some private foundations encouraged social scientists and students to study Third World conditions (So, 1990; Hettne, 1995). These experts expounded this theory as the way to understand modernisation. They claimed that development was an evolutionary process, which some countries had gone through successfully but the same process could be undergone by any society.

It was assumed that societies were divided into 'traditional' and 'modern'. Traditional societies refer to the pre-industrial world. These societies were largely made up of peasants, who lived relatively conservative lives or were set in their ways of living. They preferred to remain committed to their traditional modes of sustaining themselves, economic practice, social and cultural life. The peasants were thought to have little impetus for change and the limited economic development that may have occurred while being sufficient for their subsistence did not contribute to economic growth. These 'traditionalists' appeared to have been trapped in their old ways, had old-fashioned modes of technology, as well as lacked business and entrepreneurial skills. In addition, they were seen to embrace values and religious traditions that were conservative and which were not focussed on future planning (Wolf, 1982; Sanderson, 1999). These practices were seen as the causes for the underdevelopment of Third World countries. The exponents of modernisation theory applied these ideas quite simplistically as if Third World countries could be considered homogeneous. This theory would have been difficult to apply to El Salvador because the country is divided between the minority, who would be considered as 'modern' and the majority as 'traditional'. One of the major flaws of this theory is the lack of understanding of the historical legacy of each country in Latin America and how each one developed differently under colonial rule. This theory has also been based on the premise that western culture is superior to other cultures and should be the 'model' for others to follow thereby disregarding the indigenous groups belonging to each country. While this theory focused on the economy, it was also directed at communism and thus had a 'political mission'.

'Modern' societies on the other hand were compared to the successful and 'developed' countries consisting of countries like the United States and Great Britain. Modernists claimed that there were no other paths to follow. However, very little was said about the influence of foreign domination in the economy and in the political system. One of the best-known economic contributions used to apply modernisation theory has been attributed to Walt Rostow who saw development in different stages and claimed that all developing societies were expected to pass through this process, which included:

- traditional society;
- preconditions for take off society;
- take-off;
- road to maturity and,

- mass consumption society (So, 1990:30).

Take-off stage was seen as the central point or the most crucial stage and it might take a few decades to develop. The economic prerequisite for take-off is created in the second stage thus removing the character of the traditional societies in the process. During this stage, agricultural production increases rapidly, an effective infrastructure is created, society develops and a new class of entrepreneurs emerges. When the last obstacles to development are removed during the take-off stage, a share of net investments is expected to occur and a saving in national income should lead to the process of industrialisation, which would create the mass consumption society (So, 1990; Hettne, 1995). The mass consumption society was seen as an ideal for all countries but in a country as poor as El Salvador only a minority could be classified as belonging to a mass consumption society so it would be difficult to reach this stage. Besides, no educational opportunities were offered to the majority of the population so that they could adapt to the changes in the world-economy as well as improve their standard of living. It was convenient for the elites to leave the majority of the population in their 'ignorance' so they could not clamour for equal rights and to have better living conditions. El Salvador has a very low literacy rate in the rural areas. This is probably the reason why Grenier (1999) refers to El Salvador as a school-less country.

While modernisation theory looked to the elites as the key to 'take off stage', the causes of underdevelopment were not addressed. Frank (1967; 1969) indicates that underdevelopment was a created situation and not a natural state and as a result take-off stage was never reached but instead resulted in dependency. The failure of modernisation theory can probably be attributed to assuming that all countries have to develop according to the European notion of mercantilism and capitalism. It is a denial of the cultural diversity of non-European countries, where group, community rights and cooperation are valued (Mehmet, 1995). Baran (1973) argues that if it had been a peaceful transformation of western culture with genuine cooperation and assistance instead of exploitation and oppression, these countries could have experienced progressive development.

Modernisation programmes were implemented in El Salvador by the United States in the post World War II era. The United States was seen as a model that had risen from periphery to core but by 1950 it had reached hegemonic status and was classified as a modern society. The development of Third World countries was seen as crucial so the United States sent experts to improve the economy and political systems of many Third World countries. Industrialisation, modernisation and independence were therefore seen as necessary to promote economic development and to combat communism after the World War II era. As explained in Chapter 3, modernisation was used as a cold war ideology to justify U.S. intervention in many Third World countries.

Experts on modernisation were sent to Latin America to implement development programmes that would take the same linear path as the now developed countries. Because of the success experienced in the western countries, the modernists claimed that there were no other paths to development. It was also proposed that foreign aid was necessary and U.S. corporations were encouraged to invest abroad and to make loans. The United States therefore provided financial aid and technical expertise to Latin America and tried to implement its own programmes (So, 1990). A new concept of free trade, which encouraged foreign investors to form joint ventures with local elites, was also introduced by the United States. Trade under these conditions proved to be impressive in the early years, especially in the manufacturing sector but failed to achieve the aims and objectives when

applied to Latin America (Munck, 1985). The Central American Common Market (CACM) was used by the U.S. Alliance for Progress as the umbrella through which modernisation programmes were implemented in El Salvador but by late 1960s it had collapsed. The experts determined programmes that favoured the United States rather than El Salvador so it collapsed after a couple of decades. However, modernisation theory failed to explain economic stagnation, political repression and the widening gap between the rich and poor. To understand the causes of this breakdown, analysts began to reflect on the crisis in a historical context. Dependency theory emerged to look at the situation from the perspective of the 'countries on the periphery'. The analysis begins from the 16th century and highlights the reasons why the countries on the periphery became underdeveloped, as explained below.

DEPENDENCY THEORY

In spite of the modernisation programmes implemented by the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, Latin America did not develop according to plan. This lack of development of Latin American countries was attributed to the role they played in the world-economy. However, Amin (1994) argues that development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin in the capitalist expansion and not a backward form of capitalist development. Latin American theorists (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Dos Santos, 1998) looked at the relationships between countries in the world-economy by using dependency theory. Packenham (1992) notes that this theory has had a deeper and greater influence on the academic world of both Latin America and the United States. It has also influenced every social science discipline and other applied and professional fields. In the case of El Salvador, a country on the periphery, it is used to trace its historical background and the reasons why the country has remained underdeveloped in spite of its success in the world-economy.

As a dependency theorist, Frank (1967; 1969) explains that the countries on the periphery became underdeveloped because in the historical development of the capitalist system there is a monopolistic expropriation/appropriation of economic surplus between countries in the world-economy. Frank uses the terms 'metropolis' to refer to core countries and 'satellite' for the countries on the periphery. This means that the metropolis expropriates the surplus from the satellite and appropriates it for its own development. A metropolis/satellite relationship runs through the world capitalist system like a chain from the world centre to the local centres of the satellite countries (Tussie, 1983). This categorisation appears to be a rigid explanation in the analysis of the roles of the countries because there is no intermediary level and therefore limited. Therefore, satellite countries remain underdeveloped due to lack of surplus and this creates the bipolarisation in the modern world-system because of its exploitative character.

The underdevelopment of Latin America, particularly El Salvador, began with the expansion of the world-economy in the 16th century when the countries were incorporated into the expanding mercantile system and continued in industrial capitalism. It should also be analysed as an economic condition in terms of flow of surplus capital from periphery to core countries, where the accumulation is greatest (Blomstrom & Hettne, 1984; So, 1990). This historical heritage of colonialism and the perpetuation of an unequal international division of labour have been the main causes of dependency and not because of lack of capital, entrepreneurial skills or democratic institutions. The causes of

underdevelopment are quite complex when applied to El Salvador because it could refer to the nation as well as to the local people, who have been exploited and have become impoverished and landless.

Types of Dependence

Dos Santos (1998) one of the proponents of the dependency perspective, delineates the unequal relationship existing between core countries and the countries on the periphery. This unequal relationship results in the former becoming developed while the latter underdevelops. To explain this inequality, Dos Santos presents three different types of dependence based on its historical context. So (1990) claims that this is Dos Santos' best contribution to understanding dependency, which are:

Colonial dependence refers to the trade monopoly dominated by European countries. It provided the financial and commercial capital but transferred surpluses from the colonies to the core countries. A colonial practice of acquiring the monopoly of land, mines and human resources (serfs and slaves) was also a means of accumulating capital. In El Salvador the Spaniards took over the management of lands and the peasant population. In times of labour shortage, African slaves were brought in.

Financial-industrial dependence emerged at the end of the 19th century. It was characterised by the domination of big capital in the dominant centres and its expansion abroad through investment in the production of raw materials and agricultural products. The export sector had rigid specialisation and monocultivation of entire regions, which included other economic activities. Yah (1990) claims that during the post colonial era, exploitative relationships continued and exorbitant interest rates were charged on loans and transfer of monopoly profits were obtained through the exploitation of the working class. Rigid specialisation in El Salvador came with the introduction of coffee in the late 1800s and more land was used for this purpose. The migration of young single men from Europe and the Middle East, who were knowledgeable in finance, facilitated in establishing banks through which loans could be made. Overseas assistance was also part of the business transactions especially when it came to the building of roads and improving the transportation system to assist in promoting the transport of the export crop.

Technological-industrial dependence emerged in the post World War II era when industrial development, especially with the formation of large corporations, began to take place in many underdeveloped countries. There was a need to generate new investments to obtain foreign currency for the purchase of new machinery but loans were conditioned by the exigencies of the international commodity and capital markets. This was the time when the modernisation programmes were implemented in El Salvador. Many assembly plants were established to encourage industrialisation so the country could modernise but failed within a couple of decades.

Dos Santos (1998) argues that industrial and technological structure suits the interests of transnationals rather than the domestic market. As a result, this type of trade and economic relations led to the super-exploitation of labour power in dependent countries and dominant countries continued to accumulate profits, which were sent overseas. Although dependent countries were linked up to the international system, they were unable to develop because of the practice of capital flight by the core countries. In the post World War II period some industrialisation took place in El Salvador especially with the creation of the CACM. However, overseas companies owned most of the firms and they worked in alliance with the elites of El Salvador. Profits were usually sent overseas for investment

purposes rather than for the development of the country. While the three different types of dependence are helpful in analysing the situation of El Salvador, they are very broad and need a more intricate explanation, which this study is unable to provide.

Because of the complexity of the socio-economic and political factors of each Latin American state in terms of dependency and their separate histories, Cardoso (1973) argues that dependency theory should not be used to generalise universal patterns of underdevelopment but as a method to analyse concrete situations. The starting point must be based on economic and political struggles as they are presented in the historical process. Dependency theory has been helpful in understanding why El Salvador remained underdeveloped and dependent on the core countries. However, there are differing views between the various dependency theorists and the causes of underdevelopment are quite complex for each country; Latin America consists of 25 countries. To understand the workings of the way countries interrelate with one another, world-systems theory explains how the world-economy expanded from the 16th century. However, this theory, which is an elaboration of dependency theory, looks at the world-system from the perspective of the core countries, as explained below.

WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY

The crisis of the 1970s, which included the rise of communism and the acceleration of the Cold War, alerted analysts that the capitalist world-economy had created a growing bipolarisation between rich and poor countries. This had a profound effect on most of the Latin American countries, especially El Salvador. Wallerstein (1974, 1979), a major exponent of this theory, explains how the expansion of the capitalist world-economy affected the indigenous peoples of the Americas with the introduction of a system of exploitation and oppression in order to accumulate wealth. In the Latin American context oppression can be traced back to its historical beginnings when the world-economy expanded in the 16th century. The natives of Latin America were subjugated by Spain when their socio-political and economic systems as well as religion and cultures were replaced. Paulo Freire (1970; 1974; 1994), an author of a number of influential books on social and critical awareness, claims that oppression is a form of violence initiated by the oppressor. The oppressed are exploited and treated as inferiors by the oppressors because their rights and values are not recognised. Oppressors or the dominant groups are inclined to see the oppressed as savages or subversives, who act violently and ferociously when their rights are denied. The oppressed develop low self-esteem, which is derived from their internalisation of the opinion of others, become fatalistic and act passively. They become emotionally dependent on the oppressor but let off steam at home because he/she thinks that everything is dreadful.

In explaining the modern world-system, Wallerstein (1974:347) defines it

... as a social system, one that has boundaries, member groups, rules of legitimation and coherence ... it has the characteristics of an organism ... [and] one can define its structure as being ... at different times strong or weak in terms of the internal logic of its functioning ...

Wallerstein (1974) took the world as a unit and assigned a three-tier level of stratification to describe the functions of the different countries in the world-economy, which are:

Core countries have the most advanced goods; use sophisticated technologies and highly mechanised methods of production. These countries are politically and economically dominant, production is efficient and the level of capital accumulation is greatest (Shannon, 1996). They are known to possess military strength and become powerful as leading economies by dominating other countries (Collins, 1988). While these countries might play a dominant role in the world-economy, they do not remain in the same position because of the cyclical shifts inherent in the modern world-system and in time they gradually decline when the economy weakens. Often, wars are fought to ensure that a country attains a dominant position in the world-economy. In the 16th century, the countries in Western Europe were considered as the core countries. Sanderson (1999) claims that in the late 20th century Western Europe, North America, Australia and Japan are the core countries. He adds, however, that the United States, Germany, France and Japan are the four leading economic powers.

In addition, during certain periods in history some countries are said to have reached hegemonic status. Wallerstein (1984:38) articulates that 'hegemony in the interstate system refers to that situation in which the on-going rivalry between the so-called "great power" is so unbalanced that one power is truly *primus inter pares*; that is, one power can largely impose its rules and wishes (at the very least by effective veto power) in the economic, political, military, diplomatic, and even cultural arenas.' They are few and far between. In the last 500 years only three countries were considered to have reached this status and they are the Dutch Republic (mid-17th century), Great Britain (mid-19th century) and the United States (mid-20th century), although Sanderson (1999) points out that there has never been a true hegemon. While the United States still plays a dominant role in terms of military and political strength, it is no longer considered as hegemonic, at least since the 1970s. However in the Western Hemisphere, the United States is still considered hegemonic and this becomes evident in the role it played in El Salvador at the time of the political crisis in the 1980s.

Semi-periphery countries have a definite purpose in the world-economy in terms of political and economic reasons. Wallerstein (1974) argues that a system that is based on unequal rewards as in the core/periphery countries have to be constantly watchful about the political rebellions of the oppressed. These countries appear to be necessary in the world-economy because they suit the needs of capitalists and also act as 'buffers' between the core/periphery countries. Capital and production processes can also be easily transferred from one country to another in times of stagnation and/or contraction in the economy. Spain would have been considered to be on this level in the 16th century because it took control of the economies of Latin America by establishing forced labour systems that concentrated on the production of raw agricultural and mineral products. At the time of the arrival of the Salvadorans in the 1980s, Australia had a semi-peripheral position in the world-economy. Therefore the Salvadorans, who came to Australia, had to adjust to a different way of life, especially those who came from the rural areas.

Periphery countries are the least developed, use less sophisticated technology and engage in more labour intensive agriculture. These countries are dependent on foreign capital and technology in their development process. In the world-economy they are dominated by core and semi-periphery countries and export raw materials on cheap terms because of coerced or forced labour. They also have poor economies, dense populations and unstable governments (Collins, 1988; Shannon, 1992). In spite of some success in the economy in the past, El Salvador is still considered as being on the periphery today.

To be classified as a periphery country means that incorporation in the world-economy has to take place; otherwise it is only classified as an external arena. Wallerstein (1989) contends that to become incorporated local production needs to be linked to commodity chains of the modern world-system. However, Chase Dunn & Hall (1997) argue that when plunder and/or the slave trade become regularised, incorporation occurs and a country is classified as peripheral. Analysts differ when exactly incorporation takes place and this is confusing for someone trying to make sense of what occurred in El Salvador.

Incorporation is never at the initiative of the countries being incorporated but depends on the needs of the world-economy. It is by 'hooking-up' of zones that countries, formerly in the external arena, become incorporated and subsequently classified as peripheral. The 'hooking up' of zones usually takes place when trade relationships are established. This means that countries on the periphery begin to export raw materials to core countries. According to Chase-Dunn & Hall (1997) incorporation is a major task and it occurs when an expanding core country looks for new or cheaper labour or seeks to find unavailable, scarce or cheaper resources and is not to be taken lightly. The end result of incorporation in countries on the periphery is for changes in society to occur, which result in the natural and mineral resources being depleted. For a core or a semi-periphery country, as seen in the case of Spain, the final consequence may have had significant economic benefits but it produced adverse effects on the Latin American countries, especially El Salvador.

World-systems theory focuses on 'economic processes and links and not any units defined in terms of juridical, political, cultural, geological or other criteria' (Hopkins, et al. 1982:72). This theory might be mainly concerned with the economy but a special relationship exists between the economic producers and the holders of political power (Wallerstein, 2004). It has been devised to deal only with the economy of the modern capitalist system. However, there are constant changes in the world-economy referred to as the cyclical shifts with regards to the demand of a major product. These shifts mean that markets for a product would go through the process of expansion/stagnation/contraction. While core countries would probably find it easy to determine what products are required during a specific period of time, periphery countries suffer untold consequences. In El Salvador, this meant a loss of land for subsistence agriculture, unemployment for many, instability in the economy and often the military was strengthened to repress a population that becomes rebellious.

Wallerstein (1974; 1979) situates the expansion of the European world-economy with the conquest of the Americas, which had its beginnings in the 16th century. The main purpose was to accumulate capital and to expand territorially. This geographical expansion became necessary because Europe was running out of lands, some industrialisation had begun to take place, feudalism was in crisis, the economic system had become stagnant and population growth had increased at a steady pace (Knox & Agnew, 1989). Spain led the geographical expansion into the New World with the conquest of the Americas in 1492. The Latin American continent is vast and it took a number of decades to conquer the entire continent. The *conquistadores* did not reach El Salvador until 1524. Further, Wallerstein (2004) elaborates that the world-economy is a large geographical zone within which there is a division of labour with a significant exchange of essential goods. It does not have a single political structure but rather many political units that are loosely bound together in an interstate system. Within the framework of an interstate system are the states, which are composed of strong and weak states. The strong states can often intervene in the internal affairs of the weak states. This is

what happened when the United States implemented its modernisation programmes in El Salvador in the 1950s. Moreover, in the 1980s it also intervened in the political system.

The world-economy is said to be capitalist because it needs to expand constantly when it reaches stagnation and/or crisis situations, which is totally different from the world-empire. In contrast, the world-empire is a kind of territorial expansion where one political system rules over several countries. This too happened in the 16th century because Spain ruled the colonies from afar. The process was accelerated when Charles I became the King of Spain (two kingdoms) in 1516. At that time he was also the ruler of the Netherlands and was heir to the Habsburg Kingdom of Austria and Germany. In 1519 he became the Holy Roman Emperor, assumed the title of King Charles V, and continued to conquer more lands. His successor, King Philip II, continued this trend but territorial expansion and wars to maintain supremacy cost excessively. Spain, therefore, began to decline gradually in the 17th century and by the early 19th century it had almost collapsed completely with the granting of Independence to most of the Latin American countries.

The continuous expansion of the world-economy reached the inner geographical frontiers by the 20th century and there are no more countries to be incorporated. The 20th century also brought about technological and ecological innovations never seen before and transformed the use of natural and mineral resources of many countries (Amin et al., 1982). However, as a capitalist system, it is still expanding today and it becomes more complex because there are no more countries to be incorporated. Instead, the mega-corporations have taken over and Sanderson (1999) refers to it as the deepening process because the broadening process has already been completed.

The expansion of the world-economy did not only introduce a system of exploitation and oppression into the capitalist system to accumulate capital but also a two class-system: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. While this two-class system might have been simple in the early years of the capitalist system, it has also become complex with the continuous expansion of the world-economy. Wallerstein (2004) refers to the bourgeoisie as those who produce surplus value created by others and invest a portion of it to accumulate capital but there are now different levels of this class structure. The proletariat are usually those who are forced to yield a portion of value they create to others or they are the wage earners and there are now at least five different levels. For the sake of simplicity of analysis, the elites of El Salvador belong to the bourgeoisie while the peasants are the proletariats, who have been dispossessed of their land and deskilled. They have also been forced to move to the urban areas as impoverished wage labourers. Those who arrived in Australia, as refugees, were wage earners in the urban areas while others worked in farming communities in the rural areas.

Further Expansion of the World-Economy

According to the proponents of world-systems theory, the cyclical shifts inherent in the capitalist world-economy means that there is a necessity to restructure the economic system in order to facilitate continued expansion and profits. After the World War II era, such a restructuring occurred and became known as globalisation. Based on his experience of Third World countries, Korten (1995; 1999), who is a major critic of globalisation and has written extensively on the topic, claims that capitalism not only cannot solve the current worldwide crisis in economic and social development but is the cause of it. One reason for this is that large corporations and core countries whose interests are focussed on

economic growth or political expediency, rather than the welfare of the local people decide much of what happens in Third World countries. The state is being separated from nation-state and it is concerned more with the economic system of the country although with less and less involvement. Governments, including Australia, then began to privatise most of the services. This has resulted in social services being cut to the minimum and the responsibility has shifted to private enterprise rather than the state (Catley, 1996; Goldfinch, 2000). This can affect the provision of needed services for newly arrived refugees.

When the United States assumed the leadership of the world-economy, it played a pivotal role in the development of the political systems of the periphery countries. It began to support and promote a global political network of civilian-military regimes and dictatorships in Latin America, Africa and Asia since it wanted to maintain international order and stability. To achieve order and stability means that there is a need for a rapid build-up of the political, economic and military systems around the world in the name of 'democracy' (Chomsky, 1985; Robinson, 1996). This means that the free market is important and it should favour the interests of the United States and the transnationals. Moreover, with the increased violence and terrorism after 9/11/2001, it has also meant the 'militarisation' of globalisation. While this might benefit some of the developed countries and the transnationals because of the escalation of large amounts of capital at stake, it has also a destructive potential. Therefore, dominant capital will assert its dictatorial powers and democracy can be threatened (Amin, 2003). While these events were not foreseen after World War II, nevertheless the establishment of the four pillars of the world-economy was seen as crucial, as explained below.

Pillars of the World-Economy

To manage the complexities of the world-economy and to avert another economic catastrophe, four institutions were established in the mid-1940s. Three of these pillars became known as the Bretton Woods Systems (BWS), the 'brainchild' of John Maynard Keynes, who proposed the necessity of having three pillars in the global economic system in the 1940s to avoid the catastrophe of another world war and the events that led to the Great Depression (ul Haq, et al. 1995). The three institutions are: the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). These institutions were meant to promote an open world-economy, encourage economic growth, international cooperation and allow the free flow of capital and goods worldwide (Kirshner, 1995).

The IMF was established to ensure monetary stability in an open world-economy after the gold standard ceased to fulfil its function. It also imposes structural adjustments on Third World countries that are unable to pay their debts and this means austerity for the poor and cutbacks on social programs, but at the same time benefits are extended for domestic and foreign investors (Chomsky, 1991). However, the IMF cannot compel the great capitalist leaders of First World countries to comply with structural adjustments, but is harsh with Third World countries (Amin, 1997). In El Salvador President Duarte announced an austerity 'package' in January, 1986 because the Reagan Administration was pressured by Congress to cut foreign aid as well as to reduce its own vast federal deficits. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and IMF imposed a 50% devaluation of the local currency and this resulted in the increased cost of fuel, building and agricultural materials, medicines, fertilizers and basic foodstuffs. The government also reduced the cost for social services

programmes, such as health and this situation further increased social unrest. Furthermore, the Salvadoran government wanted to shift a greater share of the cost of the civil war in El Salvador to the Salvadoran people.

The WB, on the other hand, uses one third of its resources for sectoral adjustment programs to complement the strategies of IMF under the leadership of Great Britain and the United States. It does not see itself as a public institution competing with private ones, but as an agent of Third World countries to allow the entry of transnationals. Transnationals is a term used by the United Nations (UN) and it was institutionalised when the UN Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) was created in 1974. There is no universally accepted definition. The broad definition refers to all enterprises, which control assets (factories, mines, sales offices and the like) in two or more countries (Jenkins, 1987). In the agricultural sector of Third World countries, it has focused on destroying the autonomy of peasant populations by breaking the subsistence economy and by supporting forms of credit designed to this end. It has never concerned itself with the poor, but instead it has favoured governments that follow the dictates of the United States (Amin, 1997). In El Salvador, the USAID played a leading role in the economic programmes of the 1960s and WB was only involved in the post-reconstruction period after the civil war of the 1980s and the earthquake of 1986.

GATT was created at a later date because of concerns at the time in the United States that its power would infringe U.S. sovereignty. This institution was formed to facilitate free trade among countries and to help stabilise world-economy prices but has only performed a marginal role in policing world trade (ul Haq et al., 1995). In 1995 this was renamed as World Trade Organisation (WTO) to meet the needs of the largest corporations in the world (Wiseman, 1998). The WTO is composed of 146 member-countries; the majority are from developing countries and includes El Salvador. It establishes rules governing the trading system in the world. Often the decisions made by WTO favour the commercial interests of a few developed countries over the interests of developing countries and these affect the livelihood of ordinary people (Jawara & Kwa, 2003). For El Salvador this means that the poor, especially those in the rural areas, suffer the brunt of unemployment and loss of income, lack of health and social services, and no educational opportunities, to name a few. These can lead to further protests and demonstrations from the majority of the population, which happened in the 1980s.

Although the above-mentioned three agencies were meant to operate as UN agencies, they function autonomously (Korten, 1995). While these three institutions have been involved in the economic and political systems of El Salvador, further exposition of their roles is not deemed expedient because of the intricacies of their relationships with the country concerned.

A fourth pillar of global governance was also needed, although it was not mentioned as one of the proposals of Keynes. The UN and its agencies were seen as necessary to complement the three pillars of global governance but this will be explained in Chapter 5.

However, by the late 1960s the monetary system needed to be restructured because of unforeseen difficulties that were not anticipated by the BWS. One of the reasons is that the U.S. dollar, which was used as the international currency under the BWS, could no longer sustain the rapid changes of the global economy. This crisis led to the formation of the Trilateral Commission in 1972 due to the urgent need to reformulate new policies. The Commission, composed of North America (the United States and Canada), Western Europe (European Union) and Japan, was formed to manage the declining hegemony of the United States and to foster closer cooperation among the three regions

on common problems (Korten, 1995; Marrs, 2000). According to Amin (1992; 2003) the formation of these regional groups or 'Triad Imperialism' has been unprecedented, although in terms of military and political strengths, U.S. hegemony is still recognised.

The Commission is a non-governmental and policy oriented group with more than 300 distinguished citizens from the three regions mentioned above, but with very few leaders representing the union movements (Korten, 1995; Marrs, 2000). The aim was to restructure the North-South economic relations and to create a more just and workable economic order with increased interdependence, respect for equal rights and the abolition of 'spheres of influence'. It also planned to deal with the plight of almost one billion people in 30 resource-poor countries (Trilateral Commission Task Force Reports, 1977; Gill, 1990). The formation of this Commission changed the focus about the way the world was divided in the past. The ideological division of East-West ceased and henceforth the new division would be North-South. While the North-South division prevailed from the 1970s with regards to the global economy, the political crisis in El Salvador made the Reagan Administration revert to the former East-West relationship. This ideology was applied to the crisis in the 1980s because the United States thought that it was communist infiltration. The United States therefore sent military and economic aid to El Salvador to assist the government in fighting the insurgents. It kept the economy afloat and strengthened the Armed Forces but it sustained the civil war and caused the refugee exodus.

While the importance of tracing the historical beginnings of the integration of El Salvador into the world-economy is acknowledged, economic theorizing is not the main focus of the thesis. Thus a simple exposition of a modern world-system is outlined to provide an explanation of how the existing socio-economic and political systems began in El Salvador. The economy and the political system formed a very intricate and tangled web in the history of El Salvador and for this reason the link between the economy and the mass exodus of the refugees in the latter half of the 20th century is explored. So while this theory maybe flawed, it is necessary to understand the modern world-system and many students have found this type of analysis insightful (So, 1990; Sanderson, 1999). It has also stimulated a new approach to the understanding of capitalism that emphasises the necessity of peripheral forms of capitalism, the importance of the interstate system and the various forms and degrees of commodification in the capitalist world-economy (Chase-Dunn, 1989; Chase-Dunn & Hall, 1997). One of its strengths is that it creates a historical account of the modern world-system in the last five centuries (Shannon, 1996; Sanderson, 1999) and in this context it has been useful in understanding the economic and political history of El Salvador.

World-systems theory is helpful in explaining the geographic expansion of the world-economy in the 16th century but is inadequate in explaining the historical and economic background that led to the refugee crisis in the 1980s and 1990s. It provides some explanation why El Salvador remained a country on the periphery in spite of its success in the export of raw agricultural products. Up to this point it has been helpful, but its usefulness is limited because it looks at the world-economy from the perspective of core countries and not from countries on the periphery. While the theory might have provided useful insights into the workings of the modern world-system to explain some of the aspects of the economic system of El Salvador, Cardoso and Faletto (1979) emphasise that the situation of dependency for each Latin American state has specific qualities and dimensions because of its unique, socio-cultural and political factors in the events of their separate histories. Likewise, Hettne

(1995) proposes that there is a need for a development theory that is suitable for each country by taking into account its historical and social situations. Linked with the economy is the political system and this too has to be looked at even on a superficial level.

The above two theories provided some insights on the expansion of the capitalist system and how El Salvador became incorporated into the world-economy. However, there is a need to look at the links made between the core countries and the inner workings of the economic and political systems of El Salvador in order to trace the causes that triggered the political crisis of the 1980s, as explained below.

ELITE THEORY

In the history of El Salvador it has become apparent that a small group of elites had dominated the economic and political systems of the country after its Independence from Spain in the 19th century up to the time of the political crisis of the 1980s. The elites were so powerful and became known as the 'fourteen families'. They formed alliances with the leaders who are responsible in the core countries in the world-economy. It is therefore necessary to explain these links to understand the development of El Salvador.

The study of elites was conceived by sociologists as an alternative way of looking at the general workings of 19th century European capitalist society but it was based on the political system at the time. Two Italian sociologists, Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca, have been credited in developing elite theory. They claimed that society was divided into two main groups: the ruling class, who hold and exercise power, and the ruled class, who do not participate in government but merely submit to it. Mosca, however, asserts that the rule by the minority is an inevitable feature of social life (Meisel, 1962; Marcus, 1983; Haralambos & Holbron, 2000). This theory was developed in 19th century Sicily to justify the existence of the oligarchy but certain aspects of the theory can also be applied to the elites of El Salvador, especially the power of the oligarchy.

In Marcus' (1983) view, the concept of elites includes the notion that such groups are a major source of change within relevant levels of social organisation whether local, regional, societal or international. They can be the forces behind institutional processes in which others such as the masses and non-elites participate with them. Therefore, power in society can be attributed to the people, who dominate capitalist society and have much in common, rather than impersonal processes occurring in the country. In comparison to class, the elite perspective explains the issues of power rather than systems. Since this concept was developed in a capitalist society, it is important to note that capital accumulation is also necessary to maintain and develop elites. In this context, it is useful to use this concept because power is vested in a few, who dominate the economic and political systems of El Salvador.

Further, Haralambos and Holbron (2000) indicate that elites form a certain degree of cohesiveness and unity based on similarity of social backgrounds and interests. They mix socially in the same high prestige clubs and wealth is of primary importance because it means power. However, they are not effective in protecting their subjects (Powis, 1973). This group is usually concentrated in the richest 5-10 per cent of the population, who make major decisions that suit their interests rather than the concerns of the majority of the population. Their wealth is based on ownership and control of the means of production (land, capital, labour power, buildings and machinery). While the elites of El

Salvador do not probably meet all the qualities of the above, they became powerful from the mid-19th to the 20th century. They are considered an entrenched group and controlled the socio-economic and political systems of the country.

Elites in Latin American Context

In 19th century Latin America, the different states were governed by big landowners of Spanish descent, who ruled through three traditions of aristocratic institutions: the military, bureaucracy and the Church. Since they had no aristocratic titles, they were referred to as oligarchs (Kautsky, 1982) but adopted the lifestyles of the aristocrats. Ideologically aristocrats disliked productive labour and preferred more exciting pursuits of warfare or any war-related expeditions such as hunting and the breeding of cattle. To meet the demands of productive and manual labour, the peasants were exploited not only through forced labour but also by making them pay taxes, which they could ill-afford. In mid-19th century El Salvador, the formation of elite groups began to emerge especially when coffee became the main export crop. They were known as the 'coffee oligarchs' and controlled the economy and the political systems. However, the majority of the population became increasingly poor and landless.

Pareto (1979) claims that there is a rise and fall of elites, who do not last but appear in a different form. They form alliances with other powerful groups and are willing to use social force to preserve the existing order. They can therefore change and adapt according to circumstances. However, Stone (1987) claims that there is also the problem of self-perpetuating elites or oligarchs. Elites become a threat to democratic values. Because of their privileged positions and aims, they are able to perpetuate themselves in power. In El Salvador, the elites have enjoyed overwhelming advantages in the economic, political and military systems. They have also been able to count on the support of foreign powers, such as Spain during the colonial era or the United States in the 20th century. The elites have learned to label any peasant uprising or revolution as 'Bolshevik' or 'Communist' and win United States support through armed intervention, economic and military aid (Booth & Walker, 1989). This support became evident during the political crisis in the 1980s in El Salvador when the United States supported the military government and intervened in the political system. While the elites became a very powerful group in El Salvador, the guerrilla movements of the 1980s, as described below, also challenged them.

FOCO THEORY OF REVOLUTION

While the foregoing theories, focused more on the reasons why El Salvador became an underdeveloped country, the response of the majority of the population was vital to effect the changes in the socio-economic and political situation of the country. The 1959 Cuban Revolution saw the birth of a new theory of revolution. Known as *foco* (a Spanish word which means a centre of guerrilla operations rather than a military base) theory of revolution because its main aim is how to overthrow the capitalist state and U.S. imperialism through guerrilla warfare (Debray, 1967). *Foco* is a distinctively Latin American development of Marxism and claims that it is enough to have a nucleus of 30-50 men at the beginning of its formation. This theory is a clear and sharp departure from Lenin's theory and practice of revolutionary take-overs. Its approach to revolution is to motivate the masses by provoking a revolutionary situation or insurrection. However, outstanding and committed leaders are essential in leading the armed struggle. This was shown by the success of the Cuban Revolution, led

by Fidel Castro and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (Radu & Tismaneanu, 1990). The guerrilla movement in El Salvador cannot be measured against the success of the Cuban Revolution, but the different groups became cohesive and united; thus they were able to negotiate the end to the civil war.

In the wake of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, many insurgency groups began to form in Latin America. Revolutions were seen to counter-act the dominance of core countries in the world-economy and the system of exploitation and oppression that has prevailed in most of the Latin American countries. *Foco* theory of revolution is useful in providing insights into why, at this particular time in history, the peasants rose up against the military and the elites when they had experienced exploitation and land dispossession since colonisation. However, the continuing impoverishment and landlessness of the majority of the population encouraged people to unite themselves to change the structures that have prevailed for centuries. In the history of El Salvador, rebellions were often staged but they were mostly short-lived but in the 1980s several groups merged to challenge the government.

Aim of the Revolution

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (1961), one of the leaders of the Cuban revolution, had travelled far and wide in the Latin American continent and was familiar with the growing inequalities between the rich and poor people and the inability of national leaders to meet the needs of the poor. He advocated armed struggle and not self-defence. One of the aims of the revolution is military supremacy for the exploited people in order to relieve them from the socio-political and economic structures that have caused them to be oppressed. Members of guerrilla groups have to volunteer and no one should be forced. In El Salvador, the revolution also sought as one of its goals a move towards democratic principles in government, which was not attained after the 1979 coup (Montgomery, 1995; Greiner, 1999). In addition, advice was sought from Fidel Castro in the early 1980s about military strategies. Upon Castro's advice, the five groups amalgamated into one because unity was seen to be important in armed struggle.

'Che' Guevara, as he was popularly known in Latin America, was highly influential in providing a framework and the vision on how to successfully conduct a guerrilla force. McLaren (2000) considers Guevara, together with Paulo Freire, as 'pedagogues of revolution' but in different manners. Guevara was able to lead the people into revolution and to free countries from capitalist imperialism and dictatorships, such as Cuba from the United States and his pedagogy would probably still be relevant today because of the exploitative power embodied within new forms of today's transnationals. He would have studied and obtained a deeper understanding of globalisation and neo-liberalism. In Guevara's vision the revolution should lead the people to become masters of their own destiny by setting their own goals. They should become an independent country where they can trade freely with the world without foreign interference. The revolution should also reach the spiritual isolation of the indigenous peoples and they should be given back their stature and their land. Freire (1970; 1974; 1994), on the other hand, has been credited for his adult literacy programmes known as *conscientizacao* or critical awareness. His teaching empowered the poor to emerge from their situations of oppression and exploitation. These adult literacy programmes gained resurgence after some of the refugees from the camps of neighbouring countries returned to repopulate some areas of El Salvador in the 1990s (Purcell-Gates & Waterman, 2000).

The other aims of the revolution are to redistribute land and wealth, to restructure society, to re-organise the economy by ending exploitation and also to provide opportunities to the poor and oppressed (Kelly & Klein, 1981). However, good leaders are necessary to organise the revolution as in the case of Cuba and the peasants have to cooperate for its success. In El Salvador the five guerrilla groups merged under the umbrella of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) because unity was essential in staging a revolution against the government to change the structures that have persisted for centuries. While the FMLN was not able to change the structures outright, it nevertheless became a political party in 1994 so the majority of the population would now have a voice in government.

Latin American universities have been seen as the breeding grounds of neo-Marxist ideology that examines imperialism from a peripheral view. They perceive that Third World countries are ripe for socialist revolutions because the bourgeoisie have not been able to fulfil its role as the liberator of the forces of production. Followers of this ideology have finally realised that revolutions have to come from the peasants of the rural areas and that guerrilla warfare should lead into the formation of a people's army (So, 1990; McLellan, 1998). The formation of guerrilla groups in El Salvador in the 1980s proved that they could topple the existing military government. While these guerrilla groups were not able to accomplish their desired changes in the socio-economic and political structures, they were at least able to reach an agreement with the government to end the civil war that led to the signing of the Peace Treaty in 1992.

It has been claimed that this type of revolution usually begins with small groups led by university students and professionals or those belonging to the middle class. Although students in the past had become members of the General Association of Salvadoran Students (AGEUS), dating back to the 1920s and the 1932 Revolution, the formation of guerrilla movements in the 1970s has been blamed on the new generation of students. The University of El Salvador (UES) was thought to be the breeding ground of communist ideas because many students had become leaders of the guerrilla movements. This led to the University being closed in 1972, 1976, 1980-84 and part of the time in 1989-90 (Barry, 1991). While not all the faculty members and students had become members of the guerrilla movements, many were killed, tortured or 'disappeared' and some fled the country, as the study will show.

The increased inequalities between the rich and poor of Latin America after the World War II era have overwhelmed the national leaders. The leaders have been unable to meet the needs of the majority of the population and this has been claimed as one of the causes in the increase of popular rebellions. During this period people also have become more politically aware because they have received better education or have been exposed to new ideas and values (D'Agostino, 2001). In El Salvador, the country situation has gone from bad to worst so people were left with no option but to rebel against the system in order to be heard.

As explained earlier, the peasants were thought to belong to the 'traditional' societies and therefore were considered as the major obstacles in the development process because they were unable to adapt to changes in the world-economy. However, Petras and Velmyer (2001) see the peasants as 'actors', who are affected by the economic and political structures of their countries. They add that they should not be thought of as pre- or post-modern but rather as a social class, who act as catalysts in the anti-systemic change and a dynamic force in an on-going modernisation process. They

perceive themselves as engaged in a struggle to create a more just society and therefore they want to be freed of oppression and be in control of an economy that secures a decent standard of living for all.

The guerrilla groups or anti-systemic movements are considered an emanation of a complex historical process in the modern world-system. These movements usually come to the fore when oppression becomes particularly acute and people stage rebellions to counteract the power of the ruling elite but were of short-term duration. In 19th and early 20th century Europe, social movements appeared to have been efficacious in challenging the capitalist system and they became powerful and have lasted long after the mobilisation stage. However, the Russian Revolution of 1917 proved to be the turning point in the political history of the modern world-system because it was the first proletarian revolution in a backward zone. After World War II the anti-systemic movements had achieved great success. By the 1960s and 1970s a new kind of anti-systemic movements had arisen in different parts of the world (Arrighi et al., 1989; Wallerstein, 2004). The FMLN, composed of five guerrilla groups and an equal number of popular organisations, became a very powerful anti-systemic movement that forced the government and the military to negotiate in ending the civil war in El Salvador in the 1990s.

Stages of Formation

Debray (1967) spells out that guerrilla warfare undergoes three different stages of formation:

The **stage of establishment** is the most difficult phase and the groups become nomadic. Organisational operations have to be established, such as mail service, supply lines, relief forces and arms depots which could eventually become the zone of operations. Guevara (1961) states that women and young boys (not below 15) could become members of the guerrilla movements. In El Salvador many women joined the guerrilla movements, some of them becoming active leaders but boys as young as 12 years or younger also joined in because of what they experienced in the rural areas when some of them saw how their parents and loved ones were killed, tortured and mutilated.

The **stage of development** means that the guerrilla force has to develop in secret. This implies that members have to use pseudonyms and they should not be identified with the local population, otherwise the army can take vengeance against the families and relatives of the guerrillas. The favourite places of the guerrillas turn out to be the mountainous areas of El Salvador and many of the peasants who lived in these areas, such as Guazapa and Chalatenango, were killed because they were thought to be communists and/or subversives. The war situation in these places was experienced at an earlier date, as shown in the study.

The **stage of revolutionary offensive** is both political and military. The local population must support them and this is done through speeches, proclamations and explanations about the social goals of the revolution. There is no single command; informants and collaborators do not know one another. However, Guevara (1991) emphasises that compassion and love for the people must always motivate any revolutionary struggle. These different stages were accomplished in the guerrilla movements of El Salvador, but many people in the rural areas were seen as subversives and were tortured, killed or 'disappeared' by the military and others fled the country as refugees.

The next chapter will explain how the above theories and ideas will be applied to the historical and political situation in El Salvador.

CHAPTER 3: THE ROOTS OF THE POLITICAL CRISIS

The political crisis that caused the exodus of more than a million (25%) of the population of El Salvador during the 1980s can be traced back to its early history. To understand the causes of the political crisis and the mass exodus of the population as refugees, this thesis will examine the historical background of the country through the use of different theories explained in the previous chapter. While it is not the intention of this thesis to engage in the detailed workings of the world-economy, the theories were chosen to find the common thread that led to the political crisis and the resulting exodus. Therefore, this chapter will demonstrate the incorporation of El Salvador into the European world-economy in the 16th century and how the socio-economic and political history developed; drawing on the theoretical ideas outlined in Chapter 2. This chapter will also explain how the lives of the majority of the population were affected to the extent that by the 20th century, it caused a political crisis that culminated in the exodus of many Salvadorans. The experiences of these people who later became refugees affected their resettlement process.

The context of the colonisation of El Salvador provides a backdrop to the socio-economic and political crisis that occurred in the 20th century. In particular, the role that Spain and later other countries played in the domination and exploitation of El Salvador's resources are some of the factors associated with the ensuing poverty, landlessness, repression, revolution and mass exodus of the Salvadoran people. For these reasons, the historical background of El Salvador from the 16th to the 20th century is delineated. It is difficult to fully grasp the present socio-economic and political events without exploring the historical context. While the research component of this thesis is about the experiences of Salvadoran refugees both prior to coming to Australia and then during resettlement, it is argued that the long history of oppression and exploitation towards the indigenous people and their descendants was continued by successive leaders. These have somewhat affected the resettlement process of the refugees. In a sense, what happened to the people over generations is part of their collective unconscious. The trauma and exploitation that was endemic throughout the history of El Salvador since colonisation, is imprinted in the socialisation process and influences the way that refugees act and react, whether in their home country or in their new country. For these reasons, a detailed historical account of the colonisation and subsequent economic and political development of El Salvador is provided.

EL SALVADOR UNDER COLONIAL RULE

The world economic crisis of the 1970s brought to light some of the reasons why some countries developed while others became underdeveloped. It has been claimed by analysts (Wallerstein, 1974; 1979; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979) from developed and underdeveloped countries that with the

expansion of the European world-economy in the 16th century a system of oppression and exploitation was introduced, which has lasted to the present day. They have highlighted the need to look at the history of the expansion of the world-economy, which began in the 16th century in order to gain an understanding of the present economic and political situations. The theoretical framework as expounded by Wallerstein (1974) partially explains how a system of oppression and exploitation was introduced in the capitalist system. As noted in Chapter 2, Wallerstein is helpful in providing an explanation for the expansion of the European world-economy in the 16th century and the introduction of a system of oppression and exploitation that ensued. His ideas are utilized to provide some understanding of why events in El Salvador unfolded as they did and these will be briefly outlined throughout the ensuing sections of this chapter. The ideas and concepts of dependency theorists are also included in the analysis.

El Salvador is the smallest of the five Central American states and has an area of about 21,000 square kilometres. It shares borders with Guatemala and Honduras and is the only state in the region without a Caribbean coast. It is considered to be one of the most densely populated and poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. The country has a two-class system, composed of a small group of rich people who dominate the social, political and economic spheres, and a vast majority of poor people. The lack of mineral resources is compensated by its fertile volcanic soil that is favourable for agriculture. Its chief resource is a large population of hard working peasants. Together with the other four Central American states, the country became developed as an agrarian society, with a monoculture type of agriculture that depends on the export of raw materials for its income and cheap labour (Montgomery, 1995; Lauria-Santiago, 1998; 1999).

The Expansion of the European World-Economy

To understand the political conflict of the 1980s in El Salvador, a short history of Spain has been included to put into perspective the colonial legacy of the country. The history of conquest of the New World of the Americas in 1492 begins with the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean. This marked the beginning of the expansion of the European world-economy. Wallerstein (1974; 1979) claims that by mid-15th century an economic crisis had developed in Europe because of the crisis in feudalism, soil exhaustion and the increased expenditure of ruling classes, which had to be borne by producers. Feudalism was based on a social system of rights and duties based on land tenure and personal relationships. Land tenure was a dominant force in Spain where a small minority owned most of the land; a similar system was replicated in the colonies. Spain also had a habit of rewarding *conquistadores* for their past exploits with vast estates and as a result land began to run out. There was also a need to develop variegated methods of labour control for different products and zones and to create relatively strong state machineries, which would become core states of the capitalist world-economy. Without the geographic expansion of the world-economy, Europe would have collapsed into anarchy. For various reasons, Spain led the geographic expansion.

Columbus was the first in a long line of Europeans who exploited and oppressed the people. He set the agenda of white European supremacy, a pattern followed by other colonisers. The two ruling monarchs of Catholic Spain, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, sent Columbus to the New World with a three-fold mandate: to expand its rule territorially, to amass wealth and to spread the Catholic religion (McGlone, 1997). The crisis of feudalism meant that more land was needed to

produce raw materials and to acquire wealth. The expansion and the transformation of the economy into a capitalist world-economy appeared to have been the only plausible solution to this crisis. A system of accumulation of capital as well as two classes of people developed in the process: the bourgeoisie and proletariat. The world bourgeoisie expanded and therefore produced its own culture of constantly aiming at endless accumulation of capital. The accumulators of capital tend to push toward commodification of everything including everyday life. In peripheral zones there were communities and households, who pool their incomes together but as the world-economy developed, the proletariat or wage earners increased in numbers (Wallerstein, 1984). In El Salvador the men became nomadic by the 1920s to earn a living but in some rural areas in the 1970s and 1980s communities and cooperatives still worked together as well as households, as related by some of the participants in the study.

In the early decades after conquest, Spain became very powerful and wealthy because of the continuous inflow of precious metals and goods from the colonies. However, the wealth that Spain had amassed was used to defray its large expenditures in military warfare to establish territorial supremacy especially during the reign of King Charles V. The Spanish Empire began to decline, its position diminished and it became increasingly difficult to govern the colonies from afar. Spain acted solely as an intermediary between the colonies and the Genoese bankers, who were the masters of international payments of fortunes between Europe and the world (Wolf, 1982). In the world-economy Spain would have been classified as semi-periphery because it was considered a 'buffer zone'. However, in spite of the wealth that Spain had amassed, it did not develop and industrialise until the 20th century but was dominated by the core states. Spain, in turn, dominated the countries on the periphery, Latin America. However, the definition of semi-periphery still remains controversial and not easy to decipher in the modern world-system.

While the expansion of the European world-economy occurred at this time, the Spanish Empire also expanded. The world-economy as a modern world-system continued to expand but the Spanish Empire began to collapse. Spain took 80 years to occupy Latin America and another 200 years of trial and error in establishing the essential elements of the colonial economy (Stein & Stein, 1970). El Salvador and all the countries of Latin America inherited from Spain a system of government and society where the political, economic, social, religious and educational aspects were closely intertwined. A metropolitan type of economy was reproduced in the colonies including its structural defects where income, status and power determined the social position of persons (Wiarda 2001). The salient features of this system were exploitative and authoritarian and have lasted for 500 years.

El Salvador Under Colonial Rule (1524-1820)

Each Latin-American country has been associated with a different *conquistador* but its historical beginnings had similar features. Laws that were implemented in the colonies whether they concerned religion or the government emanated from Spain. White (1973) points out that Spain would have preferred indirect rule but it was contrary to the interests of some of the *conquistadores* and in El Salvador direct rule prevailed because of Pedro de Alvarado's policy. This is because Alvarado was the Captain-General both for Guatemala and El Salvador and Spain was far, thus his policies prevailed. The governance of the colonies would therefore be hierarchical and authoritarian as well as

corporatist. El Salvador would be ruled via the Captaincy General of Guatemala, who would receive orders from the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico), the representative of Spain.

The conquest of El Salvador by Pedro de Alvarado began in 1524 with brutal beginnings. The dominant indigenous population of El Salvador was known as the *Pipiles*, probably related to the Aztecs of Mexico, because they spoke the same language, *Nahuatl*. The natives of El Salvador were prepared to resist because of the warnings they received from the Aztecs. In spite of Alvarado's large contingent and resources, the indigenous people defeated them and therefore they were forced to flee to Guatemala (Russell, 1984). It was only in 1540 that the conquest of El Salvador was completed but a 'pattern of civil conflict, military repression and antagonism had been set for the next 450 years of Salvadoran history' (Boland, 2001:14). This early history indicates that the indigenous people were prepared to defend their land from the invaders, the *conquistadores*, and this pattern of resistance continued intermittently well into the 20th century. So while the bulk of the population became submissive because of the brutalisation they suffered from the *conquistadores*, there was a smouldering resentment that emerged from time to time. Since this thesis is interested in tracing the history of El Salvador and examining how it contributed to the political conflict of the 1980s that resulted in the exodus of the refugees, only the aspects of the socio-economic and political structures that relate to this aim will be explored.

Incorporation into the World-Economy

The Central American region lacked silver and gold so the five states comprising of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica became incorporated into the world-economy in the export of agricultural products as raw materials. This is the main reason why a monoculture type of agriculture developed in the region. In El Salvador the indigenous population continued to depend on subsistence agriculture but some of the lands began to be used for three major export products, cocoa, balsam and indigo, during the period after 1540. These crops were cultivated, marketed and exported successfully under colonial rule. Wallerstein (1989) contends that unless a country is incorporated into the modern world-system, it does not become peripheral; it is only considered in the external arena. Countries on the external arena also trade with other countries but only in terms of luxury items, such as the fur trade. In contrast, countries on the periphery establish trading networks with core countries with the export of raw materials. Hence, El Salvador became a country on the periphery with the export of the following products:

Cocoa, the first export crop, incorporated El Salvador into the world-economy in 1560 and reached its peak in 1570. It was exported to Mexico, Guatemala, Peru and Panama. First cultivated in 5th century Mesoamerica, only the Aztec elites of Mexico could afford it because it was valuable. With the production of cocoa, the indigenous population began to decimate. They succumbed to imported diseases, others migrated from the highlands to the coast and some were sent to Peru and Panama to work as slaves. It also caused the destruction of traditional forms of tribal organisations, a need to reform and develop indigenous villages emerged and a notable increase in the Spanish-speaking peasants had become evident (Montgomery, 1995; Lauria-Santiago, 1999).

Balsam was discovered in the Pacific Coast of Izalco and became another export product at the same time as cocoa. This was exported to Europe to be used for medicines and perfumes

(Russell, 1984). It does not appear to have made a big impact on the economy because there is very little information on the literature surveyed. However, in 1995 El Salvador earned US\$1.25 million for exporting balsam so there must have been a renewed interest in the demand for this product (Boland, 2001).

By the 1600s both cocoa and balsam almost disappeared as export crops. This was due to shortage of labour, international competition, the decimation of the indigenous population, and economic stagnation in El Salvador, as well as wars and recession in Europe. There was also the constant conflict between the Spaniards and the indigenous population over the appropriation of land and the introduction of the hacienda system (Montgomery, 1995). The indigenous population held property in common, while the Spaniards favoured private property. By the 20th century the majority of the population had become landless because land ownership was concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites. However, many Spaniards enriched themselves by exporting cocoa and balsam and when markets dried up, the need for a new crop arose. This is the first indication of the cyclical shifts inherent in the world-economy and explained by Wallerstein (1974; 1979) as expansion-stagnation-contraction so another export crop had to be found to further expand the world-economy, and this proved to be indigo.

Indigo replaced cocoa as an export crop from the 1600s and dominated the Salvadoran economy in the 1700s, which lasted for almost 150 years (Montgomery, 1995). El Salvador provided 95 per cent of all indigo produced in Central America since it grew high quality indigo which was in great demand in Holland and England for the textile industry and these two countries were prepared to pay the high price. Guatemala monopolised the indigo trade and El Salvador became the second richest country in the region of Central America. By 1780 the indigo market was dominated by 21 large merchant houses, mostly from Guatemala who managed the import and export business and provided capital for the dye works; goods were sold at a substantial profit. This trade relationship between Guatemala and El Salvador is difficult to evaluate in terms of Wallerstein's (1974; 1979) three-tier stratification. While Guatemala would seem to be in the semi-peripheral position because of its monopoly on foreign trade and indigo, it always remained on the periphery. However, Tussie (1983), a dependency proponent, provides a better explanation when he states that dependency means a participation in an exploitative chain of metropolis/satellite relationship between countries. In this context Guatemala would be considered as a metropolis while El Salvador would be the satellite. The inner workings of the economy can often be quite complex and not clear-cut.

Indigo stimulated the formation of haciendas and a new relationship between landlords and peasants developed, which had feudal characteristics but at the same time capitalist. It was feudal because of the relationship between landlord and tenant. These relationships were established through 'debt peonage' so the peasants (*colonos*) became permanently bound to the landowners. The *colonos* depended on the landowners for their very existence while another group, the sharecroppers, contributed part of their harvest or worked several days a week for the landlords (Montgomery, 1995; Lauria-Santiago, 1998; 1999). It is capitalist because of the trading networks established between countries through the export of raw material and to accumulate capital.

Further, indigo only needed unskilled labour for three months and often seasonal unskilled labour was used so many became unemployed or underemployed for the rest of the year. The process of dye making was hazardous to health and many died or became ill, thereby creating a labour

shortage. To meet this shortage of labour, slaves were imported from Africa or from other regions of El Salvador. The lack of human resources could mean that the export crop in demand would be grown in other states of the colonies. Dos Santos (1998), an advocate of dependency theory, points out that colonial dependence also meant a reliance on human resources on the core country or the country that dominates the world-economy but in this case, Spain. Spain became involved in the slave trade from Africa in 1517 and so it was not difficult to transport slaves from one country to another as this was used as a solution to any labour shortages in the colonies. However, it is not known how the slaves fared on the trip from Africa to El Salvador and how the Spaniards treated them en route.

In 1625 a rebellion of 2,000 African slaves was planned but this was averted when the leaders were assassinated. This is the earliest indication of a rebellion, but more will follow as the economy of El Salvador expands. The assassination of leaders or social change activists will continue to be practiced well into the 20th century every time there are rebellions. After the 1625 rebellion, the authorities disallowed the entry of more African slaves because of lack of capital and their services were only needed for two months at harvest time. The records indicate that only 10,000 slaves were brought into El Salvador from Africa during the colonial period (Russell, 1984; Weaver, 1994). While the capitalist system determines what products are grown and exported, there are far reaching consequences for the indigenous population including landlessness, rebellions and repression.

As noted earlier, Wallerstein (1974) regarded the transition of feudalism to capitalism as a change in the mode of production and as a feature of the modern world-system. While some economists vigorously refute his ideas, his ideas nevertheless provide some useful insights. His ideas are utilized to provide some understanding of why events in El Salvador unfolded as they did. Although Wallerstein has been criticised for his emphasis on the economy, he argues that no division should be made between political and economic analysis because they are interrelated aspects in the modern world-system. Likewise Chase-Dunn (1989) confirms that capitalism and the interstate system are interdependent and reinforcing features of the modern world-system. Further, Cardoso (1973) points out that to make a concrete analysis, it is necessary to begin with the political and economic struggles of the country the way they are revealed. With this in mind, a historical analysis of the economic and political situation in El Salvador was deemed expedient. Hettne (1995) claims that Wallerstein's stratification of core, semi-periphery and periphery is less helpful as a model and avoids the distinction between development and underdevelopment. So (1990) is also critical of Wallerstein but for different reasons. He argues that the modern world-system perspective neglects the historical development of countries at the national level. It also obscures the internal social relations that underlay the capitalist world-economy. Further, he suggests that a class analysis would have been more useful in understanding El Salvador and other developing countries rather than the three-tier stratification of the modern world system, as outlined by Wallerstein. On another track, Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997) refute Wallerstein's use of modes of production as a criterion to bind the world-system spatially. While the term is used in a conventional Marxist sense, they conclude that it is confusing and creates difficulties in analysing systems in which modes of production are contending with one another. Although these experts have provided useful ideas in analysing the situation of El Salvador, they are quite broad. An elite group, who is also involved in the political and social systems, controls El Salvador's economy. They are an entrenched group so it is difficult to breakdown the structures to make changes in the system and prefer to keep the *status quo*. While the above section deals with the

economy, because the political and social systems are intricately linked to the economy this relationship needs to be examined. A brief overview is provided in the next section.

Political and Social Systems

The political system that emanated from Spain and developed under colonial rule in El Salvador will help to understand the system of government that existed in the 1980s because it grew out of this structure. As mentioned earlier, it was hierarchical and authoritarian so governance was in the hands of a few leaders. In pre-conquest El Salvador, the *Pipil* natives of Cuzcatlan were the dominant group, who had established centuries earlier its own systems of government, language, culture, customs and lands were held in common. The *Pipil* natives had developed a complex society consisting of the nobility, artisans (carpenters, weavers, traders, and others) and a warrior caste, which was evident in the widespread warfare before conquest in the Central American region. They also had slavery, which was used as a form of punishment, but was not hereditary. Most of the natives were farmers and grew a diversity of crops such as cocoa, corn, beans, maguey and cotton. Diseases and epidemics were almost unknown (White, 1973; Russell, 1984). These crops were used mostly for subsistence but there was sharing among communities so no one suffered from want.

Conquest also signified the encounter of two very distinct cultures, the western European culture and the non-western cultures of the indigenous populations of the New World. Because of Spain's tolerance of the Moors and Jewish people, the rest of Europe subjected the Spaniards to blatant racial and ethnic prejudice. The Spaniards projected this treatment on the indigenous people of the New World and treated them with the same contempt they had been shown by the Europeans in the past (Chinchilla, 1983). In the colonies, the Spaniards cohabited with indigenous women, many of them were raped or forced into marriages and therefore begot children of mixed ancestry (Wiarda 2001). This discrimination was justified as social, rather than racial, because the indigenous populations and those of mixed ancestry were looked at as inferior compared to the pure Spaniards, who were considered as superior. In 20th century El Salvador the majority of the population were still being treated as inferior, while the elites of the country were considered as superior.

As a result of European expansion, a mixture of the European and indigenous people came into existence and they would be referred to as the 'new people' or *mestizos*. They do not belong to the European, indigenous or African cultures and they are still seeking their own identity today. It has now been acknowledged that the mothers of this 'new people' are the indigenous women (Ribeiro, 1990). The children from these ethnic groups were often discriminated against. The discrimination against children of mixed ancestry would have long-lasting effects and some of them would become 'power seekers', probably due to not having a sense of belonging to either ethnic group (Wolf, 1959). These *mestizos* increased in numbers within a few decades and formed a powerful group after Independence in the political and socio-economic systems well into 20th century El Salvador.

System of Government

The system of government established by the Spaniards was authoritarian, absolutist and pyramidal in structure from the King via the Viceroy, the Captain-General and then to the local *conquistador* or landowners of large estates. Each official had absolute power within his sphere of influence (Wiarda,

2001). Spain established tribunals to govern its widespread empire, which combined the functions of a court of law and a legislative assembly. El Salvador was administered from the tribunal located within Honduras until 1549 and from this date to the outbreak of the War of Independence against Spain in the 1810s, the Tribunal in Guatemala made the most important decisions affecting El Salvador.

First, the *encomienda*³ system was established and an *encomendero* became responsible for a certain number of indigenous people in the estate. This system was used to reward the *conquistador* for conquest and the *encomendero* was responsible for converting the indigenous people. Pope Alexander VI made a gift of the lands of the New World of the Americas to the Spanish Crown on the condition that the Spaniards would convert the natives to the Catholic religion (Leon-Portilla, 1991). This gift was ratified in the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 (Wiarda, 2001). Spain was reluctant to grant lands to *conquistadores* for fear that they might become the landed class, which happened in Spain, and may challenge the authority of the Crown. However, this system was used in El Salvador to compensate for the lack of gold and silver, otherwise the *encomendero* would have moved to another region where there was an abundance of gold (Weaver, 1994). Land will continue to be a contentious issue well into the 20th century.

The *encomienda* system became a dominant method of exploiting the natives so the Spaniards could live in comfort. It appears too that women were exploited and put in stockades to weave because a royal decree issued in 1549 prohibited this practice (Russell, 1984). Women do not usually feature in the literature as being exploited but Tice (1995) claims that the work of women and children are underreported because in most cases they were unpaid for their work. The surplus appropriated from this system was either transferred to Europe or used to enrich the Spaniards. This system of capital transfer did not help to develop El Salvador and it is one of the reasons why the country became underdeveloped. The *encomienda* system ceased with the plague of 1578 but the population of El Salvador rapidly declined from 500,000 in 1524 to 77,000 in 1578 (Russell, 1984). Although the *encomienda* system was used to keep the colonial leaders from going elsewhere, it was a form of feudalism because tribute was extracted from the indigenous population. A similar system was continued in El Salvador well into the 20th century.

Second, the *repartimiento* system replaced the *encomienda* because of the abuses made, similar to a disguised form of slavery. In this system, a certain number of adult males from the villages were sent to work by the Tribunal to indigo growers, religious groups, government agencies and municipalities. Smith (1991) compares it to a type of conscription although the peasants received wages. However, *repartimiento* turned out to be more brutal because it was forced labour and those who fled their labour obligations were flogged in public. By 1650 paid labour had begun to emerge and the *repartimiento* system was slowly abolished. During this period there was also a rise in the ownership of vast estates for indigo production (Pearce, 1986; Lauria-Santiago, 1999). The commodification of labour, which is inherent in the capitalist system in order to accumulate capital, appears at this early stage of history when the natives became paid labourers and who would later be referred to as proletariats and in El Salvador the poor called themselves the 'pooretariats' in the 20th century.

³ Encomiendas (concessions, holdings) were estates granted to Spanish settlers in Latin America in the colonial era. The natives living on the land were put into the service of their *encomendero* or had to pay him taxes.

Third, in accordance with the patterns of government created in the Viceroyalties of Peru and Mexico, town councils were established in El Salvador. These town councils were given the authority to sell land to the Spaniards so landowners established and enlarged their estates by purchasing or usurping the lands of the indigenous population. The Lord Mayors set a system of indirect rule by forming Councils, which were headed by the chiefs (*caciques*) of the indigenous population. However, these chiefs became accomplices in exploiting and extorting the natives. This ranking system will contribute to the fear and oppression of the majority of the population because the chiefs will acquire the leadership model of those in higher authority.

In 1700 the Bourbons of France took over Spain's monarchy and many improvements in the economy were introduced. Secular schools were provided in parts of Central America and the Bourbon Kings ruled that all be taught to read and write in Spanish (Foster, 2000). An edict was passed in 1710 in El Salvador that made the Spanish language a requirement for anyone who wanted to become a member of any of the Councils. This hurt the pride and dignity of the indigenous population because it meant a change in their own language and culture (Boland, 2001). This system of government became the basis of the political and socio-economic structure well into the 20th century in spite of the changes that occurred after Independence.

The modern world-system may appear to be an analysis based on the expansion of the world-economy and the accumulation of capital but it is linked to the political structures because governments play a vital role in implementing the rules of the capitalist system. Exploitation and oppression became the rule of law as well. It has been acknowledged by Frank (1967, 1969) and Wallerstein (1974; 1979) that there is an exploitative link from central powers to landless labourers which dates back under colonial rule and this has caused the widening gap between the rich and poor people. Slavery, as a way of having a continuous supply of cheap labour, became hereditary as it was passed on from father to son under colonial rule but it was eventually abolished. In spite of this change, the agricultural farmers continued to be treated as cheap labour well into the 20th century. However, Patch (1989) argues that the contributions of the indigenous population in terms of structures of production as well as internal and autonomous development have largely been ignored. This has probably contributed to the rebellions from the indigenous population and has increased their landlessness, especially from the mid-19th century.

In summary, the use of both dependency and world-systems theories have given some insights of what occurred in the expansion of the world-economy in the 16th century. The expansion of the European world-economy might have solved some of the problems that Europe was experiencing at the time of conquest but it had detrimental and long-lasting effects on the people of El Salvador. While the core countries enriched themselves by incorporating the countries on the periphery, the indigenous people began to lose most of their land to make room for the new products needed in the world-economy.

The system of oppression and exploitation, which began with the expansion of the world-economy became endemic in the history of El Salvador. This system was not only practiced in the way the labourers were treated and possibly it was also taken home to the families. It can therefore be assumed that women and children also suffered the same kind of treatment because the male members felt frustrated and therefore released their anger at home.

Because of the complexity of the history of El Salvador under colonial rule and the paucity of literature during this period, it has not been possible to use a single theory to understand the problem, although the ideas and/or concepts of social scientists from the 1960s onwards have been useful. In order to gain an understanding of the cultural and social milieu from which the Salvadoran refugees emerged in the 1980s, it is necessary to trace the economic and political changes that took place during the first 300 years.

While the above explained the relationship of El Salvador with other countries in the world-economy, the following will describe the links made by the elites of El Salvador after the country gained its Independence from Spain in 1821. Many changes in the socio-economic and political systems took place with dire consequences for the majority of the population.

INDEPENDENCE FROM SPAIN

This historical era of El Salvador is marked by many changes in the socio-economic and political structures because of the transition from colonial rule to Independence. El Salvador and the other four Central American states did not have any Wars of Independence but were granted their Independence at the same time as Mexico in 1821. Their experience under 300 years of colonial rule, led them to choose a republican type of government rather than a monarchy (Bulmer-Thomas, 1994). However, the Spanish Crown did not prepare the colonies for self-government, so political chaos marked the first few decades after Independence. El Salvador became one of the member countries of the United Provinces of Central America, composed of Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Guatemala, which was established as a Federation in 1823. This federation broke up into five independent nation-states in 1839 and a conservative party ruled in each country (Schmidt, 1983; Dent 1999).

From Republic to “Coffee Oligarchy”

After the political chaos of the last two decades some stability appeared to have been gained. The Central American countries wanted to become independent nation-states, but the socio-economic and political structures of the country did not allow it. To become a nation means that there must be a common awareness of belonging to a nation as well as a common desire for freedom, equality and democracy and these are not found in Latin America. Only Mexico has attained nationhood in the 20th century. This is mainly attributed to the power exercised by the elites, which does not permit the participation of the majority of the population (Alba, 1968; Riley, 1989). In El Salvador, the people are allowed to vote during elections but they have no say about the governance of the country. This is probably one reason why education does not play an important role in the services provided by the Government so a large segment of the population is left in their ignorance.

Moreover, El Salvador's government did not stabilise for another two decades and there were 42 Presidents from 1841 to 1861. These men had international connections and expertise and were able to expand the Salvadoran trading networks, which included the United States, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom (Williams, 1994). From 1870 to 1931 the Presidents of the country came from the coffee elites who ruled without interruption and Baloyra (1982) calls it the 'oligarchic republic'. The elites, who controlled the government from 1870, were considered to be liberals, and their desire was to modernise the economy so a pre-industrial capitalist system emerged, but the system of

government was authoritarian and participation and decision-making were limited to the elites. President Rafael Zaldivar (1876-1885) created the first modern state apparatus and pushed El Salvador into the world-economy (Russell, 1984).

After the 1920s, direct control by the elites over the political sphere declined. The Great Depression put an end to the direct rule by the coffee oligarchs and created the crisis in the social and economic structures put in place by the elites of the 19th century (Paige, 1997). When the coffee market crashed during the Great Depression (1929-32), the oligarchs ceded their power to the military and Paige (1997) comments that the coffee oligarchs preferred to make money rather than rule the country during this period. Although the oligarchs ceded their power as leaders of the country, they nevertheless controlled not only the military sector but also the financial, banking and agro-business sectors.

The development of elite theory in the political system of Europe coincided with this period but in El Salvador it began in the economy. In 19th century Latin America, the big landowners of Spanish descent, who governed the different states were referred to as oligarchs. In the Latin American context, according to Alba (1962), *oligarquia* refers to the domination over the economy, politics and cultural life by a minority composed of landowners, while in English the term 'oligarchy' only has political connotations. Grenier (1999) refers to the Latin Americans as *cumulard* for the same reasons and their roles are closer to Western European models rather than their North American counterparts.

Wolf (1959) provides a useful analysis about the emergence of the powerful elites in Guatemala and Mexico from the 19th century. Latin America is governed by elites, who were descendants of *conquistadores* or high-ranking officials under colonial rule and he refers to them as 'power seekers', whose ancestry could be traced from the mid-17th century. Some of these elites were sons of the indigenous people, who left their communities, some were probably illegitimate sons of Indo-Afro-European unions and others were sons of poor *conquistadores* with indigenous women, who were disinherited by their fathers. They became the 'unconnected' of society because they were deprived of wealth, cultural heritage and a place in society. To gain their place in society, they became very powerful in the political, social and economic spheres as well as in the military. In El Salvador, those in power are usually related to one another and corruption is rampant. Bribery is often used to get the best positions in government including the military. They adopted liberal ideas and were nationalistic in terms of ideology and in El Salvador they gained prominence as political and military leaders (Williams, 1994). They were also powerful in the economic sphere and controlled most of the corporations in El Salvador.

To understand the causes of underdevelopment of Latin America, Cardoso & Faletto (1979) argue that structural dependency of Latin American countries was determined by the capitalist system and built as a consequence of European and American capitalism. However, they point out that the links made between the external and internal groups are quite complex and are not based on mere external form of exploitation and coercion. There is a deeply rooted coincidence of interests between the local elites of each country and the international groups. This system of domination by international groups is imperialist in character. Foreign technology, financial systems and embassies are replicated within the country by local elites, who enforce foreign interests and make it their own, as explained below.

Links in the World-Economy

After Independence and in spite of the political chaos in the early years, El Salvador appeared to be in a position to deal directly with the core countries. One of the reasons given for the Wars of Independence in the colonies was the desire of the native-born elites to trade freely with England, France and Holland, the core countries in the world-economy. During this period El Salvador wanted to trade directly with England in the export of the indigo dye, although trading networks still had to be done via Guatemala. Even though El Salvador had become independent, its status in the world-economy had not changed and the country continued to trade with the core countries at the time.

Furthermore, the native-born elites, who managed the economy of El Salvador, wanted to expand the market and to procure higher prices. The elites thought that colonial policy under Spain hindered land ownership as a means of political and social power and this restricted the exploitation not only of the indigenous population but also of the African slaves. The colonial policy also restricted commodity markets, regulations, taxes and monopolies (Weaver, 1994). The elites, who ruled the economy and the political system, proved to be more exploitative than the colonial rulers as the history of El Salvador unfolded.

Because of industrialisation and mechanisation in England and other countries in Europe in the 19th century, there was less need for human labour so many Europeans migrated to other countries in search of agricultural lands, especially to Latin America. After the Spaniards left the colonies, other Europeans, mostly unskilled workers, as well as non-Catholics were allowed to enter Latin America. Migration is often caused by the domination exerted by the core countries over countries on the periphery in the context of international relationships but it is fraught with conflict and tension. El Salvador did not have mass migrations compared with the other Latin American states. The country is small and had no abundance of lands. The European migrants preferred countries where there were vast lands for agriculture as well as rich mineral and natural resources. Instead the migrants were young single men from Europe and the Middle East, who had expertise in banking, finance and trading networks. These single men played a key role in building up the economy of El Salvador well into the 20th century.

The industrial revolution in England in the 1820s provided the key to the changes in the world-economy and led to the establishment of an international division of labour. It was the desire of England to become a vast factory and provide primary products worldwide. With its complex machinery, it could increase its productivity and specialisation while countries on the periphery continued to provide raw materials in exchange for industrial products (Furtado, 1970). In the modern world-system, core countries usually intervene in peripheral countries in search of raw materials and cheap labour. However, industrialisation in countries on the periphery did not take place until the 20th century as in the case of El Salvador.

The main export crop in the 1820s was still indigo but demand gradually began to decline because of the introduction of the synthetic dye from Germany in the 1830s. When the demand for indigo declined, coffee emerged as the new product and by late 1860s, coffee production had increased. The government also promoted the production of coffee and supplied free coffee trees to farmers and peasants to reduce the cost of starting up but this eventually changed the system of land distribution. When coffee became the dominant export crop, the transportation system improved. El Salvador became the largest coffee producer in the region from 1880 to 1930; considered the 'golden

age' of coffee. The cyclical shifts in the world-economy of expansion/stagnation/contraction were again evident during this period so there was a need to find another crop (Wallerstein, 1974; 1979). Looking at the history of El Salvador, this explanation seems to hold some validity. At this stage in its history, during the mid- to late 19th century, the demand for indigo began to decrease but a need to expand the world-economy was necessary so coffee became the new export crop. While this might look like a simple transition from one export crop to another, trials are usually made to see which crop could be grown in a particular site, but in the process the majority of the population suffer the consequences for this expansion.

In the mid-19th century, a dynastic elite composed of coffee producers, processors and exporters, rose to power and shaped the political institutions that emerged in the early 20th century. It seems that the young immigrant men married the daughters of the indigo elites, who lost their business, and they became the coffee elites (Montgomery, 1995). Pareto (1979), a proponent of elite theory, claims that there is a rise and fall of elites and this was true of El Salvador. While this explanation is useful and makes sense, an alternative view is the use of the concept of elite distemper by Stone (1987), who argues about the problem of self-perpetuating elites or oligarchs. They become a threat to democratic values because their power enables them to exploit their position of having special privileges. The elites of El Salvador became very powerful and were referred to as the 'fourteen families.' The number '14' is symbolic for El Salvador because the country is divided into 14 departments. They intermarry among the same groups so wealth is concentrated and their properties expand. While the elites acquired more wealth and power, changes in landholding also occurred. This is also a consequence in the expansion of the world-economy on a national level, as explained below.

Changes in Land Tenure

El Salvador's integration into the world-economy proved to be a success and the country enjoyed many years of prosperity through the export of cocoa, balsam and indigo. The Spanish Crown recognised the system of common lands under colonial rule. There was a law that forced all towns to set aside land for subsistence agriculture. These lands were owned by the municipality or ethnic bodies and could not be sold. However, when coffee became the main export crop, this system of landholding gradually changed (Lauria-Santiago, 1998; 1999). Hence, the increase in the demand for coffee eliminated the indigenous system of common lands (Prendergast 1999). Coffee though is labour intensive and needs 3-5 years before it could be harvested and processed for the export market, which only the wealthy landowners could afford. It also needed a permanent labour force for planting and cultivation. In addition, coffee required good volcanic soil at altitudes between 2,000-4,000 feet above sea level and the best lands for coffee were densely populated and occupied by the indigenous population, so they became displaced as a result. Displacement of the population became common every time a new export crop was introduced.

In 1879 there were about 1.5 million acres of land classified as communal (*ejidos*), municipal and idle⁴ (*baldios*) lands. Two agrarian reforms were passed in 1881 and 1882, which meant that municipal lands and communal lands had to be abolished and sold. All unregistered and uncultivated lands were also sold to the highest bidder at a public auction so subsistence farmers lost their lands to coffee

⁴ Idle lands or *baldios* – the indigenous people practised the slash and burn method of clearing their lands and within 2-3 years these would become infertile. To regain its fertility, lands have to remain idle for 6-10 years.

growers (Williams, 1994). To finance the purchase of lands, banks were established to lend money to private landowners but only the wealthy landowners could access loans. This practice allowed rich landowners to expand their coffee plantations by incorporating common lands to their existing property (Pearce, 1986). These land reforms caused the situation in El Salvador to become increasingly volatile and rebellions occurred more often.

Land continued to be a contentious issue so a land reform for the peasants was passed in 1976 but met with no success because of opposition from the oligarchy and the landowners (Dunkerley, 1982). In 1980 the United States sent experts to implement another land reform. However, neither the government nor the people were consulted (Nieto, 2003). Although Phase I and Phase III were implemented, Phase II met with opposition from coffee growers, who had close connections with the military (Buckley, 1984; LeoGrande, 1998). This opposition led to the assassination of the head of the Salvadoran Institute for Agrarian Transformation (ISTA), the leader of the Salvadoran Communal Union (UCS), together with two U.S. advisers of the American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD) in 1981 because of their involvement in the agrarian reform (McClintock, 1985). Again, the assassination of leaders was practiced in this situation so further land reforms were not implemented.

Increase in Popular Rebellions

In response to agrarian reforms, the indigenous population revolted during the 1880s by burning coffee groves and processing plants. The government in return created the mounted police to patrol coffee sectors and to suppress the rebellions (Prendergast, 1999). The increase in coffee plantations meant less land for subsistence agriculture so the staple food (corn and beans) had to be imported. The peasants had to work as peons (*colonos*) in the coffee plantations on a meagre salary and the daily wage earners began to emerge as early as 1859 (Lauria-Santiago, 1998). With the continuous expansion of the world-economy, the indigenous people suffered the consequences of continually losing their lands. However, the elites benefited because they enforced laws that were in their favour. The elites and the indigenous people and later the peasants would therefore become the two warring factions in the country well into the 20th century.

In spite of some progress in the economic system, revolts from the indigenous population increased but these were met with repression by the government. Repression refers to a meticulous and deliberate stripping of all human attributes. The paramilitary violence practised in El Salvador does not mean just squashing strikes or eliminating 'red' activists but by exploiting victims to obtain political information through the use of torture, abduction and interrogation or sometimes made to 'disappear' (White, 1973; Montgomery, 1995). However, Alvarenga (1998) points out that auxiliary forces were appointed during this period and subsequently they played an important part in the repressive system of the country. It appears that this system of social control was quite generalised and it became incorporated into the institutions of the country, but very little is known about this situation in historical studies. The auxiliary forces, chosen from the indigenous and/or peasant communities, became part of the network of domination because there were not enough security forces in the countryside. The state therefore implemented policies that favoured the interests of the oligarchy by using auxiliary forces as civilian patrols and who acted as informants. They were expected to control the rural population by reporting people, who left their workplace before the stipulated time because some of them had been paid in advance. Offenders were tried in court, fined

and put in prison. This system also eroded the relationship within the peasant communities. A similar system operated in the late 1960s when the paramilitary group assigned in the countryside also had civilian informants, who would report any guerrilla members. This system also created internal fear in the population because people learned to distrust one another, as shown in the small study.

After Independence an internal conflict led to a number of uprisings due to the following reasons: the resentment of the disappearing indigenous communities, and the expropriation of their lands and their cultural impoverishment. The first revolt occurred in Nonualco in 1833 led by Anastasio Aquino, who opposed military conscription, low wages, the maltreatment of the indigenous people and taxes. The indigenous people defeated the government army but Aquino was killed. The practice of assassinating the leaders of rebellions, which began in 1625, to repress the majority of the population became an enduring pattern well into the 20th century.

Further, other revolts followed in 1872 by the *Pipiles* of Izalco and again in 1887 and 1888 over the expropriation of common lands in coffee producing areas (Anderson, 1981; Russell, 1984). North (1985) lists other uprisings that occurred in 1875, 1880, 1885 and 1898, all related to peasant dispossession of lands because of coffee. Vilas (1995) argues that poverty does not trigger rebellions, but rather sudden changes in the economy particularly with the way land is used and the replacement of export crops or other factors, which often alters the living conditions of the people. The elites of El Salvador expected the people to adapt to rapid changes but were unable to do so. This situation often created instability and insecurity and led to a political problem because of its links with other institutional agents. During the rebellions mentioned above, no incidents have been reported of people leaving El Salvador to move to any of the neighbouring countries but the security forces were strengthened to make sure that rebellions would not take place. No guerrilla groups had begun to form until the 1970s as most of the rebellions were localised and short-lived.

To suppress the frequent rebellions by the indigenous people, the militarisation of El Salvador continued after Independence. The first Salvadoran Army was created in 1824 and expanded after the collapse of the federation in 1840 because El Salvador inherited most of the troops. Through the years foreign experts were called in to improve the discipline and conduct of the army corps. The coffee oligarchs also supported the military as an internal police force to watch over their vast estates and to suppress peasant rebellions. The financial support from the oligarchs provided for the professional training and expansion of the military with the first military school in El Salvador being founded in 1900. During this period it became apparent that the oligarchs had penetrated almost all the sectors of the economy and the government. Because they are an entrenched group, it would prove to be very difficult to topple them. In the modern world-system, the militarisation of the political system weakens the economy because a build-up of the military system is excessively costly. While the military may assist in 'controlling' the rebellions, other problems are created in the economic system.

The continuous rebellions from the indigenous population ultimately led to a revolution, based on the following: the increased domination of the oligarchs, the demand and price of coffee in the international market had collapsed because of the Great Depression, the workers were not being paid on time and many became unemployed. This oppressive situation erupted into a revolution from the coffee-producing regions of the Western and Central highlands on 22nd January, 1932. As the country was under a military dictatorship from 1931, there were dire consequences. It was estimated that about 30,000 peasants (4% of the population) were massacred by the military and police forces of the

rich landowners (Anderson, 1971; North, 1985). Their leader, Farabundo Marti was also assassinated. However, the revolution was short-lived because of lack of foreign intervention although the United States and Canada offered to assist (Anderson, 1971). Rebellion, followed by repression, became a cyclical feature of El Salvador's history during the past 100 years and set the scene for the civil war and the subsequent refugee crisis in the 1980s.

Frank (1967; 1969), a dependency analyst, explains that countries on the periphery experience their greatest economic development and especially their most classically independent development if and when ties to the metropolis are weakest, such as during World War I and the Great Depression. El Salvador did well in the economy from 1880 to 1930, but only the coffee elites benefited. In addition the majority of the population not only became landless during this period, but most of them were not paid during the Great Depression. The worst affected by the 1932 revolution were the indigenous people, who were forced to go underground or chose to be identified as ladinos and others might have fled the country. Those who stayed stopped practising their traditions of language, culture and way of dressing (Anderson, 1971). The peasants were also labelled as 'communists' and their revolutions as communist-inspired by Russia, a practice continued until the 1980s. This probably is one of the saddest events that happened to El Salvador in the 20th century. This revolution was considered as the first communist uprising of the Americas in the 20th century (Dent, 1999). However, this revolution also created a culture of fear and individualism among the population and intensified in the repression of the 1980s, which the refugees have taken as 'baggage' when they fled the country.

The incidents that occurred during this period set the scene for future events that will see a heightened dissatisfaction by the people as they became increasingly dislocated from their land and forced to live a marginal existence. Rebellions occurred more frequently and the peasants became more organised. Repression ultimately followed the need for people to escape but the fighting in El Salvador continued to escalate and will set the scene for the civil war and the refugee exodus of the 1980s.

THE MODERNISATION OF EL SALVADOR

After the short-lived 1932 revolution, some improvements had taken place in the economy of El Salvador. Although the demand for coffee from the European markets had ceased, the price of coffee began to rise once again after 1940. In the 1990s it had become a dominant export crop once again. Coffee continued to be a significant part of the social and economic policies in conjunction with the military policy of President Cristiani (1989-1994) who was a member of the coffee elite. The aim of these policies was to make sure that no rebellions would occur (Paige, 1997). Wallerstein (2004) comments that states are in theory the only legitimate users of violence and should possess monopoly (police and military) of its use. However, political leaders have difficulty in maintaining effective control of the country not because of wrong policies but the endemic weakness of state structures.

During World War II there were more jobs and money in El Salvador than during the Great Depression. Many men worked in the Panama Canal Zone in 1941-43 and were able to send remittances to their families. Although no foreign loans were encouraged nor the importation of machineries for the manufacture of certain goods, during the Martinez' regime, President Roosevelt created the Export-Import Bank to subsidise U.S. exports and increase the dependency of Central

American states (Chomsky, 1985). Employees were paid on time, some roads and bridges were built, but industrialisation and the formation of labour unions were not encouraged, especially in the rural areas. The military was built up so it could become a ruling elite in its own right, and to counterbalance the influence of the landowning families, who were expected to concentrate on the economy rather than on security (Parkman, 1988). While the landowning families became the elites in the political and economic spheres, the military was considered an elite group or another oligarchy in the 1980s because of its influence and military strength.

Some dependency theorists (Frank, 1967; 1969; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979) claim that during the time of war, some improvements in the economy occurred because of its lack of dependence on the core country. However, it appears that there was close cooperation between El Salvador and the United States during the war period. This cooperation consisted of arrangements made between the U.S. government and El Salvador with regards to bank loans, arms grant, military aid, the building of public works projects such as the Pan-American Highway. The United States was fearful that the Japanese would attack from the Panama Canal Zone during World War II and the Pan-American Highway was seen as of strategic importance for defence purposes (Russell, 1984). While many men were able to work and send remittances to their families during the war period, they were also separated from them. The Salvadoran government had close ties with the United States for aid and this dependence on the core country caused further underdevelopment. Salvadorans, who fled to the United States in the 1980s, also practiced the sending of remittances to their families in El Salvador. This kept the economy of El Salvador afloat but the families became dependent on the remittances.

After World War II, the United States had reached hegemonic position in the world-economy but it also marked the beginning of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. There were fears that many Third World countries could become communists and to avert such a crisis, the United States implemented modernisation programmes in most Third World countries including El Salvador, as outlined in the previous chapter. Prior to this happening, the Director of ECLA, Raul Prebisch, had criticized the outdated schema of the international division of labour because it failed to include the social and political problems of Latin America. He then proposed a structuralist and protectionist approach to development, which would be done within the country rather than be imposed by outside forces. It reduced the imports of finished goods but increased the importation of capital equipment, intermediate products, raw materials and fuel. However, foreign currency was needed to finance the purchase of machinery but the United States wanted to invest more so the ECLA programmes had to be abolished (Wynia, 1984). Because of U.S. opposition, the ECLA programmes in El Salvador were dropped about the late 1950s. Modernisation and industrialisation appeared to have been used as solutions to the socio-economic and political problems endemic to El Salvador. The continuous expansion of the world-economy meant less land for the peasants but the building of factories during the modernisation era further deprived them of the little land they had left.

This was followed by the creation of the CACM in 1961, originally popularised by ECLA, to promote economic integration, industrialisation and the free movement of people among the five Central American countries, composed of Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala. The ECLA programme would have been a better proposition because it was a development programme from within the countries but the United States stepped in, under the Alliance

for Progress Programme, and gave financial backing to the CACM Secretariat. While the United States provided financial aid to the CACM, decisions made would favour the United States, being a strong state in the interstate system and the majority of the population of El Salvador would further be disadvantaged. Wallerstein (2004) claims that all states are theoretically sovereign but strong states find it easier to 'intervene' in the internal affairs of weaker states. Strong states want frontiers of weak states open so that they can transport profitable manufactures and services to them but not vice versa.

With the formation of the CACM, 44 large corporations set up business in El Salvador and regional trade increased during 1961-68 but U.S. firms took the lead with over 60 per cent of foreign capital investments. El Salvador became a haven for these firms with the establishment of free trade zones, tax exemptions, cheap labour with strike prohibitions, and allowed the foreign firms to repatriate profits easily (Armstrong & Shenk, 1982). El Salvador did well in the CACM in terms of industrialisation compared to the other states in the region but caused an increasing resentment among the Honduran leaders because they realised that they were subsidising the industrial development of their neighbours, especially El Salvador. This resulted in the outbreak of the 1969 Soccer War between Honduras and El Salvador. The war with Honduras culminated in the repatriation of 130,000 Salvadorans back to their home country (Anderson, 1981), thus creating increased landlessness. They became the 'victims' in the implementation of the Agrarian Reform law that favoured Honduran-born citizens. In addition the CACM industrialisation did not support the growing labour supply and by the 1970s it had collapsed, thus resulting in more unemployment, increased inequalities in wealth, income and reduced the wages of agricultural and urban workers (Booth, 1993). Nevertheless, the local elites enriched themselves and the standard of living for the middle class improved but the peasants were forced off the land, which resulted in an increase in labour migration (Wynia, 1984; Booth & Walker, 1989). Some of the peasants probably went to other neighbouring countries in order to survive but no records were found to this effect.

The failure of the programmes was caused by not addressing fundamental issues on how to improve the living standards of the majority of the population, such as health care, education and employment (Dunkerley, 1982; 1988; Berryman, 1984). Dos Santos (1998), one of the proponents of the dependency perspective, claims that technological-industrial dependence emerged after World War II especially with the formation of transnationals, which operated in underdeveloped countries. This type of trade and economic relations led to the super-exploitation of labour power in dependent countries and dominant countries continued to accumulate profits, which were sent overseas. Therefore, dependent countries were unable to develop properly in spite of the fact that they were linked up to the international system and the law of development because profits were sent to core countries. In addition, local elites took their capital outside the country for investment overseas rather than use it for development within the country so underdevelopment ensued.

In the modern world-system, the United States began to decline in its hegemonic status in the economy in the 1970s, but it was still powerful in the political and military spheres. This decline led to the formation of the Trilateral Commission in 1972, as explained in Chapter 2. The regional countries of the Commission then became the core countries in the modern-world system. While the United States declined in its position in the world-economy, in Latin America it continued to maintain its control and this is one of the reasons why the United States played a leading role in the economy of El Salvador.

Free trade became the market ideology with globalisation. It was seen as the solution to assist in the economic growth and development of countries worldwide and to deter communism. The growth in large corporations increased; competition, privatisation, efficiency, the removal of trade barriers to encourage the free flow of goods, and less government intervention were seen as essential for economic growth. Financial gain became the main focus both for corporations and individuals and increased consumer spending reflected the wellbeing of society. In the modern world-system this is referred to as the deepening process because there are no more countries to be incorporated (Sanderson, 1999). Instead the increased growth in transnationals became evident. This market ideology is known as neo-liberalism in Latin America and economic rationalism (ER) in Australia. ER has been claimed to be a descendant of the neo-classical economics because of some of its characteristics (Hettne, 1995; Korten, 1995) but this will be discussed in Chapter 5.

While the foregoing analyses have concentrated on how oppression and exploitation have dominated at all levels of Salvadoran society for almost 500 years, repression became part of the political system after the 1932 revolution to make sure that rebellions from the majority of the population did not develop. The interweaving themes of oppression, exploitation and repression will cause the exodus of refugees in the 1980s and will affect their lives when they resettle in another country.

THE GOVERNMENT UNDER MILITARY RULE

This period is crucial in understanding the history of El Salvador because it was the beginning of military rule in 1931 that led to the civil war of the 1980s. Military rule prevailed to ensure that the elites did not have to face demands from the peasant population (Paige, 1997). General Martinez assumed the Presidency in 1931, when Arturo Araujo was overthrown by the military because he was unable to assist in improving the economy. Under Martinez' tenure he discouraged any form of industrialisation because he saw factories as breeding places for communism but the military was strengthened, with the appointment of foreign military leaders to train the officers. The interests of the oligarchy continued to be protected but he ruled as a typical dictator and was feared by many (Armstrong & Shenk, 1982; Berryman, 1984). After 13 years of autocratic rule, the general public went on a nationwide strike that paralysed the country, which led to his resignation and subsequent exile (Parkman, 1988). The repression that began during Martinez' tenure continued until the 1980s but proved to be more violent than in the past and included random repression.

After Martinez was overthrown, there appeared to be a brief liberal period, but representatives of the coffee oligarchy had gained control of the government once again. A coup in 1948 restored the government to the military sector and the oligarchy dominated society and the economy. These were the two strong forces and both could not tolerate a democratic regime (Baloyra, 1982). When Col. Oscar Osorio (1950-1956) assumed the presidency, he introduced plans to modernise agriculture and industry, as well as some liberalisation in politics and the economy improved. Economic growth continued under his successor, Col. Jose Maria Lemus (1956-1960) but some restrictions from the previous administration were relaxed which permitted union activity in towns but not in the countryside. When the government failed to sustain limited liberalisation, the price of coffee and exports dropped and reformist opposition increased. Students demonstrated and took to the streets so Col. Lemus was overthrown in 1960 (Dunkerley, 1988).

To explain the role of the elites in El Salvador, who were not only in the economy but also in the political system, Stone (1987) uses the concept of elite distemper, as explained earlier. Although the elites were not actively involved in politics during the period 1931-1979, they nevertheless supported the military to make sure that their interests were favoured. The following is the closest definition that describes the elites of El Salvador, who are considered an impediment in the development of the country:

... a tightly knit group of people, who intentionally combine to direct the allocation of valued resources in a community. Implicit in this definition is the assumption of continuity – that once these groups are formed, they attempt to persevere, taking particular steps to promote their own security and status ...A well consolidated ruling class orchestrates the political process so as to rule by consent, as well as by constraint ... (Schneider & Schneider, 1983:169)

The elites were expected to modernise the country but instead they concentrated on consolidating military rule and the Military-Oligarchy Coalition Party of 1950 was renamed as the National Coalition Party (PCN) in 1961 (Diskin & Sharpe, 1986). The leaders of the party continued to win the presidential elections from 1962 to 1977, at five-yearly intervals. Fraud and coercion became part of presidential elections to ensure the continuance of military leadership. The PCN was dissolved in 1981 but was replaced by the National Republican Alliance Party (ARENA). The members of this party come from the military the oligarchy and a few from the death squads. Therefore, it can be said that the elites grew from strength to strength. They began in the economy from the mid-1800s, then to the political system from 1870-1931, when Presidents were elected from their group and finally they were able to form a political party of their own so the Presidents would once again come from their ranks. In world-systems theory, Wallerstein (2004) states that when the state machinery becomes the main mode of capital accumulation it can lead to falsified elections, with no transfer of powers and the military assumes a political role.

While the alliances between the oligarchy and the Armed Forces have continued, there is within the Armed Forces a dominant power known as *tanda*. It is a system that has existed for sometime, and they are unwilling to give up control of the state. They belong to the same graduating class of the military school and are reputed to be intensely patriotic and nationalistic. In the wake of a coup d'etat a new leadership group emerges but no single officer is predominant. To attain promotion, the officers in power are retired so the field becomes clear for majors to control the government. They are fiercely loyal to one another and assist one another in gaining wealth and power (McClintock, 1985; Montgomery, 1995). A large group had graduated in 1966 and was referred to as the *tandona* and by 1988 they had become the new leaders of the Armed Forces. Many of them became members of the High Command and the most elite battalion, the Atlacatl. When the UN Truth Commission investigated the murders in El Salvador in 1992, the Armed Forces came under heavy scrutiny. The Armed Forces have always operated with impunity and the members of the above group tried to cover-up their responsibility in the killings of the civilians and in particular the assassinations of the Jesuit priests (Doggett, 1993; Whitfield, 1994).

While the oligarchy had become powerful, they were also challenged with the formation of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) in 1960. This party was composed of Catholic intellectuals and their main objective was to democratise the country. Jose Napoleon Duarte was elected President in 1972

but was replaced by Col. Arturo Molina (1972-1977) so military rule continued. While it appeared that there was an electoral democracy after Martinez was deposed in 1944, because of regular elections, it was in reality an institutionalised military rule until 1979. Election merely showed that the government went through the democratic process (Montgomery, 1995). The political structure of El Salvador does not allow any change and the status quo is maintained in spite of the regular elections. It would be far more difficult to change the system because it is not a problem of toppling a military dictator, who has perpetuated himself in power, but a problem about the political structure. Because of the endemic problem in the political structure, the crisis escalated as outlined below.

Escalation of Political Crisis

When General Humberto Romero assumed the presidency, through fraudulent elections in 1977, the crisis had worsened. In October, 1979 he was overthrown by a coup led by young reformist military officers and backed by the Carter Administration of the United States. The coup could have been an opening to democratise the country, but instead it led to the formation of a transitional government, which lasted for four years.

The first Junta was formed and within three months it collapsed and was followed by three others. After a series of changes in the government and the political situation increasingly worse, Jose Napoleon Duarte became President of the Junta in December, 1980. A caretaker President, Col. Magana, was appointed in 1982, with U.S. approval, amid fears that Roberto D'Aubisson, the leader of the death squads, would become President because the party (ARENA) he founded had won the Constituent Assembly elections in 1982. At the 1984 elections, Duarte emerged as President, with strong U.S. financial backing and support, and he therefore became the first civilian President since 1931. The U.S. approach to 'democracy' is to assist in disarming a dictator (General Romero), support the interim government (a civilian-military junta) and hold elections (Smith, 2000). The spiral of violence, however, began to escalate in 1980 and the exodus of refugees started from this date onwards, many on foot, to the neighbouring countries and the United States.

Although Duarte appeared to have been elected under a democratic process, the military tried to control the government. Demonstrations, repressions, persecutions and killings increased. The military became stronger and ruled the country, because Duarte had very little control over the High Command of the Armed Forces, in spite of the fact that the Constitution of 1983 declared that Duarte was the General Commander of the Armed Forces (Diskin & Sharpe, 1986). The oligarchy and the military did not seem to favour Duarte but the continued military and economic aid from the United States was contingent on his role as President of the country so the war was prolonged and caused the exodus of more than a million.

During this period the guerrilla groups had become stronger and many of the leaders came from the middle class or from the universities. The students and peasants, who demonstrated against the government, were labelled communists and/or subversives. The use of *foco* theory of revolution, presented in the previous chapter, has been helpful in understanding the formation of guerrilla groups that challenged the government of El Salvador in the 1980s, as follows.

A People's Revolution to Effect Change

El Salvador's history has been replete with rebellions and revolts because of the policies implemented by the government since Independence. Because of the oppressive structures that have been operating in El Salvador for centuries, people had no other alternatives but to rebel against the government and by the 1970s and 1980s there was no way of stopping them (Grenier, 1999).

McClintock (1998) argues that revolutions have not always been successful and do not guarantee the overthrow of an elected government especially if supported by the United States. In the past, this has been proven by the experiences of some Latin American countries. Revolutions however can overthrow dictators, who have been in power for many years as in the case of Cuba and Nicaragua. Different variables have to be considered when planning any revolutions to see if there is a chance for success. Although the United States supported the Salvadoran government in the 1980s, the FMLN guerrilla movement was able to challenge the government to reach a stalemate in ending the civil war in 1992. These groups are considered an emanation of a complex historical process in the modern world-system and referred to as anti-systemic movements, as explained in the previous chapter.

Debray (1967) has formulated the three different stages in the establishment of guerrilla movements in his *foco* theory of revolution. While the guerrilla groups of El Salvador did not strictly adhere to this theory, nevertheless there were similarities in the way the guerrilla groups were formed. They were able to mount an offensive against the government in spite of limited resources. The different groups that amalgamated under the FMLN banner became cohesive and unified to challenge the government that had become quite powerful because of strong U.S. support. The following are the stages of development that led to the FMLN movement.

The 1970s spearheaded the formation of guerrilla groups although a small group from the 1930s Communist Party (PCS) was still around. Although, the formation of guerrilla groups and popular organisations was suppressed after the 1932 revolution, five different Marxist guerrilla groups emerged in the 1970s with its own leader and ideology. By October 1980 the five groups (FPL, ERP, FARN, FAL and PRTC) amalgamated and became known as the FMLN guerrilla movement, named after the leader of the 1932 insurrection, Farabundo Marti. At first these groups retained their own leadership, ideology and organisational structures, but when the groups became more cohesive, a leader was chosen because revolutionary unity was essential (McClintock, 1998).

Grenier (1999) indicates that guerrilla movements serve as 'vanguards' of the people so these groups were linked with other popular organisations (BPR, UDN, LP-28, FAPU and MLP) and later became known as the Revolutionary Coordination of the Masses (CRM). A new Democratic Front (FD) was formed in April 1980 and joined the CRM in what then became known as the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). FDR began organising general strikes in factories and farms rather than mass demonstrations in the 1980s. By 1981 FDR and FMLN had joined forces but remained autonomous in function. FDR became the political wing, while FMLN was the military wing (Byrne, 1996; McClintock, 1998).

Support for the FMLN guerrilla is a point of contention. Some reports showed that the FMLN received arms and ammunitions as well as training and ideology from Cuba, Nicaragua and other Soviet-aligned Third World countries in the early 1980s. This was done only for a limited period (McColm, 1982; Grenier, 1999). It has been claimed that some of the ammunitions were probably bought from corrupt military officers through the black market, some were homemade and others were

confiscated from ambushed military officers. After all the military had an oversupply of ammunitions. These were bought with the ransom money, an estimated amount of US\$50-60 million, from the kidnapped oligarchs and businessmen but who were later released (Montgomery, 1995). In addition, Castellanos (1991) testifies that some of the FMLN leaders were trained in Viet Nam in the early 1980s. The training in Viet Nam proved to be more suitable for the Salvadoran situation than the training received from Cuba. While a lot of speculation revolved around where and how the guerrillas received their support, they resolved it by finding their own resources so they could continue with their struggle.

The FDR-FMLN coalition worked together for almost a decade and gained international recognition as a legitimate opposition force against the government, with France and Mexico being the first to recognise them. The FDR-FMLN was able to control significant parts of El Salvador as well as establish schools, hospitals, a justice system, social welfare programs and local governments. It became a political party in 1994 and the Salvadoran government continues to respect FMLN territories (MacLean, 1987; Selbin, 1999). The FDR was dissolved in 1987 and the FMLN is now the second leading political party in El Salvador after ARENA (Montgomery, 1995). While the aim of the revolution is to redistribute land and wealth and to re-structure society, this was not immediately evident after the civil war. However, with the FMLN becoming a political party, the majority of the people would now be represented in government.

As the political crisis in El Salvador worsened, more people in the rural areas cooperated with the guerrilla groups, which led to collective action and forced the military and the government to negotiate in ending the civil war (Wood, 2003). Since most of the leaders of the guerrilla movements came from the universities and the middle class sector of society, many of them were killed, tortured and/or 'disappeared', some fled the country and became refugees in the 1980s. It is difficult to estimate how many members were in the guerrilla groups and the popular organisations but it became quite a large group that was mobilised. They were then able to mount an offensive against the government in 1981 and 1989, which led to the peace negotiations between the government and the FMLN (Montgomery, 1995). While the United States and the Salvadoran government wanted a military solution to the conflict, a political solution was necessary and this is what happened.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated how the world-economy expanded from the 16th to the 20th century and why El Salvador became underdeveloped and dependent first on Spain and then the United States. While there were many external causes for this underdevelopment, the internal links between those in the core countries and the elites of El Salvador also contributed to the problems of the country. The elites that emerged after Independence would have been in a prime position to develop the country, instead the system of oppression and exploitation worsened. The peasants became dispossessed of their lands and suffered hunger, while the rich became richer. Although the majority of the population began to clamour for their rights, the government responded with repression.

After the 1932 revolution, there was 'relative silence' from the majority of the population but by the 1980s there was no turning back. The revolutionary groups, with the support of the masses, were ready to take what it meant to change the structures of the country but as a result many were killed, tortured, 'disappeared' and more than a million fled the country as refugees.

The application of the five theories chosen were helpful, although somewhat limited, in finding the links between the expansion of the world-economy in the 16th century, the political and economic systems that developed in the 19th century, and the empowerment of the guerrilla and popular organisations to proceed with the revolution. While these different systems offered an insight into the workings of El Salvador and the reasons for the exodus, two other factors need to be explored to complete the picture.

The next chapter will present the reasons why the Catholic Church, which formerly sided with the elites, turned around and chose to make a 'Preferential option for the poor' in 1968. In addition, it will explore the role of U.S. intervention in the political system of El Salvador in the 1980s and why the war was sustained.

CHAPTER 4: THE STANCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE IMPACT OF UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POLITICAL CRISIS

The preceding chapters explained how the system of exploitation and oppression became rooted in the socio-economic and political systems of El Salvador through the use of world-systems theory. It traced the historical beginnings of El Salvador from the time it was incorporated in the world-economy to the outbreak of the civil war in the 1980s. Although El Salvador was successful in the export of agricultural raw materials, the country did not become industrialised or modernised. Instead the country became underdeveloped because of its dependence on the export of raw materials, which was the discussion in Chapter 2 and dependency theory helped to elucidate. Its status in the modern world-system as a country on the periphery remained the same from the 16th to the 20th century.

The Independence of El Salvador from Spain in 1821 could have been an opening for the new administration to improve the country, but this opportunity was lost. An elite group emerged that took control of the socio-economic and political systems of the country and the system of exploitation and oppression intensified further and as a result increased numbers of people became landless and thus even more impoverished. While the majority of the population had accepted their subjugation for the past 300 years, rebellions began to sporadically take place from 1833 onwards. To counteract rebellions, the military and police forces were strengthened and repression came into force to suppress any rebellions before they gained a foothold. To respond to the growing inequalities, the majority of the population staged their first peasant revolution in 1932, a watershed in Salvadoran history. This set the stage for the civil war of the 1980s and caused the exodus of more than a million of the population. The use of elite theory and *foco* theory of revolution assisted in understanding the two warring factions in El Salvador. While the above-mentioned events were probably enough to trigger the exodus, there are two other factors that are crucial in understanding the dispersion of the population.

To find the common thread that led to the exodus, it is necessary to look at the role the Catholic Church played during the political crisis and the reasons why some Church members suffered untold persecutions from the 1970s. While the Catholic Church had its historical beginnings in the 16th century and was closely linked with the socio-economic and political systems of the country, it began to change radically in the late 1960s. The Latin-American Church reflected on what was happening in Latin America and as a result it took a stance on a 'Preferential option for the poor', which had drastic consequences for both the Catholic Church itself and for the people. Another factor that needs to be examined in trying to understand what led to the mass exodus of the people as refugees is the role of the United States in the Western Hemisphere in terms of its foreign policy from 1823 until the 20th century.

The role of the Catholic Church in respect to its support of the poor is interesting to consider by itself, but it is more enlightening to look at its role in conjunction with an examination of the foreign policy of the United States in respect to El Salvador. The Catholic Church and the United States both played a part in the events that led to the final exodus.

This chapter will trace the reasons why the Catholic Church became vocal in denouncing the social injustices of the country and why the United States intervened in the affairs of El Salvador in the 1980s. It can therefore be said that all of the above are the interweaving themes that caused the mass exodus of the 1980s and 1990s. Included is a short synopsis on the consequences of war, which became part of the 'baggage' of the Salvadorans when they resettled in Australia.

MISSIONARY EXPANSION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

To understand the Catholic Church of Latin America in the 1980s, in its stance of defending the poor and denouncing social injustices, it is necessary to trace its historical origins. The Catholic Church expanded concomitantly with the world-economy in the 16th century. Spain received the mandate to Christianise the peoples of the Americas so the Church became closely linked to the established order of oppression, exploitation and alienation because it became part of the capitalist society. The Christian message, therefore, also formed part of the dominant ideology (Gutierrez, 1973). The evangelisation of Latin America therefore emerged and developed alongside the political, social and economic structures of the colonies. The structures that shaped the colonies for 300 years under colonial rule also shaped the Church that 'bore the marks of dependence, slavery and underdevelopment' (Richard, 1987:27).

Although the Church gave lip service to the view that the natives should be treated well, the reality was that rapes, killings and forced baptisms were common under colonial rule. However, some of the members of the Church denounced the way the Spaniards treated the indigenous populations but the rest followed the socio-economic and political structures transmitted by Spain. Profit appeared significantly more important to them than human rights or social justice. There was an emphasis on obedience, fatalism, conformism, humility and silence and these provided fertile ground in El Salvador for the development of a system of oppression and exploitation from the time of conquest until the 20th century.

Religion, Politics and Economics

The indigenous populations of the colonies, notably the Aztecs, the Mayas and the Incas had their own systems of beliefs, which included ancient rituals for funerals and feasts. However, with the arrival of the *conquistadores*, their systems of beliefs, their achievements and their advanced cultures were obliterated and changed according to the directives of the Spanish Crown. The cultural traditions and religious practices of the indigenous people were considered as superstitions or works of the devil because they were different from European practices. It became common practice to baptise the indigenous people, especially those who were integrated into the *encomienda* system, so that they would follow the practices of the Catholic religion. Women, who became concubines of the Spaniards, also had to be baptised first before they could become members of the official concubinage or *barraganeria* (Esquivel, 1990).

In an unparalleled event in the history of the Catholic Church, known as *Patronato Regio* (Royal Patronage), Spain was given the responsibility of spreading the Catholic faith to the New World. Pope Alexander VI, a Spaniard, had adjudicated the division of the colonies between Spain and Portugal and gave them the right and the duty of propagating the Catholic faith (Berryman, 1987). This was an unprecedented decision because Spain, a civil society, was given the mandate to spread the Catholic religion. Spain, therefore, had full jurisdiction and absolute authority over the colonies and could collect taxes to finance evangelisation, erect new churches, choose candidates for the episcopacy and send missionaries to the colonies. Any correspondence between the Holy See and the colonies came under the strict scrutiny of the Spanish Crown. This relationship between Spain and Latin America would cause big problems for Spain, the Catholic Church (Rome) and the Latin American Church because the separation of Church and State did not take place immediately after the colonies became independent in the 1820s. Independence from Spain entailed also the loss of jurisdiction on religious matters, which took time to resolve. The separation of Church and state would then become a major issue. Each state then had to make its own decision on this matter.

Royal Patronage was exercised alongside the other colonial powers so the Church became an integral part of the capitalist system of exploitation and a formidable force in Latin America (Wiarda, 2001). Although Spain was responsible for the evangelisation of the Americas, two factions have existed from the outset. There were priests and/or missionaries, who sided with the oppressors, and those who sided with the oppressed. Authors (Adie & Poitras, 1974; Schmidt, 1983) cite that Bartolome de las Casas, a priest and also an *encomendero* in Cuba, was very much concerned about the way the natives were being maltreated, although nothing was mentioned about Africans who had arrived during the slave trade. He defended the rights of the indigenous peoples and was instrumental in writing to the Spanish Crown about the abuses being committed against them. Spain responded by issuing two laws, in 1542 and in 1594, to prohibit the abuses being committed by the greedy *conquistadores* and fanatical priests (Russell, 1984). Because of distance, these laws were poorly promulgated and implemented.

Other authors (Latorre-Cabal, 1978; Richard, 1987) name a number of bishops, priests and some members of missionary orders who protested about the way the natives were treated. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the French Bourbon kings ruled Spain from the 1700s and they opposed Church power. One of the consequences of this opposition was the expulsion of the Jesuits, who were the main opponents of the Royal Patronage, from Latin America in 1767. This was caused by a political feud with the Pope, although Central America was not too affected (Weaver, 1994; Foster, 2000). The Jesuits later played a key role in denouncing social injustices in El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s.

The establishment of Propaganda Fide in 1622 did not seem to affect the implementation of the Royal Patronage and no changes were made about the governance of the Catholic Church in the colonies. Propaganda Fide had the sole responsibility for all missionary work of the Holy See from this period onwards. The dichotomy within the Church between those who identified themselves with the ruling class, and those who defended the poor and exploited created constant tensions in future generations and this is what happened to El Salvador in the 1980s. Therefore, from an evangelisation perspective, especially in relation to Liberation Theology popularised in Latin America in the 1970s,

Richard (1987) points out that it is important to confront the pattern of oppression/liberation within the context of its economic, political and social systems from its historical beginnings.

In 1530 El Salvador was incorporated into the Bishopric of Guatemala and in 1537 a Papal Bull *Sublimis Deus* was passed declaring that the indigenous people were humans and could be baptised (Russell, 1984; Boland, 2001). The Salvadoran Church came under the jurisdiction of the Bishopric of Guatemala until Independence but followed the same pattern and structure well into the 20th century. With the increasing numbers of the population being baptised, the people looked to the priests for guidance about how to live and how to react to having their land taken over by the colonisers. Because the priests, at the direction of those in authority in the Church, were closely linked with the Spanish monarchy, the Government and the local colonial leaders, they encouraged the native people to be compliant and subservient with a promise of heaven after their deaths. In looking at this situation of the Salvadoran Church and its relationship with Guatemala, it is similar to what occurred during the indigo trade, as related in the previous chapter. It appears that the Salvadoran Church was also a satellite of Guatemala when one applies the use of dependency theory.

Another legacy from Spain under colonial rule was the formation of *cofradías* (fraternal or lay communities) in the parishes of the rural areas. *Cofradías* were important church institutions that organised rituals, which did not need the presence of a priest, as in processions, pilgrimages and celebrations of saints' feast days. It also provided the indigenous people with a form of corporate identity as well as local autonomy. Although it was originally founded to celebrate saints' feast days, it also allowed the members to practice religious beliefs from pre-conquest and Catholic traditions, a syncretistic type of religion. The *cofradías* also owned lands and livestock and could influence political, economic and religious events. The leaders of *cofradías* were usually the chiefs of the indigenous groups, who were responsible for the purchase and sale of lands as well as agricultural produce. Members, who worked in the communal lands, were usually exempted from the communal obligations of *repartimiento* (Newson, 1986). In the *cofradías* the members supported one another and could live their lives according to their own traditions and customs but this relationship eroded after the 1932 revolution.

In the political reforms of the 1880s most of the land of the *cofradías* were expropriated and turned over to the wealthy but the Church hierarchy did not oppose it. This situation weakened the status of the close-knit community and without communal land, the *cofradías* gradually lost its power. Some rural and semi-rural areas, however, continued to have them but in time the responsibilities of organising rituals were taken over by families or individuals and when it became too difficult, it gradually disappeared. Since the Church did not encourage lay autonomy, the disappearance of the *cofradías* did not pose a problem (Peterson, 1997). After the 1932 revolution the government appointed military officers to deter rebellions, discouraged the formation of labour unions, and banned peasant organisations, including the *cofradías*, in the rural areas so the communities dispersed. However, in the 1970s they again began to form unions and popular organisations as well as church groups. Although popular religion continued to enjoy its autonomy, the emergence of the Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs or *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*) in the 1970s will shed new light about their role in the political struggle of El Salvador. Two of the participants belonged to this group.

While it was the intention of the Crown to make the colonies Catholic, the indigenous population had no say on the matter. Baptism became compulsory for anyone who worked under the

Spaniards but no prior preparations were made for the reception of the sacrament. Besides, the Spaniards never learned the language of the indigenous population and Spanish became the national language only in 1710 and Church ceremonies were in Latin! In a country as small as El Salvador one wonders how the Spaniards and indigenous people communicated with one another in the early decades under colonial rule. It is possible that no interpreters were available at that time. To rebel against the dominant ideology of oppression and exploitation meant to go against the will of the Church and therefore God. The Church therefore advocated silence, acceptance of suffering, sacrifice, and obedience at this time and this became part of their habitus. It is not clear how these practices were carried over after Independence but changes occurred in the administration of the institutional church, as explained below.

Changes after Independence

The separation of Church and state did not occur concomitantly when the Latin American countries gained their Independence from Spain. After Independence, the leadership of the Catholic Church caused chaos because there was no future planning for the governance of the Church. Since Spain had ecclesiastical patronage of the colonies for 300 years both Church and State functioned in unison. Religious discontent was not one of the reasons in the struggle for Independence. The Church enjoyed supremacy in the economic sphere because it owned vast estates in most of the Latin American states but not as much in El Salvador. In El Salvador the Church only had about 24 priests and 2,981 acres of land in the 1850s (Russell, 1984) so they were not considered as powerful and wealthy compared to those in other Latin American countries.

Under colonial rule the Church was subsidised by the state in the building of churches, monasteries, schools and residences. In addition, the rich people contributed the necessary funds while the poor did extra work for the church with no remuneration. However, the poor still had to contribute tithes from their normal income. The Church was also exempt from taxes and received donations, which included dowries, bequests, trust funds and alms so the clergy dominated the colonial era both politically and economically (Mecham, 1966). Some of these practices continued but there would be radical changes in the 1970s, as explained in the next section.

Therefore, the separation of Church and State did not prove to be an easy matter and out of respect for Spain, the Vatican (Rome) left the situation in limbo. On the other hand, the Independence of the colonies had not been recognised by foreign governments and the Vatican did not want to be the first one to do so. Finally, Pope Gregory XVI recognised the Independence of the Americas with a Bull *Sollicitudo Ecclesiarum* (1831) thereby indicating his intention to exercise his responsibility over the colonies (Richard, 1987). The new governments then accepted papal supremacy but Royal Patronage was not resolved for many years. However, when the first Bishop of San Salvador was named in 1842, the priests were told to refrain from politics. Factions between Church and State interests existed until 1863. When President Francisco Duenas (1863-71) restored the privileged status of priests in 1864, Catholicism was once again the official religion (Richard, 1987). Refraining from politics will again be a key issue in the 1970s and 1980s because of the involvement of priests and religious in denouncing the social injustices being committed against the poor.

The effects of shortage of work were felt in the 1920s. Men led nomadic lives to earn a living and families began to disintegrate; thus the number of illegitimate children also increased. In the

farming communities family life was still quite stable, especially those who had a piece of land for their own subsistence agriculture and families tended to have many children. One reason for numerous children is the high mortality rate. In addition, children were expected to help out at home, in the fields and to care for their elderly parents. The Church's doctrine was still based on 'increase and multiply' and this could also be the reason for large families. In the late 20th century families from farming communities still had numerous children while those from the urban areas had fewer children, as shown in the study.

When the liberals assumed the leadership of both the Guatemalan and Salvadoran governments in 1871, the same types of reforms were instituted in the Constitutions. The liberals considered the Church as conservative and tied to the colonial past. To effect change it had to give up its political and social powers and submit to new forms of civil government (Richard, 1987). Freedom of thought and religion were proclaimed, civil marriages were recognised, the cemeteries ceased to be under clerical control; education and monastic orders were abolished. Religious orders dedicated to education could have assisted in founding schools, thus increasing the literacy rate of the poor people in rural areas. Public schools in the rural areas were almost not existent so education did not become a strong element in Salvadoran society. While the Church in El Salvador was considered elitist and powerful, by the 1970s a new emphasis on evangelisation and pastoral work developed especially in the rural areas, as explained below.

The Renewal in the Catholic Church

The stance taken on social injustices committed against the poor by some of the Church leaders in El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s has to be seen in the light of what occurred in the Catholic Church in the late 1960s. A historical event of great significance in the Catholic Church took place in 1962-65, which is referred to as the Second Vatican Council (or Vatican II). This Council was a major attempt in understanding the role of the Church in the modern world and this marked a new era for the Church. Hence, any documents written after this period have to be based on the teachings of this Council.

While Vatican II introduced new social teachings about the growing concerns of the Catholic Church in the world, three earlier encyclicals written before 1962 are worth mentioning. The two earlier encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), attempted to address issues of injustice that resulted in the industrialisation of some developed countries at that time. It also denounced the accumulation of power and wealth, but they were poorly implemented (Latorre-Cabal, 1978). Just prior to the Council, Pope John XXIII issued an encyclical, *Mater et Magistra* (1961), which dealt about the concerns of the Church for the exploited poor of the industrialised countries and the marginalised poor of the underdeveloped countries. Moreover, after Vatican II Pope Paul VI wrote an encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, (1967) which focused on Third World developmental issues. He pointed out the causes of exploitation and how modern ways have enslaved and degraded the weak. Further, he stated that these abuses have caused an imbalance in the international economic order and have often led to tensions and sometimes war. The teachings of Vatican II and the encyclicals that followed had a profound impact on the universal Church but in particular the Latin American Church.

In Latin America, after Vatican II, the Bishops finally focused their attention on the extremes of poverty in their continent and the effects of economic deprivation on the people. During this period, there was a drop in the number of persons joining religious orders and several men left the priesthood.

A few also became politically active by joining political parties or guerrilla movements (Berryman, 1984). After the 1959 Cuban Revolution civil unrest/wars had also spread in most parts of Latin America. The United States perceived this increase in civil unrest as the spread of communism. While the Latin American Church supported the United States in its fight against communism, it also began to reflect on the social, political and economic systems that were put in place under colonisation and continued until the 20th century. The Bishops saw that Latin America had become economically and politically dependent on foreign trade and the developed countries, which they started to realise was a contributing factor in the underdevelopment of their continent (Gutierrez, 1973; Lernoux, 1980). Therefore, a meeting of Latin American Bishops was called in Medellin, Colombia (1968) to address these issues. This was followed by the 1979 conference in Puebla, Mexico, which deepened and reaffirmed the Church leaders' understanding about what the demands of solidarity with the poor and the oppressed meant (Gutierrez, 1983). Henceforth, Vatican II and Medellin would feature as important events for the Latin American Church. These can be seen as points at which the Church distanced itself from the oligarchs with the result that their relationship with one another began to break down; each group pursuing separate and sometimes opposing political and social agendas.

It has been claimed that during Vatican II meetings Pope John XXIII used the term 'Church of the poor' (Gutierrez, 1973). At Medellin, the Bishops therefore reflected on the rights of the poor, the necessity to promote grassroots organisations, the need to denounce unjust actions of world powers that works against the self-determination of weaker nations among others (Montgomery, 1995). These reflections of the Bishops led them to make a 'Preferential option for the poor' as their focus. They therefore assumed a stance against what they now saw as unjust structures in politics and society. Because of this option, the Bishops then realised that they had to take initiatives in applying the gospel message in a new and vigorous way in their continent. The emergence of Liberation theology (Gutierrez, 1973; Berryman 1987) and the alarming growth of CEBs contributed to the changes. In many ways it also acknowledged that the Church was changing sides after centuries of alliance with the rich and powerful. By siding with the poor, the relationships between both groups began to weaken (Lernoux, 1980). The Church then began to experience persecution and this became apparent during the political crisis of the 1980s in El Salvador.

In El Salvador, as mentioned in an earlier part of this chapter, a legacy under colonial rule was the formation of lay communities. Because of lack of priests, the poor formed lay communities or *cofradías* to support one another and to practice their religious beliefs in the rural areas. After the 1932 insurrection these lay communities were disbanded and they were also denied the right to organise. In the 1970s the CEBs or *iglesia popular* (Church of the Poor) began to emerge. Some of the members of the CEBs were trained as catechists and delegates of the word because of lack of priests in the rural areas. The people learned to interpret the biblical message within the context of their own lives and experiences (Montgomery, 1995). To the extent that people understood the gospel message, they were also able to commit themselves to challenging the structures of exploitation and oppression, which had pervaded civil society for centuries. Many were prepared to sacrifice their lives in the struggle for justice and equality. Some of them joined guerrilla groups to fight for the same cause and they were therefore labelled as communists and/or subversives; others supported the guerrillas by contributing food (Peterson, 1997; Wood, 2003). While the people became dispersed and lost their community spirit after the 1932 revolution, the events of the 1970s and 1980s encouraged them to

unite as groups and fight against the unjust structures of the country. This is one of the reasons why there were massive repressions and killings in the rural areas by the military and many civilians were killed, tortured or 'disappeared' or they fled the country. Three of the participants in the study belonged to the CEB and/or the *iglesia popular* but this will be discussed in Part II of the thesis.

In line with the teachings with Vatican II, the University of Central America (UCA) began to change its system of education in the 1970s. The Jesuits (founded UCA in 1965) wanted the children of the ruling class to become aware of the social and economic conditions of the majority of the population. They wanted the students to have a sense of responsibility in changing the structures of the socio-economic and political systems. However, the oligarchy was against such a system. Since the oligarchy was the major benefactor of the UCA, they wanted their children to follow the lead of their parents and to have a more conservative type of education (Montgomery, 1995). In the 1970s the University took a strong position in favour of the land reforms to be implemented but also told the oligarchy that UCA is not theirs. The UCA also trained lay leaders and catechists for the CEBs. Their stance aroused the ire of the oligarchy and the Government; thus the Jesuits began to receive threats and persecution. They (47) were also given an ultimatum accompanied with death threats by the military to leave the country by July 1977 (Schmidt, 1983), but they stayed. The consequences of their stance in denouncing the social injustices in El Salvador are related in the next section.

The Price of Taking a 'Preferential Option for the Poor'

The Church of El Salvador was led by Archbishop Chavez, a conservative, from 1944 to 1977, although some changes had already begun to take place during his tenure of office especially in the rural areas. Upon his retirement in 1977, Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, another conservative, a quiet man and an ally of the oligarchy, succeeded him. Many Church members did not accept this appointment because of fears that the poor would not be defended against the social injustices that prevailed in the country. Civil unrest had increased during this period and many priests involved with the poor had become targets of the military.

The systematic persecution of the Church in El Salvador began in 1977 when priests were tortured, arrested, expelled from the country and killed because they were blamed for inciting the poor. CEB leaders and catechists were also persecuted for the same reason. It has been claimed that the assassination of the first Jesuit priest, Rutilio Grande, in 1977 triggered a change of stance in Archbishop Romero (Brockman, 1989). He and other Church leaders refused to attend the inauguration of President Romero (not related to the Archbishop) and any government ceremonies until Grande's assassination was investigated and the assailant brought to justice. This was the first highly public indication that the Church did not support the government and the oligarchy. From this date onwards until his assassination in 1980, the Archbishop never attended any government functions. It was customary for Church leaders to attend major and public functions of the government in the past, which indicated their allegiance; their non-attendance of these functions meant that they were against the government. As a consequence of this opposition to the Government, the Archbishop began to receive constant threats.

In spite of threats, Archbishop Romero continued to take a strong stance about the abuses being committed against the poor and oppressed. This stance made him the prime target of the military that led to his assassination on 24th March, 1980 by right wing sharpshooters (Brockman,

1989; Williams, 1989). The 1992 UN Truth Commission finally confirmed that Roberto D'Aubisson, the leader of the death squads, acted as an accomplice in the assassination of the Archbishop (Doggett, 1993; Whitfield, 1994) but no one was convicted as the killer. Brockman (1989) recounts the events that shaped the life and leadership role of Archbishop Romero but a detailed account is beyond the scope of this thesis.

After the assassination of Archbishop Romero, Bishop Arturo Rivera y Damas was appointed by the Vatican, as interim Archbishop for three years, because of the political climate in El Salvador. His permanent appointment was conditional on the Church's non-involvement in political affairs (Buckley, 1984). The Church then became more removed from the plight of the poor and there was a decline in the number of priests especially in the rural areas. Some of the CEBs were dismantled but an outgrowth of the CEB movement emerged. It is a quasi-independent People's Church under the banner of the Coordinating Body of the People's Church (CONIP) (Russell, 1984). This group continues the social justice work that Archbishop Romero began and is active in promoting socio-economic changes, especially in areas controlled by rebels.

As related above, after Vatican II, the Jesuits took an unambiguous stance on social injustices committed against the poor and after Archbishop Romero's assassination, the Rector of the UCA, Fr. Ignacio Ellacuria, played a key role in negotiating a peace process between the FMLN and the government. He became the prime target of the military and an order to 'kill him and to leave no witnesses' was given by the High Command of the Armed Forces to the Atlacatl Elite Battalion. The order was carried out on 16th November, 1989 when six Jesuits, who belonged to the UCA, were brutally murdered by U.S. trained army officers. The housekeeper and her daughter were also killed because the military made sure that there were no witnesses to the crime (Deng, 1993; Whitfield, 1994). The findings of the UN Truth Commission of 1992 confirmed that the High Command of the Armed Forces were the authors of the Jesuit assassinations. It was also confirmed that the military, the security forces and the death squads were responsible for no less than 85 per cent of the killings (Doggett, 1993; Binford, 1996). Although a few military officers were charged for the crimes committed, no one went to prison because the Armed Forces operated with impunity. These events affected deeply one of the participants, as related in the study.

The above summary showed how the Catholic Church developed in El Salvador from the 16th to the 20th century. It can therefore be said that for 400 years the Catholic Church and the State almost worked in unison to support one another. This alliance benefited both the Church and the elite groups in numerous ways, including the acquisition of lands, wealth and their influence on the Government. The elite groups were able to increase their wealth by exploiting the poor. They were also major benefactors of the UCA to make sure that their children would be educated according to their wishes. This strong alliance filtered down to the various religious orders and services to such an extent that challenges to the veracity of such inequalities were not permitted to flourish. However, after Vatican II the poor, who belonged to the 'silent' majority in the past, began to have a 'voice' because some of them learned how to address the social injustices in the socio-economic and political systems prevalent in the country. The elite groups and Government leaders opposed this stance and because of the power they wield, the poor suffered more and over a million of the population was forced to flee

the country. However, another contributor to the political crisis of El Salvador is the impact of U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere, as explained below.

THE UNITED STATES AND ITS 'SPHERE OF INFLUENCE'

The roots of U.S. intervention in El Salvador in the 1980s can only be understood by looking at its foreign policy. Several authors (Bemis, 1943; Russell, 1984; Smith, 2000) highlight the importance of the 1823 Doctrine, which laid the foundations of U.S. foreign policy. This doctrine stipulated that the American continent would not be colonised in future by other European powers. The United States wanted to restrict and reduce European influence over the American continent and was fearful that the newly independent states might acquire diplomatic and commercial ties with France and England, the core countries in the world-economy, and could cause instability in the region (Smith, 2000). The United States was also convinced that it had a manifest destiny to 'spread democracy' in the Western Hemisphere and other parts of the world. The territorial expansion of the United States proved costly in terms of security so the idea of having a 'sphere of influence' with a network of economic and political relations in the Western Hemisphere was proposed in the early 1900s. The United States had also become powerful in the economy and was on the ascendancy as a core country in the world-economy during this period, as related in the previous chapter. In Latin America the United States was not only involved in the economy but also in the political system.

In 1904 another law was passed, known as the Roosevelt corollary, which declared that the United States would become the 'international police' in the Western Hemisphere so it would be able to intervene and occupy any country in question to maintain order (Smith, 2000). A 'dollar diplomacy' was adopted by President Taft from 1909 and continued by succeeding Presidents, which encouraged U.S. businessmen to pursue economic interests in the region. When the United States became the dominant foreign power in Central America, it was allowed to have direct military and political intervention through the mid-1930s (Booth, 1993). In the 1932 Revolution in El Salvador, the United States and Canada offered to assist the Salvadoran Government but it was refused since the country was under military rule. This refusal of foreign intervention resulted in the revolution lasting only for a month. In 1933 President F.D. Roosevelt introduced the 'good neighbour policy' and no interventions in the affairs of Central America took place (Booth, 1985). However, after World War II a change in foreign policy occurred.

The Policy of 'Containment of Communism'

It has been claimed by some critics that the decisions made at the Yalta Conference in 1945 to divide the world into East (Soviet Union) and West (U.S.) have been the primary cause of international instability. This was a meeting held between Winston Churchill (Great Britain), Josef Stalin (Soviet Union) and Franklin D. Roosevelt (United States). The proceedings, however, appear to have dealt more with the war situation in Europe and the Far East (World War II) and the establishment of the United Nations (Stettinius, 1950, Clemens, 1970). Amin (1994) argues, however, that the division of East-West took place after the Potsdam Conference, and not Yalta as many thought, because the United States had become confident of military supremacy. The United States was then able to establish its leadership as a world leader by declaring the Cold War against the Soviet Union in 1947. The East-West division of the world ceased in the 1970s but in accordance with the agreement of the

Trilateral Commission in 1972, as explained in Chapter 2, the world was then divided into North-South. However, when the political crisis in El Salvador occurred in the 1980s, the United States reverted to the East-West division and intervened because it was thought to be communist infiltration. This external intervention increased the violence and escalated the conflict; thus forcing the people to flee their country.

The declaration of the Cold War doctrine by President Truman meant that the 'free world' would be defended against communism (Laloy, 1988; Senarclens, 1995). The ascendancy of the United States into hegemonic status in the world-economy from 1945 led to a consolidation of 'spheres of influence' between the two (United States and the Soviet Union) ideological blocs. Both Western Europe (with the Marshall Plan) and Latin America fell under U.S. influence. The U.S. view of 'containment of communism' also meant transforming economic structures to promote free trade and investments in Latin America to help develop the countries, as explained in the previous chapter. Latin America therefore became a 'battleground and prize in the conflict between communism and capitalism, East and West, Soviet Union and the United States (Smith, 2000:117). To pursue this foreign policy, any uprising or revolution in a Third World country is interpreted as communist infiltration and this is what happened to El Salvador in the 1980s.

Because of fears of a possible threat of a nuclear war and an increased level of insurgency in Latin America, the United States introduced the counter-insurgency programmes in the 1960s. The Cuban Revolution and the aim to overthrow Fidel Castro became the principal cause for extensive U.S. programmes of revitalizing the military apparatus in the Western Hemisphere under President Kennedy's administration. In line with the development programmes implemented by Alliance for Progress in El Salvador, it also provided for the strengthening of internal security forces and the establishment of military and paramilitary apparatus because of fears of peasant rebellions. Both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), under the Public Safety Programme, were involved in the training and upgrading of the military apparatus in El Salvador (Arnson, 1982; Berryman, 1984; McClintock, 1985). This is another instance when a strong state (United States) in the modern world-system imposes its rule on a weaker state (El Salvador) to make sure that no peasant rebellions would occur.

To defend El Salvador from peasant rebellions, a paramilitary organisation, known as the Nationalist Democratic Organisation (ORDEN, which also signifies ORDER in English), was established. ORDEN became known as an extension of the Green Berets and the CIA (McClintock, 1985; Pearce, 1986). It worked closely with the National Agency and Special Service of El Salvador (ANSESAL), the intelligence service of the Armed Forces. This organisation set up a national network of informants from the grassroots level to serve the military. These informants were known as *orejas*, (literally means 'ears') and they have created an internalised fear and distrust among the people in the communities. This is part of the 'baggage' carried by some of the refugees, who came to Australia.

The Training of the Military

When the United States implemented the counter-insurgency programmes, it provided for the training of military officers and the strengthening of the Armed Forces in Latin America. As part of this programme, the United States trained Latin American men on torture, murder, sabotage, bribery, blackmail and extortion for the achievement of political aims. The Pentagon admitted in 1996 that

these men attended the School of the Americas (founded in Panama, 1946), now located in Fort Benning, Georgia. A bill to close the school was introduced in 1994 but it was defeated in the U.S. House of Representatives (Binford, 1996). The school has been renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (Zinn, 2002). This school is financed by U.S. taxpayers and has trained more than 57,000 Latin American men including Somoza of Nicaragua, Noriega of Panama and D'Aubisson of El Salvador (Feitlowitz, 1998). D'Aubisson became the leader of the death squads in his country and the founder of the ARENA party in 1981. In the 1980s 6,000 Salvadoran troops were trained in the School of the Americas (Barry, 1991). Some of the Salvadorans in Melbourne have expressed their concern that some of the members of the military have been accepted as refugees and their distrust of one another is again heightened, as the study will show.

The political situation in El Salvador did not appear to be a threat to security interests in the Central American region until about 1977. Historically, El Salvador did not experience any U.S. intervention until the late 1970s (Landau, 1993). Although the Carter administration (1977-81) tended to look at the relationship with the Central American neighbours along the North-South orientation agreed upon in the Trilateral Commission, the 1979 crisis made the United States intervene in the political affairs of El Salvador. President Carter also preferred a global policy on human rights and wanted to distance the U.S. government from the 'fear of communism' which made United States support any dictator in power (Arnson, 1982; McClintock, 1985). In spite of this change in perspective, the United States still sent economic and 'non-lethal' aid in 1979 to defeat communist elements in El Salvador. Instead war escalated and the Salvadorans began to flee the country.

Archbishop Romero sent a public letter to President Carter to stop military aid in February 1980 because of fears that the war would escalate. Besides, the Archbishop thought that the people of El Salvador had a right to self-determination and external aid would defeat the purpose (Brockman, 1989). The plea was not heeded; instead the Secretary of State Vance responded and assured the Archbishop that the aid was economic and that the United States would make sure that military aid would not be used to violate human rights (Baloyra, 1982). In addition, oppositions from the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference and about 20 major Protestant denominations were made but U.S. military aid to El Salvador was continued (Berryman, 1984). Unfortunately, this aid sustained the war and displaced thousands of citizens within the country and others were forced to flee.

When the Reagan Administration (1981-89) took over, it looked at the Salvadoran situation from a different perspective. It reverted back to the East-West orientation of 'containment of communism' (Shaw, 1986). The United States was also fearful that El Salvador would become another Cuba. To avert another crisis, the United States then increased its economic and military aid annually to support the anti-communist war against the FMLN guerrilla movement. In 1980, Canada and other Western European nations opposed the Inter-American Development Bank loan that El Salvador needed for development. The reason for this opposition was the gross human rights violations being committed by the Salvadoran government against the civilians. However, the United States was convinced that the guerrilla forces were receiving support from Cuba, Nicaragua and the Soviet Union so the loans were granted (Baloyra, 1982; Petras with Brill et al., 1986).

Although the United States continued to accuse the Salvadoran government of having military support from Cuba, the Soviet Union and the communist allies, no proofs could be found. However, Chomsky (1982) indicates that the United States sent 343 tons of arms in 1981. Despite this lack of

proof of military assistance from communist countries, the United States increased military assistance and trained the military in El Salvador so as to improve their capabilities in preventing communist infiltration and to better respond to terrorist attacks (Villalobos, 1986; Montgomery, 1995). It is claimed that a report, known as 'White Paper' was published in the early 1980s that blamed Cuba, Nicaragua, the Soviet Union and other communist countries as supporting the guerrillas but the report turned out to be based on speculation rather than evidence (Niето, 2003). It seems that Moscow paid little attention to events in Latin America and was completely disinterested in El Salvador. The Soviet Union was convinced that the Western Hemisphere was the U.S. 'sphere of influence' and therefore beyond the scope of Soviet power (Landau, 1993). Because of this lack of understanding between the two foreign powers, El Salvador became the 'pawn' in the game and as a result human rights abuses escalated in the 1980s and dispersed the population.

Because of military aid from the United States, the crisis in El Salvador began to escalate in the early 1980s. The first three years of the civil war were marked by indiscriminate death squad killings, massacres and scorched earth methods (Binford, 1996). When the low intensity warfare in late 1983 was introduced, the inordinate massacre of peasants declined. Therefore, the Reagan Administration was able to testify before U.S. Congress that human rights violations had improved and military aid was continued. Although the killings had declined, a different pattern of human rights violations emerged. Air bombings were used to scare the civilian population, while houses, crops and fields necessary for their survival were destroyed but torture, imprisonment and repression increased. Many of the refugees, who experienced or witnessed such events while in their home country, continued to be affected in their resettlement process, which the small study describes in Part II of the thesis.

The military aid to El Salvador amounted to U.S. \$6 billion in 12 years (Binford, 1996). This amount is considered as the largest aid to an ally in U.S. history (Menjivar, 2000). The United States not only provided aid and the training of the military but also participated directly by sending U.S. forces and planes (Chomsky, 1986). Human rights abuses spiralled while the military and the death squads perpetuated executions, detentions, torture and massacres resulting in the deaths of thousands of civilians. Salvadorans, who managed to flee the country, experienced this type of trauma and have to live with it for many years. The refugees, who arrived in Australia, witnessed such atrocities, as the study shows.

Bonner (1984) comments that the United States had no strategic interests in El Salvador. The United States, however, saw the political crisis in El Salvador as crucial to its own security interests. Therefore, the United States opposed any negotiated settlement of the political conflict because it was fearful of having a coalition government that could be anti-American. Instead the United States made El Salvador dependent on military and economic aid. Also both the United States and the Salvadoran government wanted a military rather than a political solution to the crisis. This dependence on aid became an impediment for President Duarte's Administration and the military to seek non-military solutions to the Salvadoran crisis and this is the reason why the war was prolonged. The governments of the United States and El Salvador were looking at the crisis from different perspectives. Because of pressures from the Reagan Administration, the unilateral decisions of the United States prevailed in spite of repeated pleas from the Catholic Church authorities in El Salvador and the international concern of other Latin American countries. The U.S. military aid was decreased in late 1990 (Deng,

1993). It can therefore be said that the United States misunderstood the political crisis in El Salvador. The crisis was interpreted as communist infiltration and not an internal crisis that needed a solution by the Salvadoran government and not by the United States. The military aid from the United States sustained and prolonged the war. It also caused the Salvadoran population to witness atrocities on a massive scale in their home country in the 1980s, as explained below.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR

A discussion on this event is important to understand the 'baggage' that the Salvadorans carried with them to Australia and other countries. While this short sequel may sound horrific in any western country, not all of the atrocities have been recorded but these are only some of the events accessible to readers. The escalation of the war in the 1980s caused two major atrocities; one in 1980 and another in 1982, both in Rio Sumpul, the river that separates Honduras and El Salvador. These were refugees fleeing for Honduras and both the Salvadoran and Honduran armies massacred hundreds of these refugees (McClintock, 1985). The United States trained and armed the elite battalions of both countries (Chomsky, 1993). They also followed the doctrines they learned in the United States.

Another massacre occurred in El Mozote in December 1981 and about a thousand peasants were killed. The most savage methods of war were referred to as 'draining the sea' and 'scorched earth methods'. Mutilated bodies of men, women and children were found, often faceless because battery acid had been poured so they would not be recognised and women appeared to have been repeatedly raped (Danner, 1994; Binford, 1996). Similar atrocities occurred in Morazan and Guazapa regions, which became depopulated by 'Operation Phoenix', while Chalatenango region suffered the worst repression in 1977-79 (Fish & Sganga, 1988). Chalatenango became a free-fire zone because of guerrilla presence and resulted in its being depopulated in the 1980s (Pearce, 1986). The systematic and deliberate policy of depopulation is against international law (Geneva Conventions of 1949) and both El Salvador and the United States are signatories of the Geneva Convention (Fish & Sganga, 1988).

In 1989 8,000 *campesinos* were massacred as they were crossing the Lempa River; a month later another 600 men, women and children met the same fate in the Sumpul River on their way to Honduras. The Armed Forces of El Salvador and Honduras used aerial bombs, machine guns and mortars so nobody could escape (Nieto, 2003). The above shows how repression operated in the country and the refugees, who came to Australia, have witnessed some of these events or their loved ones became victims, as shown in Part II of the study.

A medical doctor, Clements (1984), who worked in 1982 in the Guazapa region, witnessed large numbers of atrocities similar to the above committed against the peasant population. He described that the Salvadorans, who had reached California, in the early 1980s were catatonic, depressives, paranoiacs and hysterics because they were all tormented by terror. Aerial bombings were also common especially in regions where the guerrillas were thought to be present. Shaull (1990) lived with the guerrillas in the Chalatenango region for almost a year in 1984 and witnessed constant aerial bombings in the area. As a consequence, there were constant evacuations of the population, known as *quindas*, often during the night, to escape the military. More killings and thousands more fled to neighbouring countries during the civil war until about 1992, when the peace treaty was signed. Refugees, who managed to escape such atrocities, witnessed the sight of many

victims because Salvadoran cities were often littered with mutilated bodies each morning (Danner, 1994). This was used to terrorize the population and many of the refugees who fled the country still remember many of these atrocities as well as the aerial bombings, as shown in the small study.

Summary

This chapter has highlighted how the Catholic Church was established in El Salvador in the 16th century. Spain established *cofradías* for the indigenous population where they could meet and share their resources together. Because of lack of priests in the rural areas, these groups also organised their own religious functions. After Independence they began to slowly disintegrate because of lack of support from the Church. The elites however were still very much associated with the institutional Church but this began to breakdown in the late 1960s when the Latin American Bishops made a 'Preferential option for the poor.'

By 1977, with the appointment of Archbishop Romero and the killing of the first priest, the violence increased dramatically. The Archbishop became a staunch defender of the poor and continued to do so in spite of the many threats he received from the government and the military. As was the practice in the early history of El Salvador, leaders of rebellions were assassinated. It is possible that the Archbishop, being the head of the Catholic Church, was also considered as leader of the rebellious group, the poor. The Jesuit priests also suffered the same fate because they defended the poor and oppressed. The poor began to 'wake-up' and clamour for their rights, which was contrary to the plans of the elites and the military government then in power. So to silence them, the leader had to be eliminated. This period in the Salvadoran Church is considered as a time of persecution because many priests, religious sisters, lay catechists and anyone associated with the poor or church groups were killed, 'disappeared', imprisoned or tortured.

The United States played a dominant role in the Western Hemisphere. They imposed their rule both in the economic and political systems. The civil war in El Salvador could have been averted much earlier if the United States did not support the Salvadoran Government. The military aid was meant to control the insurgents but instead it caused the deaths of thousands of peasants because they happened to be living where the guerrillas were located. The peasants in general were also labelled as 'communists/subversives' because they were thought to be supporting the guerrillas, who were fighting for their cause. These peasants were unarmed and powerless but they suffered the brunt of the civil war and those who survived have to live with these experiences for the rest of their lives.

This is a tragic period in the history of El Salvador because of U.S. intervention in the Western Hemisphere, the effects of oppression and exploitation in the capitalist system that led to repression and caused the deaths of thousands of civilians. It also dispersed more than a million of the population to other parts of the world and became known as 'refugees' seeking protection. For the Catholic Church it was a time of persecution but it was also a deepening of their understanding of what it meant to be in solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

The foregoing chapters have addressed Part I of the first aim of this thesis, which is: to develop an understanding of the causes of why the Salvadoran people became refugees in the 1980s. Part II of the thesis addresses the second part of the first aim, which is:

- To develop an understanding of the reasons why the Salvadorans became refugees; how they have experienced settlement in Australia and how the economic policies and practices in Australia have affected them.

The next chapter will present Australia's Immigration Programme, its micro-economic agenda of economic rationalism and how it affects its immigration policies and programmes. To explore the resettlement experiences of refugees in Australia, the prevailing government services for refugees need to be examined and how these have assisted them. There is a saying, 'Those who have no past have no future' but for the refugees from El Salvador, their past means that their future is affected by their past experiences. For many their past is associated with trauma, the lack of extended family members and friends, lack of community support, their inability to practice their customs and traditions, the consequences of being underemployed or unemployed because of lack of English skills and the difficulties associated with living in a country that is vastly different from their own. These affect their lives drastically and influence their inability to access services and welfare. In essence some of the services provided by the Australian government will be examined to explore the degree to which they match the needs of this particular refugee group. The next chapter sets the scene for this discussion.

CHAPTER 5: AUSTRALIA'S IMMIGRATION PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

The preceding three chapters have presented the historical background of El Salvador and explored some of the reasons why the Salvadorans fled their country and became refugees in the 1980s. A few thousands of these refugees applied to come to Australia directly from El Salvador; others from the country of first asylum. Against this background, Australia accepted the Salvadorans as refugees/special humanitarian entrants, which was part of the overall immigrant intake from 1982. They were granted permanent residence and were eligible for citizenship. However, in 1992 the 'humanitarian' immigrants were officially separated from the overall immigration programme levels (Jupp, 1994). It can therefore be said that there are now two main streams in Australia's Immigration Programme, namely those that pertain to immigrants (skilled, family reunion, business, etc.) and the Refugees/Special Humanitarian migrants.

This chapter presents a short history of Australia's Immigration Programme and how it evolved since the post World War II era. The focus of most developed countries during this period was on building up their economies. Australia's Immigration Programme is considered generous when one considers the relatively small population. When taking its population into account, the intake is much larger than many other developed countries. However, it is not the number that Australia takes in that this chapter explores, rather it focuses on the policies and practices that are put in place to assist migrants/refugees in the resettlement process. What are these policies? How have they changed over the past decades? Are these policies sufficient to the challenges?

After World War II era, Australia's population was considered too small for effective economic growth and to adequately protect its borders (Jupp, 2002). One way to quickly increase a country's population is to increase its intake of immigrants. The purpose of this was two-fold: to increase Australia's population and to build up the economy. Capitalism requires consumption, and population growth feeds consumption. Finding new immigrants was not a problem in the post-war period. There were also many immigrants from Europe who needed resettlement and thousands were made welcome. Australia welcomed its six millionth immigrant in March 2002 since World War II (Jupp, 2002).

Since Australia's population was considered too small, it implemented a programme to accept a large intake of immigrants from Europe, to build up the economy and increase its population. While the developed countries experienced economic growth, the transformations in the world-economy affected the developing countries in a different way. Some industrialisation had taken place in developing countries but the process of decolonisation, rapid population increase, and destruction of

natural resources failed to achieve the development strategies put in place (Castles & Miller, 1998). This is what happened to El Salvador, as explained in a previous chapter.

Although the British and the Europeans were the preferred groups in the early decades, the escalation of the political crisis in the Indo-Chinese region in the mid-1970s opened up to a new ethnic group since Australia accepted many of them as refugees. Although Australia's policy was previously based on assimilation and integration, it was gradually changed to multiculturalism with the arrival of this group. This was designed to deal with immigration policy, in line with the policies of Canada and the United States (Hawkins, 1991). With the spread of the refugee crisis from Asia and other developing countries in the 1980s, tens of thousands fled their home countries and were in need of protection. As a signatory of the UN Convention, Australia accepted more than 140,000 refugees in the 1980s from Africa, the Middle East and Latin America because of the political crisis in their countries (Jupp, 1994). In 1982 the Special Humanitarian Programme (SHP) was introduced as part of the immigration intake and the Salvadoran refugees, the focus of this study, were one of the groups accepted under this programme.

As discussed in Chapter 2, globalisation has influenced economic policies throughout the Western world. One of the dominant economic theories that emerged during the last 20 years has been economic rationalism, which Australia has adopted since the 1980s in order for it to become globally competitive. To become globally competitive, Australia abolished tariff protection in industry (Carroll, 1992). This was followed by the deregulation of the financial system and foreign exchange controls were abolished thus resulting in an increase in foreign ownership of Australian businesses and a relaxation of restrictions on overseas investment. Australia then, in line with globalisation, adopted economic rationalism as its micro-economic agenda and the free market began to determine economic transactions (Korten, 1995). While Australia used to be classified as a country on the semi-periphery at least in the 1980s and 1990s (Jupp, 1991; Catley, 1996), Sanderson (1999) now ranks Australia as being a core country in the modern world-system. This chapter will examine how policies based on economic rationalism have influenced the Australian Immigration Programme especially those that affect the R/SHP migrants. Thus, Salvadoran refugees were confronted with a different type of economic agenda when they arrived in the 1980s, which required major adjustments.

As this thesis is concerned with refugees, the fourth pillar of the world-economy, which refers to the United Nations and its agencies, in particular the United Nations High Commission for Refugees will also be examined. The UNHCR is concerned with the protection of refugees and to find durable solutions with regards to their settlement. The chapter will include the universal definition of a 'refugee' and will explore what it means in respect to Australia. A short history of Australia's immigration programme is presented to provide as a backdrop in the intake of immigrants/refugees.

THE IMMIGRATION PROGRAMME – A SHORT HISTORY

Australia has had a long history of immigration dating back to colonial days in the late 18th century. From this era immigration became an integral part of Australian life for many reasons. Australia's vast expanse of land and low population, bordering on 7.5 million at the first census after World War II, indicated that people were needed to industrialise and modernise the country (Jamrozik, et al., 1995). In addition, Australia has vast mineral and natural resources that needed to be explored and developed in order to increase economic growth. The country also needed to become industrialised

and competitive in the world-economy. Many huge new infrastructure projects such as the Snowy Mountain scheme, the building of roads, railways, dams and factories were considered to develop the country and thousands of workers were needed to accomplish them.

Unlike Latin America, Australia's colonisation came almost two centuries later or more precisely in 1788. Australia's colonisers were not a group of *conquistadores* in search of gold but they were an outflow of the penal system of Great Britain. Most convicts were men, though not all were hardened criminals. Included in this group were educated, skilled, young and adaptable men and Australia then became a British colony (Jupp, 1998). The free immigrants from Britain began arriving in the 1830s and the Land and Emigration Board was instituted in 1839 to select and transport immigrants. This venture was financed by the sale of virgin lands in the outback (Murphy, 1993).

The discovery of gold in the 1850s attracted immigrants from America, Europe and Asia (mostly from China). The aim of the Chinese was to earn a living and to support their families in China. However, their habits and behaviour appeared to have been incompatible with the expectations and cultural norms of the Europeans. Landing taxes and other restrictions were soon imposed on them. They were given jobs that few white Australians wanted and were also excluded from joining labour unions (Jupp, 1998). This prepared the ground for the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.

Immigration Restriction Act of 1901

When Parliament of the newly formed Federation met for the first time in 1901, this Act was passed although most of the exclusionary practices, dating back to 1880, were already in place. This became popularly known as the 'White Australia' policy, although according to Jupp (2002) this Act does not mention 'race' nor 'White Australia'. It contributed to reinforcing a discriminatory outlook on non-Europeans because of fear of the Chinese and others, who were ethnically and culturally different. The Chinese were either excluded as residents or from specified occupations, and were also not allowed to bring their families to Australia. When the Commonwealth Naturalisation Act of 1903 was passed, the Aborigines and all non-Europeans living in Australia were also prevented from acquiring British citizenship, except the Chinese from Hong Kong and the Maoris of New Zealand, who were already British subjects (Castles, 1992; Jupp, 1998). Moreover, all non-Europeans were expected to assimilate into the dominant culture, speak English outside their homes and dress like the majority of the population so as not to call attention to being different (Bartrop, 1994).

Although there were refugees after World War I (1914-18), the refugee component was not part of the overall immigration intake at the time. After the Evian Conference, instigated by President Franklin Roosevelt of the United States in 1938 to discuss the refugee crisis in Germany, Australia made a commitment to take in 15,000 refugees over a three-year period. However, it applied the policies that were in force at the time (Bartrop, 1994). With the establishment of the Department of Immigration in 1945, displaced persons from Europe with different ethnic and professional backgrounds began to be accepted. This marked a change in the ethnic composition of Australian society since the aim of the government was to increase the population and to build up the economy. These migrants were needed to work in the manufacturing industry and construction sites to boost the economy.

As mentioned above, there were many displaced persons in the refugee camps of Western Europe who needed resettlement in another country. These refugees were recruited with the assistance of the International Refugee Organisation. Jupp (1998) claims that the importance of this programme in ultimately changing the ethnic character of Australia cannot be underestimated because it led to many innovations, such as the teaching of the English language, welfare programmes, extension of assisted passages to non-British persons, public relations campaigns favouring ethnic tolerance, and others. He adds that:

...the displaced persons were willing to accept conditions which would have been rejected by voluntary migrants ... they were transported in troop carriers ... housed in former army camps, the most famous being Bonegilla ... allocated to work for two years, which they had to accept on pain of deportation ... Families were divided as many men were sent to all-male construction sites like the Snowy Mountains ... (Jupp, 1998:105)

However, the preferred persons were still from the Baltic, Scandinavian and Slavic countries. These groups and the northern Europeans were racially acceptable as immigrants. The southern Europeans were only allowed into the country in the 1950s because Australia needed to meet the demands of the labour market, especially the manufacturing industry (Castles, 1992; Castles & Miller, 1998). While immigrants were expected to assimilate into Australian society, the mass immigration from Italy and Greece found this policy unacceptable. Through statistical surveys, it was found out that there were high rates of poverty, high rates of return migration, low rates of citizenship, high rates of physical and mental illnesses and they wanted a 'voice' in expressing their needs. These studies showed that assimilation was failing (Tavan, 2005). Australia's policy needed to be changed so as not to lose the immigrants, who preferred to return to their home countries rather than sacrifice their cultural identity. They were then encouraged to practise their customs and traditions more openly (Jamrozik, et al., 1995). Because of Australia's need for migrant workers to build up the economy and to attract migrants from other countries, a new Migration Act was passed.

The Migration Act 1958

The need for Australia to further develop industrially and economically as well as increase its population led to the passing of the Migration Act in 1958. In many parts of the world, there was a great demand for people wanting to emigrate, to improve their standard of living and to give their children a better future. By the 1960s it was harder to attract southern Europeans and many returned home because of the economic developments in their home countries so recruitment was opened up to people from Yugoslavia and Latin America (Castles & Miller, 1998). Immigration was also extended to Turkey in 1967 under the assisted-passage scheme. These new settlers needed a greater scope in voicing their demands for more economic and social assistance and for the Government to support and preserve ethnic pluralism in Australia. There was a significant expansion of migrant welfare and settlement services (Tavan, 2005). A relaxation of the 'White Australia Policy' was therefore called for.

With the Fall of Viet Nam in 1975, thousands of Indo-Chinese refugees were accepted. This served as a catalyst for other migrants from the Asian region and the policy had to be progressively

changed to multiculturalism⁵ (Collins, 1995). This change, however, seemed to be more of a political move because of the potential of having large numbers of voters from these ethnic groups (Stalker, 1994).

Australian Citizenship

As mentioned previously, restrictive laws passed in 1903 were placed upon the non-British, which disallowed the non-Europeans and Australian aborigines from becoming British subjects. In 1949 Australian citizenship was introduced with Prime Minister Chifley becoming the first citizen. However, a similar discrimination was also continued when immigrants of non-European descent were expected to have a longer-term residency compared to the Europeans. Those of European descent were allowed to apply for citizenship after five years continuous residency; the non-Europeans had to wait for 15 years. This was further changed in 1966 when both the Europeans and non-Europeans were allowed to acquire Australian citizenship after a five-year residency (Jupp, 1998). In 1986 residency was reduced to two years, in contrast to the United States, which still stipulates a five-year continuous residency for those who want to become citizens. Because of the present environment of 'fear of terrorism attacks', residency was extended to three years in 2005.

The acquisition of Australian citizenship appears to be easier compared to gaining a permanent residency status especially for those seeking political asylum in Australia. Some authors (Castles & Miller, 1998; Castles & Zappala, 2001) claim that Australian citizenship should be understood in the context of Australia's development and should be seen in terms of British culture and identity. Further, the Constitution does not define the meaning of Australian citizenship nor mention the rights and obligations of citizens. In most instances both citizens and non-citizens enjoy a range of social, economic and political rights guaranteed by law. Although there is a lack of a core definition or a statement of citizens' rights and duties, citizenship is considered as the unifying factor in a multicultural society (Joint Standing Commission on Migration, 1994; Dutton, 2002). It also symbolises a sense of belonging to one's country of birth and for those who have decided to stay. Further, it represents a commitment to Australia and its people, its shared values and a common future (DIMIA, 2004). The only responsibilities stipulated for citizens are the right to vote, which is compulsory, in Federal and state elections, jury duty and to defend Australia in case of necessity (Dutton, 2002). For the Salvadorans, it was simple enough to apply for citizenship and those in the study availed of this privilege after completing the stipulated residency requirement.

While it appears easy to become a citizen, discrimination still exists in the recognition of overseas qualifications, which may differ from one state to another. Often the new arrivals have to undergo retraining to adjust to differences in professional qualifications between the two countries concerned. They also need to undergo intensive English language proficiency tests to assume any professional or managerial work. Some of the Salvadoran refugees were affected by this policy, as shown in Part II of this study.

Moreover, Australian law allows dual citizenship for the overseas born to permit them to continue their symbolic social links with their countries of origin. It is estimated that there are about five

⁵ Multiculturalism, as a public policy, means that the Australian government fosters the retention of cultural heritage of different ethnic groups, and encourages cultural freedom, social justice and equality of opportunity for all within the existing political system.

million in this category (Castles & Zappala, 2001). However, El Salvador does not feature as one of the countries that allow dual citizenship. Nevertheless, the Salvadoran refugees profited in acquiring Australian citizenship in a relatively short period of time because they were able to visit their home country after the peace treaty was signed and return to Australia without any difficulties. The importance of Australian citizenship for the Salvadorans is highlighted in the small study.

Criteria for Acceptance

Australia's criteria for new immigrants are based on 'intake and settlement', which means that Australia determines who will be accepted as immigrants and from what countries they would come from since it is important to protect social cohesiveness and harmony within the country (Hawkins, 1991). The tendency to choose British and Northern Europeans was still common practice until the 1970s (Castles, 1992). To qualify for acceptance as an immigrant, there was the dictation and educational tests in any European language, but later replaced by the points system of entry, similar to Canada (Murphy, 1993; Stalker, 1994). The points system is still being used under the present policy to determine whether future immigrants can be easily employable. In line with economic rationalism, sponsors are now expected to support the applicants for the first two years in Australia, which includes accommodation and financial needs to meet their living costs (DIMIA, 2004). However, in the last few years the focus has been on an increase in business and skilled migrants.

The immigration quota system is revised yearly and certain components may change according to need as well as the economic situation of the country. The programme for immigration intake can be cut back annually in spite of the increasing numbers of people seeking asylum (Kenwood, 1995). While refugees do not have to meet the points system for entry (Holton & Sloan, 1990), family members being sponsored by former refugees may be required to meet the points system, as the study will show. However in the mid-1980s and in line with globalisation, Australia changed to economic rationalism as its new micro-economic agenda, as follows.

ECONOMIC RATIONALISM - A MICRO-ECONOMIC AGENDA

As mentioned earlier, globalisation became the focus of the macro-economic agenda at the end of World War II. Most countries in the western world followed the Keynesian theory and in Australia it achieved a high level of success until about the 1970s. Australia experienced an impressive and extraordinary growth during this period with low unemployment rates, high level of investments and a stable economy. When the economy began to decline, new experiments were tried and this involved the removal of protection tariffs in the Australian industry but by the 1980s it had failed (Carroll, 1992).

In line with globalisation and free trade, Australia adopted economic rationalism (ER) as its new micro-economic agenda. ER is claimed to be the descendant of neo-classical economics of Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus among others. These experts advocated the division of labour through specialisation, accumulation of capital, low population, free trade and income distribution among social classes. These were seen to further enhance a better standard of living (Carroll, 1992; Pusey, 1991; 1993). In addition, Stillwell (2000) asserts that economic goals have taken the primacy over social goals, which can be achieved through market forces rather than government intervention. It is rationalist because it is derived from a practical theoretical reasoning but ignores

economic history. It has also led to formulating economic policies that have damaged the wellbeing of a substantial sector of Australian society.

The introduction of ER into the economy has led to a lack of protection of the Australian manufacturing industry, an increase in the importation of primary goods, a deregulation in the financial sector among others. A range of social and community services provided by the public sector was also reduced such as health and dental services, migrant support programmes, education, childcare, labour market programmes and others. Global economic trends affect the lives of many refugees and migrants, who are at risk of becoming unemployed, underemployed or be in any low-paid form of employment (Wiseman, 1998). The effects of these policies and other factors are discussed in the research component of the thesis.

ER had become fashionable by the mid-1980s when governments and other western countries pursued an agenda, which limited government intervention in markets. It favoured commercialisation and privatisation of public sector activities and was based on the concept of efficiency and competition and not cooperation (King & Lloyd, 1993; Catley, 1996). It was established on the principle of individualism and emphasised the importance of independent thought and action (Ryan, et al. 1999). Markets were seen as the most effective way of organising the economy that was dominated by multinationals, commercial advertising and monopoly power (Stillwell, 2000). Pusey (1993:14), defines ER as:

... a doctrine that says that markets and prices are the only reliable means of setting a value on anything ... that markets and money can always, at least in principle, deliver better outcomes than states and bureaucracies ...

He adds that most neo-classical economists would accept this definition because they equate neo-classical economics with mainstream economics, a re-formulation about the merits of *laissez-faire* capitalism. Further, advocates of ER favour a 'user-pays' principle whereby the state endeavours to reduce and in some cases eliminate subsidies for services that affect the poor. Individuals are therefore encouraged to join insurance schemes for healthcare, superannuation and pension plans. ER favours the private sector and big corporations with an emphasis on the economy rather than programmes that would benefit society. The main emphasis is to reduce government spending (Bell & Head, 1994; Goldfinch, 2000). Proponents of ER have implemented the use of enterprise bargaining and contracts. The Federal Government abandoned award rates in 1993 and has sought to reduce the role of trade unions. Employers were given the freedom to remove restrictive work practices to increase productivity and thus improve competitiveness (Kenwood, 1995; Catley, 1996). While the above policies may favour private corporations, they do not favour a large part of the population. Those who are unemployed and underemployed, such as migrants and refugees, can ill afford services that are intended only for those who are able to pay.

Immigration and Economic Rationalism

Through the lens of ER, it is useful to examine Australia's immigration programme and services because economic considerations have dominated the intake of immigrants. When the Salvadoran refugees arrived in Australia in the 1980s, economic rationalism was being implemented. Some of the

existing programmes and services were reduced in the ensuing years such as the sale of migrant hostels, privatisation of transport system, and the introduction of 'user pays' services and so on (Jupp, 2002). While Australia's immigration programme is continually evaluated so the country would continue to be competitive on a global scale, there has been an increase in skilled labour in the latter part of the 20th century. The aim has been to reduce government spending and public sector employment (Webber & Bessant, 2001). One of the means of reducing government spending is to focus on the skills of future migrants and this is determined through the points system. While the R/SHP entrants do not have to pass the points system as the migrants do, there is greater competition in the work force because the migrants are easily employable. The R/SHP migrants, however, can become dependent on the welfare system because they lack the necessary skills and knowledge of the English language, which has been the experience of some of the participants in the study.

Under the Howard government, family reunion has been quite restricted since 1996 and it has become more difficult to sponsor elderly parents, non-dependent brothers/sisters, who do not have the necessary skills to join the workforce. Moreover, the number of migrants with business interests and skills increased, as did the number of paying students from overseas. In 2000 overseas students became eligible to apply for permanent residency, after graduation, because they then possessed Australian qualifications (Jupp, 2002). Refugees who belong to the CALD group but who were 'skilled' workers were particularly disadvantaged by this policy because they were not classified as 'skilled' migrants and did not possess the same privileges as people who were classified in this way. For example, it became difficult for them to sponsor relatives, who often could not meet the points system because of lack of English skills, their professional qualifications not being recognised in Australia or their sponsors were on unemployment benefits but were less than 45 years, as explained in the study.

Proponents of ER maintain that increased competition and the adoption of economic liberal principles would generate savings and increase accountability as well as invigorate debt ridden and inefficient governments (Kelsey, 1995). Further, they argue that these practices are not only desirable but in consonance with globalisation trends (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). ER may have been profitable for the economy in the early years, but studies (Stillwell, 2000; Serr, 2001; Pusey, 2003) show that not only the gap between the rich and poor is widening but it is also affecting the middle class. Refugees, like the rest of the population, are meant to compete in the market place for jobs and not depend on welfare benefits and other costly programmes. Those refugees, who have difficulty in achieving a working knowledge of English, have difficulty accessing employment suitable to their past experience, which was explored in the study.

Australia has an annual quota of 12,000 new places for offshore and onshore R/SHP entrants but it was increased to 13,000 in 2004 due to demands from asylum seekers (DIMIA, 2006). The air travel of many offshore R/SHP entrants continues to be paid by the Australian government on the condition that they stay for two years. A similar assisted-passage scheme was already in practice from the mid-19th century to attract workers to Australia but ceased in 1981. Although R/SHP migrants are not subject to the points system, they are expected to join the workforce as soon as possible and many end up as casual workers or in blue-collar jobs. Some authors (Jupp, 1994; 2002; Julian et al., 1997) cite that there are high levels of unemployment among the R/SHP migrants, but the government and private agencies have not done much to resolve this situation. The Salvadorans in Australia have a 30.6 per cent (1996 Census) unemployment rate but other R/SHP entrants are higher (Jupp, 2002).

The 2001 Census of Victoria shows that there are 33.4% of Salvadorans who are not in the labour force. This high rate of unemployment can be attributed to their lack of English skills, non-recognition of their past experiences plus the 'trauma' they experienced in their home country, as explained in Part II of the thesis.

With the focus on privatisation, the migrant hostels were sold in 1994 (Jupp, 2002). The adoption of new public management models has dramatically influenced the delivery of human services. These have resulted in the introduction of greater competition into both the public and private sectors through deregulation and privatisation; restructuring of public organisations and systems; transformation of public systems and organisations to create dramatic increases in effectiveness, efficiency, adaptability and the capacity to innovate. There is also a move to develop local and regional economies so they could be more sustainable and to decentralise industrial relations agreements (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993; Osborne & Plastrik, 1997; Rainnie & Grabbelaar [eds], 2005). To pursue the development of regional areas, skilled and business migrants as well as students are also encouraged to settle in regional areas and are given extra points for immigration purposes (DIMIA, 2006). These have led to the implementation of policies that keep costs for refugee programmes to a minimum.

As mentioned above, persons who have experienced trauma in their home countries have higher unemployment rates because of lack of English language skills, non-recognition of overseas qualifications and the difficulties of adapting to mechanised and/or industrialised work place activities, as shown in the study. They also have difficulties in accessing counselling services to assist them in resolving their past traumatic experiences and often they have to pay for these services, as experienced by one of the participants. It appears that existing psychological problems of refugees are less adequately addressed by public policy (Jupp, 2002) than more practical issues like housing, schooling, and welfare benefits.

In a study conducted by Webber & Bessant (2001), human services workers stated that governments were trying as part of the economic rationalist ideology (and as a way of saving money) to capitalise on the historical belief of many church-based agencies in volunteerism. Why should people be employed to do tasks in welfare that others were happy to do as part of their volunteer activity? Based on this premise, if churches were acting as mentors or sponsors to refugees, this was an economically sound practice. The reliance of the government on the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme (CRSS) groups to resettle refugees has been seen as a cost-saving programme, although this type of service goes back to the mid-19th century (Pittaway, 1991; Jupp, 1994). Reliance on volunteers has its downside and can be peripatetic and uncoordinated. Volunteers may not have the required skill base either, and training for them was restricted and inconsistent. There was a lack of training for such groups at least in the 1980s and early 1990s in the resettlement of refugees. While acknowledging the important role that they have played, support groups provided limited services. Those who sought employment upon arrival could not access their services. Again, as part of the ideology of mutual obligation, many of the refugees were encouraged to join the workforce as soon as possible after arrival in spite of their lack of English and had no time to make use of voluntary support groups, as shown in the study.

Against this backdrop, government policies and programmes affected the resettlement of newly arrived refugees in Australia. On a number of occasions, programmes such as learning English

as a Second Language were reduced and R/SHP entrants became disadvantaged in finding suitable employment that matched their skills levels. The experiences of refugees in the resettlement process are explored in the research component of this thesis. As this study is concerned with refugees, a brief background on the global refugee problem is presented.

REFUGEES IN THE WORLD

After World War I there were many refugees and displaced persons in Europe but there was no international agency as yet that could provide protection for these refugees. However, in 1921 a need arose to appoint someone, who would be responsible for this crisis. Fridtjof Hansen was named as the first High Commissioner for Refugees, under the aegis of the League of Nations. Nansen did pioneering work for refugees because his office provided legal protection and persuaded governments to register persons, who could not be returned to their homelands. He advocated voluntary repatriation, which is still considered as one of the durable solutions for refugee protection to the present day. However, the concept of a 'refugee' had not been adequately defined. The Office also provided legal documents that became known as 'Nansen passports' to persons, who had to undertake travel or take up residency in another country (Joly, et al., 1992; Ruthstrom-Ruin, 1993). This document was designed to protect stateless persons and refugees (UNHCR, 1993). This is the first indication of a refugee crisis in the 20th century, mainly from Europe. However, the exodus of refugees would increase and continue towards the end of the century, but they would come from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

As part of the modern world-system, explained in Chapter 2, a fourth pillar of global governance was also needed. The United Nations (UN) and its agencies were seen as necessary to complement the three pillars of global governance. The UN was founded with a mandate for peacekeeping on a worldwide basis in 1945 but began to expand in the 1950s with the formation of several agencies to meet social and humanitarian needs. While several agencies handled the post-World War I refugee crisis in Europe, an expanded agency was needed to handle the crisis of World War II. Under the umbrella of the UN is the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which was created in 1950. The key role of the UNHCR is to provide protection to refugees from different parts of the world. A Convention, signed in 1951, defined the concept of a 'refugee' as:

Any person is a refugee who, as a result of events occurring before 1st January, 1951 and owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR Art. 1.A, cited in Mayotte, 1992:3)

While there is a universal definition of a refugee, the recognition of persons as refugees may vary from country to country because it hinges on whether the governments of the source countries are recognised by the receiving countries (Ferris, 1987). To cite an example is the situation of El Salvador in relation to the United States. While the United States is a signatory of the 1967 UN Protocol only a small percentage of Salvadorans, who fled to the United States during the crisis, were recognised as refugees; the rest were considered as economic migrants (Menjivar, 2000). The reason behind this

non-recognition is that the United States supported the Salvadoran government during the civil war. By supporting the Salvadoran government, the United States probably thought that it would bring stability into the country instead the war escalated and the people were forced to flee. The fourth pillar is helpful in understanding how the global-economy functions and what the role of the UNHCR is in protecting and assisting refugees worldwide.

The 1951 UN Convention, which came into force in 1954, is a legally binding treaty and a milestone in international refugee law (UNHCR 1993). Because of the continual increase in refugees worldwide, the definition was amended in the 1967 Protocol with the time frame and the geographic location being removed (Holbron, 1975; Ferris, 1993). When the political turmoil of the 1980s occurred in the Central American region, the UNHCR was involved for the first time in protecting the massive numbers of refugees fleeing Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador (Ferris, 1987; UNHCR, 2000). As a signatory of both the Convention and the Protocol, Australia accepted refugees from the three above-mentioned countries, but a few thousands (see Table 5.1) came from El Salvador, the focus of this thesis.

In Latin America, a broader definition of the 1951 UN Convention was passed by the Organisation of American States (OAS) in the 1984 Declaration of Cartagena (Colombia) because of the refugee crisis in Central America. It included situations of mass exodus and El Salvador was one of the ten original signatories, but it is not a binding treaty (Goodwin-Gill, 1996). Some of the refugees, who fled to the neighbouring countries, were given temporary asylum but not permanent settlement, which is explained in the study.

Settlement of Refugees in Australia

As a signatory of the UN Convention, Australia had assumed a moral obligation to accept refugees, who meet the definition, within its allocated quota. Refugees are assessed in terms of humanitarian and compassionate values but voluntary migrants are considered against the background of socio-economic needs and are determined by the economic situation of the country (Day, 1991). When the Salvadorans began arriving in Australia in the 1980s, they came under the R/SHP and were accepted as permanent residents. They were treated as mainstream immigrants and there were no special services allotted to them at that time, such as psychological counselling since most of them had high incidence of trauma and torture experiences. From the period 1982 to the early 1990s there was an increased intake of R/SHP migrants from El Salvador. However, after the negotiations and the signing of the peace treaty in 1992 in El Salvador, the numbers dropped drastically (see Table 5.1). Some of the 1992 R/SHP migrants were probably approved at an earlier date. Under the Migration Program for permanent visa category, the following are cited (DIMIA, 2004):

1. Refugee category – for people who are subject to persecution in their home country and who are in need of resettlement. The majority of the applicants, who are considered under this category are identified by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and referred by UNHCR to Australia. The Refugee visa category includes Refugee, In-country humanitarian, Emergency rescue and Women at risk sub-categories.

Table 5.1 – Refugee/Special Humanitarian Programme (1982-93)
(Country of birth of settler arrivals - El Salvador)

| YEAR | ANNUAL R/SHP INTAKE | ARRIVALS FROM EL SALVADOR | PERCENTAGE |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| 1982-83 | 17 054 | 10 | 0.06% |
| 1983-84 | 14 769 | 426 | 2.88 |
| 1984-85 | 14 850 | 772 | 5.20 |
| 1985-86 | 11 840 | 481 | 4.06 |
| 1986-87 | 11 101 | 645 | 5.81 |
| 1987-88 | 11 076 | 1 048 | 9.46 |
| 1988-89 | 10 887 | 1 539 | 14.14 |
| 1989-90 | 11 948 | 1 922 | 16.09 |
| 1990-91 | 7 745 | 1 538 | 19.86 |
| 1991-92 | 7 157 | 1 239 | 17.31 |
| 1992-93 | 10 939 | 373 | 3.41 |
| TOTAL | 129 366 | 9 993 | 7.72 |

Source: Australian Immigration and Consolidated Statistics
No.17 (1991-92) and No.18 (1997-98)
Canberra: AGPS

2. Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) for people outside their home country, who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country. A proposer (known as sponsor) under the Migration Program) who is an Australian citizen, permanent resident or eligible New Zealand citizen or an organisation based in Australia must support applications for entrants under SHP.
3. There are other categories as well – onshore visas, temporary protection visas, etc. which is not of this study because it is only concerned with offshore visas for R/SHP entrants.

Dependent unmarried children, regardless of age, and dependent relatives such as single brothers/sisters who were still living with the family as dependents in the country of origin can be sponsored by their families (UNHCR, 2003⁶), as shown in the small study.

Services for Newly Arrived Refugees

Australia has had a good record as an immigrant country and on a per capita basis it has received more refugees than any major immigration destination (Iredale & D'Arcy, 1992). However, the Salvadoran refugees were considered new in the 1980s and many people in Australia did not even know where the country was located in the world. For the Salvadorans to come to Australia, it was a radical change and far from their homeland. While they may have experienced peaceful surroundings here after fleeing their war-torn country, their lives were changed drastically because it was completely different from their home country especially in terms of language and culture.

Resettlement in a third country, such as Australia, is the most complex of the three durable solutions but it is necessary for the protection of refugees (Martin 1992). It is also the most costly for the receiving countries. For the refugees, it is considered a wrenching experience because it is far from their homeland and where they have to learn a different language and culture. They also have to adapt to diverse socio-economic and political systems (Smyser, 1987). This is only done when there is no other option and the refugees cannot return to their home country. The other two solutions are: voluntary repatriation to their home country and integration in the country of first asylum. In the case of El Salvador it could be any of the neighbouring countries where they fled during the time of the political crisis, often with the assistance of the UNHCR, as reflected in the experiences of two families in the study.

Experts (Iredale & D'Arcy, 1992; Martin, 1994; Iredale et al., 1996; Julian et al., 1997) highlight that refugees need a separate settlement policy because they differ markedly from voluntary migrants. Australia did not have a refugee policy until 1977 and the Ministerial Statement did not contain any settlement policies except that voluntary agencies were expected to assist in the resettlement of refugees (Cox, 1980; Adelman & Cox, 1994). Because of the influx of refugees from Indo-China in the late 1970s, the Australian government introduced the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme (CRSS) in 1979. It was the first major initiative by the government to involve voluntary agencies and charitable institutions in the early settlement of refugees (Cox, 1980). The scheme was extended to East Europeans and then to other refugees regardless of origin and it is probably comparable to similar arrangements in Canada, United States and Great Britain. At the height of the arrival of Salvadoran refugees, the purpose of the scheme was as follows:

⁶ Refers to Australian policy, see reference section.

For improving settlement of more needy entrants and those without links in the community by bringing them close to a supportive community, which will provide for them and help them establish their independence here. All applicants must first meet normal selection criteria. Only then are they considered for CRSS support. Communities receive support to cover initial settlement costs.

Successful settlement lies with new arrivals but the group's assistance and concern will help them become self-sufficient. Refugees will need to be assisted for at least six months and in difficult cases it may extend to two years. Initially this support was extended to those with no relatives here although today some of them have relatives. In some cases relatives in Australia of prospective refugees have approached CRSS groups for assistance. (CRSS Handbook, 1987)

The need for CRSS support was usually determined by the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) at diplomatic posts overseas and referred to CRSS Coordinators in Regional Offices of DIMIA. These coordinators matched the families with appropriate support groups. CRSS groups were also allowed to nominate families and/or individuals they would like to assist in resettlement but who may still be overseas or already in Australia (Adelman & Cox, 1994).

When the Special Humanitarian Programme was begun in 1982, CRSS support was also extended to Salvadoran refugees. The responsibilities of CRSS groups, outlined in the 1989 CRSS handbook, mentions the need for an interpreter in the group. No training was provided, but videotapes could be made available to the groups. However, the need to address trauma and torture was not mentioned. It was a valuable scheme but there was a need for comprehensive and specialised training of CRSS groups as well as their constant monitoring (Pittaway, 1991; Jupp, 1994; Julian, et al., 1997). A similar programme was provided by charitable organisations in the past in the resettlement of migrants. At the time of the arrival of the first Salvadoran refugees in the 1980s, a misnomer existed between migrants and refugees. This resulted in the provision of services and programmes that were designed for both groups rather than for the specific needs of refugees. Only the refugees with CRSS groups had extra services available to them, as shown in the study.

A Refugee Resettlement Working Group (RRWG, 1994) was formed in 1992 to address the needs of the newly arrived refugees and how to improve existing services. A much improved and expanded service to refugees, which began in 2000, is now being provided by the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). Services include physical and psychological assessments (DIMIA 2005).

Refugees were usually sent to migrant centres, with or without CRSS support, for orientation procedures regarding English classes, health benefits, unemployment benefits and other services. They were accommodated in these centres for a few months or until such time as they were able to find suitable housing, usually through the private market or with the assistance of CRSS groups. Once these refugees were in migrant centres, they were treated as mainstream migrants. They paid for their food and lodging expenses, which were deducted from their unemployment or special benefits. While the migrant centres were sold in 1994, some provision has now been made for on-arrival accommodation (DIMIA, 2005). Refugees were usually referred to English classes near the migrant hostels, but once they moved to private accommodation, access to English classes proved difficult. The problem of relocating from the migrant hostel to private accommodation posed certain problems

because English courses were not accessible nearby or refugees had to travel long distances. Mothers with small children who wanted to learn English also needed to access certain services. They became disadvantaged because childcare services were limited (Pittaway, 1991), as experienced by one of the participants in the study.

Housing accommodation for refugees is crucial as it helps in their resettlement process. However, the question of affordability and availability of renting a house/unit/flat in the private market maybe problematic if they depend solely on unemployment or special benefits. A report from RRWG (1994) points out that refugees need support for on-arrival accommodation for the first two years of settlement and this could be followed by medium-term options. Pittaway (1991) points out that secure and affordable accommodation for refugees is important especially those who have experienced trauma and torture. Secure housing accommodation could probably assist in a quicker integration into Australian society. The waiting list for government housing (at least in Melbourne) is long and can take several years to become eligible, and this has been the experience of some of the refugees in the small study.

One of the important aspects of settlement is finding suitable employment. Evidence shows, both from the United States and Australia, that refugees have higher unemployment rates than migrants, which could be of long-term duration, and face greater difficulties in entering the labour market (Gold, 1992; Iredale & D'Arcy, 1992; Julian, et al., 1997). Some of the difficulties can be attributed to trauma, torture, loss of self-esteem, depression, and lack of proper documentation of professional qualifications because they had to flee their home country hurriedly. Refugees can also avail themselves of 510 hours of English classes but it does not seem to be sufficient to find suitable employment (Boyce & Madden, 2000). English classes have now been increased to 610 hours in special cases (DIMIA 2005). In Melbourne in the mid-1980s, while the refugees were in the hostel, they were also referred to Centrelink to find employment, but English was required so it was difficult to find suitable employment. Some of the professionals were referred to institutions to upgrade their training but English was also necessary. The need to learn the English language and to have their qualifications recognised in Australia proved insurmountable. Often this results in being downgraded in their employment or becoming unemployed/underemployed for long periods of time.

The other major problem in the settlement process is the need to address their experiences of torture and trauma. Social scientists (Berry, 1986; 1991; Hopkins, 1990; Zalokar, 1994; Martin, 1994; Haines, 1996; Kaplan, 1998) in the United States and Australia agree that psychological counselling has to be provided to aid in their settlement process. Many are reluctant or are afraid to discuss their own experiences, are unable to articulate them or do not identify themselves as survivors of torture and trauma. These problems are not likely to disappear and can re-surface at a later period. Refugee advocates claim that emotional support should also be available from point of arrival. Irene Moss' State of the Nation Report (1993) addresses the need to provide counselling for victims of torture and trauma and a list of services in major capital cities in each state has been provided. A 1999 Handbook from the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) also addresses the need for psychological counselling for victims, including children and adolescents, of torture and trauma to facilitate their settlement process and for the medical profession to be aware of this reality when dealing with this group of people. In Australia five states (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory) have established centres to provide counselling

for survivors of torture and trauma (DIMIA 2005). While these services may be available now, in the mid-1980s it was not talked about and the services were not offered then.

Further, experts (Pittaway, 1991; Kaufman & Seitz, 1994) stress the need to know more about CALD communities especially when dealing with sadness, isolation, loneliness, domestic violence, child abuse and homesickness. There is very little information about these problems and there is a need to provide services that are culturally acceptable. Julian et al. (1997) claim that experiences of refugees are seldom recorded because their views, opinions and experiences about settlement are seldom heard. Refugees, who have escaped war situations, are still suffering torture and trauma. Further, their settlement problems of adjusting from rural/urban conditions in their home country to urban communities in Australia can seriously aggravate the settlement process. These issues are difficult to address because there is very little research done on settlement experiences of refugees and the need is crucial.

Refugees from El Salvador are a heterogeneous group and include many professionals (engineers, agronomists, doctors, corporate managers, teachers, accountants, lawyers, architects, social workers) as well as semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Iredale et al. (1996:23) point out that their 'complex history and divisions of class, religion, politics and region must not be glossed over in the settlement process'. Additionally there is a greater proportion of sole parent families compared with other Latin American families because so many men were killed during the civil war. As pointed out earlier, there is a high level of unemployment in this group for various reasons and this is explored in the study.

Summary

This chapter has shown that Australia's immigration intake tended to be more exclusionary in its policy at the beginning of the 20th century. Australia preferred the North Europeans rather than their Asian neighbours because of differences in culture and habits. Immigrants were also expected to assimilate into the mainstream society but this changed to integration when large contingents of Greek and Italian migrants were accepted in the 1950s and 1960s. They preferred to return to their home countries rather than give up their cultural practices. However, with the influx of large numbers of boat people from Indo-China, the policy gradually changed to multiculturalism and diversity.

Because of Australia's rich mineral and natural resources, migrants were needed to develop, industrialise and populate the country. Australia experienced an impressive economic growth until the 1970s. In line with the changes in the world-economy, Australia adapted ER as its micro-economic agenda and so the economy was restructured in the 1980s. The emphasis was on free trade and privatisation. Immigrants, who had business acumen and skills to develop Australia, were given preference to migrate so the country could become competitive in the world market.

While Australia has had a good track record in accepting refugees on a per capita basis compared to other developed countries, it needs to further expand its programmes and services to meet the needs of refugees. The Migration Act of 1958 needs to be revamped, in spite of constant revisions made through the years, in line with the changes that have occurred in the last 20 years or so. Experts have also expressed the need to make a distinction between migrants and refugees with appropriate services given to each group.

Australia may have been the 'promised land' for most of the Salvadorans because of the peaceful environment and the beautiful surroundings. However, they had to meet many difficulties, which they did not expect. The lack of appropriate services and support to meet their needs became another form of struggle in being able to start life anew. The economic climate of the mid-1980s also proved to be an impediment in the plans of many for the future, as shown in the study.

It has been argued throughout this thesis that only a partial understanding of the Salvadoran refugees settlement process can occur if the research focuses on the effects of the trauma without taking into account the historical context. In order to understand how Salvadoran refugees experience life in Australia, it is necessary to gain some comprehension of the political and economic situation that led to the civil war and the flight of many people to other countries. However, the uprisings that occurred during the last half of the 20th century cannot be fully understood without seeing these events as the consequence of centuries of oppression, exploitation, repression and persecution.

In Part I of this thesis, the culture and history of the Salvadoran people have been examined to see how years of oppression led them to develop certain survival strategies which include the way that they deal with authority and with other Salvadorans, who are not part of their immediate family or network. The manner in which Salvadorans regard 'strangers' is embedded in the history, religion and culture of their people as well as in their individual experiences. When people live in a country during a civil war, they become unsure of whom they can trust and who will betray them to the authorities. Caution is seen to be essential for survival. This caution is not left behind when refugees settle in Australia, even though they may receive many assurances about the legitimacy of democratic processes in Australia. Strategies for self-preservation, which may have been successful in their home country, may not be as helpful to Salvadoran refugees as they confront a different social milieu. These issues are perused in Part II of this thesis.

The next chapter will present the research methodology used in the selection and interview process of a small group of participants for the study.

PART II: THE RESEARCH STUDY

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The first part of the thesis provided the historical analysis of the socio-economic and political structures of El Salvador from the 16th century to the political conflict of the 1980s. It also explored the role of the United States in the Western Hemisphere and how its foreign policy affected El Salvador. The historical beginnings of the Catholic Church in El Salvador and its development, especially with regards to the persecution of the Church from the late 1970s, have also been included in the analysis. These are the interweaving themes that caused the refugee exodus in the 1980s. As the refugees were accepted to come to Australia, a chapter on Australia's micro-economic agenda of Economic Rationalism with regards to immigration programmes and services were included.

This chapter introduces the second part of the thesis, which involves a qualitative research study. A group of 14 participants was interviewed to explore their views and experiences of the socio-economic and political crisis in El Salvador and their reasons for becoming refugees in the 1980s. While there is a universal definition of a 'refugee', the reasons of individual persons for becoming refugees may differ. Since these participants arrived in Australia between 1986-89 under the R/SHP, this study also examined how they have resettled in Australia from the time of their arrival up to the time of the interview. The Salvadorans belong to a minority group in Melbourne and they are comparatively new as an ethnic group in Australia as well as being the focus of a research study.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to explore the pre- and post-arrival experiences of a small number of Salvadoran refugees, who have resettled in Melbourne, Australia in 1986-89. This study looks at the experiences of Salvadoran refugees prior to their arrival in Australia and up to their settlement experiences at the time of the interview in 2001. The use of narratives was employed to explore their experiences prior to coming to Australia and their subsequent resettlement in Melbourne. Included are the services and programmes offered to them at that time. These refugees arrived at the height of the civil war in their home country and may have repressed their own history. Because they have shown a reluctance to talk about their experiences, often their problems have remained unaddressed.

Specifically, the research was interested in the following questions:

1. What were the experiences of refugees of the socio-economic and political situation of their home country and in the country of first asylum?
2. What were their reasons for becoming refugees?
3. What were their initial settlement experiences in Australia?

4. What were the experiences of Salvadorans in accessing programmes and services for newly arrived refugees in Australia?
5. In what ways were long-term difficulties of refugees influenced by their experiences of the past?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The experiences of refugees in Australia have seldom been the focus of a research study, especially those belonging to a minority group, such as the Salvadorans. The link between the relationship of flight from the home country and settlement of refugees in the host country remains to be under researched. Additionally, there is very little research done on long-term settlement experiences of refugees in the host country (Julian, et al., 1997). Most of the studies have focused on the initial years of settlement (Pittaway, 1991; Iredale, et al., 1996).

Research findings on past and present policies and programmes are important for the development of future proposals for governments. The most researched groups in Australia belong to larger communities, such as the Vietnamese refugees who are based in Melbourne and Sydney (Lewins & Ly, 1985; Viviani, 1985). However, a few studies (Hosking, 1990; Langer, 1990; 1998; 2000; Julian et al. 1997) have been done on Latin-American refugees, including those from El Salvador. This study plans to address some of these deficits.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study are four-fold:

- a) The sample is small so generalisations cannot be made. The reason for a small sample is the difficulty of accessing more participants and the lack of time because the Salvadorans are not concentrated in one area but scattered in different suburbs.
- b) There is a gender imbalance because more women have been included. There are more Salvadoran women refugees in Australia because their husbands and/or partners were killed or 'disappeared' during the civil war.
- c) Memories can be selective because of lapse of time; in some cases more than two decades. Also they do not always want to share their more painful experiences. They prefer to forget the past so they could get on with life.
- d) No children were included in the survey because this would need to form part of another study. Most of the children were quite young at the time of the political crisis so they would not have experienced the conflict as intensely as their parents.

In future, a larger group or those who have lived in Australia longer could be accessed to determine what other difficulties have been experienced in resettlement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The terms 'method' and 'methodology' are often the cause of much controversy and confusion in explanations of a research design (Richards, 2005). A method involves techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypotheses. It also covers

observation, listening to or questioning participants, and examining narratives and records or historical documents. On the other hand methodology is the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, which drive the method. This consists of the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and the use of particular methods. It links choice and use of methods so as to reach the desired outcomes (Harding, 1987; Crotty, 1998)

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of research were examined at the inception of the research. However, the research design determined the type of data collection and analysis that was best suited for the study to maximise the results and reliability of the research (De Vaus, 2001; 2002). Because the Salvadorans belong to a minority group and still considered as under researched, it was deemed expedient that a qualitative method was better. The following reasons underpin the choice of a qualitative method.

Quantitative Methods

This methodology has played a dominant role in research both in the physical and social sciences. The aim of this type of research is to obtain information that can be quantified, measured or when one is interested, in testing variables and reliability as well as providing a statistical analysis of the study (Black, 1999; Gliner & Morgan, 2000). This type of research is also suited to provide certain types of information, such as those used for survey research and questionnaires but a large number of participants is required (De Vaus, 2002). The Salvadoran population in Melbourne, Australia, is small and so a study of their experiences does not lend itself to a quantitative method. They are also quite dispersed in different suburbs. An added problem is that the participants have difficulty in communicating in English and even if the questionnaires were translated into Spanish, many aspects of their experiences would not have been explored. Besides, a qualitative method is preferable if one wants to understand the causes of the political crisis that caused the exodus of more than a million of the population of El Salvador. The experiences of refugees are seldom heard and it would be difficult to come up with a questionnaire that would suit this particular group.

While biographical information could be easily accessed through surveys, the depth of their emotionally charged experiences, their value systems and how they give meaning to their lives cannot be evaluated or analysed through the use of questionnaires. In addition, surveys usually tend to use fixed responses to questions, which may be difficult to apply for this particular group. A quantitative method is also more concerned in describing human behaviour and relationships in terms of measurements and variables, such as in gathering statistical data. Often, human behaviour is complex and difficult to measure; a need to further explain and describe what exactly happened is usually vital. Research findings using this type of method can often produce results that do not relate on how people experience their lives especially if measurement and variables become the focus of the study (Jackson, 1995; Burns, 2000). May (1997) argues that the main criticism of questionnaires is the neglect of the individual and the relationship between action and attitude. Further, questionnaires are usually based on what the researcher is interested in looking at but not on how people interpret their lives, which could be of heuristic value. Since this is a new ethnic group in the Australian scene, it is not known how they would respond to questionnaires. Although a quantitative method has its merits, it was not deemed appropriate to use this method in this particular study.

Qualitative Methods

After careful consideration, it was therefore decided that a qualitative method based on symbolic interactionism would be more advantageous because it allows experiences to be explored from the participants' perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Burns (2000) emphasises that one of the strengths of qualitative research is to gain new insights into the field of study being investigated because it is based on the importance of people's experiences and how they interpret the complexity of their world. This approach is considered flexible because it enables the researcher to consider how meaning is constructed and how new meanings are developed and employed (May, 1997). It looks at experiences of people within their own social milieu. Patton (1990) claims that this approach produces a wealth of detailed information even with a small number of people. Berg (1995:7) adds that 'qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives'.

This research is interested in understanding the stories of persons, who lived during a political crisis and why they became refugees. It seeks to understand the causes of the political crisis and to give details about their lived experiences of which there is little pre-existing information. In addition, it is the conviction of the researcher, based on her past experiences of having worked with this ethnic group in the area of resettlement, that a qualitative approach yields richer data. Last but not least was the possibility of conducting interviews in the participants' own language so concepts could be explained and first-hand testimonials could be accessed through narratives. Since the focus of this study is to understand the lived experiences of Salvadoran refugees, it was decided therefore that this method would suit this particular group better.

A qualitative method also gave the researcher an insight into a new social group that is different from the researcher's background and the Australian culture. It helps in understanding a different social group so that stereotyping and misjudgement can be avoided about a new social community (May, 1997). It also offered the researcher an understanding of the political conflict the participants experienced in their home country and how it affected their lives. Although the researcher had worked with this particular group for several years in the past, they never related their experiences in such a detailed manner.

Another form of qualitative research is to study people in their natural surroundings. While this may not be classified as participant observation in a strict sense, it has been argued that all social research is a form of participant observation because the social world cannot be studied without being part of it (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1998). This method allows unobtrusive observation that is of interest to the researcher because the researcher can note body language, gestures and how the participants react to the questions. In qualitative research, pauses, silences and tears are necessary in expressing peoples' emotions, and these cannot be registered on the tape recorder. Further, the use of face-to-face interviews appears to have a good response rate because of its intrinsic attractiveness to participants, who become the focus of attention (Singleton, et al., 1993).

Qualitative methodology, based on symbolic interactionism, is able to capture the complex nuances and meanings of people's lives, their emotions and events they experienced in the past (Berg, 1995). Their experiences serve as a historical analysis in linking their past with the present and how it will affect their future lives. Also their personal experiences of the past can serve as an oral

testimony of eyewitnesses. Marshall & Rossman (1999) claim that oral testimony is considered a primary source of information. Refugees, who lived situations of conflict in the past, still carry with them their experiences of trauma when they arrived in Australia. These experiences can sometimes affect their future lives because they can re-surface as they go through their process of resettlement. Many experts have highlighted that there is a need for medical and psychological intervention for refugees who have undergone experiences of torture and trauma.

Types of Interviews

The aim of this research project was to examine the stories and experiences of Salvadoran refugees, who lived in a country that was in political turmoil and in the throws of a civil war. It sought to understand the circumstances that led to their exodus in the 1980s. The use of narratives and in-depth interviews were therefore adopted. To elaborate their experiences, people often use narratives and these have been widely studied in many social science disciplines. During interviews it is important to maintain conversations with the participants to make them feel at ease, but every effort has to be made to gain the desired information for data collection (Reddy, 1987). The respondents were allowed to express themselves in an unstructured way to obtain more information, and which could well take a direction that was unexpected, but nevertheless highly relevant. According to Brewer (2000) in the post-modern type of in-depth interviewing, participants have a greater voice and the influence of the interviewer is minimised. The participants were therefore allowed to express and relate their experiences from their own viewpoint. This type of data collection often results in obtaining more information for the study being done.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) indicate that in-depth interviews may take various forms and can create a situation whereby the researcher can control the interview and the respondents can also answer a question in their own words. May (1997) lists four types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, group and focused interviews. The application of different types of interviews was considered and the following were used as a way of maximizing the chances of gaining the 'thick descriptions' (Denzin, 1989) about the participants' experiences:

First, the semi-structured interview was used in the wording and sequencing of questions, which served as prompts, but were identical for every respondent. The study formulated an interview schedule and a set of open-ended questions to elicit comparable information. This type of interview allowed the participant the freedom to digress and permitted the interviewer to probe far beyond answers to standardised questions. The experiences of these participants are highly sensitive by nature because of the suffering they endured in their home country. It is important for them to sometimes digress from the path of the interview. For example, one participant stood up to hold and show the researcher the photograph of her eldest son, who had 'disappeared' in El Salvador and was never found. She explained that the photograph of her son was found amongst the belongings of a younger sister, who was also killed, after they fled the country. This type of information allowed participants to elaborate on themes that they consider to be important, but which the researcher may have overlooked.

Second, the individual focused interview was the principal method used in this study, although two married couples were interviewed together. A focused interview is regarded as open-ended and allows respondents to answer questions in their own way. It is also a way of building up trust and

cooperation thereby establishing rapport, which is of paramount importance. This method has been designed to elicit understanding from the participants' perspective, and which serves to challenge the preconceptions of the researcher but allows the participants to answer questions from their own viewpoint. May (1997:112) lists the following advantages for this type of interview:

- It provides qualitative depth by allowing interviewees to talk about the subject in terms of their own frames of reference.
- It allows the meanings that individuals attribute to events and relationships to be understood in their own terms.
- It provides a greater understanding of the subject's point of view.

Memory recall was also an essential aspect of the interview process because some of the participants had to relate stories that happened to them more than 20 years ago. Although memory recall may not always produce totally correct answers because they could have been forgotten, Arksey and Knight (1999) suggest that the interviewer could assist in recalling certain events, maybe by posing a different question. However, people who have been through traumatic experiences, such as war and torture, do not easily forget their experiences. Further, it is claimed that non-literate persons make better use of memory because they do not rely on the written language as a way of storing information (Pratt & Loizos, 1992). Some of the participants in the study are considered as non-literate but their experiences were crucial in understanding the political crisis so their inclusion was essential. The interviews provided the researcher with more detailed information about the participants' experiences than expected.

Narrative Methodology

A range of qualitative methods within a symbolic interactionist framework was considered but narrative research was selected because it provides a way of gathering rich, multidimensional data in a non-threatening manner. Gottlieb and Lasser (2001) observe that qualitative research in general and narrative research in particular, can potentially open up new avenues of inquiry that have been closed to traditional research. Biography presents rich opportunities for individuals to re-examine and reconstruct their own perceptions of personal experience. In this way biography can be said to be interactive as the tellers interact with the social and cultural world from whence they were situated at the time of the story. It is a particularly useful way of researching non-literate people and allows them a voice that other techniques do not (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrators either directly or indirectly give their own interpretation and evaluation of events. These accounts take place within historical, political and economic settings that provide a necessary backdrop to understanding a situation.

The contextual intersection of life in relation to history is an important part of narrative research. A personal story in isolation to the context has limited value for research purposes (Dhunpath, 2000). Often, these personal accounts have the benefits of hindsight (Laine, 2000) because they can look at their past experiences from different perspectives. Stories are often compelling and provide insights that may not otherwise arise. It has proved to be especially useful in accessing people's experiences in time of political upheaval. The researcher's task is not merely to recount interesting and/or tragic stories but to see how the tellers understand their own experiences

and the meanings that they give to their lives. However, a series of open-ended questions were prepared based on the research questions outlined on pages 87-88.

Story telling is also considered a most effective approach to understanding political phenomena (Stone-Mediatore, 2003). It has also been widely recognised that it has a healing value and can normalise experiences of people because it conveys a sense that others have similar experiences of trauma (O'Hanlon & Bertolino, 1998; Singleton, 2001a). Furthermore, telling stories can be both cathartic and liberating. Salvadoran women, who were able to share their experiences of trauma in a women's support group in El Salvador, reveal that by telling their stories and by shedding tears over them, they experienced a sense of relief (Garaizabal & Vasquez, 1994). However, stories are also powerful research tools and provide a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems (Dhunpath, 2000). It allows researchers to understand experiences that may be way outside their own frame of reference and to see historical events from the eyes of ordinary persons, who witnessed them but whose accounts are seldom heard. In this study the cultural and linguistic context in which participants' stories occurred has been recognised.

While telling stories is a universal human activity, some stories are difficult to relate. Riessman (2002a) points out that people, who survive political torture, war and sexual crimes usually silence themselves because it is too difficult to relate their experiences. She adds that rape survivors may also find it difficult to relate their stories because others may not see it as an act of violence. However, research interviewers can become the witnesses to such stories.

Stone-Mediatore (2003:4) states that 'some theorists as well as our own daily lives affirm that we come to terms with worldly phenomena only by telling stories, the value of narratives to political thought remains largely unexplored'. For example, Hannah Arendt used narratives to examine a political conflict by telling stories and she found it to be the most effective approach to understanding the world and totalitarianism (Stone-Mediatore, 2003). While stories may not be entirely accurate in the historical sense in that people selectively construct, retrieve and distort narratives, they still provide useful accounts of how they see their world and their life (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). The people in this study had experiences that those living in a peaceful country like Australia could barely comprehend. For this reason it was thought useful and of heuristic value to focus on the narratives about their life prior to leaving El Salvador and then after they arrived in Australia.

The Salvadorans in Melbourne are considered as a heterogeneous group of professionals, semi-skilled and unskilled persons. Some of the unskilled persons lack basic education but their experiences of life in rural areas were deemed very important to include in this study. Because of lack of literacy skills of some of the participants, the best approach was through narratives otherwise it would have impoverished the data necessary for the study. As the results of the interviews unfolded, experiences of people who came from the rural areas in El Salvador were vastly different compared to those from the urban areas. The data from both areas were therefore necessary to give a balanced approach and view of the socio-economic and political situation in El Salvador.

The diversity of backgrounds, such as their political, educational and professional differences, represents a cross-section of people from El Salvador living in Melbourne. Just as in El Salvador they were suspicious (for good reasons) of others, mainly because of their violent history, so in Australia these patterns of relationship with other Salvadorans continued. The lack of trust and fear among the different groups have become internalised because of their long history of oppression and repression

as outlined in Part I. This type of behaviour was carried over to a general tendency of being vigilant of people they are not familiar with and this demeanour contributed to their difficulties of resettlement in Australia.

Analysis of Stories

The analysis of these narratives crosses several boundaries of research methodologies. Some of the narratives could be classified as *testimonios* because they speak for others and bear witness on issues such as torture, imprisonment, social upheaval and the struggle for survival (Tierney, 2000). *Testimonio* was developed in Latin America with the publication of Menchu's (1984) experiences in Guatemala. It could also be classified as ethnographic because the researcher belongs to a different cultural group. Since narrative analysis is influenced by phenomenology and hermeneutics and looks at how people make sense of their lives and how people interpret their lives within the context of the socio-economic and political conditions of their country (Patton, 2002), it was deemed necessary to use this methodology. As Riessman (2002b: 697) highlights:

... narrative approach illuminates the intersection of biography, history and society ...
the personal troubles that participants represent in their narratives ... tell us a great deal
about social and historical processes ...

Narrative analysis identifies the broader interpretive framework that people utilise to run meaningless events into meaningful episodes that are part of a story leading the researcher to connect the past into the present (Ezzy, 2002). It provides another way of getting information that strict question and answer approaches do not impart. Some participants in this study told their accounts as if they were a normal expectation of life at that time. In some cases, various incidents were told with a level of detachment as if this was what one would expect in a country wracked by civil war. The way that stories were told, some for the first time after fleeing their country, provides the researcher much information that would otherwise not emerge. In addition, Cortazzi (2002:385) states that 'Narrative analysis gives a researcher access to the textual interpretative world of the teller, which presumably in some way mediates or manages reality'. He goes on to point out that the cultural conventions and the context within which they occur together with the teller's motive and intention, all need to be considered.

Storytelling is not just a way of making sense of one's experiences and organising memories, it is about the very way of communicating with others which sustain and create a common sense way of seeing the world. Stories are a means by which the person can reflexively testify the truth of his/her worldview (Singleton, 2001b). In analysing the participants' stories, attention was given to the way stories fitted into their political framework and explained or even justified their exodus from El Salvador into refugee status. In narrative analysis the object of investigation is the story itself because it aims to see how participants impose order on their experiences so as to make sense of events and actions in their lives. The participants can be selective in what they include and exclude in their stories and may emphasise their roles whether they were protagonists or victims (Riessman, 1993; 2002a). However, the degree to which common themes came through, with what was at least a twenty-year time frame, was examined and assisted in validating experiences, which would be difficult to comprehend for people living in democratic countries.

The stories documented by participants were examined and explored to allow for a thematic analysis to take place. Since stories are at the centre of narrative analysis, they were examined for any commonality and differences about their experiences, the type of language and the tone of voice used in the telling of the stories itself. Key phrases, terms and practices that were meaningful to the participants were classified according to themes and how they understood it within their worldview (Patton, 2002). This classification facilitates the summarizing of data so as to identify themes and to pinpoint an emerging pattern (Punch, 1998). Since participants do not usually indicate what experiences are more significant to them, it is necessary to see how people link together and give meaning to their experiences.

The experiences of refugees cover many sensitive issues and sometimes participants are reticent and reluctant to share their past. Lee & Renzetti (1993) articulate that research on social issues, which deals with 'sensitive topics' has increased. For them, research that intrudes into the private sphere, deeply personal experiences, social control and the exercise of coercion or domination would be some of the issues considered as sensitive topics. Although, they do not mention specifically experiences of refugees, who have undergone torture and trauma because of the political system operating in their home countries, these experiences warrant their inclusion under such topics.

Sampling Methods

Before commencing the interviews, an application was made for ethics clearance from the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee. Upon receipt of the ethics clearance (Appendix A), the search for participants was initiated and letters of invitation, translated into Spanish, were sent out (Appendix B). Two different types of sampling methods were used, as described below.

Purposive Sampling

As this was an exploratory research that was interested in investigating phenomena that were not familiar, the use of purposive sampling was necessary. Neuman (1997) indicates that this type of sampling is necessary for special situations, especially in exploratory or field research. He adds that this type of sampling is advantageous for unique cases that are informative, a difficult-to-reach specialised population and when the researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation. It is a type of sampling that is necessary to 'maximise discovery of heterogeneous patterns and problems that occur in the particular context of the study' (Erlandson et al. 1993:82). In addition, it allows the researcher to approach a problem or situation in a unique manner so as to experience a condition that one wishes to understand (Yegidis et al., 1999), such as experiences and resettlement of refugees.

Snowball Sampling

The use of snowball sampling was necessary because of the sensitiveness of the refugee issues and the difficulty of accessing participants. This method was used to access participants of interest and who share the same characteristics, such as refugee experience, because they do not belong to groups where a list of members can be made available (Jackson, 1995; Gliner & Morgan, 2000). In snowball sampling, participants are asked to provide names of people they know and have

experienced the same problems or who meet the same criteria for inclusion in the research study (Yegidis et al., 1999). The criteria included were: participants, who had lived in Melbourne for over a decade, have different backgrounds, and those willing to be interviewed. As it turned out, a few of the persons recommended did not accept the invitation to be interviewed.

Snowball sampling is also a form of non-probability sampling and is widely used in social science research, especially when the population is unknown (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991). Each participant was asked to recommend 2-3 names at the end of the interview. It was necessary to have a kind of recommendation from another person, as these refugees do not usually want to be interviewed by strangers. Also refugees from El Salvador do not share their past experiences readily with others because of fear of reprisal.

Participants

To begin the recruitment process of participants, inquiries were made through a Church-sponsored community centre, a medical centre and friends (see Appendix D). As mentioned above, some participants were accessed through the recommendation of other participants. Upon receipt of such recommendations a letter of invitation, translated into Spanish (Appendix B), was sent with the informed consent form (Appendix C). The interviews were done in different stages. First, the researcher made a telephone call to explain the purpose of the study and to ask them if they were willing to participate. The informed consent form was then sent and upon receipt of this form, another telephone call was made to schedule the interview so they were made aware that the researcher could speak Spanish. In the letter of invitation, a clause was added stating that psychological counselling would be provided in case any of the participants suffered undue distress because of evoked memories about the past. The researcher always left her telephone number with the participants, in case it was needed. The researcher also prepared a list of centres, which provides psychological counselling, for ready reference.

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, the participants' native language, and since the researcher is bi-lingual, it did not pose many difficulties. If there were any differences by way of colloquial expressions between the participants and the researcher, these were clarified at the interviews. Patton (1990) points out that in cross-cultural interviewing, language could be an inherent difficulty as well as privacy. However, he adds that it is a far better method of collecting data than standardised questionnaires especially if non-literate persons are included. As one of the participants indicated, 'it is difficult to express oneself in English as words do not have the same meaning as when we speak in our own language.'

This type of interviewing allowed the participants to give a more detailed description of their experiences, which Denzin (1989:83) calls 'thick description' because:

...it presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships. Thick description invokes emotionality and self-feelings. It establishes the significance of an experience or the sequence of events. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard...

Interpreters, unfamiliar with the history and background of participants, can only provide a literal translation of interviews in most cases. This can mean a loss of valuable data because the meanings

and expressions of a language cannot be easily translated. In addition, the introduction of a third party, such as an interpreter, during interviews could pose a problem for Salvadorans because they find it difficult to share their experiences with others.

The data from this research came from interviews of 14 participants, five males and nine females, whose ages range from 41 to 66 (see Table 6.1) and had lived in Melbourne for over a decade. This time span was necessary because it was felt that for most people, they would have had enough time to become settled in the Australian environment and to make the decision of whether to stay permanently or to return back to El Salvador. Since these participants had to make a hasty decision at the time of the civil war, it is possible that refugees could choose to return home once the political situation in their home country was back to normal. There were four couples included in this study but only two couples were interviewed together. The other two couples were interviewed separately at different times because of work commitments of the men. The interviews with the wives alone proved to be a positive experience because these women were able to express the difficulties they were having with their husbands and/or with their children. It is important to know how their marriages and their families have developed after their resettlement in Melbourne since they no longer have the support of their extended families, friends and neighbours.

Interview Process and Transcription

The interviews were conducted in Melbourne, Australia; tape-recorded and transcribed within 48 hours. They were translated personally by the researcher and replayed several times to determine accuracy. Since it was translated from Spanish to English, it is detailed but not verbatim. Written notes about family life and family component, including the time spent by the researcher talking with other family members, which occurred before and after the interviews were also recorded but not taped. The actual interviews varied in length from one hour to two hours. In some cases more time was needed waiting and talking with some of the family members before and after the interviews. This process helped both the researcher and the participants to be more relaxed about the actual interviews. This time was also needed to foster rapport and trust between the participants and the researcher. The extra time spent with participants before and after the actual interviews also allowed the researcher to have an insight into other aspects of the lives of the participants. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and were held at the participants' homes, located within 20-30 kilometres from the Melbourne Business District. However, the researcher's past experience in the resettlement of refugees from El Salvador was not only helpful in formulating the research questions, but also in understanding the experiences of refugees. It was also an opportunity to meet other members of the family. This immersion in the setting allowed the researcher to see and learn more about their lives.

Confidentiality

At the beginning of each interview, participants were assured that any information or description of their experiences would be maintained under strict confidentiality. Confidentiality is of paramount importance because it can influence how much participants are willing to share their experiences (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

TABLE 6.1 – Participants' Personal Data

| PSEUDONYMS | AGE | STATUS | RELIGION | CHILDREN | EDUCATION | WORK EXPERIENCE | WORK IN AUSTRALIA |
|--------------|-----------|--------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Victor | 66 | M | Catholic | 11 | None | Farm Supervisor | Gardener (FT) in plant nursery |
| Clara | 64 | M | Catholic | | Grade II | Housewife | Housewife |
| Gloria | 63 | Sep | Catholic | 10 | Home tutored | Coffee Processor | Unemployed; on retirement pension |
| Rosa | 46 | Widow | Catholic | 4 | Year 10 | Self-employed dressmaker | Machinist (2 y); on unemployment benefits |
| Emma | 53 | M | Evangelical | 2 | Bachelor in Bus. Management | Office Manager | Unemployed |
| Ramon | 57 | M | Catholic | 4 | 4 ½ Law | Law Clerk | Factory worker (3 y); occasional cleaning + unemployment benefits |
| Ines | 56 | M | Catholic | | Teacher's Dip. | Prim. Sch. Teacher | Machinist (2 y); on Disability benefits |
| Juan | 54 | M | Catholic | 4 | 3 rd Yr. Uni. | Manager of outlets | Process worker (FT) |
| Irene | 53 | Widow | Catholic | 3 | 2 nd Yr. Uni. | Secretary | Leaflet distribution and occasional cleaning + widow's pension |
| Linda | 45 | M | Catholic | 2 | Teacher's Dip. | Prim. Sch. Teacher | Casual cleaner (PT) |
| Pedro | 50 | M | Catholic | 3 | 3 rd Yr. Uni. | Accountant | Storeman (FT) |
| Sara | 41 | M | Catholic | | 1 st Yr. Uni. | Exec. Secretary | Self-employed cleaner |
| Tomas | 53 | M | Catholic | 10 | Grade IV | Farmer | Occasional cleaning + Unemployment benefits |
| Rebecca | 55 | M | Evangelical | | Grade III | Housewife | Housewife |
| TOTAL | 14 | | | 52 | | | |

Note: Educational levels have been cross-checked with the equivalent level in Australia as per: Country Educational Profile – El Salvador. Issued by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition. June 1993. AGPS: Canberra.

Participants were also reassured that their names and/or identification regarding their personal data would not be divulged. Further they were informed that pseudonyms would be used to protect their anonymity; their personal details were not tape-recorded, only the actual interviews. However, some participants continued to share some experiences that were not part of the interview process, but nevertheless important after the tape recorder was turned off. For some participants, especially those known to the researcher, it was an opportunity to talk about some of the difficulties they were going through in daily life.

The Role of the Researcher

The experiences of refugees deal with sensitive topics so the researcher/translator needs to take a stance, especially in the case of this group. Since these narratives could not be classified as strictly *testimonio* because it is not of *novella* length and the participants are not the authors, the researcher/translator has a role to play in presenting the stories to the readers. In some episodes the use of the first person pronoun will be necessary. The use of the first person pronoun in research has now gained acceptability in the post-modern era (Richardson, 2000; Tierney, 2000). Writing and analysing the experiences of these participants has been a way of learning and understanding about other people's lives. While it cannot be strictly classified as ethnographic because of lack of participant observation, my past experiences of visiting some of the participants and other Salvadoran refugees for periods of more than six months gave me an insight into the lived experiences of this particular group. My stance therefore is to analyse the narratives and complement it with the historical documents available and when necessary to include my personal experiences of the past where relevant but were not part of the interview data. I also posit myself as a spokesperson of these participants whose stories would have never been heard without this research study. This is how I would want to 'immerse' myself in the data and to give 'voice to the voiceless' so they can share their emotionally charged personal experiences with others.

In addition, vicarious trauma is recognised as a negative emotional effect on the researcher, who has been working closely with people who have experienced trauma (Jones, 2004). As the term 'vicarious' suggests the persons emotionally affected have not actually experienced the trauma themselves but, through the action of listening and emotionally connecting with the survivor take on an emotional load (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). As the researcher/translator of the participants who had witnessed and experienced torture and death of loved ones, I was exposed to both their emotional baggage and to their stories. During and after the interviews I experienced an emotional drain akin to vicarious trauma. In order to deal with this, I needed to de-brief by talking to my supervisor and by having some space and silence and by not interviewing more than two participants a week. Even some years after conducting the interviews, I am still able to recall their stories with an incredible amount of detail. When I meet them in other settings, as has occurred on a number of occasions, I am still filled with sadness. I needed to distance myself time-wise before I conducted and wrote up the analysis.

In summary, this chapter explained the aim, limitations and significance of the research study as well as the research methodology and the various techniques demanded in developing the interview schedule, the selection of participants and the data analysis of the study.

The succeeding chapters will present the data on the experiences of refugees based on the five research questions outlined on pages 87-88. The next chapter will explore the experiences of the refugees of the socio-economic and political situation in El Salvador. As three of the participants fled to Costa Rica, a country of first asylum, in the early part of the 1980s, their experiences are also included.

CHAPTER 7: EXPERIENCES OF SALVADORANS IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY AND IN THE COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM

This chapter presents how the Salvadoran refugees experienced the political crisis in their home country prior to becoming refugees. Also included are the experiences of Salvadorans, who fled to Costa Rica to seek political asylum. As explained in Chapters 2 to 4, El Salvador experienced a history of oppression and exploitation from the time of conquest and under colonial rule. Although the country became independent from Spain in 1821, the successive leaders of the country did not improve the living conditions of the majority of the population. Instead there was a marked deterioration in the living standards of many in spite of the country's success in the world-economy in the export of cocoa, balsam, indigo and coffee.

The elites that arose after Independence not only ruled the economy but also became political leaders from the mid-19th century. Any improvements in the economy of El Salvador favoured the interests of the elites and the core countries. The demand for coffee increased during this period but the majority of the population suffered because they became dispossessed of their lands. As a result, peasant rebellions increased. In response to peasant rebellions, the military was given full responsibility to rule the country from 1931, but the elites continued to dominate the economy as well as supported the military. Oppression and exploitation still dominated society, but repression became part of the political system to control any peasant rebellions before they had a chance to develop. Military rule continued until the coup d'état in 1979 and within a few months it had become a full-blown civil war. Because of U.S. intervention and military aid, the war lasted almost 12 years (Pearce, 1986; Montgomery, 1995). The socio-economic and political situation in the country reached such a high level of violence that more than a million people were forced to flee the country. They were considered as refugees by many countries but not others (notably the United States). Those who fled to the United States were classified as 'economic migrants' and/or illegal migrants; only a small number was given refugee status. Many could probably have been recognised as de facto refugees because of the war situation and mass exodus. The failure of the United States to recognise them as refugees was because the U.S. government supported the Salvadoran government and to accept Salvadorans as refugees would be contrary to U.S. foreign policy.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONFLICT IN EL SALVADOR

In the research component of this thesis, 14 participants were selected and interviewed. Five of the participants were from the rural areas and nine lived in the urban areas while in El Salvador. Based on the interviews, it became apparent that the participants had different reasons for fleeing the country

in the 1980s other than the direct effects of war. These reasons are discussed in Chapter 8. Three of the 14 participants fled to Costa Rica in the early 1980s to seek political asylum and lived there for many years before coming to Australia. The three participants and their families, who were in Costa Rica at the time of exit, were recognised as refugees, while the rest were classified as special humanitarian entrants. Australia accepted refugees from El Salvador under the Refugee/Special Humanitarian Programme from 1982 and the participants interviewed arrived in Melbourne between 1986-1989.

To understand the lives and social worlds of Salvadoran refugees, there is a need to examine the situation in El Salvador prior to their departure. While the tragic and sad history of El Salvador was explored in Part I of the thesis, this chapter highlights the dislocations, sufferings and movements of ordinary citizens while still in their home country. Although the civil war lasted almost 12 years, the antecedents to this war also became part of the collective memories that have deeply scarred the lives of many. It appears that migration became an enduring pattern in the history of El Salvador from mid-19th century because of economic policies and political decisions that triggered population movements. These movements have also affected family life (Menjívar, 2000). However, in the life history of these participants no one experienced migration to the neighbouring countries until the political crisis of the 1980s. Australia only had 14 migrants from El Salvador before 1981 (2001 Census) so this group would be considered as new in the Australian setting.

Experiences of the Political Crisis

While the causes of the political conflict in El Salvador have been well documented, the participants related their own experiences of the crisis and in so doing provided a picture of what it was like for ordinary citizens. They were able to recall their experiences quite vividly in spite of the time gap of more than 20 years. Their stories had some commonality in the telling, in that horrific incidents were often related in a matter of fact way. Things that most people in Australia might consider to be tragic, like for instance losing one's house, were seen to be inconsequential when compared to the rape, torture and killings that they witnessed.

The interviews revealed a high incidence of trauma that occurred during the civil war and prior to their arrival in Australia. The participants belong to a heterogeneous group of professionals, semi-skilled and non-skilled workers. They all owned their own homes in El Salvador, one had a second home and a few had cars. They all travelled to Australia with a limited amount of personal belongings and all of them, at the time of the interview, still rented their homes through the private market or government housing.

A striking feature of the interviews was that the stories were recounted with stoicism and without embellishments. The terror was expressed in participants' voices, and in body language and in some cases by making grinding and other noises. One woman rubbed her hands relentlessly prior to relating her story and others shook their heads. In such situations, I sat in silence and waited until they were ready to unravel their stories. The actual recounting of incidents were kept to 'facts' rather than descriptions, possibly because of the pain they were still experiencing. In their endeavour to survive, they were resourceful and tenacious yet they did not see what they had done as in any way remarkable. I wondered whether this method of recounting was in itself a method of self-protection and separated the emotions from the facts.

Participants told their narratives in a matter of fact way with little or no emotional or expressive language. They recounted incidents as if they were historical facts that happened to someone else, rather than terrible emotional events through which the tellers had lived. As they told their stories, many of them became teary-eyed or were visibly distressed but with great self-control yet they showed a startling detachment to the details of their personal lives by merely enunciating facts. Among all the participants, only one of them received counselling in Australia in the initial months of settlement but this will be explained in Chapter 10. Each participant recounted incidents as if they had just occurred and it was hard to believe that they had in fact happened more than two decades ago. Their stories tell of extraordinary bravery and resilience in resisting the military and helping fellow compatriots. The picture they presented of themselves during this period was one of resourcefulness and self-reliance. There was a degree of humility in the way they recounted their role in surviving and escaping during this period. Some participants expressed regret that they were unable to do more for others in their village or community. However, they claimed that in order to keep their families safe they needed to be unobtrusive and avoided drawing attention to themselves. This practice of resistance had been used historically for centuries, as a useful way of avoiding persecution and retribution from the military and the elites. They had also learned, through word of mouth and personal experiences, that to complain about injustices carried a heavy price, and that silence proved more effective.

Causes of the Conflict

The official and/or academic discourses around the causes of the conflict were discussed in previous chapters. This section attempts to explore the reasons that the participants gave for the civil war. It also seeks to see the ways in which their own experiences of living within a war zone and in a country in which power is vested on a few wealthy and influential families coloured their perceptions.

The participants gave three-fold reasons that caused the conflict. They certainly acknowledged the inequalities in society as well as the exploitation and oppression of the poor as reasons for the civil war. They also saw the role played by the United States in destabilising events. Lastly, they recognised the influence of the oligarchy, the 'fourteen families', in trying to hold on to their wealth and wield their power in the economic and political systems. Participants differed in their views as to which reasons were more important. The contrast in their emphasis was largely due to where they were located and what they were doing at the time. The participants from the rural areas (5) noted and described in detail the disparity between the rich and poor because they saw how the poor were dispossessed of their lands resulting in them suffering from hunger and malnutrition. They lived with the constant presence of the military and the guerrillas in their locality and were well aware of the 'cause' for which the guerrillas were fighting. Those from the urban areas (9) noticed the same disparity but they were more conscious of the general inequities and had taken part in some of the activities that were organised by the unions or university students to address this issue. The union and student activists, for example, were quite vocal in attempting to improve the living standards of the people. The city-based participants indicated that in the 1980s many more people became unemployed and those who had jobs had difficulty managing to feed and house their families on their salaries. Also, people from the rural areas began flowing into the capital cities to sell their farm produce in the streets, so the city became overpopulated. Both rural and city dwellers attributed the gap between the rich and poor, at least to some degree, to the 'fourteen families'.

All the participants used the rapaciousness of the 'fourteen families' to explain the political instability that occurred from the 1960s to the 1980's. Although the civil war took place in the 1980s, in Victor, Clara and Gloria's regions war began in the early 1960s. This was probably due to the rise in insurgents in the 1960s and the United States, under President Kennedy's administration, provided counter insurgency training to the military of Central America (CA) to avert another crisis similar to the Cuban revolution. Part of this programme was the installation of a system of communications network in the CA region. In El Salvador two agencies were created to organise counter-insurgency courses, ORDEN and ANSESAL, as explained in Chapter 4. Informants were hired to report anyone suspected of being a communist/subversive. However, while this might have caused upheaval in the lives of the peasants in the rural areas, Victor claims that the causes of the conflict can be attributed to the:

... fourteen families, who had money and only wanted everything for themselves ... El Salvador is full of people and for them there is no work, no studies, nothing ... the land is for everyone so long as people work ... the rich had the power ... the war started about 1965 and by 1970s it was bad ... the United States used to send \$2 million per day for arms, ammunitions, planes ...

Those in rural areas saw first hand the result of the widening gap between rich and poor, so it is not surprising that the reasons they gave for the civil war focused on this issue. For example, Victor was a supervisor of 10 men in a cooperative farm and he also owned 3-4 acres of land for their subsistence. In El Salvador there are different levels of poverty – the lowest being the poorest of the poor, when people become destitute. Victor saw more and more people living in absolute poverty during this period. He also pointed out about the lack of studies in the rural areas. There were very few schools in the rural areas and therefore a high illiteracy rate. As a consequence of this lack, Victor never had the opportunity to go to school; his wife only reached Grade 2 level.

Victor lived in the Chalatenango region near the border with Honduras and he indicated that many of the people were already unemployed or were seasonal workers. (This region also became depopulated in the 1980s.) There was also an economic crisis in the 1960s because of the decline in the price of cotton and coffee in the world market. The President was deposed and he was replaced by the civilian-military Directorate, which gave a political role to the Armed Forces. He did not mention what effect the repatriation of 130,000 Salvadorans in 1969 had on their area since he indicated that the situation worsened in the 1970s. In fact, none of the participants alluded to the Honduran war and how it affected their region. The role of U.S. intervention in the affairs of El Salvador is explained in Chapter 4.

The link between the role of the 'fourteen families' and their desire for wealth at all costs and the resulting disparity between rich and poor were acknowledged. For example, Gloria indicated that war in their area began in 1963 although it was at its worst in the 1980s. In her words she indicated that:

... the main problem was there were too few rich, rich ... but there were far too many poor people ... the leaders of the opposite party were making the government aware that the poor were being paid too little as labourers ... the others were becoming rich ... the people started to go out into the streets and clamour ... 'Please pay us more because we live miserable lives' ... we do not have food for our children ...

Her comments related to how she saw the situation in their region especially the many children who died of malnutrition because of lack of food and medicines. She recalled how people had to live under affliction and sadness because of lack of basic necessities and many could only eat once a day. The word 'affliction' was also mentioned by another participant and refers to a sense of loss, grief and anguish. The 'opposite party' she refers to is the political party of her husband, who belonged to a Socialist Party. He was working for equal rights for the people because he saw how the people were suffering in their region. This stance was not well received by the government so her husband and the family had to flee and hide from the military constantly; thus affecting their family life. The family was only reunited in the mid-1990s in Melbourne, as mentioned in Chapter 8.

During the interview, Gloria sat with her hands clasped on her lap. She had her apron tied to her waist like a typical Salvadoran woman at home, to indicate her readiness in cooking something for the children, whenever they visited. She was quite unemotional in the way she related her story and in some instances they were horrific but this will be related later in this chapter.

Some participants were able to put the conflict into a historical context, while still acknowledging the particular circumstances of the mid-20th century. Emma, a university graduate, had elaborated more on the causes of the conflict, but like Victor and Gloria, she also blamed the conflict on the

... different economic levels of life in our country – high – medium – low ...the high class were very few and they controlled all sources of work ... they had the monopoly ... they controlled the government completely so they had all the power ... there was no opportunity for others ... before all the conflict they treated the peasants like slaves and exploited them ... it was an exploitation of men by men ...

She indicated that the 'rich could travel overseas and enjoy themselves with the profits of the sale of coffee and the poor had next to nothing'. At the same time as she was speaking, she shook her head to indicate her non-approval of such behaviour. What she did not say in words, she expressed through actions and sometimes in unintelligible noises to indicate her disapproval. In addition, she compared how the Spaniards treated the indigenous people under colonial rule as slaves but in the 20th century the elites continued the practice but it was far worse because of the violence and victimisation she observed close to her home and her office. The continued U.S. military aid of \$2 million per day was also given as a reason for the sustained war. It is interesting how Emma made a link between the 1980s political crisis and the situation under colonial rule. This may be due to her historical knowledge about the country. Being a university graduate, she had a good job in the city. Often she discussed the situation with her fellow workmates so she would have had a good grasp of the political situation. She certainly was disparaging of the rich for accumulating all the profits for themselves and ignoring the needs of others.

Other participants saw the primary cause of the conflict as the dispossession of the peasants' land by the rich and powerful, the accompanying exploitation and inability to adequately feed their own families. For example, Pedro gave the causes of the conflict as:

... power, money and land ... the 14 families were blamed because they practically owned the country ... the *colonos* (farm workers) used to live in estates, where they grow coffee ...the owners used to give the houses to the *colonos* to live ... they were

first to harvest the coffee ... to prepare the land ... in 1980 they asked for cheese ... they were not given the cheese nor paid more ... so the war problem began ...

It is quite 'mind boggling' to hear that 'fourteen families' practically owned most of the country; a similar situation existed in 15th century Spain. While the peasants were able to live on the land where they worked, they were only fed beans and *tortillas* (flat corn bread). They soon got tired of it on a daily basis so they rebelled when they were not given any cheese or the extra pay. This demand may sound minimal and inconsequential to a developed country, but for the poor they are important demands. Pedro described how farm labourers were exploited. He claimed that the people could no longer tolerate such a situation and were left with no other option but to rebel against the system. The *colonos* formed part of the feudal system under colonial rule and by 1965 this system was gradually being abolished because of the introduction of the minimum wage law. Based on the comments of Pedro, it appears that remnants of the feudal system still remained. Both Emma and Pedro experienced the political crisis in the late 1970s. Being better educated and exposed to city life, Emma and Pedro viewed the situation in a somewhat different perspective – that of the middle class with a stable income and job security – but there are similarities in the way the four participants evaluated the causes of the political crisis.

As noted earlier, participants put a different emphasis as to what were the most significant causes of the uprising. This difference was influenced by educational background and urban/rural distinctions. Historical records and commentaries support the comments from the participants about what occurred in the 1960s and the reasons why they thought that war began during this period. The rapid changes in the economy and their effects during this period were felt more by the people in the rural areas (Pearce, 1986; Montgomery, 1995). There was a marked increase in landlessness because the government wanted to abolish the feudal system. As mentioned in Chapter 3, there was the implementation of the modernisation programmes by the United States through the Alliance for Progress and the CACM. The country did not industrialise but created more unemployment and only the elite and foreign companies benefited. In addition more land was taken from the poor to build factories in the process of industrialisation. The repatriation of 130,000 Salvadorans from Honduras in 1969 would have aggravated the situation and caused more landlessness. The rapid escalation in the number of unemployed bred popular unrest and they reacted by demonstrating and demanding solutions. The rural areas were the most affected by these events and this explains why Victor and Gloria indicated that war began in their areas in the 1960s. Landlessness is often caused when a new agricultural product for export is introduced into the economy or land is used to build factories and assembly plants but people often are not compensated for their loss of land.

The experiences of Victor, Gloria, Emma and Pedro illustrate through their personal narratives some of the causes of the socio-economic and political conflict. The gross inequalities between the rich and poor were apparent to the participants who resented this extreme bipolarisation. Many had to struggle to earn a living to feed and clothe their children, while the rich were able to enjoy many luxuries, similar to the wealthy of developed countries. The 'fourteen families' were so powerful and controlled not only the military, but also the political and economic spheres of the country. Against this type of power, the participants claimed that they experienced powerlessness in changing the structures of the country. While the United States interpreted the political crisis as communist

infiltration, the participants saw the crisis as being caused by the extreme bipolarisation between rich and poor, an internal problem that needed a political solution.

Living through Terror

Random repression operated from 1931 to the 1980s and people could be captured and 'disappeared' (*desaparecidos*) without any apparent reason. The people were subjected to all kinds of violence including rape, which was common in El Salvador during the political crisis. For example, one of Gloria's daughters was raped and bore a child, who lives with the family in Melbourne. Although rape has long been an instrument of war, it was only defined as a war crime in 1993 when the UN Security Council passed Resolution 808 (Barstow, 2000). This Resolution relates to the establishment of an international tribunal for the sole purpose of prosecuting persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, which includes the rape of women (www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs). Rape, including gang rape, was often practised by the military as a form of torture or to terrorise the population and had become institutionalised in El Salvador (Chomsky, 1985; Fish & Sganga, 1988). Garaizabal & Vasquez, (1994) add that during the 1980s civil war in El Salvador, the military, the national guards and the Honduran Army often used sexual violence and threats on refugees. Among the participants interviewed, only Gloria's family had someone who was raped but other female refugees from El Salvador would have also experienced this type of violence.

During the period (1986-1990) when I was working in the resettlement of refugees, I was called-in to assist a CRSS group as an interpreter because a Salvadoran woman (Rita – a pseudonym) with two young daughters had been flown-in by a voluntary agency to Melbourne. Rita needed urgent medical attention because of bullets in her legs sustained during the time when she was captured by the military and imprisoned. One of Rita's legs had to be amputated and she had to undergo intensive rehabilitation. In the other leg she had shattered remains of bullets in her thigh, which she made me feel on one of my visits, but proved to be inoperable. She claimed that she had been a catechist of Archbishop Romero and continued to do this work even after his assassination. The military government was against catechists because they were labelled as communists and/or subversives who incited the poor to become aware of their unjust situation.

The CRSS coordinator responsible for her informed me that she had been raped and bore a daughter, who was then 18 months, when they arrived in Melbourne. She had an older daughter (5 years) with her from another relationship but no information was given and therefore I decided not to ask any questions to respect her dignity. After a few weeks of visiting Rita, I was invited by the CRSS coordinator to spend the weekend with them outside Melbourne. I was very conscious that children ask about their fathers so I broached this matter in the event that her daughter would one day inquire about her 'absent' father. Without blinking an eyelid or any tinge of emotion, she responded 'I do not remember because I was blindfolded and there were several men'. I was not expecting such a response. Much as I understood what it meant, I found it difficult to react in a verbal manner because I considered it an atrocious crime. In spite of the violence committed against her, she always treated the child with love. Although many years have passed since this event, I have not forgotten her and often think of the family. I chose not to intrude further to respect her privacy unless she was willing to share more about the incident and where it happened. She did not elaborate on the matter but revealed that

she had spent her time in Ilopango jail while pregnant and delivered her child in prison. During this time she claimed that she was quite sick. It was only through a Melbourne-based voluntary agency that she was released from prison and flown to Australia. If she had stayed, she would have been classified as a 'woman-at-risk' category under the R/SHP. However, she chose to return with her two daughters to El Salvador because she felt compelled to be part of the political struggle and no amount of convincing could make her change her mind, even for the sake of her daughters.

A number of participants saw others being tortured or killed including family members, workmates and friends. They saw mutilated bodies in the streets and heard people screaming in the neighbourhood but they did not come to their aid because of fear that they could be the next victims. This meant that they lived in a high level of stress knowing that at any time they or any family members could be raped, tortured or killed with impunity. Linda recounted and witnessed the violent capture of a woman as if she were not connected to the event:

... a female teacher lived next door to my mother ... during the night the door to her house was forcefully opened (*a patadas*) ... she had a maid who hid under the table when the teacher was taken ... the daughter (3 years old) was asleep when eight men entered the house ... the men surrounded the house so there was no means of escape ... the men took hold of her hands and feet and threw her like an animal in the pickup ... she said good-bye to all and she made noises hmmm hmmm ... then they covered her mouth ... It was terrible, I was trembling ...

There was no hint of hostility towards the perpetrators in her words but her voice was quivering. Others in the study repeated this way of telling stories of violent incidents. Maybe the absence of abusive language was because of fear of reprisals against members of the family still in El Salvador or maybe it was a way of coping with the intensity of the pain. Linda also recounted that many teachers were killed or 'disappeared' and many of them were hard to recognise. The above-mentioned teacher was found the next day at the end of the river, all muddy. The daughter asked about her mother the next morning but was told that her 'mother was taken to hospital' but later told her that she had died. Stories appeared to be toned down and the details of abuses omitted so the pain is lessened. Apparently, Linda's mother had already warned the teacher to hide somewhere else, but she did not heed her advice.

All participants knew of friends or family who had 'disappeared'. Four immediate family members from three families had 'disappeared'. Two of the 'disappeared' joined the guerrilla movement and went underground, but after the war they surfaced and made contact with their relatives in Australia. The other two who 'disappeared' have been presumed dead but family members still live in hope that they may come back. While the experience of a loved one being killed is painful, it was claimed that to have a loved one 'disappeared' is worse because the families are not really sure what happened or where the body is located. Rosa, whose husband was killed by the military, expressed relief that she knew her husband's fate and that he was not one of the 'disappeared'. It was difficult for some to have any kind of 'closure' because of lack of evidence or details about the 'disappeared'. They could not approach the police or those in authority because they could become the next victims.

Six of participants suffered the loss of close family members or loved ones who were killed during this period. Some had lost several family members. Rosa was married to a journalist, who was

killed the day before the national elections on 20th March, 1989 because the military wanted his archives and whatever videos, files and information he had about the situation in El Salvador. Her cousin, another journalist, was accused of passing information by the military and for this 'offence' he was tortured and imprisoned, but later released. Rosa indicated during the interview that this was the first time she had spoken about this incident after more than 10 years:

My husband was killed in 1989 ... it was illegal to speak the truth at that time ... I also have a cousin, a journalist ... and he went to prison ... He has scars of the tortures he suffered ... but journalists feel that they do not live ... if they do not make denunciations...

Clara had a son (19 years) who 'disappeared' and two of her siblings were killed. At the time of the interview, Clara still had not received any information about her son so there has been no closure to her grieving. The two siblings of Clara, both catechists⁷, were considered as 'communists' because of their activities. They were killed in the 1980s when Clara and her family were living as refugees in Costa Rica. Clara stoically recounted the incident:

My eldest son disappeared in 1979 during the invasion of Sumpul and has never been found ... My younger sister, a catechist, was killed as well as a younger brother when we were in exile in Costa Rica...

The interview must have evoked memories in Clara because she suddenly stood up to show me her son's picture. She tried to hide her emotion. However, I noticed that she held the picture with tenderness but tinged with sadness. Clara explained how she was able to locate the picture on one of her visits to El Salvador. His picture was found with the belongings of her sister, who was killed. Clara is a very quiet person, who does not initiate a conversation nor show her emotion so I found this gesture rather extraordinary because I have known her since she arrived in Australia in 1986. She also had never disclosed this information during the time (nine months) I visited the family in their initial settlement period. Apparently her son held great promise for the family. He had already received a scholarship to further his education; quite exceptional for someone who comes from the rural area.

Clara and her family lived in Chalatenango, which is located near the Salvadoran/Honduran border. Chalatenango suffered severe repression in 1977-79 and it is possible that Clara's son could have fled to Honduras when he 'disappeared' but more likely her son was massacred trying to get into Honduras. The only recorded massacres of people crossing the Sumpul River to go across to Honduras occurred in 1980 and 1982 (McClintock, 1985). Often people may forget dates when relating their tragic stories but her husband, Victor, also gave 1979 as the year when their son disappeared so it is likely to be right. These massacres were never investigated; people were often fearful to claim the bodies of their loved ones because the military might target them too. In fact Linda indicated that if any relative or person they knew got killed, the best way was to have a quick burial possibly in the night, so no one would see them. Honduras and El Salvador were guarded by the Armed Forces on both borders to make sure that nobody could cross from El Salvador to Honduras. There could have been

⁷ Catechists are lay persons who teach children/adults in the rural areas about the Catholic religion because of lack of catholic schools in the region. Often these catechists were also leaders of Ecclesial Base Communities (CEB) and they became the target of the military from late 1970s because they were making the peasants aware of the social injustices in El Salvador.

other groups trying to cross the river to go to Honduras before 1980 but no information was found in the literature available.

Linda experienced the shooting and capture of several family members. Her father owned an estate (about 65 *manzanas*⁸) and went out one day in 1978 to pay the workers and was killed, but war began in 1972 in her father's region. A younger brother-in-law, who went out for a walk to meet some friends was also shot by the military because he was 'suspected' of being involved in 'something'.

They killed my father – five men came with their masked faces ... My father was shot from the back ... My husband's youngest brother was also shot twice, but not fatally ... My sister was captured and put in a truck blindfolded ... luckily she was not killed ... she was 'suspected' of killing the father-in-law of a certain woman ... someone 'pointed a finger' at her or someone did not like her ... she was dropped at the back of a maternity hospital at 12 midnight and was told not to tell anyone ...

Again, this event was related stoically as if it happened to someone else. Linda's father lived in the Usulután department and it appears that war in the area began in the early 1970s with the arrival of catechists in the region, who gave them courses on how to improve their community so they could become more aware of their rights. Catechists were also considered leaders of the CEBs and they became targets of the military. In 1972 there was a presidential election and political organising intensified at the grassroots level. The results of the elections were manipulated and protests began, followed by repression and fear intensified among the people. Progressive Catholic projects began to emerge and became the primary gathering sites, where the poor people could discuss common goals and grievances for the growing opposition to the government (Peterson, 1997; Wood, 2003). However, as in the other cases these acts of violence remained unreported because in most instances the military or the death squads were the culprits but they operated with impunity.

To continue the commentary above, Linda stated that when her sister was released, she took a taxi but could not tell the driver where she lived. A taxi driver could not be trusted either because he could be an informant of the government or he could be associated with the people who committed the crime. The taxi driver apparently asked her sister several questions. To camouflage the incident, her sister made up a story. Since random repression was in force, some people could be captured without any apparent reason. It was enough to 'point a finger' at anyone and that person could be captured by the military, so people always lived in fear because they did not know when their turn would be. Her sister and brother-in-law were forced to flee to the United States illegally otherwise they would have been killed. Most of the Salvadorans fled to the United States at the time of the political crisis but were not recognised as refugees. As Clara stated: 'I have two brothers in the United States but they were not considered as refugees because the United States helped in the massacre in El Salvador'. It would have been difficult to act under these conditions because one has to be extra cautious about what to say.

Gloria lost many members of her family because of the bombings in Guazapa where they lived. Guazapa, was a free-fire zone and bombs, both incendiary and aerial, were used to terrorize residents in the area. In the early 1980s the government began to destroy material and social bases of the guerrilla movement. In 1986 it instituted a new phase in depopulation strategy with massive air and

⁸ In El Salvador, a manzana is a block of land equivalent to 7,000 sq. mts.

group attacks known as 'Operation Phoenix' in Guazapa (Carter, et al., 1989). Gloria claimed that bombings were more frequent and heavier in the 1980s and many were killed as she related the incident:

In my case nearly 60 people died, relatives, family members ... including those of my husband ... there were cousins and uncles ... My mother died with 14 grandchildren ... my sister with 7 children ... my brother, another brother and his son ... a bomb fell in the zone of Guazapa where they lived ... My husband lost 2 aunties and cousins because of a shooting rampage (*juego de balas*) ... in these zones everyone has 'to incorporate' themselves to fight for the country ... whichever band, sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced ...

Gloria's calmness and simplicity in recounting such an incident inspired me with awe. As I was listening to her story, I could not help but wonder how she could live her life in such a peaceful manner without any rancour of the past nor hatred for the people who committed such crimes. This probably is the attitude of many women in the rural areas of El Salvador who have matured and lived in suffering. Actually, she admitted during the interview that she did not know how she managed but she had to keep moving to protect her family because her husband was involved with his political party. To 'keep moving' is often practiced by the Salvadorans to save themselves from possible danger. 'To incorporate' means to join the guerrilla movements in their political struggle.

Destruction of property was another technique used by the military. Gloria's region, Guazapa, was eventually depopulated after she left for Costa Rica, but recalled what it was like before she fled:

All the houses in our zone were burned, ... we had 300 *manzanas* for our coffee trees ... lands have been abandoned ... but there are landmines which are a danger to all ... the guerrillas used to live in our zone and sometimes the military ... they used to eat what they found...

Gloria added that all the houses in their area were burned and people had to leave the area. In addition, there were also landmines and these posed a danger to everyone. The doctrine of low-intensity conflict used in 1983 was called 'scorched earth method'. The area is bombed and everything is burned including crops so the 'communists' would not have any food. Gloria and her seven children had already fled to Costa Rica when the above incidents occurred but her husband and three of her older children were still in El Salvador.

Gloria explained that the land belonged to a cooperative and it was used to plant coffee, the source of livelihood for the members of the community. She claimed that the military used to throw petrol and burn the houses, which resulted in the trees and animals being lost. Landmines also caused the deaths of many and the land cannot be used to plant any crops, so the people suffer more. These events would probably make many people despair but Gloria was able to maintain her equanimity and survived to relate her story. There were only two participants who permanently lost their property. They claimed that these property losses paled into insignificance in comparison to losing a family member. Others lost part or some of their property or their livestock was stolen. Among the female participants, who lived in the rural areas, only Gloria was involved in a farm cooperative where coffee was grown. She was a young woman when the war began in 1963 in her region because her eldest son was only 38 at the time of the interview in 2001 and there are nine other children! It can

therefore be said that this family lived in a war situation from the time the children were born and this affected their resettlement, as explained in Chapter 10.

The Guazapa region, where Gloria lived, was also the favourite spot for the guerrillas because it is mountainous and therefore became the prime targets of the military. To survive, the military and the guerrillas used to steal the livestock in the area thereby depriving the local population of food but no one could complain about this situation. Both Victor and Gloria are illiterate and their experiences and views are from the grassroots level. They also had good memory recall and answered the questions directly, without further prompts. Because of their involvement in farming communities, they would have seen and felt the deterioration in the living standards of many people.

Mountainous areas became the prime targets of the military because their aim was to eliminate the guerrillas, especially when the doctrines of 'draining the sea' and 'scorched earth' methods were in force. The guerrillas were labelled as communists/subversives, but in the process many civilians were also killed. These are some of the experiences of people in the rural areas, but more will follow as the civil war escalates and this is the 'baggage' that the Salvadorans brought with them to Australia.

A medical doctor, Charles Clements (1984), was an eyewitness to the events that happened in the Guazapa region in 1982-83 and claimed that the use of aerial bombs, napalm sprays and phosphorus bombs was rampant. The main targets of the bombs were usually the guerrillas, who were thought to be hiding in the hills, but this was also used to terrorise the civilians. Many peasants were killed as a result of genocide-like counter-insurgency campaigns, which consisted of aerial bombings and scorched earth methods, but the media never referred to it as such in the case of El Salvador. One of the military methods used during the low intensity conflict (LIC) was referred to as 'draining the sea'. The aim was to get rid of the civilians (sea) so the guerrillas (fish) could be caught or annihilated (MacLean, 1987; McClintock, 1998). This method was developed by the United States for South-east Asia during the Viet Nam War, but it had become more sophisticated at the time of the Salvadoran crisis.

According to Fish and Sganga (1988) in classic revolutionary theory the strength of guerrilla forces lies in their being hidden and supported by the masses – like 'fish in the sea' and the counter insurgency doctrine remedy is to 'drain the sea'. 'Scorched earth' was another method used by the military to make sure that there would be no food for the guerrillas, but as a result the civilians suffered starvation and death. No matter how precise the combatants were in dropping bombs to hit specific targets, they always caused a lot of civilian casualties. Many animals were also killed by the military when they invaded the region, so there appeared to be an increase in vampire bats that attacked humans instead of animals. Bombings also produced craters that collected water during the rainy season and became depositories of larvae, which turned into mosquitoes that caused other diseases, such as malaria (Shaull, 1990). With malnourishment and very limited medical and health facilities, people have to live with these diseases for the rest of their lives or many would have died.

Bombings, Disappearances, Repressions and Killings

During the period of the civil war, people experienced torture, violence, and loss of loved ones. They also witnessed events of people being apprehended and tortured by the police or the military. Wartime

experiences are not only traumatic because of what one sees, hears and feels during the uprising but people can be traumatised without having experienced violence and torture themselves. It also results from the loss of many loved ones and loss of property owned by the participants because many had to flee their homes to seek refuge somewhere else. All the people in the study experienced enormous losses and disruptions to their lives. Although all of them experienced hardship because of the repressive political system and the war situation, only one participant claimed that she experienced near starvation at any time during the repression. Another participant claimed that her children got sick and they had nothing to live on because of guerrilla activities in their region. Two other participants indicated that they were not earning enough to support their families and so became union activists. The rest reported that they experienced extreme difficulties living under conditions that prevailed in the 1980s. Poverty may cause population movements but in general people do not flee their country to become refugees. It is only when extreme poverty causes social unrest as well as human rights violations. These could lead to violent internal conflicts and exodus may result.

Rosa indicated that war was sporadic in San Salvador and in times of heavy fighting, she and her children fled their home and went to another suburb, after her husband was killed. She added that the year 1989 was a very tense time for the people in the city because the guerrillas had also gone to the city and were planning an offensive in certain areas of importance, in particular the headquarters of the Armed Forces. Instead, the largest and most militant union organisation (FENASTRAS) was bombed in October 1989. The Secretary-General and nine others were killed; 30 were wounded. It has been assumed that the 'agents of the state' carried out the bombing but no full-scale investigation was carried out. The FMLN offensive took place in November 1989 the aim of which was to overthrow the government and to open serious negotiations to end the war (Montgomery, 1995). 'To be heard' by the government, the guerrillas had to have recourse to violence otherwise nothing was done.

Clara's husband, Victor, also mentioned the loss of their son as well as three other relatives: a sister's daughter who 'disappeared', a brother's daughter and another brother's son, both of whom were killed. According to him, 'the catechists were taken by the squadron because it was prohibited to have a Bible or to teach catechism'. He added that the Bible at that time was also considered a type of 'subversive' literature. Many people were 'disappeared' by the military, especially those who belonged to the CEBs, and have never been found by their loved ones.

The 'disappeared' (used as a noun) was common practice in Latin America during periods of repression. In Argentina a group, known as the 'Mothers of the Disappeared' (COMADRES), was formed in the late 1970s and in El Salvador a similar group was also founded in 1977. In 1987 COMADRES amalgamated with two other organisations and became known as the Federation of the Committee of Mothers and Families of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated (FECMAFAM). They wear black dresses with white scarves on their heads and demonstrate publicly from time to time (Carter et al., 1989). In spite of these demonstrations, the 'disappeared' have not been found.

Many of the participants suffered greatly from the death of their loved ones and have not recovered completely from their grief and trauma. They appear to cope with this trauma by not talking about it to anyone so their grief is not addressed or they try to keep busy to forget. The interviews suggested that it was difficult for some to have any kind of 'closure' because of lack of evidence or details about those who 'disappeared'. On the other hand, three of the respondents whose family

members had been killed, expressed that for them it was a privilege to die fighting for the country to defend others, especially because this struggle was for the poor. In their view the death of a loved one for a just cause seemed to alleviate the pain and helped them to accept their deaths.

Demonstrations and Protests

At the height of the civil war, demonstrations and protests increased. Some of the participants were still students at the University of El Salvador (UES) in the early 1980s. Others were also impeded to go to work because of the conflicts occurring near their homes or workplaces. These incidents may seem alien to the Australians because it is easy to seek the help of the police or other authorities, but in El Salvador there was no one to protect the civilian population.

Emma claimed that she did not suffer individual persecution but witnessed terrible incidents that happened in front of her eyes by day or night. She remembered thus:

... the war was something desperate ... we saw things with our own eyes in the middle of the city ... we used to go to work ... but the conflict occurred in places we did not expect ... sometimes in front of our houses ... One time I told my husband 'Look under the tree, they are all there with arms' ... this was about 5.00 a.m. ... we saw the armed men and heard the shooting ... we did not know in which room to hide ...

She stated that the guerrillas used to detain the cars at night in their street and during the day they would shout and give orders. Sometimes there would also be confrontations between the military and the guerrillas that were horrific. To defend themselves, Emma and her family would often hide somewhere in their house usually under the tiled roof, which was still dangerous because the bullets could get through. She explained that 'the noise was enough to kill you' and often they could not sleep because of fear. She claimed that the 'arms' looked very strong – probably they were made overseas because El Salvador had no ammunitions factories. It is interesting that she made an observation about the ammunitions because the other participants did not comment about it. It must have been very difficult to live in such circumstances especially since her two children were toddlers – but they went to work just the same. Nothing stopped them otherwise they could be suspected as being members of guerrilla groups. It was a very tense situation because whatever decisions they made could have fatal consequences. The Salvadorans have also become very sensitive to 'noise', especially those similar to gunshots or bombings because of their past experiences, a part of their emotional 'baggage'.

It was also difficult to get to work although transportation was available but nobody was sure what could happen from one minute to the next so everyone had to be vigilant. Often the guerrillas would get into the buses in plain clothes and this would instil fear in the other passengers. But in spite of the precarious conditions of the 1980s people continued to go to work, to attend the university or to sell their goods in the streets to earn a living. When Emma was at the university, there was a shooting rampage between the guards, the police and the guerrillas and a bullet just missed her. At the university, they ran and others just simply followed and this could sometimes cause a stampede. There were no safety programmes implemented at the university about what to do in case of bombings and shootings so each one had to do what was expedient. This would be quite unheard of in many developed countries, especially Australia!

Linda's husband was involved in demonstrations at the university since he was a student activist at the UES. It was not uncommon in the 1980s to go to the streets to hold strikes and demonstrations. The police used to 'throw water, shoot or spray gas' but sometimes some of the students were also captured from their homes and they would not appear the next morning. Her husband also used to transfer from one bus to another because the students were always being watched by the military. The UES was considered a 'breeding ground' of Marxists ideals so the students were thought of as being communists/subversives in general and many were killed and 'disappeared'. Probably most of them were not involved in any of these activities, but it was difficult for the military to make distinctions so many innocent civilians became victims.

As a student, Sara, also explained how the military entered the UES with light tanks in 1980. She reminisced that:

... we were in the library and they told the students to lie on the floor face down ... then they began a psychological war ... they shouted at us, threatened us ... because they wanted information ... they kept us until the afternoon ... they pointed the rifle on us while we were on the floor and said all sorts of things ... then the university had to be closed ...

She calls this a psychological war but it is actually a type of random repression occurring at the time. Her husband, Pedro, stated that they had to go to work in spite of the political situation, otherwise the employers would consider them as members of the guerrilla movement. They told me the story in a matter of fact way but sometimes grasping for breath because of what it meant to them. Both Sara and Pedro had experienced other horrific incidents, which cannot be recounted here but this would have affected Sara intensely because of what happened to her three years after their arrival in Melbourne and this will be explained in Chapter 10.

The 'push' factors (violence, killings, disappearances, etc.) predominated but the participants continued with their own lives and did not flee the country. It was only when they were pushed to the brink that they resorted to 'flight'. In contrast, most voluntary migrants are motivated by the 'push' factors in their home countries. These could mean a lack of suitable employment, better income and more professional opportunities in their home countries. They are therefore attracted to the 'pull' factors offered by developed countries so they migrate. For the refugees there were no 'pull' factors associated with economic gain but the need for protection. During this period there was also a marked degree of resilience, resistance to the invaders (the military, the death squads and the police) and this took great courage. This attitude of resistance is reminiscent to what the indigenous people did when the *conquistadores* invaded the country in the 16th century. The following explain how they acted in times of crisis.

STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

While these participants witnessed and experienced violence at different levels, they learned to analyse their own situations and acted accordingly to the best of their abilities. Some tried to find ways to appease the military and the guerrillas. When war began in their area, Victor and his family experienced the presence of the military and the guerrillas in the 1960s but Victor claimed that 'the guerrillas were not maltreating people'. Victor learned to use a strategy of giving about 40

watermelons to the guerrillas and also the military. They were then left in peace for a few months. Since the situation grew increasingly worse, they were forced to leave their region in December 1980. However, they continued to be vigilant to protect themselves because the military kept them under constant surveillance. In a country like El Salvador, the police and the military supported the government so the civilian population were left to their own resources. Also there were informants (*orejas*) in the community so people had to be careful with whom they spoke. The repressive system, which began in 1931, made people afraid of the National Guards, the Death Squads and also the informants. Some of the participants commented how they reacted to the presence of security forces in Melbourne. They reported that they were still very circumspect about whom they could trust, especially the police force.

It can therefore be said that some of the participants became internally displaced persons because they had to flee from place to place. During the 1980-92 conflict, it has been estimated that about one in four Salvadorans was displaced. They were forced to flee because of the civil war and the violence that almost paralysed the country. A number of strategies were used in order to survive including keeping as low a profile as possible. Participants claimed that they needed to be constantly on the alert and to hide or destroy any incriminating documents as well as prohibited material. Rosa mentioned that after her husband's death, she packed up and hid all his records, some of which were banned in El Salvador.

Often the women and children stayed behind after the men left. They were however forced to flee at a later date, leaving behind extended family members, some of whom they never saw again. Some families were constantly on the move. For example, Gloria and her seven children left El Salvador for Costa Rica in 1981 but prior to this date they moved from house to house. She left because of lack of food, the presence of landmines, her children's ill health and because all means of communications were cut off. She stated that:

We came through motives of war ... We were living in Guazapa, a zone where the guerrillas were present ... If the guerrillas were there, the military would also arrive to bomb them ... The zone where we were living had lots of *cerros* (hills) and *monte* (forests) ... the guerrillas used to look for these places to protect themselves ...

Linda also recounted stories of family members having to flee the country. As mentioned earlier, her sister and brother-in-law fled to the United States illegally in the early 1980s. Linda claimed that if she and her family had gone to the United States, they would have been deported to El Salvador by the authorities.

Constant Mobilisation

Because of the political situation, people became adept at shielding themselves to escape the violence. There was a common theme of constantly moving because they had to flee the military and the police. They moved from house to house, transferred buses constantly or walked to work. For them life had to go on in spite of the crisis. In the university, they ran and hid if they noticed others running without being given any reasons. Some slept in the open fields *incognito*, which Victor did or he went to his brother because he could not stay in the refuge centre with his family. Gloria and her

children also had to sleep in the open fields often and her greatest fear was that mosquitoes would sting her children and they could get sick.

However, in order to stay one step ahead of the military or the death squads, the men in particular needed to be able to move quickly from one part of the country to another or to cross international borders. This meant that they needed to travel light, so personal effects were kept to a bare minimum or just left behind. In order to escape the military, the men including older sons often had to separate from their wives and younger children. Some of these men and/or their sons joined guerrilla groups and stayed behind to fight for the 'cause', while others moved to neighbouring countries as illegal migrants.

Many young men also had to move and hide because there was forced conscription in the army for 14-year olds and older. In fact Victor and Clara's second son had to go to Nicaragua at age 13. Separation could last years with some family members never returning or becoming part of the 'disappeared'. They became disconnected from extended family members and their local community. Mothers took full responsibility for the remaining family members as they tried to protect them from the worst effects of the political conflict. Mothers then became symbols of great significance in the continuity of the families. For example, Gloria and Clara took tremendous responsibility in caring for their numerous children, while their husbands were away. They adopted roles and responsibilities, which were outside the normative expectation of their culture and had difficulty returning to their former roles once their husbands returned from hiding. When the participants arrived in Australia, the women were expected to become traditional wives again but without familial supports. This reversion to former roles put pressure on the marital relationships, especially in their resettlement phase.

Silence and 'Do not tell anyone'

This appears to be a common attitude of many. Because of the random repression in operation, the participants learned how to be extra careful with whom they talked. Since they could not get support from the government or the police, silence predominated. They were afraid to tell anyone about what they saw, heard and experienced because they were not sure what the consequences could be. In short each person made judgements about who to trust or not and when it was safer to rely on one's own resources. To make a poor judgment about who would betray them could have resulted in their death. Distrust of authority had been already ingrained into them by their experiences of years of oppressive governments. The narratives show that they were both protagonists (as CEB members, union leaders or student protestors) and victims of the political structure operating in their country. Their experiences during this period changed the ways in which they related to their family members and to the wider community. These would have far reaching effects in their resettlement experiences.

The interviews showed that the participants had many traumatic experiences resulting from the war in El Salvador. Not only did they experience the loss of loved ones but they also witnessed many atrocities committed by the military against the civilian population. These experiences of trauma were simply repressed by most of the participants and not shared with other Salvadorans or with grief counsellors. During the interview, two of the participants had great difficulty expressing their experiences because they wanted to forget about it and go on with life. However, with some encouragement and time, they managed to relate their stories. These traumatic experiences would

also be true for most of the Salvadorans, who came to Melbourne and other parts of Australia as refugees.

CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

The insecurity of not knowing what would happen from one day to the next created fear in many; people had to live in constant watchfulness and trepidation. Because they could not get protection from their government and lawful authority, they became distrustful of others in authority and sometimes even with one another because of the role of informants in their own country. Silence was also common and these would be carried over in their resettlement process and could lead to fatalism, a defeatist mentality of not knowing how to fight for their rights and also isolation. Their fear of authority and/or reprisals in El Salvador was transmitted to their resettlement in Australia with some participants claiming that they were fearful of the police in Melbourne. It was difficult for both men and women to accept that once they had arrived in Australia they did not need to be afraid of the military or of authority anymore. They carried all sorts of emotional 'baggage' with them.

A daughter (3 years old) of two of the participants remarked to her parents during their initial settlement period 'look we passed by the soldiers and they did not scream at us' or 'the police passed by near us and did not kill us'. Since random repression was practised in El Salvador for many years and the police and security guards could just knock at someone's door to capture someone, a door knock could trigger fear in any of the refugees since many of these experiences of the past are still in their unconscious. As Sara claimed 'one stays with the shock, panic and fear and I still experience these feelings when I pass by a soldier or police.' Similarly, firecrackers, sirens or loud noises remind them of bombings during the war and would make them run for cover. If they see demonstrations or strikes on television, they begin to think that this could lead to a civil war, like what happened to them in El Salvador. Some of these experiences will be discussed in Chapter 10.

As mentioned earlier, the participants did not leave El Salvador immediately but only when they were left with no other option. Victor, for example, built a house somewhere near the city because he thought that war would be over soon but it did not happen. In fact, none of the participants even thought of walking to the United States or any of the neighbouring countries, an action taken by thousands to escape violence. When it became clear that it was unlikely that they would ever be able to return to their homes, three of the participants and their families chose to go to Costa Rica, even temporarily, because the UNHCR offered them protection and assistance.

COSTA RICA – A COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM

The continuing violence and lack of economic resources during the civil war, forced many to flee to neighbouring countries and the United States. The influx of Salvadoran refugees to Costa Rica began in 1980. Costa Rica signed the 1951 UN Convention and the 1967 Protocol in 1977, but it was only in October 1980 that the legislation, which defined a 'refugee' was put into practice (Basok, 1993). Therefore the UNHCR opened refugee camps in the neighbouring countries so the refugees were helped to flee. In Costa Rica the Salvadorans did not have to live in refugee camps but in the community. They were provided with temporary accommodation and assisted in finding jobs so that they could become self-sufficient. Gloria, Victor and Clara and their families (a total of 18 persons)

lived in the refugee centre for a short period of time and then rented houses for several years. One of the three solutions of refugee protection is resettlement in a country of first asylum but they did not apply for permanent residency. While Costa Rica accepted a few thousands of Salvadoran refugees, Ferris (1987) indicates that those who applied for residency would have lost their refugee status as well as emergency aid. It was also costly to obtain permanent residency and this is probably why these refugees did not apply for residency because they would not have been able to afford it. They only earned enough to cover their basic necessities.

The UNHCR provided funds for food, rental accommodation and medical care but this assistance was reduced in 1983 when the Costa Rican government took over the handling of refugee assistance from UNHCR. The children of the refugees were allowed to attend the public schools and family members were allowed to take advantage of socialised medicine. Unemployment rates, however, were high because the refugees were not allowed to work in certain sectors of society, such as schools, hospitals and factories. Most of the refugees could only work as servants, gardeners, and seasonal agricultural labourers or in projects funded by international agencies. Two countries, Sweden and Holland, funded some programmes for refugees but by 1989 funding from Sweden had ceased (Quizar, 1989).

Because of the continuing political conflict in the Central American region in the 1980s, the Organisation of American States (OAS), as mentioned in Chapter 5, passed a broader definition of a 'refugee' in 1984. This definition can be applied to Latin American refugees, especially in cases of generalised violence and mass exodus. Most Latin American countries have provided protection and assistance in situations of mass exodus but were not always able to provide permanent resettlement. In addition, Costa Rica was experiencing an economic crisis during the 1980s and to accept thousands of refugees not only from El Salvador but also from Guatemala and Nicaragua was not considered feasible. It is difficult to estimate how many refugees reached Costa Rica because of the constant movement of people but many were also deported.

Among the participants, only Victor, Clara and Gloria and their families fled to Costa Rica with the assistance of the UNHCR. They would have preferred to return to El Salvador once the war was over, but they were not allowed to do so because the war was prolonged. Victor and Clara and their seven children fled to Costa Rica in late 1980 because they had become targets of the military, which will be described in the next chapter. Prior to fleeing El Salvador, Clara and her seven children stayed in the Catholic Centre in San Salvador for nine months, a refuge centre for people fleeing the rural areas. Her husband, Victor, could not stay with them in this refuge centre as it was only for women and children so he stayed with his brother or slept in the open fields but visited them regularly. He was separated from them for six months. Their second son fled to Nicaragua and lived there for three years and then proceeded to Costa Rica where he lived as a refugee. The UNHCR allowed him to petition his whole family to go to Costa Rica and this is where they stayed for six years. Clara claimed that:

... we left in 1980 after the killing of the nuns ... through the UN we could live as refugees ... we got there by plane – the whole family ... we left everything in El Salvador ... we lived in Costa Rica for six years ... the children (8) were 16 – 3 years ... in Costa Rica we had a better life ...

Clara indicated that they left all their property in El Salvador with a family member and started life anew under precarious conditions. They felt apprehensive about Costa Rica because they did not know anyone in their locality or how they would cope while in exile. She explained that in Costa Rica they went first to a refugee centre and then to a friend's house where they stayed for a month. They rented a house during the duration of their stay. In spite of insecure conditions, Clara never complained about the situation in which they found themselves or the uncertainties of the future especially with such a large family. Once again her husband had to be away most of the time because of his job with a voluntary agency. Their son was accepted as a refugee for Australia in 1984 and he was allowed to sponsor his family in 1986, after he completed the stipulated two years' residency. The family arrived in Melbourne in December 1986, after six years in exile.

Likewise, Gloria, with her seven children, were forced to go to Costa Rica in 1981 and stayed until 1989. The head of the family was Gloria, as her husband stayed behind in El Salvador. Thus, she reminisced:

The children were getting sick ... we had nothing to live on ... our house was completely burned ... We only had our clothes on our backs ... an opportunity arose to go to Costa Rica so I asked to go ...it was more peaceful ... the United Nations helped us ...

Gloria explained that the guerrillas were constantly present in their region and used to eat whatever food they found in the area in order to survive. The situation of not having any food for the family made it difficult for her and her children so they decided to flee the country. Probably, Gloria and her family fled in time because their region was eventually burned down by the military and it also became a dangerous area because of landmines.

Living Conditions in Costa Rica

In spite of UNHCR assistance, the participants needed to work to cover expenses for food and clothing for the family. They claimed that they encountered discrimination on the part of the locals but some were friendly. Clara disclosed that some of the locals felt resentful because they thought that their government was assisting the refugees. This resentment on the part of the locals was probably due to the fact that the refugees received more aid from the UNHCR and often they would fall in line in the same office (Ferris, 1987). However, in spite of some minor problems, she recalled that:

My husband helped in projects ... but the situation became difficult when the peace agreement was signed ... The UN gave aid for house and food a little ... A priest in the project gave some help for food but very little ... the refugees had to find other ways to survive ... People in Costa Rica were quite friendly and we were well received ...

The peace agreement referred to by Clara was probably the proposal made in 1983 by the Contadora group (Mexico, Panama, Venezuela and Colombia) to resolve the conflict in the Central American region. This was during the same period when UNHCR handed over the care of the refugees to the Costa Rican government. The UNHCR also discontinued emergency aid in December 1985. A compromise draft treaty was presented in September 1984 and accepted by all five Central American governments but it was opposed by the United States (Barry, 1991).

There was another peace proposal that was recommended by President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica in 1986 and for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1987. However the five Central American Presidents only signed this proposal, known as Esquipulas II, in August 1987 but Clara and her family were already in Melbourne. The dates between what Clara stated and the literature do not seem to coincide. However, this could happen when one tries to remember incidents that happened in the past. Clara claimed that they were well received by the poor Costa Ricans. This is probably true because the poor were also victims of prejudice. On the other hand, the middle and upper class Costa Ricans had negative attitudes towards the poor Latin American refugees.

Although Clara's husband, Victor, had a job with the UN he was isolated from his wife and children and could only visit them every 1-2 months, but he liked the life in Costa Rica because he had a good job. Victor recounted that he was quite adjusted to life in Costa Rica and was happy because he had a lot of work, which he enjoyed. He had acquired 100 livestock to propagate but then their application to come to Australia was approved so he had to leave everything again. As he was recounting his story, he felt this loss. He would probably have wanted to stay in Costa Rica because of similarities in culture and language and it is closer to home.

Furthermore, both Clara and Gloria were grateful that their children (12) received free schooling in Costa Rica. In El Salvador there are very few schools for children in the rural areas. Costa Rica has a high literacy rate (more than 90%) compared to the other four Central American states (55 to 70%) and the economy is a little better. Costa Rica is also the only state in the region without the military so it has more teachers and schools (Quizar, 1989).

Like Clara's family, Gloria and her children were able to support themselves but also received aid from the United Nations. She related:

Costa Rica is poor but we were able to work and the children went to school ... UN gave us money to pay for the house ... they helped us find jobs to pay for food and clothing ... It was not easy to rent a house ... we ended up living in houses in bad conditions and sometimes in dangerous areas ... the people of Costa Rica were quite good but others discriminated ...

Gloria stated that it was more peaceful in Costa Rica and she was able to work in a clothing factory, her son in another factory and her daughter worked as a maid. However, she did not find it easy to rent a house because the people looked at their appearances. They saw that they were poorly dressed and thus may not have been good tenants. A few times they were asked to vacate a house soon after they had moved in presumably because they were 'poor'. They then ended up renting a house in bad conditions and in overcrowded areas where it was dangerous. Gloria did not give any reasons why they had to vacate the house often, but she implied that it was discriminatory on the part of the owners. She stated that in the area where they eventually settled, there were drunkards and unemployed. Also violence was rampant, including rape of young boys and girls. Although three members of the family were working and they received UNHCR aid, it was still difficult to meet their expenses. However, as in the case of Victor and Clara, UNHCR assistance was withdrawn. There could also have been some fear that the military or its spies would find them in Costa Rica. Gloria claimed that 'many (spies or military) came who used to persecute my husband and one of them stayed near us'. The locality where they lived was quite crowded so it would not be easy to distinguish

the new faces in the vicinity. She was also constantly vigilant about next-door neighbours to make sure that her children were safe; a habit she had acquired since her marriage. She was also afraid of retaliation and this is why they eventually had to leave Costa Rica.

After a period of time the three participants and their families adapted to life in Costa Rica. Some of them were gainfully employed but the extra support from the UNHCR was needed. Otherwise it was difficult for them to subsist just on their personal income, as rent was costly. The adjustment process would have been easier because of similarities between the two countries. Since they could not stay in Costa Rica nor return to El Salvador because of the war situation, they needed to move to another country where they could again live in more stable conditions. The UNHCR therefore recommended resettlement in Australia. Refugees are only resettled in a third country if they have no option of returning to their home country.

Summary

This chapter looked at some of the reasons that caused the socio-economic and political conflict in El Salvador. It showed how the participants experienced trauma while living in their home country because of the war situation as well as what they witnessed in the areas where they lived. Not all their experiences of trauma can be related in this chapter. Some of the participants also claimed that war was sporadic and this was proven by their experiences. Three participants indicated that war began in 1963 and 1965, while another one said that in their area it began in 1972. In the capital city it was through the 1980s. It also showed a level of resilience in the way people continued to live and work in spite of great difficulties. Resistance is also a strong quality in the way they defended themselves from the military and the police.

Only three of the participants and their families fled to Costa Rica because of the assistance received from the UNHCR in the early 1980s. Those from Costa Rica and from El Salvador only came to Australia after the mid-1980s because they hoped that the conflict would soon end. Some of them moved from one area to another while in their home country, but the political crisis became intolerable. El Salvador being a small country and densely populated, space was very limited. The conflict forced them to leave with no alternatives left, otherwise they could have been killed or 'disappeared'.

This chapter showed how the participants experienced the socio-economic and political crisis in their home country in the 1980s. While the refugees were victims of generalised violence, it is necessary to prove their claims for refugee status and the next chapter will explore their individual reasons.

CHAPTER 8: REASONS FOR BECOMING REFUGEES

The previous chapter explored how the Salvadorans experienced the socio-economic and political conflict in their home country. It presented the strategies they took to avoid the military and showed how these experiences have affected their lives. It also discussed the experiences of those who left El Salvador and went to Costa Rica prior to seeking refugee status in Australia. Among the durable solutions of the UNHCR, third country (Australia) resettlement is the most complex and the most costly and this is only done when refugees cannot return to their home country. The three participants in the study, who came from Costa Rica fitted this criterion while the others came directly from El Salvador under the Special Humanitarian Programme.

While the previous chapter explored experiences of the participants while in El Salvador, this chapter will examine the reasons why they became refugees, which warranted their being accepted under the Refugee/Special Humanitarian Programme of Australia.

REASONS FOR BECOMING REFUGEES

Although most of the Salvadorans were victims of the generalised violence, those who claimed refugee status needed to prove that they had a 'well-founded fear of persecution' on an individual basis, according to the UN Convention. Persecution may vary in terms of race, nationality, and membership of a particular social group or based on one's beliefs such as religion or political opinion. Before fleeing the country, most of the participants moved from house to house or from the rural to urban areas and vice versa to stay in their extended families' homes or in places where there was relative peace.

The participants gave several reasons why they fled El Salvador during the political conflict. While most of their claims could be classified as political according to the UN definition, it was not that clear-cut. In the past, it would probably have been easier to identify refugees according to the classic definition of the UN convention because of the political or religious systems operating in their home countries, but today it is no longer that simple. The determination of refugee status may also depend on the guidelines of governments and the interpretation by their representatives on the claims made by each person. The reasons given by the participants may differ in intensity. These were related to membership of a particular group and/or political opinion and religion although there was a great deal of over-lap. The main reasons for seeking refugee status revolved around the following themes:

- religious/humanitarian
- political
- union activism
- university activism

- being a suspect/fear of reprisals
- random repression

Religious/humanitarian reasons

Victor and Clara's reason for becoming refugees fits into the religious/humanitarian category. He and his wife belonged to the CEB and both were active in helping the community as the following anecdote of Victor illustrates:

I was accused of committing a *delito* (crime)... My crime was because I was working with the North American missionaries ... they always had things to bring to the people in need ... they collected all the children, who had lost their parents ... we hid boxes of food, medicines for coughs and intravenous drugs in our *tatu* (underground shelter) and then distributed them ... but hidden ... for this I was accused of committing a *delito* ... I was involved since 1975 ... many times I received threats ...

During the interview, I was struck with the way Victor emphasised the word 'crime' which he repeated three times. Crime, according to Quinney (1999), is a definition of behaviour that is conferred on a person by authorised agents (legislators, police, prosecutors and judges) in a politically organised society. It is a judgement that is formulated according to the interests of those segments of society, which have power to translate their interests into public policy. In the case of Victor, this would probably refer to his activities in the community of helping in the distribution of food and medicines. He also allowed the missionaries to hide in his *tatu* to protect themselves. Since outreach programmes for the poor were few and far between at that time so anyone involved in this activity was labelled as a communist. The military, by implementing the law of the government with regards to people helping the poor, would classify such an activity as 'criminal' so they were after him and this is the reason why the military persecuted Victor. This incident happened in the early part of 1980. Not finding Victor at home because he had already fled, they turned to Clara, who said:

We were persecuted because my husband helped the poor ... I saw the necessity so I worked inside the community ... Parents were being killed and the children abandoned ... We received a few in our home ... My husband had gone to the capital so the military turned to me ... there was an order to kill all of us ... I left the house for three days but the military waited from 9 am to 5 pm ... since they did not find us, the military threw a bomb to our house ...

Clara indicated that she left their home when she became aware that the military began to look for her. She returned after three days and it was during this time that the military arrived. The military, according to her, surrounded their house and stayed from 9 AM to 5 PM each day but did not find her. The reason being is that during the daytime she would go to the river with her eldest daughter to wash the clothes but distributed her six children in three neighbourhood homes. Before going home, she would always check whether the military was still around to make sure that it would be safe to proceed. She mentioned that she always went to the house of her *comadre* (baptismal godmother of one of the children) to wait for the military to leave the premises. Fortunately, the military only went to certain houses to search, otherwise she would have been found. Although the neighbours knew of her whereabouts, no one reported her, but they became fearful. Without a telephone system in the area, they could not call one another to make sure that the military had left. The neighbours needed to

cooperate to defend one another by forming a good social network and keep silent - an attitude, which many have learned to protect themselves and their families.

The missionaries mentioned earlier found this out so they took Clara and the children to a refuge centre in San Salvador in the early part of 1980. The children in Clara's narrative were the orphans of the parents, who were killed by the military because they were presumed to be communists/subversives. The stance, taken by Clara and Victor, was contrary to the will of the military so they were persecuted. At that time the missionaries visited small towns in the war zones and they used to gather the orphaned children. They were taken to other families to be looked after. Clara took in 15 children at a time to be fed, bathed and de-loused. The missionaries would then take them to a refuge centre in San Salvador for women and children only. Clara indicated that the military then began to kill both the parents and the children. This incident is indicative that a practice was revived from the 1932 rebellion since the rooting out of 'infection' in the western region proved to be effective. The western region was the only part of the country that was relatively 'peaceful' while the other areas were in turmoil in the 1980s (Danner, 1994). 'Infection' refers to communism and the killing of peasants and their children would further eliminate communists, who cause the rebellions. These are the only two participants in the study who were persecuted because of their involvement with the CEB.

The missionaries in this narrative were raped and assassinated on 2nd December 1980 and buried in an undisclosed grave, which was later found (Montgomery, 1995). To avoid being seen and captured by the military, Victor fled to the city so he got separated from his family for more than six months. The dislocation of members of families during the war was a common experience with the participants. It was difficult to keep whole families together when they had to move locations so frequently mothers usually stayed close to their children. They practically lived like nomads for a period of time. This was especially difficult because of the close-knit family bonds of Salvadoran families in the rural areas. They would then be classified as internally displaced persons and there were more than half a million in this situation in the 1980s.

Outreach programmes for the poor only began in the 1970s as part of the 'preferential option for the poor'. Prior to this period, priests and religious sisters did not go to villages to visit the poor; probably most of them were in their religious institutions. In fact in the villages the priests visited rarely so the people were left on their own to organise their saints' feasts, prayer groups and celebrations. Clara had difficulty narrating her story so she rubbed her hands relentlessly. I reassured her though that it was important for others to know how the poor people helped one another in the rural communities because of lack of government support. In Australia there are charitable organisations and volunteers who assist the poor and this situation in El Salvador struck me as rather extraordinary.

Political Involvement

Gloria's husband worked against the government and belonged to the Socialist Party and so fits into the 'political' category. Even though several decades had passed since the 1960's, Gloria provided a detailed description of her constant fear of reprisals because of her husband's involvement in politics. His persecution started in 1962 but the political conflict commenced in 1980. Thus, she recalled:

My husband worked against the government in 1962 ... he had to flee and hide constantly ...the military used to look for him ... the children and I were in danger ...we used to sleep in the forest but not continuously ...

She added that through the years the family fled from place to place and their lives were always in danger so they fled the country, as related in the previous chapter. Gloria claimed that she belonged to the *iglesia popular* (Church of the poor people) but she did not appear to have been persecuted although she said that many were killed and tortured in the rural areas for belonging to this group. The decision to leave the country was left to Gloria, having the sole responsibility of her children. Her husband stayed behind in El Salvador to continue with the political struggle, which he saw as just.

As related in the previous chapter, Gloria and her seven children fled to Costa Rica in 1981 because they could no longer live in their area. Three of her children became active in the political struggle and stayed in El Salvador until the 1990s. These children eventually came to Australia under the Family Reunion Programme and Gloria paid for their airfares, which she had to save little by little from her pension funds. She did not indicate any difficulty in sponsoring them because they were still part of the family unit when Gloria and her children fled to Costa Rica.

Rosa, for example, became a widow after her husband, a journalist, was killed by the military. She told many graphic stories about incidents that occurred during this time and claimed that anyone who spoke or wrote about the political conflict in El Salvador was considered a subversive/communist. She had a cousin who was tortured and imprisoned for the same reason, but was later released. After the assassination, he went to Rosa's house immediately to make sure that all his archives were packed and kept away from the military. Her cousin's quick action had saved Rosa from a possible problem with the government authorities. Her mother-in-law also burned most of her husband's books and some were given away.

Rosa had four young children (including her youngest brother) with her so it would have been extremely difficult to be faced with the assassination of her husband. She claimed that after her husband was killed 'I was very confused and did not know the files'. After burying her husband, they had to flee to a relative's home to escape the war situation and packed up a few belongings, which they could take with them by hand. She added that she could no longer work and there were no more schools for the children. Rosa's story resonated with stories told by other participants that they needed to be prepared for flight on short notice and leave everything behind. To augment Rosa's comment about the loss of schools, Wood (2003) points out that 644 schools were destroyed during the civil war of the 1980s, but she does not give any details of where these schools were located except that 17 per cent were from the Usulután region, but Rosa lived in the capital city.

To elaborate on the events that occurred during the elections, commented by Rosa, Montgomery (1995) claims that during the 1989 elections three journalists were killed and one was seriously wounded by the Armed Forces because the guerrillas had reached the city and the confrontations between the military and guerrillas had escalated dramatically. Those who wielded power in El Salvador did not want anyone to speak against the government nor against the system. Although President Duarte (1984-89) was in theory the leader of the country, the military ruled the country and repression was in force. The feeling of powerlessness prevails when the military becomes too powerful because the President is not able to do much for the country.

Another reason for the escalation of violence in the 1989 elections was based on fears about who would be the next president. The ARENA party, whose members came from the oligarchy, the military and the death squads, had become powerful once again. This party had won the 1982 Constituent Assembly elections and there were fears that the party would also win the 1989 presidential elections because some of the members were from the death squads, notably Roberto D'Aubisson, the founder of the party and leader of the death squads. The results indicated that the candidate of the ARENA party won the presidential elections. This event determined the future of the country but the people wanted an end to the civil war.

Rosa gave another reason for fleeing El Salvador, which concerned the military recruitment of her eldest son and youngest brother and said:

I wanted to be where there was no war ... if I could work and my children could grow in peace, that was all I was looking for ... I also had my youngest brother, who was the same age as my oldest son (14 years) ... It was the age of recruitment for the military ...

Rosa already had several family members living in Melbourne when she and the children came in 1989. She thought that Melbourne would be a good place for them to settle. Although she hesitated about leaving El Salvador immediately after the death of her husband, the murder of the Jesuits on 16th November, 1989 (Whitfield, 1994) was the deciding factor. She realised then that by staying in El Salvador, her brother and her son could be recruited by the military because the political conflict had become increasingly worst. With regards to the recruitment of the Armed Forces, Barry (1991:164) comments that 'youths as young as 14 were forcibly recruited by the military, whose annual intake varied from 12,000 to 20,000 and most of these young men came from poor areas. Those who belonged to the upper class could ask for an exemption.' These young men were recruited anywhere in the city, school grounds, picture theatres or streets.

This forced recruitment was confirmed in an incident that occurred in early 2004 in Melbourne, when I visited a Salvadoran family. A Salvadoran couple happened to be in the vicinity at the same time. The family I was visiting invited them for a cup of coffee but the 'visit' lasted for three hours. As his story unravelled and probably he felt relaxed in our company, he revealed that he was a former member of the Armed Forces. He indicated that he was forcibly recruited by the military at age 16 on his way to the store to buy a bottle of soda for his father. After almost 10 years' service with the military, he decided to leave the service with someone else's assistance because he no longer wanted to be involved with the military and its role in the political conflict. Because of bullet wounds sustained in the latter part of his military service, he needed surgical interventions (he showed us his scars!) when he arrived in Melbourne. He came to Melbourne in the late 1980s but he has been barred from visiting his country for 25 years, although his family is allowed to visit El Salvador.

In the course of the conversation, I intervened to indicate that the Salvadorans in Melbourne are still suffering the consequences of the aerial bombings. He replied simply 'that used to be my job.' In addition he revealed that he was sent to the United States for training and that there are also former guerrillas living in Melbourne. This information also confirms the reason why some of the Salvadorans, who are aware of the presence of ex-military men in Melbourne, have expressed fear with whom they could talk. I was somewhat in a state of disbelief when I heard this man's experience. I had been

approached in the late 1980s that ex-military men had been accepted as refugees and people had expressed fear. However, because of lack of evidence at that time on my part, I could not do anything.

Union Activism

While each participant recounted different experiences while in El Salvador and prior to becoming refugees, there was a common theme of trauma and fear throughout their accounts. The story told by Ramon, who was a union leader, illustrates the precarious ways participants existed during this time. He claimed that he could barely survive on what he earned in spite of the fact that his wife also worked as a teacher. In addition, he also had other family members living with them whom he supported. Ramon indicated that he and his workmates were going hungry and this is the reason why they asked for the increase. Household members usually pool their incomes together to survive but their parents were elderly. Since they did not receive any pensions from the government, they had to be supported by other family members. Although he and other union leaders were able to obtain the increase, many were killed, 'disappeared' and persecuted. For other union members it was even more difficult to feed their families because their wives did not work.

While his claims appear to be economically based, it was because of his union leadership and activities that he received death threats. He was employed by the government and was working for an increase in salary levels. Many employees were only paid about 30 *colones* a month but he earned 60 *colones*. He said that it was still very low because he had to support a family and this is how he described his problem:

In my work I belonged to a *sindicato* (union) to improve salary levels ... we were able to obtain an increase ... but many were killed ... persecutions for all of us ... some were made to 'disappear' ... I received threats daily ... I was next on the list to be killed...

Ramon's description of these horrific events was in a *précis* format - as if the spelling out of details was too painful. The participants commonly used this method of narrating incidents that contained atrocities. He claimed that he and his wife, Ines, were threatened by phone constantly as well as stopped in the streets. Like, several of the participants, Ramon and Ines felt tense and powerless so they decided to flee the country. His application and that of his family (wife, three daughters and one grandson) were approved almost immediately and they were able to leave the country without delay.

In the history of El Salvador, the government discouraged people from getting involved in unions. Because of the economic and political situation in the country, Ramon decided to join the union and became a leader. According to Montgomery (1995) union activists in the urban areas have played a significant role in challenging the government about the economic situation in the country and there was repression from 1980-82, but some union militants met clandestinely. By 1983 there was an upsurge in the number of labour unions and peasant organisations, headed by a new generation of leaders. Strikes and street demonstrations had become common. The government had difficulty in controlling such groups because most of them were suspected of being linked with the FMLN. Economic conditions, however, had deteriorated in 1984 and public employees, who once were on the side of the government, also began organising themselves and Ramon was an employee of the postal system of the government. His wife, Ines, a participant of this study, was employed as a primary

school teacher but she claimed that she was never threatened whereas many teachers were killed or 'disappeared' in the 1980s.

Their eldest son could have come with them to Australia, but he was in a de-facto relationship at the time. Being in a de-facto relationship, the permission of the parents of his partner had to be sought and they would not have consented. However, during the interview, Ramon also indicated that his son was no longer dependent on his family and if his son had come with them, their departure from El Salvador would have been delayed but this is explained in another chapter. Because of constant threats to his life, he could not afford the delay.

Ramon recounted similar experiences to those of Rosa and Gloria and claimed that he fled the country because of his political activities and fear of reprisals. Although Ramon was already experiencing difficulties since 1984, he did not come to Melbourne until 1988. Most of the narratives indicate that people were not willing to leave the country immediately but only when they were left with no option. I found it difficult to interview him because he wanted to say so much and would jump from one subject to another. While Ramon did not indicate that it was the first time he spoke about his experiences during the interview, his wife followed me to the car to thank and tell me that 'her husband was finally able to unburden himself'. This episode shows how important it is when people are able to relate their horrific stories to someone and hopefully it proved to be a cathartic experience for him.

Student Activism

With Linda it was her husband's life that was in danger. He was a student at the UES. The students at the university had gained the reputation of being communists/ subversives because anti-government groups had increased in the 1970s and 1980s. Protests and demonstrations were usually associated with neo-Marxist communist ideology. Historically, the university became autonomous in 1950 and the students had moved forward to the centre of the political stage by the late 1960s, although it still had a certain degree of protection because of its middle class status. In the 1960s student enrolments had increased dramatically under the leadership of progressive rectors and the students became known to have provided support for the left in the 1970s, such as the guerrilla movements (Dunkerley, 1988; Whitfield, 1994). As a consequence, many students, lecturers and others in management positions were killed, 'disappeared' and tortured by the military. The UES, which was founded in 1841, was the only university in El Salvador until 1965 when the University of Central America (UCA) was founded (Barry, 1991). The UES was closed in 1972-73 and again in 1980-84 and part of the time in 1989-90 because of protests and demonstrations. This incident, however, happened in 1988 and Linda described it in a straightforward manner:

My husband was studying at the UES ... A list of students had appeared in the newspapers and some of them had already 'disappeared' ... The students used to go out into the streets to hold strikes, demonstrations ... Sometimes students used to be captured in their homes at night ...

Linda explained that the students went on strikes and demonstrated in the streets because of lack of government support. Her husband's life was in danger so they made plans to go to Canada or Australia or wherever they could go. To avoid the military and the police, her husband transferred to another region to work but he also had to find ways and means of not being recognised. He devised a

method of using different buses to and from work. Also he could not go for a walk on his own because he risked being searched by the police. She realised then that they could not live like this all their lives. If accompanied by Linda and their daughter (a toddler), they could walk in peace. While waiting for their application for Australia to be approved, they waited at her mother's home in the rural area but did not tell family members or friends about their plans. Often, people have to act clandestinely so as not to be found. This experience may have affected Linda and her husband because they have not returned to their home country since they fled.

Being a Suspect and Fear of Reprisals

Thomas had a different reason for becoming a refugee. It was not uncommon to be nabbed by the military during the political conflict and be labelled as a 'suspect'. According to his wife, Rebecca, he was suddenly captured while speaking to friends because he was 'suspected' of working with the guerrillas but was subsequently released. She went to the police headquarters but was not given any reasons for her husband's detention:

We came here because my husband was captured by soldiers ... they thought that he worked with the guerrillas ... He was simply a farmer ... One day, the Armed Forces came to get him and took him to headquarters ... he was tied around the neck as if they were ready to hang him ... He was detained for one week, locked up and interrogated on what persons reported...

Rebecca and Tomas lived in the rural area where she claimed that 'there was no war' although the guerrillas were around their area because of explosions they heard during the night. Although the police could not give any reason for his capture, he was nevertheless treated as a 'criminal'. Rebecca mentioned that this did not happen only to him but to other persons as well. She was courageous enough to front up at the police headquarters in spite of the lack of evidence for her husband's detention. After her husband's release from detention, he became very fearful and anxious to the point that their children also felt the effects of this experience because they cried a lot. Apart from this episode, the couple did not seem to have experienced violence or witnessed it to the same extent as the other participants.

It is possible too that the military might have revived another practice that occurred during the 1932 Revolution when men, with indigenous features in the rural areas, were killed. In Australia, Thomas used to wear a particular type of hat, which made him look like a descendant of the indigenous people. Most of the Salvadorans I have met have the mestizo features, but he looked rather distinct from them. I accompanied him and his son to Warrnambool in 1988 and noticed that people in the streets and cars would turn their heads to look at us. This happened when we were walking in the streets or sat down in the park to discuss the possibility of their resettlement in Warrnambool because of the availability of market gardens where he could work, as described in the next chapter.

Random Repression

Another example is Juan who had a different claim about his 'fear of persecution'. One evening after work he was 'kidnapped' by two armed men. He was put into a truck by the men and taken to a deserted place. Since the incident, he became fearful and said without a great deal of elaboration that:

... the thieves used to sometimes present themselves as guerrillas ... I was the manager of a chain of outlet stores ... I knew everything about the business ... two armed men came and took me ... I was promised that I would not be hurt ... two men were also in the truck ... when we reached an isolated place, they were killed ... Since then I had difficulty working and became very nervous ...

The identification of the men referred to above was unknown and no record of these particular killings have been documented. Apparently, some guerrillas robbed people and death squads killed people. The thieves mentioned by Juan could have been members of either of the two groups. This is an example of random repression that used to occur in the 1980s but the persons who committed this crime were not always easy to identify. This incident could not be reported to the lawful authority or Juan's life could again be in danger.

Juan claimed that these men wanted information about the company where he worked. He said that the company had already experienced several assaults and burglaries but no personnel had been killed. After the killings of the two men, Juan was taken to another park where he was asked to explain about the company he worked with. The 'thieves' wanted to know about the leaders, the union and how the employees were protected. Juan stated that he gave them all the information he could but he was warned 'not to tell anyone'. Because of this experience, he found it very difficult to visit the outlets and he asked to work in the office. He and his family could have gone to Guatemala since some family members were already living there but he was afraid that the 'thieves' would follow him. At the start of the interview, Juan looked apprehensive and somewhat reluctant to share his story because he bowed down his head for the first 15-20 minutes. I had difficulty understanding him because his voice was not audible. He gradually relaxed and became more at ease during the rest of the interview. He even offered me a cup of coffee and accompanied me to the car!

Some of the reasons given by the participants for fleeing the country are not always in consonance with the UN definition of a refugee. In some cases, it was rather a combination of factors, which resulted in becoming a target for repression. To be in the wrong place at the wrong time was enough to attract attention from the military since random repression was also in operation. It was enough to be a 'suspect' as in the case of the husband of Irene. Her husband became a prime witness of the murder of the millionaire and was threatened by the guerrillas through the years. As Irene claimed in a brief monologue:

We fled because a millionaire appeared in our microbus ... He was killed and left in our microbus ... We recognised the persons who took the bus ... We were warned that if we tell the police we would also get killed ... In 1985 the case was re-opened and we went to court to testify ...

According to Irene this event occurred in 1981 in San Salvador, where the family lived and the case was not re-opened until 1985, but they were pursued until 1987 so they decided to flee the country.

She thinks that the guerrillas, who threatened them, killed the millionaire. Her husband was the accountant in a clothing factory owned by his brother. The microbus belonged to the factory, but they were allowed to use it. Because of this trauma, her husband developed 'Gillian Barre' (virus of the nerves) in 1983 and had become seriously ill, but he recovered. She claimed that these events made her and her husband fearful. They could no longer walk freely in the streets because of constant threats. They also had to move from house to house. This behaviour became a common feature for people being pursued by the military, death squads or sometimes guerrillas. The phrase 'do not tell anyone' seems to be a common expression of persons usually related to the military, death squads, thieves and probably the guerrillas.

To elaborate on the above claims, Montgomery (1995) comments that the guerrillas used to kidnap millionaires to ask for ransom, but they were usually released. A few may have been killed but no mention was made about this incident in the literature surveyed during the period. With regards to killings, it is not usually clear who is responsible because there were three groups operating at the time – the military, the death squads and the guerrillas, although the latter group killed less people and this was proven by the UN Truth Commission in 1992 (Doggett, 1993).

Summary

The interviews revealed that the participants were compelled to flee the country not because of the economic conditions but arguably more for the social unrest, generalised violence and for safety reasons. Australia offered resettlement and it seemed to be the best solution to flee the country at that time. It is also far from the conflict zone. However, their experiences of the political conflict have become part of the 'baggage' that they carried with them to Australia. They faced new difficulties in the initial settlement, for which they were mostly unprepared and this will be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9: THE INITIAL SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES IN AUSTRALIA

This chapter discusses the initial settlement experiences of the participants after arriving in Melbourne during the period 1986–1989 as R/SHP migrants. As part of initial settlement, they had access to programmes and services available for them at the time of their arrival. In 1982 Australia introduced the new ‘Special Humanitarian Programme’ and the Salvadorans were one of the first groups, who became eligible for this programme. According to the participants, Australia offered the quickest way of leaving the country, although three of them waited for two years before coming. Canada and Sweden also offered them resettlement but the processing system took somewhat longer and some of them needed to flee El Salvador immediately due to threats they had received.

SETTLEMENT – A PROCESS

To facilitate the settlement of new migrants, Australia has adapted a range of post-arrival services and programmes in the post World War II period. The settlement of new migrants can be quite a complex process. It begins with adaptation or readjustment, which commences soon after arrival and reception. This process ends when migrants have adjusted to the new environment and have integrated into the new society. It could be a long or incomplete process depending on each individual person.

The assimilationist approach of the 1950s and 1960s assumed that new arrivals could become part of the dominant society within two generations. With the change of policy in the late 1970s to multiculturalism, migrants were encouraged to maintain their cultural heritage but could also become full members of Australian society. This transformation to multiculturalism has not caused major racial conflicts. One plausible explanation for this is that because of the wide diversity of cultural backgrounds among migrants, no one ethnic group has been large enough to dominate Australian society. Nevertheless, Rumbaut (1991:56) articulates that ‘migration can produce profound psychological distress even among the most highly motivated or well prepared individuals and even among the most receptive circumstances.’ For refugees, there is also the added problem of their traumatic experiences prior to leaving their home country.

Settlement is also a critical social issue because it affects individuals, families, ethnic groups and institutions, and the ways in which society is cohesive. The 1978 Galbally report (cited in Cox 1996:7) defines settlement as:

... the complex process of adjusting to a new environment following immigration. It is a long term process affecting all migrants and particularly those coming from cultures different from that dominant in Australia or without a well-established ethnic group here. Its end point is the acceptance by and the feeling of belonging to the receiving society. It implies change both in the individual immigrant and the host society.

This same Report also states that settlement problems have wider implications for society than just the effect on the migrant and refugee populations. Issues confronting them flow over to the wider society. Resolution of issues associated with resettlement is also wider than just the individual and needs to be addressed by the dominant society and its institutions. It is then the responsibility of the government and the wider society to provide policies, programmes and services that would ensure equality of access and provision for new arrivals. Some policy changes have in fact made life more difficult for migrants and refugees. For example, in the mid-1990s changes in government policy occurred that put more emphasis on the acceptance of an increased number of skilled migrants that would help boost the Australian economy. However, the numbers of migrants under the family reunion and humanitarian programmes were considerably decreased.

Australia also adopted the micro-economic agenda of economic rationalism in which economic goals are intended to take the primacy over social goals through market forces rather than government intervention (Stillwell 2000). In Australia, there has been a move away from universal health care, a shifting of educational expenses from the government to the individual and a reduction in the availability of public housing and public funded dental care and an increasing emphasis on a 'user-pays' system (Castles 2004:1). This has resulted in some of the existing services being affected significantly. Some of these services became the responsibility of the community, family or individual migrants, while several services were placed on 'user-pays' basis (Cox 1996). For example, it has become more difficult to sponsor elderly parents and non-dependent brothers/sisters. New migrants were no longer eligible to claim unemployment benefits on arrival and during the time they have to search for employment. They have become the responsibility of their sponsors at least for the first two years. Some of these changes have been presented in Chapter 5.

While migrants and refugees may share the same difficulties in resettlement since both groups have had to make drastic changes to their lives, the refugees have the added 'baggage' of the trauma they experienced in their home country. Also most migrants have time to plan and prepare themselves to move to another country, but a large majority of refugees do not have such an opportunity. Further, migrants can return to their home country if they find resettlement in Australia too difficult but this is not the case with most refugees. To understand the resettlement of refugees in the host country, it is therefore important to consider their past history because this will influence their patterns of settlement. Joly (2004) argues that refugees may display different attitudes to settlement in the host country and she explains it by using two types of categories: the Odyssean and Rubicon refugees. The Odyssean refugees refer to those who were not just the victims of the political structure of their country but were also committed to the political struggle and to a project of society in their home country. They brought this project with them to the host country and their commitment continues. Their intention is to continue with the political struggle and to eventually return home. This group would not stay long in the host country and would not be motivated to resettle. Because of this project, they would be bound up with the same ethnic group in the host country. They would probably also form networks with the same ethnic group in other parts of the world.

On the opposite end of the spectrum are the Rubicon refugees. They have turned their back on their home country and no longer have a commitment towards it. They may however be concerned about their families and friends and would still be attached to their culture of origin. Return to their

home country would not be an option so they would probably have a greater motivation to start afresh in the host country. Nevertheless, due to the involuntary nature of their departure, their past could also have adverse effects on their settlement. In this context, the overriding importance of the refugee experience is considered unique because their past would determine their settlement. It is therefore imperative to establish a link between the circumstances that preceded their flight, exile and their subsequent settlement in the host country.

Settlement Needs and Social Networks

In an attempt to explain the settlement process of refugees, some experts have identified certain needs. Hugo (2004) points out that English language tuition, translation and interpreting services, accommodation support, health services, information and referral services are available to the newly arrived refugees. In addition, because of high levels of unemployment in the R/SHP group, they are also eligible to a full range of income supports and job search assistance. Moreover, Pittaway (1991) underlines that primary needs such as food, shelter and income provision have to be met in the first two years of settlement. She has also identified their secondary needs as language acquisition, further training and education and the need for specialised services especially counselling to address their experiences of trauma and torture. Jupp et al. (1991) add that there is a need to recognise their skills and qualifications and there is a lack of information about government services because of lack of English. While there are English classes, which the refugees can avail of, these courses do not cater to the professional groups, at least not in the 1980s, and this could affect their chances of not being able to find employment commensurate to their past experience.

While the aforementioned may seem a very complex web of settlement needs, others (Iredale et al., 1996; Gilchrist, 2004) stress the necessity of having social networks. New arrivals have a need to have contacts in the host country to assist them in maintaining their cultural heritage, give emotional support, provide material aid and services as well as information on employment, housing, and new contacts. This is probably one of the reasons why there are high concentrations of ethnic groups in some suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney because they can provide support and a familiar cultural environment to one another (Hugo, 1995). However, Collyer (2005) points out that migration is not only a social process but also an economic and political issue. It appears that early sociological approaches to migration have reflected a growing awareness that purely economic explanations were insufficient. Social networks have played a vital role in migration movements and this type of assistance, it seems, has also influenced the refugee movements to a significant degree.

A study (Collyer, 2005) in Europe reflects a change in the growth of refugee populations because of the increased flow of asylum seekers in the 1990s. In the past 'chain migration' had become popular due to the presence of social networks comprising of families and friends in the host country. New restrictions on migration policies now limit the support of families and friends because they have to bear the burden of supporting the new arrivals. Some have recourse to weak ties offered by ethnic or religious groups rather than their families. Others may have recourse to paid agents and/or smugglers. These agents then become the migrants' social network that provide them with information about a migration decision and offer a diversification of destinations, different from the usual destinations. In a similar vein, a study (Menjívar, 2000) of the Salvadorans in California (U.S.) also shows that social networks, when linked to social and human capital, can become a burden if the

older settlers cannot meet the demands of the new arrivals. The reason is that the new arrivals were far more numerous than the host community and because of their experiences of the political crisis, they needed to talk to people they could trust and this was not always possible.

Social networks in traditional societies and in non-western cultures in most Third World countries especially in the rural areas have existed for centuries. They are usually informal structures of families, friends and neighbours, who gather together as communities. These groups have usually provided support both materially, economically as well as emotionally. The elderly, usually grandparents, are valued because of their wisdom. They pass on their knowledge to the younger generation. In contrast to western society, the elderly, together with the disabled, the unemployed, and young children among others are often viewed as 'problems' (Pilisuk & Parks, 1986). In case of crisis, the young in non-western cultures prefer to talk to one of the elders to help them resolve or see through the difficulties they are experiencing. They do not have recourse to psychologists or agencies that provide such services. In addition there are very few psychologists available for this type of service in most Third World countries and it is also costly. Psychological counselling is a Western and foreign concept. Most of them would probably associate psychological counselling with persons who are mentally ill. This has been acknowledged by some of the participants in the study and they would prefer to talk to someone they could trust in relating the atrocious experiences they witnessed prior to leaving El Salvador. Lacking in social support and networks in Melbourne, the Salvadorans tend to repress their problems by not talking about it or by being constantly occupied. This could lead to isolation and loneliness, as the study reveals.

Network theory was popular in the 1980's and 1990's and the breakdown of networks and the need to establish new ones was a common theme (Cox 1989). Migration integration is a process of change of social systems where migrants move from one kinship network to another. In doing so they leave behind some kin and joining others, from one social network to another, from one societal system to another, which may involve the educational system, the work environment or the wider social system. The migrant may feel positive or negative about the social systems left behind, while the new system may seem welcoming or unfriendly, reasonably familiar or strange. Some adapt and find it a beneficial environment to live and develop, others fail to adapt and thus remain alien, and some become maladjusted, adopting survival strategies not conducive to personal fulfilment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) and other ecological theorists (Steinkopff Verlag, 2000) have taken up this theme of looking at the whole system and subsystems to explain interaction patterns and welfare of children and adults.

While social networks are also linked to social capital because of the financial and material support they can give one another, it is also a way by which people can share ideas, consolidate relationships, give emotional support and cooperate with one another. It is also a good medium to provide communication, establish links between long-term residents and the new arrivals. Social networks can also provide warm, caring and supporting relationships that help newcomers overcome barriers to learning and adapting in a new environment (Gilchrist, 2004). These could help them gain a sense of belonging to the host country. With the migration movements occurring in the last 100 years or more, social networks have also been established in the countries of destination. They establish links and aid in the migration of relatives and friends. However, the Salvadorans in Australia could be

considered as pioneer migrants in the 1980s because they are a new group. In the absence of families and kin, they had to rely heavily on government and voluntary organisations.

From another perspective, social support networks play a significant role in the health and mental health of newly arrived migrants/refugees. While it is acknowledged that professionals are necessary in the treatment of serious pathological disorders, social support networks serve as 'buffers' to people with friends and relatives. These could probably lessen the effects of stress of their past experiences and the migration difficulties they are encountering. It protects them from experiencing the full impact of their stresses (Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Goldsmith, 2004). Studies done by Pilisuk and Parks (1986) show that personal relationships can be established and nurtured through social networks and bring considerable benefits in terms of well-being. This, however, would depend on several factors such as having strong ties in the communities, the diversity of the members, their relationship of interdependence and their feeling of being connected to others as well as the level of care and love among members. This can be achieved through informal conversations among trusted people, who provide information and advice on various matters. Although it is not easy to measure the effectiveness of social networks, the influx of clients who see mental health professionals may be considerably lessened. Networks also provide different levels of support since network members have diverse ways in helping others. The study shows that some of the Salvadorans relied on their networks in the community during the time of the political crisis in their home country.

Refugees come with 'baggage' and this affects their settlement process. While they were able to flee the political turmoil in their home country, they may still be affected by the fate of family and friends, who were still exposed to danger. Their anxiety levels may increase because they continue to feel a sense of helplessness and powerlessness. Some refugees belonging to the same ethnic community in the host country may provide support but may also remind them of an earlier trauma or they could be perceived as being linked to perpetrators. The unfamiliar environment can create anxiety; loss of language can provoke fear and isolation, dislocation from culture and traditions may persist; and their beliefs could be challenged because they no longer belong to a dominant culture. In some instances contact with refugees from the same country does not always restore connections if they are viewed with suspicion and fear (VFST, 1998). These are some of the reasons why the refugees from El Salvador need extra services in the initial settlement phase otherwise their experiences of trauma persist for a long time, as explained below.

INITIAL SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

Australia is a signatory of the UN Convention but has extended the definition to include those who live in refugee-like situations but have not crossed international borders. Of the 14 participants, only one participant and his family (six persons) were asked to pay for their air travel and the rest were provided with free travel to Australia. A son sponsored his parents (both participants) and family but the rest applied on their own merit. In this group, four were not considered as high priority and two were not classified as refugees because their claims were not covered by the Convention.

The Australian Government has no Consular Office in El Salvador. The nearest Embassy is located in Mexico; hence representatives from this Embassy visited neighbouring countries to interview the applicants. These participants were interviewed either in El Salvador or in Costa Rica.

After the Australian Embassy approved their applications, some of the participants claimed that they were given a brief introduction about life in Australia and were told that they had to stay for two years. If they stayed less than two years, they would be asked to repay their travel expenses. Some of the professionals were warned that they would not be able to work according to their training but would need to work in factories. The reason given was that the Australian government paid for their airfares and this obliged them to accept any work they could find. This is a similar condition for migrants, who were given assisted-passage after World War II, as described in Chapter 5.

Travel to Australia

The participants, who were processed in El Salvador, did not travel immediately to Australia after being accepted as SHP migrants. Four of the participants waited two years and the rest came within a few months or a few days after being approved, depending on their situation. The refugees, who came directly from Costa Rica, did not have to wait a long time because their situation was more clear-cut. They had been living in the country of first asylum more than six years and could not return to their home country because the civil war was prolonged. The refugees were given little or no preliminary orientation about Australia at the time of their selection interview, so they were largely ignorant about the country to which they were heading. Arriving in Australia under these conditions was terrifying. Each part of the process had its own challenges, as described below.

Arrival at the airport

The time between getting off the plane in Australia and going through customs and their subsequent trip to the migrant hostel may have been relatively brief but for some it was stressful. Some claimed that their first impressions have had a lasting impact on them and how they felt about Australia. These participants belong to the CALD group and either spoke no English or relatively little. They also felt apprehensive of what to expect in Australia because they did not know anyone. In addition, they came from a war-torn country and carried with them the trauma of living in a political crisis. Two of the participants admitted that they learned English in school but were not able to converse at all. However, they were pleased to have arrived in a country where there was no war.

Ten of the participants expressed that they felt welcome on arrival at the airport although there was a lack of interpreters. One of the major issues confronting the participants when they arrived in Australia was the lack of interpreters. Their difficulties in communicating due to lack of English language skills heightened their fears of coming into a new country. In the case of two participants an interpreter met them at the airport. However, this interpreter made them feel anxious because they were told to throw away all the medicines they had brought with them. These medicines were meant for one of the children, who had bronchitis. According to the interpreter, it was against Australian regulations to bring in medicines unless they were able to produce a medical certificate to warrant such medicines. Unfortunately, they did not have the certificate nor were told about it prior to departure from their home country.

The following are some of the impressions experienced by the refugees on arrival at Melbourne airport. Most of the participants indicated that they were received relatively well in spite of the lack of interpreters, except two who claimed that they were 'locked up' at the airport on arrival.

The participants indicated that it was such a long trip and many of them did not remember all the details.

Rosa already had family members living in Melbourne. Because of delays in San Salvador, their flights were changed so the relatives were unable to meet her and the children on arrival. Rosa expressed her disappointment at not seeing her relatives at the airport, but at least she and her family were well received by the immigration personnel. She said that:

At the airport I do not remember much ... Immigration group came and we were told that the support group would visit us ... we went by taxi, provided by the Immigration to the hostel ... My auntie prepared food each time but on the day we arrived nothing was prepared ...

Rosa said that their application was approved in July 1989 but they did not come until December because the war had worsened at that time. She and her family were disappointed because she was really looking forward to meeting her relatives, after a separation of a few years. It is customary for the immigration personnel to arrange for transport to the hostel. Although Rosa had a CRSS support group, they were not at the airport to welcome them. She obviously accepted the arrangements made by the immigration personnel in spite of a lack of an interpreter compared to others who felt apprehensive in being put in a taxi. Her family could have served as her social support network but they happened to live on the other side of town so she did not get any assistance from them, which will be explained later.

Emma, on the other hand, was not only received well but also felt welcome even before taking the flight to Australia. She remembered with gratitude:

From Los Angeles, we were made welcome by the Australian authorities ... I have no reason to complain about anything – they were so cordial ... everyone had a good reception and maybe they do not recognise it ... they gave us meals in Los Angeles, then Sydney and Melbourne – we were all welcomed ...

Only Emma received such a warm reception at all ports of call, among the participants interviewed. She stated at the interview that from Los Angeles they were already made welcome and treated so well until they reached Melbourne. Of all the participants, she was probably the least traumatised because she did not claim to have suffered direct persecution. She probably was more open to whatever was given to her because fear was not as acute.

Ramon and his family had some difficulties when they arrived in Melbourne. The processing of the application at the airport was delayed and no interpreter was present. They were the only family in the study who had to stay in a room at the airport for three hours before their problem was sorted out. They felt quite fearful because no one in the family spoke English. He remembered with sadness that:

We arrived in Melbourne on a Saturday ... since we did not speak English, no one attended to us ... They kept us for more than three hours in a room ... A man came and said he will help ... He put us in taxis ... We did not know where we were going ... he did not explain either ... He only spoke to the taxi driver ...

Ramon said that he and his family (6 members) were not pleased about the way they were received at the airport and the worst part was being 'locked up' in a room and with no one to act as an interpreter. Being 'locked up' in a room probably made them feel that they would be interrogated, just like in El Salvador every time the police captured someone. Finally, he added, a man arrived to help them and put them in a taxi to go to the hostel but no explanation was made. They were perplexed and this made them feel fearful because they came from a war zone and did not know if it was the same in Melbourne. With this type of experience, it appears necessary to have interpreters based at the airport to explain what the new arrivals have to do and where they have to go.

While most of the participants arrived directly at Melbourne airport for processing, only one family had to stop over in Sydney for a couple of hours. The couple had to face a dilemma, which may appear simple for English speaking people, but proved to be a 'pantomime act' when they had to ask for a feeding bottle and milk for their young daughter. Pedro could still visualise this experience as he recalled that:

In Sydney, my wife had a good experience ... She had to design a bottle and went to the pharmacy and made signs ... Then we had to look for milk and my wife made all sorts of signs and noises ... then pointed to the child to make ourselves understood about the milk ... There was no interpreter in Sydney airport ...

Pedro recalled that the sales person at the pharmacy was very cooperative and helped them find a feeding bottle but then they did not know the English word for 'milk' so they went through the same motions. They also became anxious because they had to catch their connecting flight to Melbourne and they were afraid to miss the plane. It is understandable for people who are not seasoned travellers to become apprehensive when they have to transfer flights and without English, it is even worse. It has become apparent through this incident that there is a need for bi-lingual interpreters at airports to assist families especially those with young children and to assist them to transfer flights.

The interviews revealed that interpreters are needed at the airports to meet refugees and to explain to them the regulations about Australian laws and procedures. It is also a welcome gesture when refugees arrive that someone can talk to them in their own language and this would lessen the apprehension they feel in coming into a new country. Their fears, which had been internalised in El Salvador, were carried over to Australia and their lack of English language skills also contributed to their anxiety of what to expect on arrival.

Migrant Hostels

At the time of the refugee intake in the mid-1980s, there were still two hostels operating in Melbourne: in Maribyrnong (closed in the late 1980s) and in Springvale. These two hostels were later sold in 1994 in line with the government's policies of privatisation and economic rationalism, as explained in Chapter 5. The participants in this study were lodged either in Maribyrnong or Springvale Hostels. Although Rosa had relatives residing in Melbourne, she spent two months in the hostel. Some of the refugees, who had support groups, stayed for a limited period in the hostel but this depended on the availability of housing in the areas where the support groups were located.

The availability of hostels was deemed important, especially for refugees who had no support groups or family members in Australia. Refugees were also linked up to certain services, such as

language centres, banks, health care, schools and so on. Participants claimed that there were no limits on how long they could stay in the hostels and their stay varied from two weeks to one year. However, because of lack of privacy and other issues, participants were anxious to leave the hostels as soon as possible. While the food in the hostel was acceptable, they preferred to cook their own type of food.

The orientation experiences of participants varied with some being relatively satisfied and others less so. By and large all of them complained of being given too much information in too short a time with little real practical help on how to do basic things like catching a train or a bus. Those with support groups fared much better compared to those who relied on hostel staff for information and briefings. At the hostel, participants were met by the immigration personnel and also support groups. Soon after arrival they were given preliminary orientation to life in Australia and most of them indicated that they felt quite overwhelmed with the amount of information they were given. They claimed that at the time of the briefing sessions they were still experiencing the effects of jet lag. Rosa recalled that:

They gave us heaps of information ... I had just arrived and did not know anything ... Information was in Spanish ... they explained to us about transport in the city ...but only pointed to the map on the wall ... what is important is to know the landmarks ... but they explained to us globally ...

Although the information was given in Spanish, Rosa indicated that the persons giving the orientation pointed to a map on the wall where they could take the train or bus to go to the city. She claimed that she was still very confused because of jet lag and the instructions did not make any sense to her. She had no idea what direction to go to or which direction the train or bus would go in order to reach the city. Probably it would have been better if someone had accompanied them to the train station or bus stop to explain the transportation system. They were used to the transportation system in El Salvador which is totally different to the system in Australia, so they were confused and anxious about how to access public transport. Public transport in El Salvador was fairly frequent and there were no timetables, which is the opposite in Australia. Also the direction of the traffic is on the opposite side.

Clara and her family, who came from Costa Rica, also experienced 'confusion' about orientation programmes. She said that they were given too much in a short time and absorbed very little of the information given. She 'did not remember the orientation although there was a Spanish woman who translated for us.' In spite of some initial difficulties, Clara felt that facilities at the hostel were adequate and they were given a lecture on rules and regulations upon arrival. She probably would have not complained if the services were not good because she was used to making a lot of sacrifices while in El Salvador. However, at the end of it all she could not remember anything. Clara and her family only stayed in the hostel for a month because their support group moved them to a parish house. In a way it is better for people not to stay too long in the hostel so they can adjust to normal life quicker; otherwise some of them could become dependent on the hostel.

In contrast, Juan and his family stayed in the hostel for a year, which is quite long compared to the other participants. He recounted that:

We acquired the information we needed at the hostel ...some persons used to come to help but expected something in exchange ... but others also offered to give us information ...

Juan acknowledged, however, that the information he received at the hostel was adequate. He, like Rosa, could not retain all the information provided. Several persons visited him while he was in the hostel, some of them were soliciting for membership of particular groups, and this distressed him. For example, an evangelical pastor visited him and the family but pressured them to join his church, which he refused. Because Juan and his family stayed for a long time in the hostel, a Salvadoran group also visited them but they wanted him to join them and become involved in their causes of which he was not in agreement. This probably is an exceptional case in terms of orientation but he also experienced adverse reactions from the other groups, which the others did not have. The participants generally felt that conditions in the hostels were good and were grateful for the service.

Irene, who stayed at the hostel for five months, recognised that they were well received and said that she was grateful for the services provided by a whole range of organisations:

When we arrived at the hostel, it was late but we were well received ... the next day St. Vincent de Paul personnel were waiting to give us some clothing as we did not have any clothes for the cold weather ... we met a friend who explained to us what we had to do ...

Irene had pleasant experiences in the hostel, compared to others. Because of this initial contact with St. Vincent de Paul Centre, she was able to frequent the Centre to socialise. This again could be due to other experiences of socialising back home because others did not access the Centre where they could have also practised their English, as described in another section of this chapter.

However, several of the participants complained that they felt pressured to find work immediately – any type of work whether it matched their skills and experiences or not. Irene remembered that her husband was often pressured by Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) to work in spite of his lack of English language skills. Apparently he was told that since he was accepted to come as a refugee, he was expected to work not to study. The implication was clear, Australia does not want any free loaders – they must get off welfare as soon as possible. He managed to find a job and studied English at night, while still at the hostel, but found it very difficult and he used to cry often. By contrast, Juan disclosed that he was not pressured by CES to work, but he attempted to find work as soon as possible for personal reasons, probably to have the same lifestyle he was used to in El Salvador. Gloria's sons were also pressured to work but instead they took full time English courses. According to Emma if the refugees decided to take full-time English courses, they were not pressured as much to work because this also happened to her husband.

There were voluntary agencies based at the hostels in the mid-1980s who provided assistance. Two of these agencies, St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Salvation Army, provided clothes, furniture and white goods. There could have been other voluntary agencies as well. The other participants did not comment if they received any assistance provided by voluntary agencies or visits done by representatives of the above-mentioned agencies, except Ramon who was assisted by another group.

Ramon and his family, who did not have a good reception at the airport, were not well received at the hostel either. Their apprehension increased about what to expect here and he pointed out that although they were given their rooms, they were not fed that night and went to bed hungry. The other two participants who arrived late, on two different occasions, at the hostel were given meals. However,

there was a redeeming factor in this welcome because they met a good man, who helped and guided them the next day. Some of the personnel were quite helpful and even assisted him to find work and enrol in an English language course. However, he and his wife felt bad that their eldest daughter was pressured to work by CES at the hostel. She did not have a chance to attend any English classes so she ended up working as a cleaner one month after arrival.

To sum up, all except two of the participants expressed that they had a fairly good reception at the hostel. They also received the necessary orientation they needed but too much was given in a short time. The information was given in Spanish but they would have preferred it if the orientation were not given too soon after arrival. The interviews revealed that there is a need to improve orientation services given to R/SHP migrants, which would help them to mobilise and become more independent in a shorter period of time. In addition it is proposed that newly arrived R/SHP migrants should not be pressured by CES to work immediately after arrival without doing a beginners' course in English, at least for six months. The transition of life from El Salvador to Australia showed that it was not easy and everything was 'new'. Their past experiences also contributed to their anxiety and their lack of English to express their needs or to ask questions were not helpful.

PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES FOR NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES

As part of initial settlement, the participants were given access to programmes and services at the hostel. They were registered for their Medicare cards, Social Security Benefits (unemployment or special, and allowances for minor children), and the CES (now Centrelink) for job placement. They were also enrolled in English classes offered at the hostel or in another centre. Newly arrived refugees were entitled to a maximum of 510 hours of English language courses (Boyce & Madden, 2000) and this is still the ruling at present. For special cases, English courses could now be extended to 610 hours (IHSS Report, 2003). However, it does not appear to be sufficient if one wants to find a job according to one's professional training.

Learning English

Based on the interviews, some of the participants began their English courses at the hostel. They then transferred to another English language centre after leaving the hostel. English was and still is a big hurdle for all the participants because they belong to the CALD group. While a few learned enough English in these training programmes to communicate a little, others picked it up later as a result of constant interaction with English speakers. But for most, their conversation in English remains very limited and as one participant commented, they learn 'factory English'. This lack of basic English seems to be an underlying reason for their reluctance to get involved in the Australian culture and community organisations. An additional reason for their isolation is their fear of authority and their perceived needs to be cautious about trusting strangers. This reaction appears to have its roots in their experiences while in El Salvador. With no established social support networks in Melbourne, they did not know where to seek advice.

Some participants were more determined than others to learn English and persisted against all odds in spite of great difficulties. Rosa is a widow and was very conscious of her responsibilities as a

sole parent to four young children. After attending three English courses, Rosa still had difficulty speaking English properly so requested an additional course:

The English courses were magnificent ... they told me they could not give me anymore classes but I kept asking ... I told them I would like to stay here for good ... my children were small ... I said it with such desperation and badly ... so I was given full time ...

While she attended three English courses, she still did not feel confident in speaking the language because Spanish remains her means of communication at home and with her relatives. She did not mention if she had time to study English at home because she had four children to look after and this would probably have contributed to her lack of progress in learning the English language. Her persistence however paid off because she was convinced that she needed more English even if she stayed at home. As will be explained in the next chapter, she still had difficulty expressing herself when she had to write a letter to the Department of Housing. Rosa indicated that she did not want her children to act as her interpreters and felt that it was her duty to orient them in the new country. She was not alone in her dislike of having her children interpret for her. Others also discussed feeling embarrassed and disempowered by using their children as interpreters. It is probably also a humiliating experience for them to have to depend on their children.

Gloria indicated that she was taught at home how to read and write as a child. She manages to get by because she now lives alone but has to depend on her children to act as interpreters when she has to visit the doctor and when she attends meetings in the parish community and conveyed:

It is a desperate situation not to know English ... I have not learned English ... I can go to the bank and do the shopping ... If I have to see the doctor, I ask one of my children to accompany me ...

Gloria is not the only one who expressed difficulty about language when visiting a doctor because the other participants who cannot access Spanish-speaking doctors usually depend on their children or other family members to interpret for them. The participants expressed the need to have Spanish-speaking doctors so they do not have to depend on their children. Because of the confidentiality nature involved in consulting doctors, children should not be used as interpreters especially if they are minors.

The lack of basic education from their home country could also have contributed to an inability in learning English. Maybe their need to learn was not strong enough because they all somehow managed to cope with their day-to-day activities. Victor explained that:

I understand a bit but cannot talk English because of my tongue ... but at work I manage ... they were going to give me lessons for two hours a week ... if they call me by radio, I manage to answer ...

Victor's problem was that he never attended school in El Salvador because the government did not provide schools in the rural areas when he was young. He was only taught to sign his name as an adult. He mentioned during the interview that his work provided him with some tapes to learn English but he has only learned a few words and most of the time he manages by making signs. However, his inability to speak English did not seem to bother him since he is able to work full time in a job that he

likes. He works in a plant nursery and when he is called on radio he can say where he is located by identifying the plants and flowers nearby. His wife, Clara, is also unable to speak English, but never took any lessons. Three other participants did not take English language courses because of low literacy (Grade II-IV) levels in their own language. Their own historical backgrounds of having limited education in the rural areas may have also contributed to this difficulty. El Salvador has a low literacy rate of about 70 per cent on a national level and lower in the rural areas. These participants could probably be taught English in small groups and not in a classroom environment, but in more practical ways.

In spite of Ramon's good education he has had difficulties learning English and this is also true of his wife, Ines. He claimed that his age was against him (he was 44 when he arrived) and found it difficult to learn a new language and uttered in frustration:

I do not speak English, but I understand it ... The problem is that there are different kinds of English – work and street ... The older people like us have difficulty assimilating language ... it is not possible to go to work and also learn English ... I cannot cross the language barrier ...

Ramon related that he studied English for six months but finds it difficult to stand up to others when confronted with difficulties. He understands English at work because of constant repetition but not when he is outside the work environment although he managed to do three courses for cleaners. His wife, Ines, never learned English although she worked in a sewing factory for more than two years. She indicated that: 'they used to make me cry because I did not speak English and so I was the first one to be retrenched when they reduced the number of personnel'. While she did not know English, it is possible too that she had difficulty in adjusting to the workload as she was a primary school teacher in her home country and had no experience as an industrial machinist. Factory work is often demanding and speed is important. Although Ramon had reached a high level of education, he was fearful of expressing himself and probably did not want people to laugh at him because of his accent and poor English, which would hurt his self-esteem terribly.

Irene related her husband's frustration about studying English after a hard day's work. Her husband, an accountant, was never able to get a job commensurate to his training because he was classified as 'old' at 52! He did some training as an accountant in a company for a couple of months but was told at the outset that he could not be hired. In line with economic rationalism, his age would have been a deterrent at the time because those below 45 were the preferred workers. Most of the time he was unemployed or in precarious employment so he worked as a casual cleaner or as a volunteer in a church-based organisation. Irene acknowledged that she found it difficult to learn because the teachers were monolingual and they could not ask questions. She resorted to reading children's books with pictures in the public library. At least she found another way of learning the English language!

While all participants had difficulties with English, their children managed much better and only Irene discussed the difficulties that her children faced because of their lack of English. The other participants also had young children when they arrived in Australia, but they appeared to have coped well with the change and learned English quickly. The participants indicated that there is a necessity to have bi-lingual ESL teachers, at least in the beginners' class, because they were unable to ask questions for clarification of words. One of the female participants also claimed that it would be better

if they were taught more practical English which they needed for shopping. Probably trips to the supermarket and the shopping centre would have been beneficial in trying to learn practical English.

On the other hand, while Juan and Emma went to full time English (six months), they still had difficulties in speaking the language. Both are professional people and have been unable to find suitable employment because of lack of English proficiency. In addition, Juan said that he felt very frustrated about one of his English teachers who used to humiliate him so he did not learn much. His wife also continued to study English but also has difficulty with the pronunciation. Pronunciation seems to be a common problem when one is learning another language and probably they were also embarrassed to speak for fear that people might laugh at them. Both Emma and Juan belonged to the middle class society in El Salvador so it would have been difficult for them to accept any humiliation.

As mentioned above, Emma did full time English but also wanted to work immediately because the allowance she received was not enough. She however got distracted selling books from door to door so did not advance in her English and feels somewhat frustrated. While she was unable to find suitable employment, she attended several courses at TAFE but the courses did not help her either. Her husband, who did not want to work in a factory, pursued several English courses and was able to find employment commensurate to his qualifications. The difficulty of learning English was attributed to many different factors including:

- Lack of space
- Lack of time
- Other commitments
- Reverting back to their own language outside the classroom
- Not having English-speaking acquaintances
- Age
- Pronunciation of English words
- Having monolingual ESL teachers and
- Not studying at home

To sum up this situation, eight participants were able to access English courses soon after arrival but they expressed an inability to learn a functional level of English. Five did not study English because of lack of literacy skills in their mother tongue or they stayed home to look after the children and one waited for a vacancy in the childcare centre. The difficulties in not learning English have been mentioned above and in addition, some were pressured to work by CES immediately after arrival. Another problem that emerged was the continuous acceptance of new students so lessons had to begin anew. The difficulty with English continued to be a problem over the ensuing ten years and this will be delineated in the next chapter.

All the participants owned their homes and had secure jobs in El Salvador. They probably thought it would be easy to continue the same life style in Australia until they found out that English was required to apply for most jobs. While they were able to access and were appreciative of the welfare benefits, they were unable to find better jobs than the low-skilled positions offered to them. The participants in the study, except one, were not politically active in their home country so it was not surprising that they did not become involved in any type of politics in Australia. They were also limited

as to whom they could socialise because they did not know the political backgrounds of the Salvadorans in Melbourne; thus they were somewhat afraid of one another – a fear stemming from their past experiences. Having a support group seemed to make the difference between not being able to understand relatively quickly how to access services and having a real struggle to do so. Support groups helped bridge the cultural gap and reduced the isolation. A social network of expatriate Salvadorans would have facilitated their settlement, but it was non-existent and they also had an underlying fear of not trusting anyone.

CRSS Support Groups

The Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) introduced the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme (CRSS) in 1979 so that community groups could be involved in the resettlement of refugees. This service was originally introduced for Indo-Chinese refugees, but was also extended to refugees coming from other countries. The main idea was for voluntary organizations to get involved in the settlement of newly arrived refugees. The government provided some funding to the voluntary organisations, but the CRSS groups were expected to assist the newly arrived refugees with basic necessities and to visit them regularly. Based on the interviews, it was not clear how refugees were assigned support groups, although the CRSS Handbook (1987) indicated that 60 per cent of cases were identified at overseas posts and some were sponsored by agencies in Australia.

There were six participants in this study who were assigned CRSS groups, and only one of them had relatives in Melbourne. Three of the participants had several children, one had four children and two had two small children. Two other participants, Tomas and Rebecca, who have a large family (10 children), were not clear whether they had a support group or not but they acknowledged that a group assisted them by providing furniture and beddings. The group who assisted them was probably the CRSS group in Melbourne because I volunteered as an interpreter to accompany Tomas and his son to Warrnambool, where we stayed for a week. I presumed that the purpose of the trip to Warrnambool was explained to them by a group of women from the St. Vincent de Paul Society, who contacted their representatives in Warrnambool. The men from the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Warrnambool showed us a number of market gardens. The people of the parish also offered hospitality. These groups were willing to assist them with housing, schooling for the children and resettlement, which I explained to them. If they had decided to resettle in Warrnambool, the Sisters of Mercy also offered me accommodation each time I visited the family. Somewhere there must have been a communication breakdown because he claimed during the interview that they did not have a support group.

A meeting (I was not present) was held at Springvale Hostel about the situation and I only learned later that Tomas did not accept the arrangements because it was 'far'. Coming from a densely populated and small country, the term 'far' is a common expression for this particular group. As in El Salvador, they were probably afraid that basic services would not be available to them if they resettled in a country area. They admitted at the interview that a CRSS group would have been an advantage in the initial stages of settlement if they had this type of assistance. The range in the type of support varied enormously and there seemed to be a lack of guidelines about how a support group should operate. Despite this lack, the help given was valuable.

In most cases, the refugees settled in a suburb where the CRSS groups were located to facilitate assistance or where a house/flat could be found. The CRSS groups were responsible for finding them accommodation and providing them with the necessary furniture and household goods. Four of the participants rented houses that belonged to the CRSS groups. The other two participants rented their flat from the private market, but their CRSS group provided the first month's rent. In terms of material provisions of food, clothing and shelter, the CRSS groups made sure that newly arrived refugees were well provided for and those who were assisted were grateful for this service.

The commitment of CRSS groups is to visit refugees regularly for at least six months but this may be extended, depending on the circumstances. In addition, CRSS groups assisted in finding suitable schools for the children, employment for the adults and other services. The groups were usually from Church-based communities or voluntary agencies. The participants indicated that CRSS groups were deemed necessary, although there was no training provided by DIMIA for them at that time. The interviews revealed that most of the participants were resettled as voluntary migrants and did not receive special services designed for refugees. The participants also indicated that there was a lack of bi-lingual interpreters to follow-up families when they were visited. In addition most of the interpreters worked only during office hours. However, in spite of lack of training of support groups, the six participants who had CRSS groups thought that they were helpful in the initial settlement period. However, basic communication between members of the CRSS groups and the refugees were difficult due to lack of interpreters. These refugees needed someone to talk to in their own language and to act as moral support in the initial settlement phase.

Rosa remembered how the CRSS group took her to another suburb, far away from her relatives. The CRSS group could have liaised with her family and things would have been better. She said she had difficulties communicating about her needs to the contact person of her support group:

The support group rented us a furnished house ...I moved to a suburb to be near the support group and the couple who interpreted for us ... One day I looked for an English word in my English-Spanish dictionary and found 'help' ... but I could not express it in what way ... I never learned to take the bus until my 4th year ...

She admitted though that she did not want to bother the couple, who acted as interpreters, by calling them constantly. Rosa indicated that she would have preferred it if someone had accompanied her on foot rather than just telling her where to go. They were also given bus tickets for one week but did not know how to use them or where to catch the buses to take her children to school. In addition she did not know the timetable of the buses so she ended up waiting for long periods of time. This experience brought her a lot of frustration, which she was probably reliving when she related her story because of the tone of her voice. The lack of communication in this case exacerbated the situation. In El Salvador, she was accustomed to having the buses almost every five minutes or more often. An important observation she made was that the contact person of the CRSS group drove a car and was not familiar with the transportation system and also she could not ask questions because of lack of English! This is one instance when the process of resettlement is impeded or slowed down because the volunteers did not have the necessary training. It becomes an ad hoc orientation and volunteers are left on their own volition.

In addition, she indicated that her relatives were on the other side of town and could not help her. It is quite frustrating to be presented with such a situation and someone who is new in the country could probably find it desperate. She is the only participant who has a number of relatives both in Melbourne and Queensland. She actually could have called the couple but she probably had an underlying reluctance to do so because she did not want to be dependent on them. The couple come from another Central American state and she did not indicate whether this had a bearing on the relationship because they have different cultures.

Clara and Victor had a very positive interaction with their support group as they were helped with finding another house in the area, after leaving the parish house. They disclosed that the support group knew people in the Department of Housing so a house was obtained for them in the same area within a year. Victor was also helped in finding a job commensurate to his experience in spite of his lack of basic education. Both participants expressed their gratitude for the support they received. They pointed out that:

It is necessary to have a support group as people need it ... who will help newly-arrived refugees as it is difficult to fend for oneself ... Refugees come as 'blind' people and do not know how to find their way around ...(Victor)

We stayed in the Parish House for one year and paid low rent ... The Parish Priest and John knew someone in the Housing Commission that is why we were able to find this house ... My husband got his job with the help of the support group ... My husband is illiterate so it would have been difficult for him to find a job ... (Clara)

Without the support group, Victor would have been unemployable. Victor really hit the nail on the head when he described the newly arrived refugees as 'blind'. This is true since Australia is so different from their country. During the interview he stated that he was happy with his job and has stayed in the same employment for more than 10 years. He expressed amazement that his employer kept him for this length of time because he saw many people retrenched through the years. Being a farmer he was the only participant in this study, who was able to work in accordance with his past experience. CRSS groups play a vital role in assisting refugees in obtaining work through friends and acquaintances. This results in people finding jobs at the shortest possible time in spite of his/her inability to learn English.

The other farmer in this study, Tomas, has only worked as a casual cleaner intermittently and has depended on unemployment benefits since his arrival. However, I tried to assist by making contact with the Victorian Farmers' Federation (VFF) in 1988 to see if there was a possibility of relocating some of the farmers, who had arrived in Melbourne from El Salvador. The plan was to explore the possibility of moving people with farming experience in regional areas. A representative of VFF was sent and Tomas with two other farmers attended the meeting, while I acted as an interpreter. They did not accept the conditions because they did not want to work under someone else's authority or as peons. Peons in El Salvador signify unskilled labour or day labourers in a large estate. These farmers had their own farms in El Salvador but relied heavily on family members for assistance and this is the reason why they thought the Australian arrangements were unacceptable. They were not willing to start from the bottom to learn the conditions in Australia. Instead two of these farmers chose to remain as factory workers. It is not always easy to try and place people in the same kind of work they had in the past because there might be other underlying reasons for not accepting the proposals, which they would not enunciate verbally.

Actually the plan to move some of the farmers to rural areas could have served as a pilot project at that time, even without government support. Unfortunately it could not be implemented because of lack of acceptance on the part of the farmers. A similar plan for Warrnambool was envisioned if Tomas had accepted moving to that region. The communities would have assisted other Salvadoran farmers so there would have been a good social support network among them. Unfortunately, this did not happen either.

Gloria indicated that her CRSS group proved to be of tremendous help to them. While she was unable to communicate directly with the support group, she was quite content to have her children act as interpreters and commented:

The nuns rented us a house near the beach ...it helped us to overcome some problems ... they helped us a lot in terms of material help ... but also psychological ... they did not speak Spanish but my children understood enough English after three months ...

Gloria recalled that her support group visited regularly and took the children out on occasions. When Gloria became ill, the CRSS group arranged for her hospitalisation and surgery. Their CRSS group also arranged for psychological counselling for Gloria and her family because of family problems related to their past experiences. She commented that they had extreme difficulties adjusting to one another at home, which she attributed to their experiences of trauma in El Salvador. She was the only participant who admitted frankly about their adjustment difficulties at home; the rest just accepted it as 'normal'. In addition, settlement problems in Australia and the lack of English language skills contributed to their adjustment problems. Not all newly arrived refugees experienced this type of problem at the initial period of settlement or if they do, they do not always ask for assistance.

In the case of Gloria, she obviously was able to identify their difficulties in adjusting to one another and sought some assistance. The support group was then able to find them a psychologist. This actually is an unusual situation because people from El Salvador do not go to psychologists in their home country. They think that psychologists are only for the mentally ill so they do not seek help when needed. There appears to be a need to provide refugees with emotional and psychological counselling during the initial settlement period or as soon as it can be identified. The need for this service will also be touched upon in the next chapter because another participant suffered depression and needed prolonged treatment.

Sara and Pedro acknowledged the extreme necessity of having a support group. While they were taken out of the hostel within a month after arrival, they were able to mobilise and fend for themselves immediately. They also felt the need for someone to listen to them in their own language and they pointed out that:

We stayed in the hostel for a month ... the support group took us out but we learned how to move around ... It is necessary if the support group would follow up ... Material help is not too important ... but moral help is much better ... Many people used to be surprised that our support group was in contact with us for a long time ...

Pedro and Sara appreciated the visits of the CRSS group and they did not feel abandoned in a strange land. Although material needs were necessary, Pedro and Sara agreed that the moral help they received from the support group was of greater value to them. In the initial months of settlement,

they admitted that they had no one else to talk to. Sara had a small child all day and could not talk to the child and Pedro was unable to share his work experiences with his wife so they felt very isolated. It appears that they also compared notes with other Salvadorans who had support groups because they commented that some of them claimed they were abandoned too early. Support groups could form part of the social network of newly arrived refugees, especially those who have no one in Australia. This could lessen their sense of isolation and loneliness especially during the initial stages of settlement.

Based on the experiences of the participants, voluntary support groups aid in the orientation process of newly arrived refugees. Two participants indicated that they were assisted in finding a house, three claimed that they had moral support because of constant visits from the support group, while only one participant did not receive as much help as she would have liked, although she was provided with the material help needed in the early settlement period. Participants have acknowledged support groups as necessary and invaluable. However, they claimed that a more consistent standard of support is needed.

To sum up, six of the participants had support groups of which five were grateful for the services provided by them; the other participants would have liked this type of service if it had been offered to them too. At the very least they wished that they had received better assistance and orientation in the suburb where they lived. Two participants admitted at the interview that some of their problems could have been sorted out in the early stages of settlement, if they had a support group. The interviews demonstrate that support groups are important but they needed to be trained to resettle refugees. Results indicate that participants would have appreciated having bi-lingual interpreters as part of CRSS groups so families could be visited regularly at least during the first six months of resettlement and assist in evaluating their needs.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that in spite of the difficulties experienced by the participants during the initial stages of settlement, they expressed gratitude, tacitly, for having been accepted by Australia at the time of the political crisis in their home country. To adapt to a new country is considered traumatic in itself because everything is different especially language and culture. For these participants the 'baggage' of the traumatic experiences they brought with them in their resettlement process can be considered overwhelming. Only one participant sought psychological counselling in the initial stages of settlement because she felt that she was again living in a 'war situation' due to constant arguments between family members.

Orientation at the hostel is important but probably not all the information had to be given immediately soon after arrival. Hostel facilities proved to be necessary as an interim arrangement before the refugees could be resettled in the local community especially with a shortage of affordable housing. Airport services with a welcoming atmosphere have been deemed lacking.

Based on the participants' reactions, English appears to be their most difficult problem in spite of the English courses they attended. This is linked with their difficulty of finding jobs commensurate to their professional qualifications. For most of them, a downgrading of their professional training was accepted because they wanted to work and support their families. A few also wanted to maintain the standard of living they were used to but it often caused a high level of frustration to the persons

concerned. In their home country, there are no unemployment/special benefits. Although they appreciated the benefits as an emergency measure because they had nothing when they arrived, they did not want to become dependent on the system. As related in Chapter 3, El Salvador is considered to be a dependent country in the modern world-system yet the individual citizens do not want to be dependent on the government and prefer to have secure employment to support their families. However, by coming to Australia they became disadvantaged because they had to adapt to new circumstances, which were entirely different from their own culture, language and traditions; for some they had to settle for less satisfactory work. Unfortunately, some had to become dependent on government benefits.

The role of CRSS groups was recognised as valuable but results indicate that these groups needed training on how to follow up newly arrived refugees. Access to bi-lingual interpreters in the groups while essential was found wanting. The interpreters were seen to be of utmost importance because the participants valued moral support more than the economic support they received. Interpreters could also assess the needs of the families and thus assist them in finding the services that could be accessed. CRSS groups also play a vital role in finding suitable employment for people who are being resettled. Victor is the best example because the support group was able to find him suitable employment otherwise he would have been unemployed. Visiting refugee families during the first few months of settlement by the support group was particularly valued by two of the participants because they had no one nor knew anyone in Australia. All the participants did not have much in terms of material possessions but nobody complained about economic problems. They seemed to manage somehow on the government benefits they received.

In this context, the CRSS groups acted as social networks for the participants even on a temporary basis because of the assistance they provided in what was important to the individual families. The families of Rosa could have also acted as part of the social network in the settlement period but because of distance, they did not assist her. At this early stage of settlement, it was not possible to establish whether they belonged to the Odyssean or to the Rubicon refugees, but this will be explored in the next chapter.

The next chapter will explore the long-term settlement difficulties of refugees and how their past experiences have influenced their resettlement in Australia.

CHAPTER 10: THE INFLUENCE OF PAST EXPERIENCES ON LONG-TERM SETTLEMENT DIFFICULTIES OF REFUGEES

This chapter explores the long-term settlement difficulties of the participants after they left the hostel and resettled in their own homes up to the time of the interview. The participants stayed in the hostel between two weeks to one year. Most of them had received basic information about health care, social security, English classes and other services related to their settlement process. However, when they relocated to another suburb they had to find where these services and programmes could be accessed often without CRSS support or community assistance. Learning English, however, proved to be the main difficulty because this was essential in finding employment, relating with others in Australia and having access to services provided for them. This chapter also provides insights into their family life, acquisition of Australian citizenship, visits to their home country and how their past influenced their resettlement experiences.

LONG-TERM SETTLEMENT DIFFICULTIES

The interviews revealed that the participants experienced many difficulties in resettlement in the years after their departure from the migrant hostels into private accommodation. These revolved around some key interrelated issues, the most central of which is their inability to learn English. The consequences of this inability hampered their chances of having a smooth adjustment to Australian society. It affected their chances of becoming employed at the same level they were in their home country, options to socialise with native Australians or to become active members of a local community. While they had some preliminary orientation to Australian customs and mores in the hostel, they needed to access programmes and services anew when they relocated.

Barriers to Learning the English Language

As mentioned in the previous chapter, eight of the participants attended English classes but the difficulties associated with lack of English skills have persisted for over a decade. Proficiency in the English language proved to be a major hurdle for most of the participants because of difficulties in learning a new language for a variety of reasons even after many years in Australia. The lack of English language skills caused a series of problems such as loneliness, isolation, difficulty in communicating with others, inability to find suitable employment and many others.

The lack of proficiency in speaking English often resulted in being unemployed and under-employed. Those who were well educated and had good jobs in their own country, found the change

of status and the inability to easily communicate particularly difficult. Juan had a good educational and professional background but a few months after arriving in Melbourne, he felt an 'inner pressure' to work, irrespective of the type of work, because he did not want to rely on unemployment benefits. This 'inner pressure' that compelled him to find work as soon as possible is related to his high social standing in El Salvador. Because he had a good standard of living there, he probably wanted to achieve the same level here as well in a short time. He was the only income earner in his family for a number of years because his wife had to stay home to take care of their four children. For his wife, it was also a big transition from being gainfully employed to that of staying at home to care for the children and doing domestic work. His difficulties in learning English have been mentioned in the previous chapter and he is still struggling to overcome it after many years in Australia. Because of his accent he finds it difficult to pronounce English words and feels embarrassed because people could laugh at him. His managerial position in El Salvador and the society in which he grew up would have been hard for him to accept such an embarrassment. Juan still feels frustrated at his lack of fluency in English even after many years and recognises that this deficiency leads to other difficulties:

Everything is so different here in Australia ... the frustration one experiences makes you want to study again ... but to acquire another language is very difficult ... here I feel the isolation, the loneliness and the lack of communication ... my morale goes really low ...

While Juan attributes his isolation, loneliness and lack of communication to his difficulties in learning English, he is also finding it difficult to be-friend other Salvadorans because of the fierce competition among them. His previous high social standing in El Salvador might also contribute to his isolation. The Salvadoran participants form a heterogeneous group. They may come from different regions and diverse social strata so it is possible that he would not relate to this group of people even in his home country.

Ramon is another example of a well-educated man who could not get a job commensurate to his experience because of his lack of English. Although more than ten years have passed since his arrival, he is still experiencing a very high level of frustration. This has caused him to feel isolated and anxious. In addition, he was brought up in a patriarchal society. His dependence on unemployment benefits and being relegated to doing casual cleaning work would be demeaning for him. His patriarchal role is probably also being challenged because Australia is more egalitarian than El Salvador. This loss of status could have a negative effect on his self-esteem and his place in the family. However, if he sees it as a sacrifice for the family, the negative effect may probably be lessened. It is possible that this is one of the reasons for his frustration and not simply his difficulty in learning English. His family understood his difficulty but he is unable to accept his low employment status. Although he does not directly blame himself for having 'failed', he nevertheless expressed his frustration and futility in not finding a better job and feels crushed. In a way he was somewhat blaming the Australian system that did not provide him access to better employment:

Language is my biggest problem ... I cannot cross the barrier ... Work here is difficult as it is more demanding ... also I am unable to find the type of work I was used to ...

Back home, he worked in the postal system but here he works as a casual cleaner, a few hours a week. Previously, he was employed as a casual labourer and for various reasons he had to change jobs through the years. One can certainly admire his perseverance and resourcefulness in finding jobs in spite of the difficulties he encountered in the past. Now, he has to depend on unemployment benefits, which he finds unacceptable, and he feels that he is discriminated by society for this reason. He commented that professionally trained people from his country are unable to progress no matter how hard they try. This situation did not console him either when he found out that others from his country had similar experiences of unemployment and/or underemployment.

Ramon's age would have been an added deterrent in finding permanent employment because he was already 44 at the time of his arrival. Persons who already speak English and have the necessary skills are usually preferred; particularly if they are younger than 45 and for newly arrived refugees they would be at a disadvantage. By the same token Australia is more industrialised and mechanised than El Salvador so it would have been difficult to work in the same job he was used to even if he were proficient in English. The study of a foreign language is never easy even when people have a high level of education. The added difficulty with English is the pronunciation since words are not pronounced the way they are written; in Spanish words are pronounced the way they are written. This however is not a remote example because former migrants, who arrived in Australia about 40-50 years ago, still experience this difficulty although employers now expect their employees to be able to speak better English than in the past.

Difficulties in Employment

Previous studies (Wooden, 1990; Iredale & D'Arcy, 1992; Jupp et al. 1991; Jupp, 1994) cite that there is a high level of unemployment in the refugee population compared to the skilled migrants. This is probably due to the fact that refugees are not selected according to their professional training but on their claims of a 'well-founded fear of persecution' and some would have had low education. Iredale et al. (1996) comment that this would be common to Salvadoran refugees as well but they do not feature in the survey data because they belong to a small minority group. A study in Tasmania shows a 31.25 per cent level of unemployment for Salvadorans (Julian et al, 1997). This study also found a high level of unemployment among the participants as well as the lack of recognition of their professional qualifications. Full employment and non-reliance on welfare benefits were seen as important goals for the group, especially the men. These men were the main providers for their families in El Salvador, so they found it essential to continue with this tradition even in Australia. They also want to keep the standard of living they were accustomed to in their country.

Some of the participants, as well as their spouses, claimed that they were pressured by CES to find employment, but the knowledge of English was necessary. The lack of recognition of their overseas qualifications was another drawback so the participants were relegated to factory work and no bridging courses were offered. Three of the participants claimed that they were warned at the Australian overseas office that they could only work in factories and that it would be difficult to have their overseas qualifications recognised. In spite of this warning, they still found it difficult to face this situation in their settlement process in Australia.

In the late 1980s there were still a few factories located near the Springvale hostel and many of them were sent to these factories to work. For example, Linda and her husband were sent by the CES to work in the car assembly plant, one month after arrival:

CES took us to Nissan with an interpreter since we could not speak English ... I was the only woman in the group ... we were obliged to work right away ... the work at Nissan was difficult ... they used to give us the heaviest work ... I asked for a change of work after a while ... I showed my medical certificate as I had pain all over ... the foreman, an Australian, did not want to transfer me as no one could replace me ...

Linda remembered how difficult it was for her and her husband in the early years. This is another example of how people from a non-industrialised country have to cope with work in an industrialised country. They had two small daughters at the time and they found it difficult when one of the daughters got sick. It meant that one of the parents had to miss work because the childcare centre did not allow sick children. However, Nissan was not pleased either if one of them did not go to work for this reason. This problem was resolved when they found an elderly couple to look after their two daughters. The use of skilled refugees/migrants in menial jobs was also practised after World War II when people, who came under the assisted-passage scheme, were sent to factories to work (Castles, 1992; Castles & Miller, 1998).

A problem that arose was the difficulty of working in an assembly plant because Linda and her husband, who are small in stature, developed aches and pains. Their work proved to be detrimental to their health. Because the foreman would not listen to her complaints about work practices, Linda decided not to tighten the screws in the cars so they would all be returned to the assembly line and the other employees complained since it delayed the work. This tactic of passive non-compliance is probably one of the survival skills that she had learned in El Salvador. Thus she expressed in action what she could not say in words to prove her point. She could have lost her job and this attitude could have had disastrous results for her and her family. In spite of this experience, Linda and her husband worked in the same company for three years because they needed the income but were eventually forced to resign. This study shows that the Salvadorans were eager to work to support themselves and most of them would accept any type of work but often it did not suit them for health reasons and they would be forced to resign.

Emma attended several TAFE courses and applied for work in different places but laments her inability to find permanent employment:

It has been hard all these years ... I went to a job interview and was told I was over qualified ... I went to a newsagent, fruit shop, office, factory, banks to look for a job ... I even tried to look for a voluntary job ... I went to so many places but did not find any ... I really got depressed ... I won't look anymore ...

Emma admitted that although she attended full-time English, she did not study at home because she got distracted selling books from door to door, probably in her broken English! She proved to be a good saleswoman as she was never short of money during this period of her life and was quite pleased about receiving the cheques through the mail. Her eyes lit up and she had a smile on her face when she recounted this episode of her life. But by not studying at home, her English did not improve. She also completed several TAFE courses and applied for several jobs but has been unsuccessful

because she was considered as 'overqualified'. Emma showed a great willingness to work and did all the courses to update her skills but has not been fortunate enough to find employment according to her past training. She now spends most of her time with a Church group by visiting people in her area to occupy herself because she is home most of the time. At least she proved to be quite resourceful about how to spend her time and does not feel sorry for herself. However, her husband has been successful in finding a job according to his professional qualifications. He was only able to accomplish this through his sheer determination in learning English because he did not want to work in a factory after he saw what was happening to the other Salvadorans. His level of motivation was probably also high and this attitude served him to study hard in learning English. He is probably one of the few Salvadorans who found suitable employment.

Juan, an executive manager in his home country, was used to office work. Here he had to work in the factory, where he needed manual skills and had to wear overalls. He has since gained dexterity in his work and has been offered a supervisory position. However, he refused the promotion because he felt that his English was not good enough. This transition from a white-collar to blue-collar job was a very humiliating experience for him but he had to adjust to this situation. Since he was used to doing paperwork in the past, he claimed that his fingers were quite stiff when he began to work in the factory. Although he feels frustrated and humbled, he prefers to continue with his job rather than go on unemployment benefits or rely on his wife's income. Now that his wife works as a cleaner and the children sometimes work on a part-time basis, they are able to manage better financially.

When I met him at the medical centre, he was suffering from a severe headache, which he claimed occurred sporadically. The cause of the recurrent headaches continues to be undiagnosed and at the time of the interview he simply stated that he 'needs to be occupied all the time to forget'. He probably wants to forget what happened to him in El Salvador prior to coming to Australia and thinks that by keeping busy it would help him to forget his past. He recalled how he prepared himself mentally to accept whatever came after leaving El Salvador, but it has not been easy. Juan belonged to the middle class sector of society while in El Salvador and lived quite comfortably. His limited finances and his job as a process worker posed difficulties in the early years of settlement and this could also contribute to his sporadic headaches and in addition the trauma he experienced in El Salvador. Two other participants also indicated the need to be always 'busy to forget' and probably this is important for them so they do not have to think about the past. It would probably be good to be able to explore the area of men's health especially those who arrived here as refugees.

The lack of full time employment for men poses a difficult problem. Tomas and Ramon felt very frustrated and depressed, as they have not advanced beyond casual cleaning work. The women have had similar difficulties. Two other women indicated that they worked in a sewing factory after their arrival but they could not continue to do this type of work longer than two years because it proved to be detrimental to their health. Since they never did factory work in their home country, it proved to be strenuous for them because of the pressure to produce, finish on time, and have the necessary skills as well as dexterity.

It can therefore be concluded from the interviews that the participants were mostly relegated to factory work or as casual cleaners in spite of their professional background, except one who was employed in a plant nursery. At the time of the interview, most of the participants were already unemployed but others worked in the past but it was not easy for them. No bridging courses were

offered and the only two women who did TAFE courses have been unable to use the skills they learned. Only three of the participants have full-time employment and they have stayed in the same jobs since they were hired, more than 10 years ago. Three of the participants work as casual cleaners, one is a self-employed cleaner; seven of the women stay home as housewives, but two of them worked in factories in the past. Although some of the participants have skills, in Australia they are not recognised so they have to suffer the consequences of being downgraded in their employment. In addition in the last decade, as part of the deregulation of the labour market and economic rationalism, there has been an increase in casual and part-time employment. Australia has high job turnover rates and one in three employees is a casual or part-time worker (Pusey, 2003). Casual employees are also cheaper for the employers because they do not get paid for holiday and sick leave. Employees can be easily retrenched when business is slack.

Economic Hardships

One of the striking features of the interviews was the lack of 'whingeing' about their treatment. Any criticism was muted. All the participants had times of financial difficulties though, but no one complained at the time of the interview. Actually, when I was doing resettlement work with the refugees, no one asked for financial help nor complained about it. On arrival in Australia, the refugees were given unemployment or special benefits and some of them have depended on either one of these two benefits for a few years. For those who had a high standard of living in El Salvador, the lack of a matching income in Australia was hard for them. This was particularly true for the women who had maids in El Salvador and who had not learned how to manage the household on their own. This meant that they needed to quickly learn new skills whilst in a foreign environment. Those who had assistance either through a CRSS group or through family members coped better than those who were left to their own devices.

Irene and Rosa experience financial hardship because they are both widows with three children still at home and both depend on government benefits. Both also had a good standard of living in El Salvador because their spouses had good and steady incomes. At present both rent houses from the Department of Housing but the similarities end here. Irene did not have to work in El Salvador since her marriage because her husband had a good income and she was able to pursue her favourite hobbies. When they came to Australia, the family unit was complete but her husband had to work as a casual cleaner for a couple of years. Since her husband's sudden death a few years ago, she had to manage on a very tight budget. However, she works as a casual cleaner occasionally to supplement her income but copes with difficulty to make both ends meet:

We have lived on a very limited budget here ... we paid Catholic schools so we deprived ourselves of many things ... they did not give us concessions ... only after my husband died ... I receive the pension every week but I am very thrifty ... Last year I stopped distributing papers as it was very hard and I got sick ... Now I work as a cleaner three hours per week ...

Irene and her husband had a very limited income before he died, especially after he was retrenched from work. In their desire to provide a good education for their children, they made the sacrifices to send them to Catholic schools, a trend among the middle class from El Salvador. Both husband and wife used to distribute the local neighbourhood papers and were paid very little money for the hours

they worked. This would have been very humiliating for them but they needed the income. In fact when her husband died, she did not have enough funds to pay for his funeral. The community centre where he worked as a volunteer did a collection and the funeral director, upon learning of the economic situation of the family, gave a big discount for the funeral expenses. She is only allowed to earn a certain amount each week to supplement her income or else her pension would be reduced. However, Irene revealed that sometimes she accepted orders to bake cakes to supplement her income and she is also adept at sewing. Since she has no extended family here, she has to have recourse to a charitable organisation, such as St. Vincent de Paul Society, in time of crisis. This is an alien practice in their home country but in Australia it is a type of social network. The study made by Pusey (2003) shows that there has been an increase in the last ten years of people relying on charities in Australia, which has become part of the global trend of economic reforms.

The other widow, Rosa, had her own business in El Salvador and was quite self-sufficient. When her husband was killed in El Salvador, she was able to claim on his life insurance. She brought this money with her when they came to Australia but relatives, who were already here, and knew about the insurance claim borrowed some of her money and she could not refuse them. She disclosed with sadness:

I had money when I came ...but the money went so I manage with difficulty ...The money I receive from the government covers only our basic needs ... I count every penny ... It is difficult when the children ask for more ... I do not have a husband ...I cannot go out nor take the children out ... It is hard to be a sole parent ...

Rosa is unable to do extra work to supplement her benefits because of health problems and barely manages her income. She conveyed that she spent some of the life insurance money to buy furniture and furnishings for the house and also bought a used car. The relatives, who borrowed money from her have not repaid the loan so she has to manage only on her widow's pension. She still has three children at home and nobody else works. She felt that her relatives took advantage of her and did not help her resettle. In this instance her strong ties with family as a social network began to crumble. It is not clear whether she wanted to retain the standard of living she was used to in her home country but she spent whatever insurance money she had and did not save for the 'rainy day'. It is possible too that she did not budget for her expenses. I found this out when I was working with a Salvadoran woman (single mother with a son) who was having problems in meeting her expenses in spite of her full-time job. She had no concept of budgeting and needed to learn how to manage her expenses within her allotted income. Once she acquired this knowledge, she was then able to manage better. Also in Australia new migrants/refugees can easily be seduced into buying a lot of material things on easy credit terms so many people end up living on credit which they have difficulty in repaying.

The above-mentioned widows experience economic hardships because no one else works in the family and they are dependent on their widows' pension. They mentioned that the cost of living in Australia is certainly higher than in El Salvador. While Irene cleans houses to supplement her income, it is barely enough to cover their expenses. She also sends her children to a private school and in spite of a 50 per cent reduction on tuition, she still feels financially disadvantaged. She probably could have sent her children to a state school and she would have been better off financially. However, she wanted to realise the 'dream' of sending her children to a private school so she had to tighten her belt.

Both had a fairly comfortable life in their home country so they are feeling the pinch of having to rely on pensions and a limited budget here in Australia. It is always difficult when one wants to continue the same lifestyle they were accustomed to in their home country especially if they cannot find full-time employment.

From this interview it appears that widows would benefit being allowed to do extra work to supplement their incomes, especially if they have no one else in Australia. These families come from the tropics and were used to the hot weather. In Australia they feel the cold so they probably spend more on heating their houses and this can be costly. Their houses were well furnished and mechanised, similar to an average Australian home, and these can be expensive to run. In their home country, they were used to having maids and probably most of the work of running the house was done manually without the need of machines, such as vacuum cleaners, washing machines, etc.

The other participants indicated that they are able to manage their finances although with some difficulties. In the early years Rebecca said that she used the children's government allowances to buy food and the unemployment benefits of her husband covered their rental fees. Now her husband, Tomas, pays for the rent from his unemployment benefits and casual work, while she uses her benefits to pay for food and the running costs of the house. When she runs short of money, she asks for extra funds from her adult children who work. Likewise, five other participants manage the same way although Clara said at the interview, that she did not know how they would manage financially when her husband retires because of the loan with the Department of Housing. Four of the participants are a bit better off because both husband and wife work and have a steady income. The husband of one participant has a good income and there is only one child at home so they do well financially.

Lack of Affordable Housing

The difficulty of finding suitable housing accommodation was a common experience for all the participants except the ones who were assisted by their CRSS groups. Studies (Pittaway, 1991, Martin, 1992) have shown both in Australia and overseas that the availability of good and affordable housing contributes to the first years of settlement of refugees and lessens the stress of living in a new environment. Housing is a basic human right that provides social and economic security necessary for survival as defined by the UN Covenant on Social and Economic Rights (Iredale et al. 1996). Access to low rental housing often depended whether they knew someone that could help them or have a support group, who would help them find affordable accommodation.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the six participants with support groups were able to move to a house with low rent and were allowed to stay between six-months to two years. Three of these participants were able to move to public housing after they left the houses subsidised by the support groups. They were assisted by their support groups to obtain public housing because they had many children. The problem about affordable housing becomes critical when refugees have to rent in the private market after leaving the hostel and move to another house or when they move out of houses subsidised by support groups as the following episodes illustrate. It can become a very frustrating experience if they are unable to express themselves in English and unemployed.

Emma and her family did not have a support group but remembered how difficult it was to rent a house, after they moved out of the hostel, because she and her husband were on unemployment benefits:

We looked for our own house through the agency ... those who do not have work have difficulty in getting a house ... the agents put many obstacles ... my husband used to get so frustrated ...

Emma related that she and her husband went to see many houses for rent but they were not in good condition and the one they liked was not given to them because they were unemployed. Her husband was studying English at the time so they had to settle for a house without insulation and so suffered the effects of heat and cold. In spite of the inconveniences of the house they rented, they stayed in the same house for six years and then moved to a better house, which they were still renting at the time of the interview. Some families could also face discrimination by the real estate agents especially if they are unemployed (Campbell, 1997). After all from the perspective of real estate agents, their role is to collect rent so they want to be assured that rent would be paid, but it is extremely difficult for newly arrived refugees.

Rosa stayed in a house that belonged to her support group for six months and then had to move out. She managed to rent a house for a number of years through the private market because she was working full-time and also had some money from her husband's insurance. Her problem arose when the tenants wanted the house back, after five years, but during that time she was already unemployed. Her sister was living with her at the time but then decided to go to Queensland so she was left to shoulder the high cost of rent.

Rosa was faced with a dilemma – that of being unemployed, the insurance money gone, high cost of rent and a sister, who could have helped decided to move out. Had Rosa's sister helped out, this problem would probably have been lessened although she said that she was willing to make the extra sacrifice. For her it was a traumatic experience because she had no extra funds to rely on, she still had four children at home and this precarious situation meant that she often felt 'abandoned'. Actually the feeling of 'abandonment' might have been due to the fact that there appeared to be no reciprocity in her family. Her family simply took advantage of her by borrowing money from her insurance claim but did not repay her back and was not helped to resettle. To make matters worse after having sponsored her sister and paying for her trip, she decided to go to Queensland! Rosa probably also wanted adult company at home and her sister would have fitted into this role. No wonder she felt 'abandoned'. While she had undergone a lot of pain and suffering in the past, this incident appeared to be insurmountable in the way she recalled it:

The housing situation made me very depressed ... I searched for a house but the real estate agents did not want to rent me a house ... I was a sole parent with children and unemployed ... I was told to look for a social worker who will write a letter for me to get a house on priority ... First, I was told to wait five years, then 10 years ... After I was refused, I appealed ... I told the social worker to let me put in a letter ... But the social worker wanted to help me on her terms ...

Rosa always lived in the family home in El Salvador and for her a home signified a 'sense of belonging'. Here she had to move constantly since her arrival and this situation made her feel insecure

because she needed a fixed address. She added that a cousin could have helped her but they were not on speaking terms because of certain problems between them, which had not been resolved. She managed to find a social worker at the Department of Housing to help her but the social worker only wanted to give her \$20 each time she fronted the office, which she refused. This gesture pales into insignificance when someone is in need of housing urgently! She felt that her plea was not progressing so in desperation she wrote a letter to the Department of Housing to appeal her case. Although she expressed herself poorly in English, she indicated that she got a positive response from the Department of Housing officer, who commented that it was necessary for them to know the situation of sole parents. She had been on the waiting list for public housing for seven years and was only given a house when she wrote the letter. She stated that now that she has a house with a fixed address, it makes her feel more settled. Her persistence paid off! Hugo (1995) claims that discrimination in the housing market can occur as a way of marginalizing people and may limit the locations into which the migrants could move. However, housing is essential for refugees to give them a sense of stability and security and they should be considered as priority for public housing.

The experience of Sara and Pedro was somewhat different because the Department of Housing turned them down. The reason being is that Pedro earned 'too much'. They would have preferred to rent a Department of Housing facility but they were not given one for various reasons. Ever since their arrival, they have rented houses through the private market. They have had to move almost on a yearly basis because of rent increases. This problem was temporarily resolved when Pedro's workmate (a former refugee) rented them a house at a reasonable cost, with no bond money, so they stayed in the same house for six years. When they arrived in Australia, they had two small children and another child was born a couple of years later. They felt bad about their lack of housing and conveyed:

Our frustration concerned the Department of Housing ... We were waiting for a long time for a house ... They said that those with small children were priority ... After eight years we were told that my husband 'earned too much' ... By then we had three children ... this was an injustice ...

Sara and Pedro revealed that they felt unjustly treated by the Department of Housing because they saw how some of their Salvadoran friends were given houses to rent in a short time under the same circumstances and some were better off than them. They questioned the system and wondered how families were assessed but did not make further inquiries why they were refused. They said that they checked regularly on the progress of their application, but were only showed one house after eight years! They were then told that they should have a low income to be considered for public housing. Unlike Rosa, they were not persistent and did not write a letter to the Department of Housing to see if they had a better chance of obtaining public housing because they had been on the waiting list for many years. They did not ask anyone for help either, as in the case of the other participants who were helped by their support groups. Perhaps, they simply fronted up to talk to the clerk on duty on a regular basis. While they were aware of what was happening to other Salvadorans and how they were able to access public housing, they did not ask how they were able to do so or who helped them. This acceptance of 'unfairness' or to 'suffer in silence' may have been a carryover of their experiences in El Salvador.

The lack of affordable housing has been a common problem for the participants and this has made them move constantly once rent is increased. The study shows that refugees need affordable housing to facilitate their settlement. In the last decade or so home ownership has become more difficult even for the middle-income Australians because privatisation of housing and the deregulation of housing loans have become part of the economic reforms implemented in the mid-1980s (Pusey, 2003). Studies (Pittaway, 1991; Julian, et al., 1997) show that housing is a primary need of refugees in their settlement process to give them stability and security.

To sum up, the inability of these participants to obtain housing because of lack of employment made them feel frustrated. Rosa even felt desperate because the social worker, who was supposed to assist her to get public housing, was not very helpful and just wanted to give her some money each time she visited the office but she persevered in her desire to obtain housing. She felt embarrassed by the offer of money because she did not want to appear as a charity case and it did not resolve her problem about obtaining public housing. Sara and Pedro not only felt frustrated but also experienced injustice after having waited so long and saw how some of their friends were able to obtain public housing. Among the participants interviewed, only seven (four families) live in public housing. Two participants also indicated that some of the houses shown to them by the Department of Housing personnel were in poor condition or in isolated areas far from public transport. Of the seven participants who rent their houses, four rent their houses directly from owners (former migrants) and three through the estate agents. Those who rent their houses directly from owners stay longer because rents are seldom increased and prices are affordable. Also if any repairs are needed, they are attended to immediately. While former migrants do not form part of the social network of these refugees, they understand their dilemma and know how to empathise.

Lack of English leads to isolation and loneliness

A further consequence of not speaking English is the inability of the participants to socialise with non-Spanish speaking people. This difficulty limits the participants in relating only with one's own compatriots or language group and to understand or read documentation from Government or semi-government bodies in their own language. The consequences of their inability to learn English has caused them much pain, although their circumstances may differ.

Clara never studied English and she explained how she coped in Australia since her arrival:

I never learned English but I manage with shopping ... I only have Salvadoran friends ... I do not have Australian friends ... I am happy to be home ... I feel bad if people speak to me and I misinterpret ...

Clara was honest in admitting that she was not able to befriend Australians because of her inability to speak English. She therefore limits herself to relating only with her family, Salvadoran friends and people who speak Spanish so she stays home most of the time. Although she did not say that she felt lonely, nevertheless she experiences isolation. Her husband, Victor, knows a minimum amount of English but manages to communicate at work through the use of signs. He indicated that someone at work speaks Spanish, so he relies on this person to act as an interpreter. This experience would probably be common for people who have to learn English or any foreign language if they have not

had any basic education in their own language. Because of these limitations, they had to adjust to conditions in Australia that limits their interaction with English-speaking people.

The other female participants (6) who do not work tended to feel even more isolated than Clara because of their lack of English and being confined to home duties. An exception was Irene, who indicated that she used to frequent a Church-based community centre and was forced to speak English with the result that unlike the other women, she was able to join in the school meetings of her children. She is probably more outgoing than the other female participants and is not hampered by her lack of English. The socialisation skills and the level of resourcefulness of the participants varied between one another and are mainly due to their experiences in their home country and their socio-economic level there. In any discussion about the participants it needs to be remembered that they are not a homogeneous group, and would not necessarily socialise with each other in their home country nor interpret unemployment or under-employment in the same way. As mentioned earlier, it was difficult for them to know which Salvadoran refugees were likely to be on the same side of the insurgency. Thus they were reluctant to befriend other fellow Salvadorans unless they were known or could be recommended by a trusted family member or close friend. Likewise, they felt uncomfortable relating to Australians whom they perceived were from a different socio-economic group. Those who were uneducated had the most difficulty because of their reluctance to cross class boundaries.

Sara, for example, indicated that she does not attend school meetings because the parents of the other students 'drive Cherokees' (four-wheel drive vehicles) and she did not feel at ease in their presence because this indicated that they must be 'rich'. She did not mention any other brands of vehicles, which were probably more expensive than 'Cherokees'. I made enquiries from three Salvadoran women about the significance of 'Cherokees' for them. They indicated almost in unison that 'Cherokees' were used in the *fincas* (rural estates) owned by the wealthy landowners of El Salvador. One of them added that they were also used by the Armed Forces. Cherokees are US-made jeeps and these were probably part of the military aid from the United States in the 1980s. Unknowingly, Sara was probably associating it with the wealthy of El Salvador and the military so this prevented her from attending the school meetings. This probably could be traced back to her own social background and how she related with those in authority in El Salvador. An element of fear may also be present. This is another instance when their past colours the perception of their new home and impede the resettlement process. It is surprising though for Sara to have this outlook because she is well educated and worked as an executive secretary in El Salvador so she would have been used to dealing with people in authority and those who were well off. However, when they were in El Salvador, the children were young and not of school age.

On the other hand, Juan's wife did not feel intimidated with dealing with well-educated and financially secure people although she was hampered by her lack of English. For example, she managed to meet up with the Principal of her daughter's school when a problem arose but they had recourse to an interpreter.

Pedro recalled with anguish how he and his wife, Sara, were unable to socialise with other English-speaking people at work. While English may have served as an excuse in not socialising with workmates, there could have been an underlying reason as well especially if they were not used to doing it in their home country. Often they turned down invitations until they realised that it was acceptable to attend parties even with limited English:

At work there were always parties for couples and my wife never liked to go because she did not speak English ... But now it is different as we feel more confident ... if we need to talk to others we do, but if not we just talk to one another ...

Once Pedro and Sara accepted their own limitations (lack of English) they began to socialise more with their workmates. They manage to get by with their English and both of them work. Of all the participants in the study, they are better off in terms of English proficiency. The other participants, who work did not indicate if they socialised with their workmates. It appears that Pedro's workmates had accepted them but they were not ready to reciprocate so they used English as an excuse for not socialising.

To summarise this situation, English has been a continuing problem for all the participants and it affects their day-to-day interactions with English-speaking people, which contributes to their isolation. The women, except those who work, limit their outings to the bank, shopping centres and to visit families from the same country. Only one participant is able to attend the school meetings of her children because she did some self-study in the past and frequented a community centre, where she was forced to speak English.

It can therefore be said that the lack of English creates a sense of isolation, loneliness and fear because they are unable to express themselves if someone talks to them in English or do not understand what has been said. For the men, it is a similar problem. Although three of the men work, their English vocabulary is limited to their workplace situation because the same words are repeated constantly. None of the participants can speak fluent English although some have achieved a high level of education in their home country. It does not follow that if a person has had a high level of education in his/her own country, English would be easy to learn. One of the difficulties expressed by some of the participants (7) is that their English teachers were not bi-lingual and often they were unable to ask questions if they did not understand the words or what was said during the English classes. This was perceived to be a major drawback in learning English and there is probably a need to evaluate and monitor how English is taught. Some of the reasons in not progressing in their English language skills have been mentioned in the previous chapter, yet after almost a decade this difficulty continues.

Family and Marital Dissonance

Family life in Australia is drastically different from El Salvador. The participants made a transition from belonging to an extended family to a nuclear family. It would have been more difficult for those who came from rural areas compared to the urban areas. This change in family life can bring about many difficulties in the settlement process because it entails at least two generations – the parents and the children. Some of their children have lived longer in Australia than in El Salvador, so culturally they have adapted to the Australian way of life. In addition, these families are now living in a different culture, which may affect the spousal and parental relationships. This is often a stressful event and can test the stamina of any family.

Five of the participants had large families and only one of them claimed that they had extreme difficulties in adjusting to life in Australia. The other two participants seemed to have coped relatively well while the other two had marital problems but they indicated that their children adjusted well to the

changes. Four married couples were interviewed - two were interviewed together and the other two were interviewed separately. One couple related and interacted well during the interview, while the other couple presented a different picture because he dominated the conversation and his anxiety levels appeared to be quite high and sounded aggressive. I needed to intervene during the interview a few times so that his wife could also make her own contribution.

In this study only four of the eleven married participants interviewed indicated that their relationships with one another had improved. These four participants attribute the improvement to the way they cooperate and relate with one another, which includes domestic duties. In El Salvador, they were used to having maids, but here there has been a change of roles both for husband and wife and a few of them find it difficult to accept this. The other three married men persist with the same 'division of labour' they have been accustomed to in their home country. This 'division of labour' often causes tension in the marriage especially if the wife works outside the home. One of the women commented that her husband used to help her in the past when she was working, but no longer does so since she became unemployed. When the participants were interviewed, some of them admitted that they still prefer to maintain their own cultural patterns at home and want to continue that way. This desire to hang on to past roles and customs may contribute to some of the tensions they experience with their children. A study on gender roles of husband and wife in the refugee population could probably be explored, which this study was unable to examine.

Only one participant, Rebecca, directly revealed that she had marital difficulties with her husband, Tomas. The main problem appears to be that her husband has a mistress in El Salvador and with whom he has two children. She only found this out a few years ago through relatives in El Salvador. This situation has increased the tension in their marital relationship but it is also making her unwell. She added that her husband had a drinking problem in the past and often he became violent but she could run to her mother-in-law for protection. Her husband, unfortunately, only works part time and feels very frustrated about his situation. Rebecca revealed her problem and said:

I do have problems with my husband ... it seems that our marriage has gone for the worse ... In El Salvador we also had problems as he used to drink and chased me with his knife ... My most difficult problem has been this ... I do not have an extended family to run to ...

The rest of the participants were more circumspect and while some alluded to difficulties they were reluctant to spell out the details. One of the main issues for all the participants was that they were separated from their immediate or extended family members, who they had left behind. They were afraid for their safety as well as missing their company and support. For example, Rebecca misses her extended family including her mother-in-law in El Salvador especially in times of trouble. A married daughter, whom she visits regularly, lives near their home but she is not able to confide her difficulties. Rebecca commented, that there was a time when her husband became really violent and the police went to their home twice to intervene. She proved herself audacious in seeking help from the police otherwise it could have been worse. Such a challenge to her husband's authority demonstrates that she had accepted some of the Western practices in respect to family relationships. In El Salvador, the police would not aid in domestic problems. However, if they had a social support network here, these problems could be alleviated. Rebecca would have someone she could trust and share her difficulties.

This family did not have any psychological counselling and Rebecca at first claimed that the past experiences of living in a war zone did not seem to have adversely affected her or her children. But on second thought, after she was asked the question related to trauma of the past, she disclosed that maybe her husband was probably affected because of the way he acts and constantly asks to return to El Salvador. From the interview, it appears that there is a lot of dissonance between husband and wife, which remain unresolved as well as tension in the relationship. Because this couple was interviewed separately, the wife was able to relate her difficulties with her husband and she became teary-eyed and emotional about it. When her husband arrived she spoke less, but continued her conversation with me in the train station while he waited in the car. Had they been interviewed together, this difficulty would not have been revealed.

The other participants did not indicate any definite difficulties with any of their children, except Ramon who claimed that he had a problem with one of his daughters. When he noticed that his daughter was going in a direction contrary to that which he thought appropriate, he acted immediately. He claims that his daughter acknowledged his correction and was grateful for it. He was afraid that if he did not act accordingly, his daughter could go in the wrong direction and might have had recourse to drugs. It is not clear if the problem was due to cultural change or peer pressure but the parents certainly did not approve of their daughter's behaviour. This difficulty could also have arisen in El Salvador, but the father being the main disciplinarian would have corrected his daughter just the same.

The data revealed that the participants did not note as many problems with their children's adjustment or emotional health as one would expect to have with the change of countries and culture and the trauma they experienced. It is possible too that the parents either could not or would not acknowledge them. The most serious situation was what happened to Gloria's family because of their past traumatic experiences, which were resolved with family counselling and the second episode when the other three children and the seven-year old girl arrived from El Salvador in the 1990s. In a study conducted by Cahill (1996) on immigrant school children, traumatising emerged as a critical issue with the entry of Salvadoran and Iranian refugees. These traumatic experiences were usually associated with students who had been tortured physically, sexually abused or had been forced to watch relatives or friends being tortured or raped. The specialist unit was able to help some of the Salvadoran adolescents but often these problems were difficult to identify because of their reluctance to disclose. Maybe there is a need to explore the experiences of refugee children to see how the past affected them.

Counselling was not readily available to the participants when they arrived because it was not offered to them, even though some family members had difficulties dealing with the way a spouse or a child was coping with the aftermath of the war. The cost of counselling was also outside their ability to pay, on the one hand and on the other hand, counselling was not part of their cultural expectation. Counselling also has to be seen within the context of non-Western culture where seeking counselling is not part of the milieu and the family's concerns take precedence over the individual (Bemak, Chung & Pedersen, 2002). However, one participant underwent intensive psychiatric treatments three years after arriving in Australia, as a result of the after effects of her traumatic experiences in El Salvador, as related in another section of this chapter.

In this study two couples (Tomas & Rebecca; Clara & Victor) have been identified as having a history of domestic violence. Tomas and Rebecca already had problems in El Salvador but there was

an extended family for support. Rebecca claimed that her husband was an alcoholic and only stopped drinking, a few years ago. However, other family problems have emerged since coming to Australia and it is not clear whether the causes are due to their experiences of trauma, change of lifestyle and even change of roles between husband and wife. Clara and Victor also had episodes of domestic violence since their arrival and the family attributed it to his drinking problem although Clara commented that Victor was a good man before he started drinking. At least Victor has a full time job, which he likes, but Tomas only does casual work and stays home most of the time and this is not helpful to the relationship between husband and wife. Pittaway (1991) claims that little is known about domestic violence among the CALD population. Only the above families discussed with me their difficulties with their spouses and children. The other participants claimed that they cope with their children quite well except for the difficulties of growing up which could happen either in El Salvador or Australia. As indicated elsewhere, there was a degree of stoicism in the way they recounted their difficulties and tended to minimise them. Alternatively, since their experiences are emotionally charged, they have difficulty in talking about them because of the pain attached to it.

Emotional and Psychological Problems

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the participants experienced different degrees of trauma. Experts (Kaufman & Seitz, 1994) cite that people who have escaped from war and repression (Chile and El Salvador) still suffer the effects of trauma and torture for a period of time. In addition, Pittaway (1991) argues that trauma has to be addressed to facilitate a satisfactory settlement or it can lead to lack of trust and fear. The experiences of the following refugees will show what kind of difficulties they had to confront during their resettlement process.

Gloria's family had a two-fold problem, which created the 'war situation' at home. First, it was the frustration of learning the English language and all the adjustments they were going through both inside and outside the home, which created tension. Secondly, the arrival of the three older children in the 1990s re-activated the tension again. These children had been separated from the family unit for more than 10 years. There was also the seven-year old child of one of her daughters, who was raped in El Salvador, as mentioned in Chapter 7. The second group also had their adjustment problems and the traumas from El Salvador, so the frustration levels exacerbated the situation. Gloria added that one of the causes of the problem in the second episode was due to the psychological frame of mind of her three children, who arrived from El Salvador. For her it was a joyous time to have all the children together but realised that it created chaos and expressed her predicament:

My most difficult problem is to live in a 'war-like' situation ... my children maltreated one another ... I felt this situation far worse ... Then we brought the other three from El Salvador, who were sick psychologically ... They also brought with them a 7-year old girl ... so the war began again ...

Gloria seems to be 'spot-on' when analysing her family problems and tended to act immediately in finding a solution or tackling them. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the family had counselling during the initial settlement phase and this helped immensely. It appears that the separation of family members for over 10 years produced a rupture in their relationships especially since they all lived in politically unstable and unsafe areas prior to coming to Australia. Eight members

lived in Costa Rica for eight years and the other three children lived in El Salvador during the most intense period of the civil war. At the time of the arrival of the three children, Gloria was renting a four-bedroom house from the Department of Housing so there would have been 12 persons in the same house and this situation of being overcrowded also contributed to their difficulties.

Gloria disclosed that her three children went through a lot of atrocities in El Salvador. Her granddaughter grew up in the streets of El Salvador and had become 'wild'. At times she was uncontrollable in Australia. The experiences of trauma are a recurring problem in the refugee population and needs to be addressed during the initial period of resettlement to facilitate their adjustment; otherwise it lingers on and on. Although Gloria's family was already established in Australia at the time of the new arrivals, it also led to impatience, misunderstandings, and arguments because family members saw the world differently especially after a long separation. Gloria commented that it is 'necessary to seek psychological intervention, otherwise it will lead to a very sad life'. This is a noteworthy comment from a woman, without any formal education. She was able to identify their problems and asked for help when needed. Not too many people would acknowledge such a need especially when one considers that to see a psychologist is taboo in the Salvadoran culture because it means that they are mentally sick!

Mental health issues surfaced in a number of families; Gloria's family was not an isolated incident. Pedro brought to light how difficult it was during the two years when his wife, Sara, had to undergo psychiatric and psychological intervention. Pedro disclosed his experience and related that:

My wife experienced depression when our son was one year old ... the psychiatrist said that it came with her from El Salvador and I think so too ... It lasted two years ... she had treatments for one year ... She was under a psychiatrist as she was taking medications ... She also used to see the psychologist weekly ...

The family was very much involved in supporting Sara during the period she was receiving psychological and psychiatric treatments. The episode, which sparked off her depression, did not happen immediately after their arrival in Australia but after three years. Sara's mental instability created chaos in family life because she became uncontrollable at the best of times and the family never knew how she would react at any given moment and the children became scared. Sara remembered that:

When I had the crying spells, I used to feel panic ... I could not control myself ... I was convinced that I was ready to go to the mental hospital (*manicomio*) ... I used to lock up my son, who was home with me in the closet ... In spite of the state I was in, I used to do all the housework ... I used to drive too ...

These episodes were triggered by something, which Sara could not explain, but she realised that something had to be done because she wanted to be healed. She was also putting her son (a toddler) at risk by locking him up and treating him as a scapegoat. Since she continued to drive her car, she put her life at risk as well as others. A striking comment, made by Pedro, was that after his wife regained her mental state, their son who was then three also improved in his behaviour. Sara intercepted and said that this could have been due to:

When we get here and feel the isolation, the mind starts working ...there is a need for someone to listen in one's own language ...I used to stay home by myself with my three-year old daughter ... Solitude is hard ...

At least Sara was able to pinpoint the cause of her difficulties and sought help. It is possible that something like this could also happen to other refugees because they no longer have their extended families and friends to talk to. Pedro commented that Salvadoran people they know, both men and women, have similar problems stemming from the war situation and said:

Some people experience it but do not do anything about it ... I think it is happening to many Salvadorans ... We know of four cases – male and female ... We come from a society with many prejudices ... to go to a psychologist means one is insane ... it is not true here ...

From this experience, Pedro recommended that it would be better if refugees sought counselling on arrival rather than wait for it to worsen because medical intervention is quite expensive. While Pedro is aware of the meaning of seeing a psychologist in his culture, he was able to transcend it when his wife needed assistance. He was only able to claim from Medicare for the psychiatric consultations but had to pay for the psychological sessions (twice a week) as well as the medications, which were costly. Haines (1996) comments that mental health problems are serious and unlikely to disappear. Often problems surface at a later date and do not disappear during resettlement and these include depression, anxiety, and marital conflict among others. Likewise, Cahill (1996) indicates that traumatic reactions may emerge later than sooner in the settlement process. A small study (Voices from Ethiopia, 2002) done in Melbourne reveals that Ethiopian refugees have similar problems because they are unwilling to talk to a psychologist and there are no elders to rely on. Elders play a special role in the communities for people who come from Third World countries because they can always go to them for advice but the Salvadorans have no community or elders to rely on in Melbourne.

Rebecca provides another example of a family member experiencing mental health issues. She commented that her daughter got very sick and had to be hospitalised recently. All the tests done in the hospital proved negative, so she was advised to see the psychologist. Her daughter already had three children when it happened. When they came to Australia, her daughter was then 16 years old and recalled that:

My eldest daughter also got sick ... She seemed to be going crazy ... She used to have pain in her stomach ... would just cry and also feels desperate ... She went to see a psychologist ... Sometimes I go through the same difficulties ...

Rebecca is quite supportive of her children but the lack of extended family is common with Salvadoran refugees. They are unable to go and visit someone to share their experiences because of lack of English or fear that their stories could be passed on to others. Rebecca indicated, as mentioned above, that her husband might have been affected by past trauma. However, by talking about her daughter's difficulties, she also revealed hers. While she does not associate her difficulties with her past trauma or with her marital problems, her symptoms appear to be related to her past. She simply goes to a doctor and is given medications, but often they do not help. There could be other underlying reasons for this malady that she is not telling the doctor. Or alternatively, the doctor does

not ask any questions about the past that could be attributed to her complaints so the complaint remains undiagnosed.

Two of the participants claimed that they used to have nightmares at night. Linda in particular remembered what happened:

We used to dream a lot ... any small noise like the train was enough to trigger any event of the past ... I used to cry a lot at night and my husband too ... even someone just bursting a plastic bag was like a bomb for us ...

Linda commented that she never saw her husband cry in El Salvador but they felt so much sadness internally. Since they did not know anyone whom they could visit, they often went for walks. For them to visit friends and to talk to them means a lot, a common practice in their home country. She also indicated that often she would cry uncontrollably in the middle of the night and her husband, who was a psychologist in El Salvador, would let her cry. After her crying spells, they would talk about her problem and this helped a lot.

The other participant, Pedro, also experienced nightmares in the first few months of his arrival in Australia but in time they ceased. Nightmares are not uncommon in the refugee population in the early stages of settlement. In addition, noises were associated with their past experiences of aerial bombings and shootings, which happened frequently during the civil war. Most of the participants still react to certain noises similar to the ones quoted above. After more than a decade in Australia, most of the participants claimed that certain noises they hear at work and in the streets still make them jump. Kaplan (1998) argues that fear and sheer terror can persist for a long period because the trauma continues through nightmares, memories, images and other types of stimuli. He adds that reminders of traumatic events can act as triggers.

As mentioned earlier, two of the participants (Juan and Pedro) indicated that they sporadically suffer from severe headaches. The causes have remained undiagnosed in spite of repeated consultations with doctors. These experiences appear to confirm Kaplan's (1998) findings when he explains that refugees somatize trauma (especially those from non-western nations) and certain symptoms such as headaches, nausea, heart palpitations, etc. are manifested. The other participants may experience similar problems but did not say so during the interviews. If they did, they probably did not relate it to their past experiences and just treated it as a medical problem. There is a need for medical and health care professionals to become aware of symptoms manifested by refugees which stem from their past experiences of trauma. This will enable them to recommend early intervention strategies.

The data suggest that after more than a decade, the psychological scars of these participants have not healed. Psychological problems do not seem to surface immediately after arrival but only after a few years of residency in Australia. It appears that these traumatic experiences are not only affecting the first generation refugees (parents) but also the second generation (children). While some of the women were able to control their emotions in relating their stories during the interview, they had a look of sadness in their eyes, which seemed to indicate their inability to express their experiences. To do otherwise is just too painful. Most of them prefer to just keep it to themselves and not even talk about it with their compatriots. Their psychological scars could probably be also attributed to fact that they left the country at the height of the civil war and they were not present to share in the jubilation of

the peace process and in coming to Australia, their experiences of trauma were obliterated. They did not join in the rituals in El Salvador to grieve and mourn their tragic history and to pay their respects to those who were killed, as in the case of the survivors of the El Mozote massacres (Binford, 1996) and in San Salvador (Montgomery, 1995). Their flight out of El Salvador, while providing a sense of relief, was accompanied by feelings of guilt that they had survived and lived in safety while others had stayed behind and had been subjected to continual harassment and in some cases torture. While some of them have returned, it is only for a short visit and the changes that occurred after the Peace Treaty was signed may have not been obvious.

Acquisition of Australian Citizenship

Studies (Hugo, 1995; Julian et al., 1997) show that a large percentage of refugees acquire Australian citizenship as soon as they are eligible. A higher level of CALD migrants also take on Australian citizenship compared to those of English Speaking Background. The law stipulates that migrants and refugees are able to take up Australian citizenship after a two-year residency. In this study, the rate is 100 per cent in spite of their lack of English language skills and their applications were approved immediately. Patriotism and nationalism were not the main reasons for becoming Australian citizens. As refugees, who fled their country, they were afraid of not being able to have a country to stay, if and when they decided to visit El Salvador. There appears to be an underlying fear that they could be 'deported' by authorities in their home country because they fled during the civil war. The participants gave different reasons for acquiring Australian citizenship. They can be classified as follows:

- sense of belonging (2);
- security and stability (2);
- peace and tranquillity (2);
- family links because of the children (7); and
- to follow the rule (1).

Among the participants, only Ramon desires to return to his home country because his only son has not been successful in being accepted as an immigrant and he claims that he is living in 'exile'. He claimed that the citizenship 'did not change much in anything and we did not lose our citizenship like in other countries'. However, he added that he would lose his Salvadoran citizenship after five years. His wife, Ines, is ambivalent about the idea but will go with him if and when he returns to El Salvador in the future. Because of this problem, it is difficult for Ramon to get settled in Australia after more than a decade. On the other hand if he returns to El Salvador, his daughters would stay in Australia because they are now married with children so the problem would be repeated.

All the children of the participants took on Australian citizenship after the stipulated two-year residency and no difficulties were raised. It became apparent from the interviews that the participants valued the feeling of wellbeing and peace in their day-to-day activities in Australia. Most of them commented that in Australia they are able to move freely, in spite of the many difficulties they have experienced. These participants claimed that they did not have any preparations when they applied for citizenship. They simply filled in the forms and went for an interview.

Reasons for Staying in Australia

This question was explored to see if the participants would consider going back to El Salvador once the country was back to normal. As gleaned from the interviews, they were able to see and experience a different kind of life in Australia. Their going home to El Salvador for a visit also became a decisive point in their lives in determining whether they preferred to stay here or return to their home country. When they fled El Salvador, it was during a crisis situation, which needed an emergency solution. They did not have any choices unless they wanted to risk their lives and those of their families.

Most of the participants have returned to El Salvador for a visit. Only three participants and their families have not returned, mainly for financial reasons. Some of them have gone home more than once during the past decade. While most of them would like to stay in El Salvador because it is 'home', they have mixed feelings. The reasons the participants gave for staying in Australia have been grouped as follows:

Family links - the Salvadorans have a great sense of family and they are ready to sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of the children. While some of the participants still have their parents living in El Salvador, their attachment to their children seems to be stronger and they only go home to visit their elderly parents.

Lack of fear in Australia - some of the refugees are still fearful of reprisals and violence when they visit their country. For example, Clara and Victor still experience fear when visiting their home country, which appears to have been internalised even after an absence of several years. They tend to stay indoors most of the time and to keep a low profile because they are afraid that people judge them harshly for 'deserting' their country rather than remaining as part of the resistance movement. According to Peterson (1997) the culture of fear has been pervasive in El Salvador since the 1932 Revolution for the poor people. The culture of fear was experienced the most in the 1970s and 1980s because of massive repression although it was also random so it was never possible to feel safe. This type of fear is part of the 'baggage' that the refugees brought with them when they came to Australia.

Better opportunities for advancement - while it is difficult for most of the participants to adapt to the Australian environment, they see a better future for their children. Emma, for example, claimed that she had returned to El Salvador twice but has no desire to live there anymore because there are many opportunities open to people here as long as one is willing to work hard which is not true in El Salvador. However, she claimed that she would not encourage any of her relatives to come to Australia because of difficulties in resettlement.

While they like visiting their home country, they still prefer to come back. They now realise the differences in the two countries and prefer to stay here in spite of the isolation and loneliness that many feel. Their home country has changed too during the time of their absence so that would mean readjustment if they decide to go back. Besides, most of them would prefer to stay where their children are because this is one of the reasons for coming. They want their children to have a better future. Also if they returned home, they could not be assured of any employment. They think Australia offers them better opportunities in the long run.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Ramon was the only participant who desired to return to his home country because he feels that he is on a 'voluntary exile' in Australia. So in spite of the difficulties faced by the participants, they prefer to stay here and live for their children. The

Salvadorans in Tasmania also expressed their desire for staying because it is a peaceful country in spite of the difficulties they have to live with (Julian et al., 1997). After listening to the participants about their intention to continue to reside in Australia, it is evident that they are Rubicon refugees and would work hard for their resettlement. Although Ramon desires to return to his home country, he cannot be classified as an Odyssean refugee because he has cut his links with his political party and only wants to go home because of his son.

Need for Social Networks

The interviews showed that there is a lack of a community centre where the participants could converge and share their lives with one another. Unlike other cultural groups, they are quite dispersed geographically and this was a big problem in accessing participants. They do not appear to be a cohesive group although a particular suburb has been termed as 'Salvadoran colony'. However, this lack of community network is also evident with other Latin American groups at least in Melbourne. The participants were asked about the underlying reasons for the dispersion.

Several reasons were given and the main one is that they do not know one another and have become very competitive among themselves. They appear to gravitate only within a small circle of friends. Sunday worship at the local Catholic Church could be an appropriate location to meet since they are mostly Catholics but only a few go to Church. They gave the following reasons for non-attendance: work commitments, the Church is far away, people talk or gossip too much, and they are unable to worship in this setting. Fear or mistrust was also given as one of the reasons for avoiding places where they might meet other Salvadorans because stories about them could be transmitted back to El Salvador and their relatives might suffer reprisal. Since it has been purported that members of the armed forces and guerrillas have come to Australia as refugees, the participants fear meeting them. Additionally, their own experiences of trauma inhibit them from relating with their own people so they do not have to talk about the past. They prefer to forget about the past and go on with their lives. A study (Julian et al. 1997) in Tasmania shows that there is a refugee-initiated community for Salvadorans and this would be helpful for the refugees in Melbourne but no such community has emerged. Probably, there might be one in another suburb where there is a larger group of Salvadorans living close to one another. However, no information could be obtained.

Summary

As discussed in this chapter, English has been the most difficult problem to resolve for the participants, which was already identified in the initial settlement period. In spite of the professional backgrounds of some of the participants, their English levels did not seem to be better than those who were less educated because they all claimed that English is their major problem. While English skills for some of the participants improved a little, they still find difficulty with the pronunciation so they do not talk as much.

To find suitable employment with the help of a support group, as in the case of Victor, some success was achieved. Those who found permanent full-time employment have stayed in the same job. Since they come from a country with a high level of unemployment, they seem to have a tendency to stay in the one job. Loneliness, isolation and frustration are common experiences for these

participants. The lack of networking with community groups where they could converge is a cause for concern. Most of them are quite resigned to living here for the sake of their children.

The children are better adjusted because they have learned English and most of them were young when they arrived in Australia. Although most of the participants had small children on arrival in Australia, childcare did not appear to be a major problem because the women stayed at home. Only one participant had difficulties with childcare in the first few months of settlement because she and her husband had to go to work almost immediately but this situation was resolved.

Experiences of past trauma are still evident even after more than a decade in Australia, especially when they see protests, demonstrations or any noises which may be associated with their past experiences. They are not always sure how they will react to certain stimuli but something triggers it somehow. Some of the participants commented that problems related to their trauma need to be addressed soon after arrival so they do not linger.

Only two couples were identified as having marital problems but both husbands already had drinking problems before coming to Australia. The lack of extended family can also cause added tensions in the marital relationship because they have no one with whom they could talk. All the participants speak Spanish to their children and prefer to continue to live their cultural traditions at home. Cross-cultural issues were not explored because the participants expressed that they are unable to live the Australian culture as yet.

Fear is still an on-going problem for most of the participants especially when they visit El Salvador. For example, Clara and her husband presume that people look at them when they visit El Salvador and think that they ran away at the time of the political crisis. Feelings of guilt for surviving while others had died or 'disappeared' was common among respondents and spoilt their joy at being 'home' again. Other studies have found similar experiences of 'survivor guilt' (Silove, 1999). Still, Clara and her husband were more fortunate than some participants because they at least could return to El Salvador for a visit, others cannot. In addition, fear also seems to be an underlying cause in relating with their compatriots here in Australia. Some of them have friends whom they had met in the hostel or those they already knew from their home country or be-friend those who speak the same language. If they had an active community group, this might help them even more.

The next chapter will delineate the conclusions of the study with some recommendations for future programmes and policies for newly arrived refugees.

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter draws together some of the threads that emerged during the interviews about the experiences of the refugees before their arrival in Australia, immediately after arrival and their long-term adjustments.

EXPERIENCES OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

The participants gave different reasons about their experiences of the socio-economic and political conflict but basically they point to the extreme bipolarisation between the rich and the poor of El Salvador. While the economic situation did not trigger the exodus, it was the increased violence that made the people flee to safer places. If the country had returned to normal within a short time, the people would have gone home but the war was prolonged. While not all of them directly blamed the United States for prolonging the war, it was the continued military aid and support for the government that sustained it.

The effects of the war came at different points in time depending on the geographic areas in which they lived. Three of the participants from the rural areas seemed to have experienced the effects of the war between 1963 and 1965. The other two participants, also from the rural areas, claimed that they did not see any real evidence of the war apart from hearing sporadic explosions in their region until the 1980s. While one participant moved from the rural area to the city after she got married, she pointed out that in her parents' region war began in 1972. The manner in which the war was witnessed also differed for each of the participants. One participant claimed that there might be war in one block and none in the next. However, all who lived in that area certainly heard explosions, saw people running everywhere and witnessed the killings of civilians.

Random aerial bombings occurred throughout the region especially when the military men were given orders to bomb when they saw anyone moving. A common theme that emerged was that life was precarious and that constant vigilance was required to increase the chance of survival. This meant they needed to be versatile and inventive in order to secure safety and to find food and housing. Because of the early experiences of political conflict, participants in the rural areas found ways of fending for themselves. For example, Gloria claimed that they moved from house to house from 1963 and sometimes they had to sleep in the open fields usually infested with mosquitoes. Her husband's involvement in politics forced them to move constantly from the time the children were born. So literally their 10 children grew up in a war situation. In the end Gloria and her seven children had to flee to Costa Rica in 1981 for political asylum, but her other children remained in El Salvador to

continue with the political struggle. Her survival skills were sharpened while in El Salvador but once the family arrived in Australia, they had to seek counselling during the initial settlement phase. Their past experiences probably started to surface and created a 'war situation' because of constant arguments in the family. These families, like many of the others, would have been traumatised by their experiences, which would have long-term effects on them. What has emerged from this study is that people flee from place to place before leaving the country. They would have preferred to stay 'home' if it were not for the political situation that forced them to flee.

Those who were not directly involved in politics or in the insurgency fared better in some cases although none of the participants could escape the effects of war. It was difficult to keep all family members together and the separation put stress on family relationships. For example, Clara and Victor were not involved in politics but in the late 1970s they became separated because they were being pursued by the military for their work with the poor and their involvement with the CEB. Their family began to disintegrate when the oldest son 'disappeared' in 1979 and the second son had to flee to Nicaragua. In 1980 Clara and the seven children went to a refuge centre to hide from the military while Victor went to his brother or slept in the open fields so no one knew where he was. He also lost track of the whereabouts of his family. Reunification was not easy either – the separation changed the nature of parental and spousal roles. Life together was often in a precarious situation like living in a refugee camp in Costa Rica for years.

While the participants in the urban areas did not have to move as much, they could not avoid the effects of war, especially the aerial bombings. Their experiences differed markedly from those in rural areas and often they were witnesses to protests, demonstrations and killings, but not all of them had the need to move from house to house. These events around the political conflict left an indelible mark in their memories and their ability to settle in Australia. Certain events or noises or even the sight of a uniformed policeman or security guard could trigger what happened in the past. This probably could be attributed to the fact that their traumatic experiences were never addressed because in most cases they have been reluctant to discuss them with others or to seek counselling. Likewise, they were rarely offered the services of counsellors, who spoke Spanish and understood their culture.

REASONS FOR BECOMING REFUGEES

The reasons for becoming refugees were not as clear-cut, as expected. While most of the participants had claims to refugee status because of the war situation, only four participants, Clara, Victor, Ramon and Tomas were directly threatened by the military. The other participants were not the main targets of the military, but some members of their families were directly involved in anti-government protests and/or demonstrations, so they had to flee the country. None of the participants wanted to leave the country, but were forced by the political conflict to do so. Based on the interviews, it became evident that claims for refugee status allowed them to be given the protection and assistance they needed at the time otherwise their lives would have been in danger.

The experiences of the two families, who fled to Costa Rica with the assistance of UNHCR, were often precarious. While they were out of the political conflict, they were not sure how long they could stay in Costa Rica and as it turned out they stayed longer than expected. These two families would have wanted to return to their home country but the war was prolonged. Because they had been

in the country of first asylum for a long time, they were given priority by the UNHCR to resettle in a third country, Australia. Resettlement in a third country is costly and this is conceded only to applicants if they cannot return to their home country.

INITIAL SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

The initial settlement experiences were presented to see how the refugees were assisted from the point of arrival in Melbourne to the migrant hostels. The early days were crucial in resettlement and they were all going through some sort of fear as to what to expect in the new country. The welcome ambient of the host country assisted in facilitating resettlement. In general most of them felt welcome at the airport but found orientation at the hostels quite overwhelming. However, the migrant hostels met the needs of the participants, at least during the time they stayed there.

The participants were able to access services and programmes at the hostels almost immediately. They were provided with unemployment or special benefits to cover their personal expenses but also a certain percentage went to the hostels for food and lodging, but no one complained about it. They were also entitled to attend free English classes but not everyone enrolled. Some of the men, as the heads of their families, were given preference by their wives to enrol in the English classes. Only one female participant enrolled soon after arrival because she was the head of the family.

Four women did not take English courses, one waited for a childcare vacancy, one female participant was sent to work by CES one month after arrival and only three women were able to access the English courses. The women, who did not access the English courses at all, had several children so they stayed home to look after them. Only one female participant, Linda, accessed the childcare centre, one month after arrival because CES sent her and her husband to work at the factory. The childcare centre served its useful purpose but it became difficult when the children became ill. It meant that one of the parents had to absent himself/herself from work but an equivalent amount was deducted from their pay.

Only two women in the study did TAFE courses but have not found suitable employment. Three of the male participants started to work six months after arrival, one in a plant nursery and two in factories. Three of the women also worked in factories a few months after arrival where they stayed for a couple of years. After resigning from the factory one of them did a six-month hospitality course, which enabled her to work as a casual cleaner in a private hospital. These participants were well qualified but because of lack of English, they were unable to find better jobs and no bridging or retraining courses were offered at the time.

The CRSS groups were seen as important but results indicated that they needed training on how to follow up refugees to give them moral support. The material needs of refugees were amply provided for by CRSS groups but moral support was seen as more important than material needs because of the participants' lack of friends and relatives. As the study revealed, the first few months in Australia were considered as critical to the adjustment of the participants because of their loneliness, isolation and their inability to cope with English or not finding people, who spoke the same language. While the situation of seeing new places and learning new things would have been a temporary distraction for them, the reality of being in a strange land confronted them sooner rather than later. The

participants expressed the need to have bi-lingual interpreters to form part of CRSS groups so that families could be visited regularly, be listened to and evaluated according to their needs.

Because this is a new group in the Australian scene, there has been a lack of social support network of families and friends. Only one participant had extended family in Melbourne but for a variety of reasons, they were not assisted in resettlement. A couple also had a son already living in Melbourne but he could not resettle them and could only visit occasionally because he also had his own family to support. A social support network would have facilitated their resettlement and they would have had people they could talk to and share ideas with especially about difficulties they were encountering in the initial settlement stages. This lack of social network will also be reflected in the long-term difficulties.

LONG-TERM SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

The long-term settlement experiences were evaluated to see how the past affected their present situation. It became apparent from the interviews that English had been a continuing problem because of difficulties in learning another language. Age, the pronunciation of English words and lack of basic education were seen as impediments in learning a new language, but those with better qualifications did not fare any better. Because of lack in English proficiency, three of the male participants stayed in the same jobs for more than 10 years and have not progressed. The other participants, both male and female, have been employed as cleaners on a casual basis or worked in factories for a few years. Only three of the female participants did not work since their arrival because they all had several children to care for.

Two of the participants suffer economic hardship because they are widows but try either to supplement their income by working as a casual cleaner or manage on a very tight budget. The others cope with their income and expenses as best they can. Parents with many adult children, who are already in the workforce, contribute to the expenses at home.

There was also a lack of affordable housing for people on unemployment benefits or low income. Public housing was not always available because of long waiting lists. Those with CRSS groups were assisted to move to public housing in a short time because they have numerous children but others met with difficulties in renting houses through the private market. Two participants who applied for public housing were unable to qualify because they were not considered in the 'low-income' bracket. Since housing is a basic human right to provide social and economic security, there is a need to recognise refugees as priority groups in the allocation of housing.

The participants interviewed did not seem to have many problems in respect to their relationship with their children. The children appeared to have adjusted well to Australian society and most of them have been able to complete secondary school, while others continued to university level. Maybe a study of a larger group of Salvadoran refugees, who have been in the country for more than 20 years, might give different results.

Marital conflicts did not appear to be any greater than would occur in the general population. Cross-generational conflicts were not examined in great detail because the children were not interviewed and only the parents' perspectives were canvassed. Four of the participants claimed that their marriages have improved while others have remained the same and one said it was worse. The

couples, who have adapted to the change from El Salvador to Australia, have fared better. They cooperate and assist one another in their domestic responsibilities. Those who have continued to live the same model of family life in El Salvador experience tension, especially the women, because they have to do the domestic work on their own. These participants have been used to having domestic servants and/or other members of their extended families assist them in El Salvador.

Cross-cultural adaptation was not explored to any great degree because the participants expressed that they preferred to live their own culture at home as well as speak their own language. They had not become part of mainstream Australia but remained in a Salvadoran enclave, but this would probably be common with some of the immigrant groups.

The results of the interviews indicate that certain stimuli affect them and serve as reminders of their past traumatic experiences. Some mental health issues have also surfaced as well as a few undiagnosed medical complaints. Maybe if counselling had been given on arrival, these incidents could have been lessened. One family claimed that counselling facilitated their re-adjustment during the initial months of settlement. Others tried to make sense of their experiences in different ways by questioning their religious beliefs or by being constantly occupied to forget. Two participants changed to another religion in the hope that this might help them find some meaning to their suffering.

All the participants and their families acquired Australian citizenship after the stipulated two-year residency, in spite of their lack of English. Although there was no prior preparation before they became citizens, they claimed that citizenship gave them a sense of belonging, security and peace. Fear, however, is still an on-going problem especially when they visit their home country. Out of the 14 participants only three sponsored family members but the others did not indicate their willingness to sponsor any of their next of kin. The need to send remittances to extended family still in El Salvador was not expressed as of concern for the participants. This is probably due to the fact that their nuclear families are intact in Australia.

Despite some unhappiness and dissatisfaction about their treatment in Australia, most of the participants rated policies and practices around resettlement relatively high. Life in Australia was seen to be an improvement to life in El Salvador. For example, after more than a decade in Australia, all but one of the participants stated that they preferred to stay in Australia rather than return to El Salvador. While they all acknowledged that they had a decline in their employment capabilities, commensurate with their skills, and lack of home ownership potential, they still prefer to stay even if only for the sake of their children. The other three participants, who have not visited their country, are of the same opinion. It can be said therefore that the participants can be classified as Rubicon refugees in spite of the fact that one of them wants to return home. His desire to return home is not based on his ties with any political party but his yearning to be reunited with his son, who cannot meet the points system to come to Australia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for future policy implementation were formulated as a result of the research study. Some of these recommendations have been based on the services available at the time of the arrival of the refugees. However, if some of these services have been met or are in the process of implementation, these recommendations will serve to further expand the existing policies.

Recommendation 1

That treatment for post-traumatic experiences of refugees be provided by the government either through DIMIA or the Health Care Ministry as part of the Refugee/Special Humanitarian Programme as soon as indicated.

Newly arrived refugees, who are likely to have experienced traumatic events could avoid further suffering if psychological assessment could be done and if they could easily access psychological services in their own language at least in the initial stages of their settlement. While there are now centres in most capital cities that look after the trauma of refugees, there is a need to develop programmes that address the full spectrum of psychological and psychiatric problems and other related mental health issues that could best serve the refugee population. The information, regarding the provision of such services, needs to be readily available in every language group.

Recommendation 2

That appropriate training be provided to bi-lingual interpreters and/or workers to assist new ethnic groups resettling in Australia under the Refugee/Special Humanitarian Programme.

There is a shortage in the number of trained and accredited interpreters available and sometimes newly arrived refugees have to access emergency services during the night or on weekends, especially in the initial stages of settlement.

Recommendation 3

That the incidence of rape among female refugees be investigated and that the medical profession be made aware of this sensitive issue and appropriate ethnic specific services provided.

Rape has been used as a way of terrorising populations during periods of war but it was finally classified as a war crime in 1993. It is important that women, who have been abused and/or raped be assessed and given the necessary counselling so the problem does not persist. The need to have female health care workers and bi-lingual interpreters are deemed necessary.

Recommendation 4

That the training of medical and health care workers be expanded to assist refugees in identifying complaints that have been somatized.

There is a need to have training programmes for outreach and health care workers to identify this type of complaint and/or to assist refugees to become aware of the consequences of torture and trauma. Often refugees do not relate their ailments with their past experiences and their complaints persist. Probably there is a need to implement programmes that would address men's health, in particular, and the effects of trauma (headaches, nightmares, dizziness, etc.).

Recommendation 5

That bi-lingual doctors be accredited to serve the needs of refugees, who are unable to learn English, without the need to have recourse to interpreters.

Patients usually want to talk to their doctors directly without having an intermediary, usually an interpreter or one of the children, who are sometimes too young to act as interpreters. Policies need to be put in place that discourage the use of family, especially young children and community members as interpreters because of the confidentiality nature of the consultations. In the refugee population, there are trained doctors, who experience difficulty in being accredited in Australia. This would require the need to upgrade their training, after they have learned English, and to assist them in passing the examinations of the Australian Medical Association requirements. Work in one of the private and/or public hospitals could be offered to enable them to have hands-on experience before going into private practice.

Recommendation 6

That newly arrived refugees undergo basic English language courses before being sent into the work force.

It is important for the newly arrived refugees to undergo intensive English courses before they are sent to the workforce otherwise they either remain unemployed or underemployed. Most employers today require that future employees need to have at least a working knowledge of English before they can be employed. Parents also need to speak English when they meet with the teachers of their young children. Refugees, who are professionally qualified in their home country, need special English courses to upgrade their qualifications.

Recommendation 7

That bi-lingual teachers be employed at least at the beginners' level to teach English.

It is deemed necessary that ESL teachers be bi-lingual so the students are encouraged to ask questions for clarification and maybe this could facilitate their capacity to learn English at a shorter period of time. Probably practical lessons about day-to-day activities, such as shopping, especially for the women would be of value. There is also a need to assess the ESL courses offered to newly arrived refugees and to evaluate their success.

Recommendation 8

That the recognition of overseas qualifications be facilitated so that newly arrived refugees are able to continue with the work they have been trained for in the past.

This will require the need to offer bridging courses and/or further training to refugees with professional qualifications. In line with this recommendation, maybe the refugees could be assisted to find employment that takes into account their past qualifications so they do not have to work in factories or remain unemployed or underemployed for long periods of time.

Recommendation 9

That low cost housing be made available to refugees as soon as they leave the hostels and/or on-arrival accommodation to facilitate their resettlement in Australia.

The necessity of finding affordable housing has usually facilitated the settlement of newly arrived refugees, after they leave the on-arrival accommodation. Often it is difficult to access public housing because of long waiting lists and refugees should be recognised as high priority by the Department of Housing.

Recommendation 10

That bi-lingual interpreters be provided at all ports of entry to meet new arrivals and clear them through Customs and Immigration Bureaus.

Refugees, who arrive from overseas, often experience difficulties when they land at airports because of their lack of English language skills and their fear of settling-in into a new country without relatives, friends or community groups to meet them. Families with small children often need assistance at airports and in some instances they have to be aided in finding their connecting flights.

Recommendation 11

That orientation programmes not be given soon after the arrival of refugees from overseas.

Refugees who have just arrived from overseas often feel disoriented because of the time change and their inability to speak English. It is good practice to show new arrivals the area and the system of transportation to them by accompanying them to the actual locations rather than just pointing to a map on the board. There is also a constant need to evaluate such services.

Recommendation 12

That bi-lingual interpreters be made available at on-arrival accommodations so families can be visited regularly and their needs evaluated.

Most families have different needs and newly arrived refugees appreciate being visited by someone in the host country, who can speak their language, during the initial weeks of settlement. It is also a good means of evaluating what their needs are so programmes that address R/SHP entrants may take into consideration their culture, social interaction and other related factors could be implemented.

Recommendation 13

That training be provided by DIMIA to support groups on how to resettle refugees. It is also recommended that DIMIA monitor the progress of support groups to see what improvements can be made on the services available by asking them to give regular reports about the refugees, at least during the first six months. Regular meetings with different support groups would also be helpful so there is a sharing of ideas and difficulties and how best to improve the services.

This service is deemed invaluable because it is also a good means of identifying persons who are having great difficulties in adjusting to Australian society and maybe appropriate assistance could be extended sooner rather than later. While the IHSS is now responsible for this programme, there is probably a need to constantly monitor the services. Regular visits are necessary because refugees do not usually have family and/or friends in Australia and it makes them feel welcome in the country. This will also require the integration into the group of a bi-lingual person.

Recommendation 14

That widows or sole parents be allowed to work part time to supplement their incomes without detriment to their pensions, especially those without family links in Australia.

This will require a change in policies to allow widows and/or sole parents to do extra work to increase their income without loss of government benefits. It is also a good means for them to relate with other people outside the family unit so they do not feel too lonely or isolated and also to improve their English language skills.

Recommendation 15

That childcare services be made available to small children of refugees soon after arrival in Australia.

The necessity of having childcare services is important for newly arrived refugees so women can attend English classes and can access programmes and services, together with the male members of the family unit.

Recommendation 16

That courses be made available to persons who are planning to take on Australian citizenship.

The present stipulation of two years' residency appears to be quite short. Although residency has now been extended to three years because of new national security laws, a five-year residency would probably be more advantageous to the country and those wanting to be naturalised. This residency stipulation would probably be more advantageous to those wanting to become citizens since they would value it more. A course would probably assist them in preparing to become naturalised citizens so they would become aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Recommendation 17

That refugees after the stipulated period of residency be allowed to sponsor their last remaining son/daughter and their families without the need to pass the points system.

There is probably a need to review the rules and regulations about bringing in the balance of family unit under the Family Reunion Programme, which was done with the Indo-Chinese group, so families are not separated.

Recommendation 18

That programmes, which promote better family relationships, be put in place to avoid marital breakdowns, domestic violence, and other related family problems in the R/SHP group.

Because of changes that have occurred in family relationships due to their being uprooted from their home country and the lack of social networks, marriages could breakdown and domestic violence could occur more often. Information has to be provided in their language group.

Recommendation 19

That on-going research on long-term settlement experiences of refugees, especially minority groups, be conducted to examine what difficulties they experience and thus be able to identify what types of programmes and services can be implemented that will best serve the refugee population.

DIMIA or the Australian Research Council can probably provide funding. There is very little research available on the experiences of refugees, especially on their long-term settlement experiences. There is a need to look at settlement patterns specific to refugees, social networks and longitudinal studies on labour market access.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The Salvadoran group is considered new on the Australian scene. A wide scope of research possibilities can be considered. One of the most urgent possibilities is to be able to listen and write eyewitness accounts about the experiences of these refugees, especially those who suffered gross human rights violations. This could probably prove invaluable for psychological and sociological studies in the future. Since most refugees are reluctant to seek psychological assistance because of what it means in their home country, it could probably be done through story telling or narratives.

This research study is by no means complete. Other areas can be explored about family life and how the children of these former refugees have adapted to the Australian way of life, which include cross-cultural issues and reversal of gender roles. A system for acculturation of the children into Australian society probably needs to be expanded because in most cases the parents live as Salvadorans and do not acculturate fully, especially if they have never learned English. A few research studies (Lidz, 1964; Gucciardo with Bertelli, 1987) have shown, both in Australia and in the United States that children live in two cultures – one at home with their parents and another with their peer groups outside the home and this can cause confusion.

A larger group could also become the focus of a study especially those who have lived in Australia for more than 20 years. Most of the participants in this study have only been in Australia for a little over a decade. It would also be interesting to know how many of these former refugees and maybe their children have been affected by trauma and what are the long-term consequences. For example, the survivors of the Holocaust in Europe still suffer from their horrific experiences, even after more than 50 years have passed. After the silence of the early years, many survivors have now spoken and written courageously about their stories so it does not happen again. In addition, some of their unresolved trauma could be passed on to the next generation so it is important to become aware of them (Greenspan, 1998; Lagarwey, 1998; Jacobs, 2006; Wiesel, 2006 [1958])).

Studies on other refugee groups, especially those who belong to minority groups, could also be an area of future research.

The next chapter will frame the general conclusions of the thesis.

CHAPTER 12: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This thesis explored some of the root causes of the mass exodus in the 1980s of the people from El Salvador. It also sought to gain an understanding of the experiences of refugees who fled El Salvador to Australia in the 1980's. In order to fully understand their settlement process it was thought necessary to examine their experiences in their home country and to try to discern how the past might have impacted on their resettlement process. This thesis tried to explore the links between three interweaving themes:

- a) the social, political, economic and religious history of El Salvador;
- b) the situation in which the refugees found themselves prior to their escape; and
- c) the resettlement process in Australia.

To understand the first theme, a number of interconnecting events are explored and examined: the expansion of the capitalist world-economy which began in the 16th century, how colonial rule transformed the social, political and religious structures of El Salvador, what triggered the refugee exodus in the 1980s and the role of U.S. intervention in the government of the country.

A simple outline of the history of El Salvador, while providing an important backdrop to the political situation in the late 20th century, does not provide an adequate explanation for the subsequent civil war and mass exodus of the people. At first glance, the problems in El Salvador appeared to have been caused by political instability resulting in the civil war. On closer analysis, other problems have emerged mainly stemming from the socio-economic and political structures that were put in place under colonial rule, and which were exacerbated by subsequent economic and political policies from within and without El Salvador.

Historically, the indigenous people of El Salvador resisted conquest in 1524 and it took more than 15 years to establish a permanent settlement. Little is known about the *conquistador*, Pedro de Alvarado, except that he retreated to Guatemala after he was defeated by the indigenous population led by Atlacatl, at the time. Apart from Alvarado, only his successor, De Cerrato, was mentioned in the literature and no other leaders were named under colonial rule except that El Salvador was governed from the Captaincy-General of Guatemala during the first 300 years.

When El Salvador was integrated into the European world-economy in the 16th century, a system of oppression and exploitation was introduced into the country. This system was continued even after El Salvador became independent in 1821. Because of this system, many problems had been brewing for centuries but were never addressed. Repression, as a solution to the ever-growing discontent of the majority of the population, was often used. The complex history of El Salvador and how the expansion of the capitalist world-economy developed gave an insight into some aspects of

the problems facing the population but they failed to adequately address fully the reasons that lay behind the mass exodus of people from El Salvador in the 1980s.

The explanations of analysts of the modern world-system were helpful in clarifying and understanding the relationship between core countries and countries on the periphery. They were able to trace some of the problems in the modern world-system because they gave a historical perspective on the expansion of the capitalist system and how the system was implemented. While they were useful in explaining the relationships between countries in the world-economy, many questions have remained unanswered.

Their analyses pointed out that oppression and exploitation of workers in the countries on the periphery have been the hallmark of the capitalist system that developed through the centuries. In this context one can wonder why in El Salvador only a small minority of the population had become successful and acquired great wealth while the majority of the population continued to be oppressed and exploited. By the 20th century, the living conditions of the majority of the population had deteriorated to such a degree that it appeared worse than it was during the pre-conquest era. While much wealth came out of El Salvador, it did not seem to benefit the ordinary people.

In the modern world-system, core countries determined the raw materials to be produced and exported by the countries on the periphery. In the case of El Salvador great wealth was achieved even under colonial rule, with the export of cocoa, balsam and indigo. After Independence, the economy improved radically, especially from the mid-19th century when coffee became the 'golden grain' but it was still based on mercantile capitalism. In fact El Salvador was able to produce and export good quality coffee that proved to be competitive with the other coffee-producing countries in the world. This high level of success also attracted young men from Europe and the Middle East, who were knowledgeable in business and finance. While they were able to expand and improve the economy the country did not develop as expected.

A cyclical phase of expansion/stagnation/contraction in the world-economy is experienced in respect to the country as a whole, but ignores individual population groups. The integration of El Salvador into the European world-economy meant that land formerly used for subsistence agriculture began to be utilised in growing the export crop. While some land was still allotted for communal or collective use by the indigenous population under colonial rule, the situation changed after Independence. Less land was used to grow the staple food, men became nomadic and many began to experience landlessness.

The same capitalist system functioned in the world-economy but the economic and political situation changed in El Salvador after Independence because of the new leaders. Coffee production became profitable but some of the best lands, inhabited by the indigenous population, were used for coffee plantations. This situation forced the indigenous people to seek other lands and their dislocation created discontent. Since coffee takes at least 3-5 years before the fruits can be harvested, only the wealthy could invest in this kind of export crop. Whenever there was an expansion in the world-economy, more land was used for the export crop, which occurred in late 19th century. This land acquisition was aided by political machinations. For example, the members of the coffee elites became Presidents of the country and the government policies favoured coffee growers and the interests of the core countries in the world-economy. The government therefore planted more coffee trees to make sure that the demands in the world-economy were met. However, the indigenous

population was never compensated for the loss of their lands. Also lands used for coffee can only be used for this purpose. With indigo, the previous export crop, land could be used for subsistence agriculture because indigo only needed three-months to grow and then harvested. Also coffee trees cannot be uprooted and they continued to be cultivated in spite of a drop in demand in the world market. The majority of the population usually suffered the consequences of lack of income and poverty increased as well as discontent.

Increased landlessness was caused when coffee became lucrative and profitable for the economy, which led some to go to Honduras; others began to resist the continuous incursion of the elites into the land used by the indigenous population. A few members from the indigenous population, who attended the University of El Salvador, began to form themselves and to rebel against the elites. This led to the first communist revolution of 1932. Although it was a short-term revolution because of lack of foreign intervention, an estimated 30,000 civilians were killed. However no refugees were recorded to have left the country during this time. As the economy expanded, only the wealthy and the core countries increased their wealth, while the majority of the population suffered the consequences of lack of land, food, and seasonal work. Nomadic life for the men became a norm that caused broken families, an increase in illegitimate children, high infant mortality, hunger, malnourishment, as well as other diseases. To aggravate the situation there were no health care facilities to tend to these people.

The Great Depression of the 1930s had dire consequences for El Salvador because it was the time of contraction/stagnation in the world-economy. There was a need to introduce other crops for export to improve the economy. This meant that less land would be utilized for subsistence agriculture and the country would need to import basic foods for local consumption. This arrangement was suitable for the wealthy since they could afford the high price of imported food, but not the poor. Farmers with medium-sized lands also suffered the consequences of an economy that began to decline and often they were forced to sell their lands to the wealthy in order to survive. Although some of the crops for export could have been short-term such as cotton, often lands cannot be used for subsistence agriculture.

The explanations of many analysts on the capitalist world-economy concentrated mostly on the macro-economic factors and no detailed account was given about the consequences of an economy that expands, contracts or stagnates within El Salvador. While oppression and exploitation refer to the majority of the population, land used for the export crop was also depleted of all its nutrients to the point that artificial fertilizers had to be imported, which the poor could barely afford. Sometimes they had to make loans, but had difficulty in repaying. The environment was also often damaged as well as the health of the people, who had no access to health care. Therefore, a series of problems ensued, often with no solutions or these were just ignored by the government and caused people to rebel.

Dependency theorists point out that countries on the periphery became underdeveloped in spite of its success in the export of raw materials. While the *conquistadores* had a drastic way of implementing the expansion of the world-economy, the elites that emerged after Independence could have changed the structures of the socio-economic and political systems of El Salvador. The country could have developed in a better way if only the elites, who were after all native born, looked at the interests of the majority of the population instead of oppressing and exploiting them more.

Modernisation and industrialisation programmes in El Salvador in the 1960s also failed to achieve its proposed outcomes because those who implemented the plans, such as the United States and the elites of El Salvador, made sure that it was in their favour. If any industrialisation took place, it was concentrated mostly in the urban areas and the rural areas were deprived of needed development unless it was to benefit the economy. Further, in the industrialisation process, big factories have to be built and these further deplete the majority of the population of much needed land for their subsistence agriculture. It has been claimed however that El Salvador is the most industrialised state in the Central American region. Although some industrialisation began to take place in the 1960s, the country also became dependent on foreign loans when the transnationals were allowed into the country. The inability of the government to pay foreign debts meant that the poor had to suffer the consequences of cuts to social services available. An example of these cuts occurred in 1986 when the IMF implemented its structural adjustment programmes at the height of the civil war.

While the modern-world system provided some explanations about what happened to El Salvador, some questions remained unanswered of why the Salvadorans became refugees in the latter part of the 20th century. One has to probe further into the causes of the extreme bipolarisation of Salvadoran society so there was a necessity to look at the links created between those in the core countries and the countries on the periphery. Without these links, no business transactions could take place.

In El Salvador, the elites did not begin in the political system but rather in the economic system. It was only when the coffee elites began to gain ascendancy in the mid-19th century that they became involved in the political system as well; a few became Presidents of the country. While elections were held at five-yearly intervals, Presidents were elected from within the core group of coffee elites, or by relatives of the incumbents. The regular elections were used as a façade for democracy. The coffee elites became a very powerful group, known as the 'coffee oligarchy' in the 20th century. Members of this group ruled the country from 1870 to 1931 and the country appeared to be in a 'stable' condition until the rebellions began in the 1930s. The governance of El Salvador was then turned over to military rule from December 1931.

The main reason why the oligarchy ceded to military rule was to make sure that the majority of the population could be silenced or repressed every time they gained a foothold and staged a rebellion. The security systems were built up in the late 19th century of both the police and national guards. They were further strengthened and updated well into the late 20th century. The continuous incursion of the elites into the communal lands incited the indigenous population that led to the first communist revolution on 22nd January 1932.

At this point, it became evident that the elites were not only in the economic system, but also in the political system because they supported the military government to make sure that they were able to continue to accumulate wealth without interference. Although the coffee elites did not rule in the political realm from 1931 to 1979, they still played a dominant role in governing the country because their interests had to be met. The internal domination of the elites was so powerful that they could virtually manipulate the government on how the country had to be ruled. The interweaving relationships between the economic, political and military systems were quite complex but they certainly dominated the country well into the 1980s.

Another factor that had to be looked at was the role of the guerrilla groups and why they became the targets of the government in the 1980s. As a response to the inequalities in society, the guerrilla groups wanted to make radical changes to the socio-economic and political structures of the country to benefit the majority of the population, which could hopefully lead to democratisation. Instead the military government met their demands with persecution, torture, 'disappearances' and assassinations. The country was in such a state by the 1970s and 1980s that there was no other choice but to rebel against the government and the system – it was a point of no return and they were willing to take the consequences of their actions.

A history of rebellions from the indigenous population has been recorded since 1833 and continued every time they lost their land for subsistence agriculture. It was not due to the downturn in the country's economic situation that gave way to the revolution, but rather it was influenced by the fact that the indigenous population were deprived of their own land, which was a spiritual heritage from their ancestors. They also preferred to continue growing their own basic foods rather than buying imported food. Very little land was allotted for their use and sometimes with poor soil and most of the labourers was forced to find work somewhere else to provide for their families or work under conditions similar to the feudal system of 15th century Europe. It was a social injustice because not only was the economy under the control of a few but also the government. The military was also financially supported by the oligarchy to make sure that their interests were met.

After the 1932 revolution there appeared to be some relative 'peace' because the country was under military rule. However, the indigenous population went 'underground' from this time onwards but a 'culture of fear' emerged. They no longer spoke their own language nor practiced their cultural traditions in the open. Each time new changes were introduced in the structure of the capitalist system, only the small minority continued to benefit from them and the majority of the population continued to be exploited and oppressed and in addition also repressed. The 'culture of fear', which began from the 1932 revolution, continued well into the 1980s because of random repression and people learnt to trust others less. This is also evident with some of the refugees, who formed part of the study.

While the indigenous population appeared to have been subjugated since colonial rule, centuries of oppression and exploitation made them rebel against the government so as to be heard. New leaders emerged and the communist party from the 1932 revolution also continued their work although not openly. Some leaders, who represented the majority of the population, had become somewhat militant because of the growing bipolarisation between the rich and poor. Leaders from the 1930s communist party and the guerrilla groups of the 1970s and 1980s came from the University of El Salvador. The UES became known as the birthplace of the guerrilla groups and that is the reason why numerous students, lecturers and university administrators were killed, imprisoned, 'disappeared' or tortured by the military and the university had to be closed several times. Some fled the country and became refugees and others went into exile.

The guerrilla groups continued with their struggle to eliminate some of the social injustices that had operated in the country for centuries. As the war escalated, several guerrilla groups and popular organisations began to unite in the 1980s that became known as the FDR-FMLN guerrilla movement. The guerrilla movement became cohesive and united and in 1994 it became a political party. It was

also able to reach an agreement with the government that led to the signing of the peace treaty in 1992, thus concluding the civil war.

The above are some of the interweaving themes that led to the civil war. El Salvador is a small country and also densely populated so it is unable to provide for the people if more lands are allotted for the export crops in demand. The people were literally pushed out of their own country especially after diversification of crops was introduced into the economy in the 1940s and 1950s.

While the above themes would have sufficed to explain the political conflict in El Salvador, the role of the United States and its foreign policy had to be delved into to understand why the United States supported the government, which sustained the war in El Salvador in the 1980s. The United States did not only play a dominant role in the economy of the Western Hemisphere but also a political role with reference to its foreign policy. The role of the United States in the Western Hemisphere began with the passing of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. However, after World War II the United States had gained pre-eminence as a super power and changed its foreign policy to 'containment of communism' when it declared the Cold War against the Soviet Union in 1947. The United States then implemented its policy of deterring the spread of communism in Western Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

Because of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the United States became alarmed about the increase in insurgency groups in Latin America in the 1960s. It began training the military of El Salvador and other Latin American countries on counter-insurgency tactics because it was thought that communism had begun to spread. Any uprising in Latin America tended to be looked-at as communist-inspired and military aid would be increased. While the United States is convinced that it has a 'manifest destiny' to spread democracy to other parts of the world, it continued to support dictatorships in Latin America, thus democracy was never attained.

At the time of the political conflict in 1979, President Carter wanted to alienate the United States from 'fear of communism' and looked at it in terms of the North-South relations, in line with the agreement of the Trilateral Commission, and human rights policies. In spite of this change of perspective, the United States still sent military aid. However, when President Reagan took office in 1981, it reverted back to its East-West relations so military aid was increased and the spiral of violence in El Salvador escalated. As a result, El Salvador's armed forces did not only receive good training but it was also upgraded. The civil war could have been averted in a short time if the United States had not provided the military assistance not only financially but also in the training of the military personnel. The United States interpreted the political conflict as communist infiltration but instead it was an internal problem based on social injustices, which had been brewing for centuries. It also sought to solve the problem militarily but what it needed was a political solution.

Because of U.S. intervention and aid, the military became a very powerful force in the Salvadoran government that led them to form its own political party, the PCN. After the demise of this party, ARENA was formed in 1981 and most of its members came from the coffee elites, the military and the death squads. By 1989 ARENA had become the ruling party and the President of the country came from the ranks of the coffee elites so they were once again in power. The main problems of the country were never addressed and continued to benefit the small group of elites so changes were never made to benefit the majority of the population.

Last but not least is the key role the Catholic Church played in El Salvador and its stance against the social injustices that had prevailed in the country for centuries. While the Catholic Church in El Salvador was always associated with the rich and powerful from its inception, the Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965 put more emphasis on evangelisation and social justice teachings. This was followed in 1968 when the Latin American Bishops met in Medellin, Colombia, to make their 'Preferential option for the poor' as their priority. While the poor were not allowed to form communities after the 1932 revolution, the emergence of CEBs in the 1970s enabled their leaders to apply the biblical message to what was happening in their country. This was also the time when Liberation Theology became popular. It achieved a different level of evangelisation because the poor became aware of the oppressive and exploitative structures prevalent in society and they learned how to address them. Two things happened in the 1970s and 1980s – the poor gained a 'voice' by becoming members of the CEBs and some Church leaders sided with them but had dire consequences. This is the reason why members of the CEBs and some Church leaders were killed, tortured, 'disappeared' imprisoned and deported from the country.

Although the guerrilla groups and CEB members became the main targets of the military in the 1980s, there were some in the middle class, who opposed the government. They also became implicated in this struggle. This is the reason why the refugees, who arrived in Australia, belong to a heterogeneous group of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled people, some from rural areas while others from the urban areas.

Against this background, Part II of the thesis looks at a small group of refugees, who arrived in Australia in 1986-1989. They belong to a minority group in Australia and are not classified as Europeans since their customs and traditions vary markedly with that of the Australian community. The eyewitness accounts of 14 participants confirm the extreme bipolarisation between the rich and poor in El Salvador. They all suffered the consequences of the capitalist system, some more than others, but can testify to the events that led to the civil war of the 1980s. Because of their experiences of repression and social injustices in the history of their country, they have to live with trauma. All the participants expressed a reluctance to leave their country but the civil war was prolonged, so they were forced to flee their country to seek protection. Australia was generous enough to provide it.

Australia is a more industrialised and developed country compared to El Salvador. In addition, they also belong to the CALD population and have experienced a lot of trauma in their lives. Many are professionals but have been unable to seek employment according to their past experiences and suffer the consequences of being unemployed or underemployed. In line with globalisation, Australia's economic rationalist policies expect people to quickly get off welfare and make a contribution by joining the workforce. Skilled migrants, who can speak the English language, are advantaged but those who arrive as refugees and belong to the CALD population are highly disadvantaged.

Not only is there a completely different system of government in Australia but also families are organised differently. While the participants in the study traditionally belonged to extended families, in Australia they live as nuclear families because their families had been dislocated. Consequently, they feel a lack of moral and emotional support from the extended family that would have been present in their home country. Unlike the other refugee groups, such as the Indo-Chinese, they do not appear to be a cohesive group, probably because of the past trauma that they have experienced in their own

country so there are no community groups or social support networks where they can meet and share their experiences in Melbourne, at least where the participants live.

While this refugee group has suffered the loss of relatives, friends and community groups when they came to Australia, there are some difficult problems that have to be addressed even after more than a decade of living in Australia. Their experiences of trauma are still present in their lives even after many years and they appear to react to certain stimuli that they are unable to control, usually associated with their experiences of war in their home country. While most of them suffer the consequences of being underemployed, those who are unemployed suffer most because they do not want to depend on government benefits, and prefer to have some form of employment. Since this group is not accustomed to government benefits, which they find degrading, they prefer to work if they are able to find one. It is also one way of keeping their minds occupied so they do not dwell on the past.

The families in the study appeared to be intact at the time of the interview, except for one participant, who wished to have his only son and his family here in Australia as well. In spite of difficulties the participants have encountered in their resettlement, they prefer to stay because of their desire to provide a better future for their children. The participants interviewed had their own homes in El Salvador so they could return if they desire to do so. Compared with other migrant groups, they did not express a desire to bring other members of their families, such as married brothers/sisters and even parents. The lack of community groups is a cause for concern as it contributes to their isolation and loneliness. Hopefully this situation can be resolved in the future.

This is a 'snapshot' analysis of the history of El Salvador and how it affected the people and finally caused the refugee exodus of the 1980s. In terms of immigration, Australia is one of the countries considered as a 'promised land' because it is considered an egalitarian society. Australia has a beautiful and peaceful environment with the country needing to be populated. Many people immigrate to Australia to seek a better future for themselves and their families. For most of the skilled immigrants and those who speak English, it could prove to be an easy transition. However, those who have come as refugees without any English language skills it is a different matter, as the experiences of the Salvadoran refugees show.

The tragic history of the Salvadorans is reminiscent of the story of the Jewish people, who fled Egypt many centuries ago because of oppression to enter the 'promised land'. The lives of the Salvadorans here in Australia are fraught with losses, struggles, difficulties and the trauma they experienced as well as tinged with sadness because they had to leave their homeland. On the other hand, it is also filled with hope because they can leave as a legacy to their children and their descendants the opportunity of living in a peaceful country.

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AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Office of Research

University Human Research Ethics Committee Ethics Clearance for a Research Project - Approval Form

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Principal Investigator/s (if staff): | 1) A/Prof Ruth Webber | Campus: Patrick |
| Co Investigator | 2) | |
| Researcher(s) (if student/s) | 1) Sr Beatriz Santos | Campus: Patrick |

Ethics clearance has been provisionally approved for the following project: The Latin American Experience: A 20th Century Exodus to a Promised Land.

for the period: 15.11.2000 to 15.11.2001

University Human Research Ethics Committee Register Number: V2000/01-15

subject to the following conditions as stipulated in the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Statement on Human Experimentation and Supplementary Notes 1992:

- (i) that principal investigators provide reports annually on the form supplied by the Institutional Ethics Committee, on matters including:
 - security of records;
 - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation;
 - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) as a condition of approval of the research protocol, require that investigators report immediately anything which might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol, including:
 - adverse effects on participants;
 - proposed changes in the protocol, and/or
 - unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

and subject to clarification of the following to the University Human Research Ethics Committee:

1. Information Letter to Participant
 - Omit paragraph 2.
 - Please proof read and alter to second person so that the letter is addressed to the participant.
 - Simplify the language and provide a translation in Spanish.
 - Indicate counselling will be available if participants suffer any distress.
2. Provision of Counselling
 - Counselling should be made available, refer to appropriate agencies.

A Final Report Form will need to be completed and submitted to the URPEC within one month of completion of the project.
OR

An Annual Progress Report Form will need to be completed and submitted to the URPEC within one month of the anniversary date of approval.

Please sign, date and return this form (with any additional information, or supporting documents to show completion of any amendments requested) to the Administrative Officer (Research) to whom you submitted your application. This is essential before final approval by the University Human Research Ethics Committee is confirmed.

Signed: *J. Muesh*
Administrative Officer (Research)

Date: 5.10.00

(To be completed by the Principal Investigator, or Student and Supervisor, as appropriate.)

The date when I/we expect to commence contact with human participants or access their records is:

I/We hereby declare that I/We am/are aware of the conditions governing research involving human participants as set out in the University Human Research Ethics Committee's *Guidelines and Instructions for Researchers/Students* and agree to the conditions stated above.

Signed: *Rush Weeber*
(Principal Investigator (if staff) or Supervisor, as appropriate)

Date: 23/11/00

Signed: *B. Santos*
(Researcher (if student))

Date: 23/11/00

OR/E30/974



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Latin-American Experience: A 20th Century
Exodus into a Promised Land

NAMES OF INVESTIGATORS: Dr Ruth Webber & Sr. Beatriz Santos

We are seeking refugees from El Salvador who are prepared to be interviewed on their experiences of fleeing their home country, their time of exile or asylum in another country and their resettlement in Australia. We would, therefore, like to invite you to share your experiences with us.

Any comments or stories that you tell us in the interview will be treated in confidence. In any report on this study, your name or any identifying information will be altered to ensure that you and your family or organisation cannot be identified by any one. The interview should take between one to two hours or more, if necessary, and will be tape recorded with your permission.

There has been very little study on the experiences of refugees from El Salvador ever since their arrival in Australia in the mid-1980s. It is important for us to listen to the stories of refugees and to know how these experiences have affected you and your family in your resettlement process. Further, it is important for us to see if the present policies, programs and services are still valid today as it was when you arrived.

We are aware that you have come from traumatic situations, and would like to know if you received any counseling or emotional support during your first two years in Australia. In the event that you have suffered distress in the past and this interview would again make you re-live those experiences, we are willing to provide counseling services, should you so desire.

You are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the study at any time without giving a reason.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact:

Dr. Webber or Sr. Santos
School of Arts and Sciences
Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 4115 MDC
Fitzroy 3065

Telephone: (03) 9953 3221
Fax (03) 9953 3455

This study has been approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint about the way you have been treated during the study, or a query that the Investigator has (have) not been able to satisfy, you may write care of the nearest branch of the Office of Research

Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee
C/o Office of Research
Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 4115 MDC
Fitzroy 3065

Tel. No. 9953 3151 Fax No. 9953 3295

Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence, investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in the project, please sign both copies of the Informed Consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the investigator.

Sr. Beatriz Santos

Associate Professor Ruth Webber



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

TITULO DEL PROYECTO: La Experiencia Latino-Americana: Un Exodo del Siglo 20 a Una Tierra Prometida

NOMBRES DE LAS INVESTIGADORAS: Dra. Ruth Webber y Hna. Beatriz Santos

Estamos buscando refugiados de El Salvador que estan dispuestos para ser entrevistados sobre sus experiencias como huieron de su pais, el tiempo de exilio en otro pais y durante el tiempo de adaptación en Australia. Le queremos invitar a compartir sus experiencias con nosotras.

Las historias o los comentarios que nos dirán durante la entrevista seran tratadas en forma confidencial. En cualquier reportaje de este proyecto sus nombres, sus familiares y sus lugares de trabajo no serán identificados de ninguna forma. La entrevista sera dentro de una o dos horas, si es necesario, y será grabada con su autorización.

Hay muy poco estudio sobre experiencias de refugiados de El Salvador, desde que llegaron en Australia a mediados de los ochentas. Es importante para nosotras poder escuchar las historias de refugiados y saber como esas experiencias les afectaron en su proceso de adaptación en Australia. Tambien queremos ver la importancia de los programas, reglas y servicios que les ayudo en el pasado y aun siguen validos hoy día.

Nosotras estamos conscientes de las situaciones traumaticas que vivieron y queremos saber si recibieron ayuda psicologica o apoyo emocional durante los dos años de su estadía en Australia. Si ustedes sufrieron emocionalmente en el pasado y si esta entrevista podía causar el mismo sufrimiento, estamos dispuestas a ofrecer servicio de consejo.

Si tienen alguna pregunta sobre este estudio, pueden contactar a:

Dra. Webber o Hna. Santos
School of Arts and Sciences
Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 4115 MDC
Fitzroy 3065

Telephone: (03) 9953 3221
FAX: (03) 9953 3455

Este estudio fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética de Investigaciones Humanas de la Universidad Católica de Australia.

En caso que haya alguna queja sobre el modo como fue llevada esta entrevista durante este estudio o una pregunta que la investigadora no responda con satisfacción, usted puede escribir a la Oficina de Investigaciones mas cercana:

*Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee
C/o Office of Research
Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 4115 MDC
Fitzroy 3065*

*Telephone: (03) 9953 3151
Fax: (03) 9953 3295*

Cualquier queja que haga será tratada en forma confidencial y será investigada completamente y usted será informado del resultado.

Si usted esta dispuesto a participar en este proyecto, por favor firme dos copias del Informe de Consentimiento; una copia para su archivo y la otra copia será para la investigadora.



Sr. Beatriz Santos



Associate Professor Ruth Webber



Australian Catholic University

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: The Latin-American Experience: A 20th Century Exodus into a Promised Land

NAMES OF INVESTIGATORS: Assoc. Professor Ruth Webber & Sr. Beatriz Santos

I (the participant) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I can withdraw at any time.

I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT
(block letters)

SIGNATURE DATE.....

SIGNATURE DATE.....

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Dr Ruth Webber & Sr. Beatriz Santos

SIGNATURE DATE.....

SIGNATURE DATE.....

ADDENDUM TO METHODOLOGY:

Data collection

I began the study by wanting to know why the Salvadorans became refugees in the 1980s. Although I had worked with this particular ethnic group in the area of resettlement, I knew very little about their experiences or their reasons for becoming refugees. DIMIA referred some cases to me for resettlement but little information was given about their historical background except that they came from a war zone. As I got to know the Salvadorans better in their resettlement phase in Melbourne, I found it easy to talk to them in a familiar atmosphere. They also enjoyed having someone visit and talk to them in their own language.

Before I began my interviews in 2001, I spent more than a year reading and writing about their historical background. This information helped me decide how best to collect the data I needed for my thesis. A questionnaire or a survey method would have been out of the question. Participants, who have experienced being interrogated in their home country, would probably be reluctant to participate in such a study. I therefore decided to collect my data through narratives or storytelling, as it would be easier to relate in this manner, being more natural for them. Early in the interview phase, one of the participants indicated that a would-be journalist had interviewed her previously. She found it difficult and threatening because the interviewer asked her many questions. Narratives also convey information that is not part of the open-ended questions prepared so it yields richer data. Therefore, the researcher can see other areas of interest that were not foreseen and did not form part of the study.

Gaining access and selection of participants

As this is an exploratory research, two types of sampling were used: purposive and snowball. In terms of purposive sampling, there was a need to identify participants who had been residing in Melbourne for over a decade. This time span was needed so that their long-term settlement experiences could be looked at. I also wanted to have people who came from dissimilar educational and social backgrounds and lived in diverse regions in El Salvador. This was planned to enable me to compare how the political crisis affected them. Because of the difficulty of accessing participants due to lack of an established community in 2001, three major sources were contacted:

First, I approached a medical centre located in the south-eastern suburb. The couple, who run this centre, were former refugees from Central America. Many Salvadorans visit this centre for consultation. I also know the couple personally so I explained to them the purpose of my research. The husband gave me a list of four names with their telephone numbers. I contacted them all but only one accepted.

Second, I visited a voluntary Church-based association. I know the women who run this centre. Some Salvadoran women used to gather in this centre to learn how to operate the electric and industrial

sewing machines and overlockers. One of the women responsible for this centre gave me a list of possible interviewees but I was only able to include two participants to my list.

Third, since I worked as a coordinator of a CRSS support group and resettled some of the Salvadorans myself in the past, I contacted some of them and they accepted.

However, I did not have the number of participants needed for the study, so I asked the participants to recommend friends who would be willing to participate in the study. This is the snowball sampling I referred to in Chapter 6. Most of them gave me 2-3 names each with telephone numbers and I contacted each one personally. Not all of them were willing to be interviewed because they did not want to talk about the past nor remember it.

To those who were willing to be interviewed, I sent the letter of invitation and the consent form. Upon receipt of these forms, I made another telephone call to set the time and date for the interview. One couple withdrew when I met with them at their house. They were fearful about the interview and I respected their wishes and did not intrude. The wife was quite cordial and we just had an informal talk over a cup of coffee. All the participants were interviewed in their own homes because it was better for me to meet them in their own setting and meet the other members of the family. I also met and spoke to family members, who were home at the time of the interview. This helped me to see the composition of the family unit and how they interacted with one another.

Data analysis

The results of the interviews posed some difficult issues. While the narratives were used to gather the data, the interviews could not be presented on a line-by-line basis. The translations are considered as detailed but not verbatim. I chose to quote paragraphs that answered the research questions and whatever important issues arose. I looked at them in terms of context and content and how they experienced the political crisis at the time. I used the data from the literature surveyed to validate what happened then. Not all the incidents that occurred in El Salvador can be gleaned from the literature. The experiences of the individual participants add to our knowledge of how people saw and experienced the events before and during the civil war. The participants come from different regions so they witnessed the events in myriads of ways.

I defined or explained some of the concepts they used and how it related to their experiences in El Salvador before and during the civil war. I also added some information, which I experienced in resettling this particular group. Further, I included the chance encounter with a former member of the military in one of my visits to a Salvadoran family. This confirmed the fear that some of the Salvadorans experience because they do not know whom to trust here in Melbourne. On the odd occasion when I could not understand what 'driving a Cherokee' meant, I approached some Salvadoran women, who meet for lunch in a cafeteria I frequent.

I made my own field notes after each interview and made my own observations on how some of the women needed to talk further about some of the difficulties they were experiencing but were not part of the research questions. This type of information was not tape-recorded. I divided the data into themes and categories and added my field notes wherever necessary or appropriate.
