UNDERSTANDING THE LIFEWORLDS OF THREE CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES IN VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the meaning of "opportunity" as expressed in the experiences of three recent refugee youth from Central America (Guatemala and El Salvador). The setting of the study was MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps programme in Vancouver, Canada. This four-month voluntary programme was designed to give immigrant Canadian youth language skills to facilitate their entry into the work force.

Data for the study were obtained through a twenty-week field study at the Job Corps site followed by the construction of three case studies based upon a series of interviews. Among the findings of the study were the following: the three refugees used a notion of opportunity as the overriding theme in defining their situation in Canada. This theme contained two aspects. First, the "what" of opportunity was future-oriented and contained a social dimension of "wanting to become someone," a material dimension concerned with "wanting to have things," and a familial dimension of "wanting to maintain the family unit." Second, the "how" of opportunity referred to the way the three refugees defined opportunity in terms of their past experiences, their initial difficulties since coming to Canada, the support networks available to them in Canada, their perception of the lives of other immigrants, and finally, the age factor. There was a strong awareness among the refugees studied that their attainment of personal goals (the "what" of opportunity) was dependent on acquiring fluency in the English language and in their finding secure employment with career mobility. The study also found that many of the refugees' future aspirations were related to their
own past experiences in their countries of origin.
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DEDICATION

Para "Los Papos"

con mi mas profundo carino y agradecimiento.

y

Para Michelle y David

quienes compartieron la experiencia.
CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The Canadian population between the ages of 15 and 24 has the highest rate of unemployment of any age group; British Columbia ranks third after Ontario and Quebec in this category (Statistics Canada, 1984). For many young immigrants in this age group, there is the added impediment of being language disadvantaged; in English-speaking Canada, those who lack English language skills are severely disadvantaged when it comes to education and employment opportunities.

Immigrant youth from Central America arrive in Canada as either immigrants or refugees. (MOSAIC report, 1984). Some of these youth begin life in Canada with their parents and other family for support, while others arrive alone or with only part of their family. They may have considerable training and work experience, find established support networks, and have only moderate difficulty gaining employment. Others, with little education and no established networks when they arrive, face obstacles in finding work because they may have spent several years away from schools or jobs, and have no family support. They must begin to provide for themselves, learn a new language, adapt to a new culture, and build their careers at the same time. Although Canadian life may be an improvement over conditions left behind, finding jobs and adjusting to a new culture can present problems, especially for the poorest, least
CHAPTER ONE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM / 2

educated, and older immigrant youth. Even the most highly motivated youth may require assistance to overcome these obstacles.

Despite these difficulties, many of these new Canadians have a sense of hope in the future because they are young. They believe that they have opportunities in Canada that they did not have before. It is this sense of opportunity that makes them optimistic about the future.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the meaning of "opportunity" as expressed in the experiences of three recent refugee youth from Central America. Two aspects of this theme were highlighted: what the subjects meant by "opportunity," and how it was defined by them. As an analytical device, the "what" aspect of opportunity referred to the future-oriented aspirations of the subjects. They had goals that they hoped to attain in three areas: the social, material and familial. The first related to what they wanted to become, the second pointed to what they wanted to own, and the third was concerned with their desire to maintain the family unit.

The "how" of opportunity was also an analytical device which provided insight into the refugees' ways of defining opportunity. Of interest here were the contexts in which opportunity was defined; they defined opportunity in the light of their past experiences, their initial difficulties in Canada, their support networks, their relatively young age, and in comparison with other immigrants.
While the "what" of opportunity examined their future aspirations, the "how" dealt with the reasons they gave to justify these aspirations.

**Contribution**

This study makes a contribution to E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) programme planning by sensitizing curriculum and programme developers to the refugees' view of opportunity. It focuses attention on the need to facilitate the initial integration of refugees to Canadian society as opposed to emphasizing English instruction alone; currently what is available for immigrants is primarily language instruction, although E.S.L. teachers are aware of the difficulty experienced by newcomers in cultural adjustment (Wolfgang, 1975). In helping refugees to resocialize, teachers may need to know what expectations students bring to instructional settings. The E.S.L. literature has in large part neglected the life situations of immigrants (Mastai, 1980, p.100). An understanding of the notion of "opportunity" that refugees bring with them when they enter E.S.L. programmes may be important to the success of both students and programmes.

**Context and Method**

In trying to understand the lifeworlds of three young refugees, the study was shaped by its context and the procedures used for data collection and analysis. This section describes how and where the data were collected. Described first is the context of the study as well as the reason for choosing the three
particular refugees.

Context of the Study

The study was carried out at MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps (for details of MOSAIC and the programme, see Appendix A) in Vancouver, British Columbia, from April 5, 1985 to August 28, 1985, with follow-up interviews from July 22, 1985 to November, 1986.

MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps (hereafter referred to as MOSAIC, or the programme, or the Job Corps) was a federally funded programme designed for unemployed immigrants between 19 and 24 years of age. The twenty week programme attempted to develop English in the context of providing life-skills, job-finding English skills and English that would be used at the job-site. Also, by the end of the programme, it was hoped that each trainee would be placed in an employment position appropriate to his or her job experience and skill. At the time of the study the programme was limited to a group of twenty-four unemployed immigrants of varying ethnic backgrounds, between the ages of 19 and 24. To be eligible, candidates had to be legally able to work in Canada, and also have undergone an unsuccessful job-search in Canada for at least three months.

To benefit from the MOSAIC programme, the trainees entered with a level of English communication skills comparable to the "Upper Beginners" level at Vancouver Community College. For example, trainees were required to have writing skills such as basic spelling and punctuation as well as spoken skills
such as asking for and following directions. An English Language Competence test was administered before candidates were formally interviewed. In the observed group the average English reading level was Grade III.

A key component in the project was the trainees' motivation to succeed. Although the project did not take applicants who would have been successful on their own, in finding employment, it also excluded those who were not highly motivated, because it was thought that such persons were unlikely to benefit from the programme. Also, the personal situation of applicants must have allowed them the time and energy to pursue the programme; the admissions interview for men and women included questions about their living situation, responsibilities at home, and daycare arrangements.

The MOSAIC programme was selected as the context for the study because it had features that distinguished it from other programmes, such as its emphasis on placement and work search skills, as opposed to purely language acquisition. My initial intention when I went to the Job Corps was to gain insight into the approach used to help young immigrants acquire adequate language skills for seeking employment. I was a participant observer for the entire Phase I of the programme which was eight weeks in duration. This phase consisted of providing students course work in the area of life skills, job-finding English skills and English for work skills. During these two months, trainees engaged in a number of field trips, "contact assignments" (interviewing strangers) and work observations. The first three weeks of Phase I was a probationary period. If a trainee successfully completed this period he/she received a $100
stipend and was then paid minimum hourly wages for the balance of his/her participation in the twenty week programme.

During Phase II, which was six weeks in duration, trainees spent half-days in the classroom and half-days at work experience. These work experience placements were selected on the basis of the individual trainees' vocational goals. While in the classroom, trainees followed independent study plans based on their progress during the first eight weeks and on their perceived language needs that arose at their respective job-sites. It was during this Phase that I was able to talk to trainees individually about their experiences and get to know them better. Towards the end of the six week period many of them expressed relief that it was possible to speak to me without any apprehensions that I might divulge information to the Job Corps' staff. It was these discussions that gave me insight into their immigrant experience (lifeworld).

During Phase III, also six weeks in duration, trainees were intended to make a transition into full-time employment. Based on the trainees' strengths and needs, they spent varying amounts of time on the job and in the classroom. The employer, who was subsidized during Phase III, would decide whether to hire the trainee as a full-time employee, provided both parties were satisfied.

MOSAIC's programme thus provided the first real employment opportunity to all its participants. In the words of one refugee: "with MOSAIC's cover letter we had it made in so far as references were concerned. When we came here, we were strangers to any prospective employer and they hesitated to
even open their doors to us." Being employed was the most important means by which these immigrants saw themselves taking advantage of opportunities available in Canada. Work was essential for self-esteem and for feeling that they were making some contribution to society. Also, to be employed meant that they would have the opportunity to interact with and get to know Canadians, as well as to improve their English.

Methodology

This investigation was a twenty week field study, out of which emerged three case studies based upon a series of interviews.

1. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from MOSAIC's executive director and from the Job Corps manager, prior to the beginning of the programme on April 5, 1985.

2. During the first eight weeks of the programme, as a participant observer, I spoke only English with all the twenty-four trainees. I offered them assistance while they were working on written exercises and had the opportunity to instruct the group on two occasions. I was engaged in some of the trainees' field trip assignments which took place outside of the Job Corps classroom, and where I had numerous opportunities to talk with them on a one-to-one basis and to observe their reactions to the task at hand. During the ninth week, once I felt I had their confidence, I engaged in Spanish conversations with the Central Americans at lunch hour and at break time; they outnumbered the other groups participating in the Job Corps programme. I also had discussions with teachers' individually to obtain their views and purposes of the programme and of the difficulties experienced by its participants. My purpose for participating in this
first phase of the programme was to gain familiarity with it and with the trainees.

3. I decided during the ninth week to focus the study on refugees from Central America because Spanish is my first language. (I felt that it would be advantageous to focus on Spanish-speaking refugees because I would be able to appreciate the nuances when they expressed themselves; this would be invaluable for allowing me to see into their lifeworlds and then for providing "eyes" for the reader.

4. By the twelfth week three individuals who had refugee status according to Canadian Immigration were chosen for indepth study. The reason for selecting them was not only because of different personal situations (as discussed in Chapter Two), but also because they provided contrasts in terms of marital status and support network in Canada. Their differing personalities and circumstances played a role in my choosing them, as well as their willingness to be a part of the study. Pseudonyms were used for all three:

   a. Esperanza, 22 years old and from Guatemala, came with her husband in October 1984. She had her first baby in November, 1984. Her support network in Canada consisted of some of her husband's relatives.

   b. Maria, 20 years old and from El Salvador, arrived in Canada in January 1984 with a sister and two brothers and was later joined by her parents.

   c. Alirio, 21 years old and from El Salvador, had come on his own. He knew no one when he arrived in February 1984, and had to overcome initial difficulties without help from a network of friends or family.

5. The purpose of the first set of interviews was to understand the experience
of "being a refugee" from the time these three individuals left their homeland. Also sought was how they came to Canada, and their reasons for coming to a largely unknown country. They were interviewed individually in Spanish (see Appendix B for interview questions). With the permission of all three refugees these interviews were taped and later transcribed in Spanish, and provided the basis for the biographical information provided in Chapter Two. Esperanza was interviewed on June 18, 1985 for one and a half hours; Maria was interviewed on July 22 for one hour, and again for one and a half hours on July 23, 1985; Alirio was interviewed on August 13, 1985 for one and a half hours.

6. After a close reading of the interviewees' transcripts it was clear that "opportunity" was the overriding theme that they used to define their situation. For purposes of analysis, I decided to focus on this theme in two ways: firstly, on what they meant by opportunity, and secondly, on how they defined it. This distinction will be discussed in detail in Chapters Three and Four.

7. A follow-up interview with all three subjects occurred on February 16, 1986. The conversation was in Spanish and lasted three hours. It was taped and transcribed in Spanish, and was used to further clarify the notion of "opportunity." (See Appendix C for interview questions).

8. Other discussions were sometimes necessary during the transcript analysis in order to clarify and extend things that were said in the transcripts.

9. The objective of transcript analysis was to find themes concerning the "what" and "how" of opportunity. A model was followed for the analysis (Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker and Mulderij, 1984). (For illustrative purposes, an initial theme analysis of one interview is included in Appendix D). The transcript analysis included the following:
a. Identification of those themes stressed by the interviewee as important to him or her in each of the first individual transcripts. Once a preliminary selection of themes (in the interviewee's own words) had been made, they were compared for shared themes across the interviews. Each common theme was identified with the supporting statements made by the interviewees. All of these common themes analyzed were related to the "what" and "how" of opportunity.

b. The second interview provided clarification and validation of the researcher's effort to understand the theme of opportunity.

c. Those sections of the transcript identified as being related to the theme of opportunity were translated to English and analyzed in English. The advantage was that the writer, after translating the relevant quotations, could then "think" in English.

10. The following system of notation is used in this study whenever quotations are utilized in the text:

   I- individual interview transcript with Esperanza.

   II- individual interview transcript with Maria.

   III- individual interview transcript with Alirio.

   IV- group interview transcript.

   V- follow-up discussions.

Also, each line of the transcript was numbered. For example, if a quotation is identified as (II-39), this means that it is the 39th line of the interview transcript with Maria. For quotations taken from the group interview transcript (IV), and from the follow-up discussions (V), the letter denotes the respondent as follows: A = Alirio, E = Esperanza, M = Maria.
11. The following abbreviations for government agencies were used in the text:

Welfare - Ministry of Social Services and Housing.

Immigration - Employment and Immigration Canada (the refugees referred specifically to Immigration Centres).

Manpower - Employment and Immigration Canada (the refugees referred specifically to Employment Centres).

Limitations

There were explicit parameters put on this study, as well as some recognized limitations:

1. The point of the study was not to document the stories of three refugees from Central America, but rather to define how they individually and collectively constructed the notion of "opportunity." If the former had been the purpose, the study would have taken a different route methodologically: perceptions and stories would have been collaborated, and interviews would have been extended to employers, landlords, teachers, and Welfare and Immigration officials. Rather, the data were limited to those obtained by the self-reporting of respondents through interviews and information gleaned through my observations. The interviewees' stories and perceptions were accepted at face value because it was their "definition of the situation" that was relevant to the present analysis. No claims are made here concerning the accuracy of their recorded views about events, people, and agencies.

2. Since all of the interviews were in Spanish, transcript quotations reported in
this study were translated into English. These translations may sometimes miss the richness or nuance of the original, or suggest a nuance not originally intended.

3. The writer had empathy with the experiences of the three young refugees from Central America. However, the point of the study was not to be prescriptive, judgemental, or to advance any particular agenda, but to analyze how three individuals defined opportunity for themselves. Reported judgements and perceptions about people and agencies belong to the interviewees rather than to the researcher.

4. No comparisons were made with immigrants from other parts of the world who also were a part of MOSAIC’s programme, and no generalizations are made from this study to other Central American refugees of this age group.

5. Many of the interviewees’ perceptions about Canadian life, MOSAIC, and government agencies contained contradictions, factual errors, and unwarranted assumptions. These perceptions are not discussed in the text unless they were relevant to understanding the theme of "opportunity."

*Lifeworlds and Conversation*

We may sometimes assume that if we can cope with a situation, so can everybody else. Unfortunately, we (that is, those sharing a common cultural milieu) take so much for granted that we sometimes think the stranger can easily become like us. But, if we stop to think about the conceptual tools, common sense recipes and implicit rules that we use to operate in our everyday
existence, then we begin to appreciate that what is very natural for us, might not be so for someone coming from a different culture. By trying to understand the world as seen by others, as they describe and explain its order, one gains insight into their lifeworlds. One is then made aware of the fact that what we take for granted and use to define our own situations, is not necessarily what governs others’ definitions of their situations (Rockhill, 1982, p.11).

The concept of lifeworld is central to a phenomenological understanding of individuals’ actions. For Alfred Schutz, the term encompassed one’s total everyday experiences. His identification of some of its basic structures provides the basis for the interviews and analysis in this study. This lifeworld is largely prestructured and its meanings pregiven because the language and culture provide one with a "stockpile of typifications" and "recipes" for interpreting and acting (Schutz, 1964). When the unexpected happens or new situations occur and the "taken-for-granted" is thrown into question, only then is the individual forced to consider alternative schemes of interpretation and action (Schutz, 1964, 1970). The lifeworld’s pregivenness means that we are each born into a particular set of cultural patterns and assumptions that are not of our individual making. We enter into a social life that already has a history and that is intersubjective or shared with others. As members of a group, we have been given conceptual frameworks for defining most of the situations we encounter during the course of the day.

The naturalness of our lifeworld means that we consider it normal. Our experience of it is so "taken-for-granted" that we rarely have reason to question
its organization and assumptions. For example, if we see someone standing at a bus stop, we assume that he/she is waiting for a bus rather than expecting to meet someone there.

Another feature of the lifeworld is that it is interpreted through "knowledge" acquired from significant others such as parents and teachers. This knowledge includes recipes for action ("knowledge of how") which can be thought of as typical solutions to predictable problems. It also includes typifications ("knowledge of what") which include generalizations about such things as roles; the terms "nurse" and "teacher" imply different typical motives that can be imputed to people.

These features of the lifeworld permit members of a cultural group to interpret one another's actions without major difficulties. They do not need to give much thought to most aspects of daily life because it is so routine, in spite of the fact that it is based upon a host of shared assumptions. Only when one or more of these assumptions is shown to be problematic - as, for example, when there is a breakdown in interpretation - does the complexity of the lifeworld start to become evident.

In his essay on "The Stranger," Schutz incisively captures the experience of the person in a "foreign" context (1964). The refugees’ lifeworld is disrupted when that which was formerly taken-for-granted is no longer applicable. This entails a "crisis" (Schutz, 1964, p.96) where he or she now begins to question everything. To a "stranger," a lifeworld's very structures - its pregivenness,
taken-for-grantedness, common sense knowledge - are problematic and bewildering. Former recipes can no longer be applied because one does not know how similar the new situation may be to past ones that were familiar. Because one's pregiven "cultural pattern" and even one's "biographical history" can no longer be assumed as adequate, the stranger who goes to another lifeworld is "like a man without a history" (Schutz, 1964, p.97).

In other words, the cultural pattern of the approached group is to the stranger not a shelter but a field of adventure, not a matter of course but a questionable topic of investigation, not an instrument for disentangling problematic situations but a problematic situation itself and one hard to master (Schutz, 1964, p.104).

The stranger becomes an observer of the new community and is able only to give subjective interpretations of what is observed. This places the stranger at a disadvantage as he or she appears to be culturally clumsy while testing new recipes and typifications. The uncertainty of this testing period is cause for anxiety, and the stranger has "to face the fact that he/she lacks any status as a member of the social group he/she is about to join and is therefore, unable to get a starting-point to take his/her bearings" (Schutz, 1964, p.99). Furthermore, the stranger's actions and interpretations are noticeable and judged often to be unnatural to members of the community. There is a constant collecting and testing of new knowledge in order to successfully define situations and appear to be a quasi-member of the new social group. "Only after having collected a certain knowledge of the interpretive function of the new cultural pattern may the stranger start to adopt it as the scheme of his own expression" (Schutz, 1964, p.100). Full membership may elude the first generation immigrant. They often continue to find themselves both at home and estranged at the same time.
During this period of transition, they have to translate between old and new cultural patterns, and a full transition may never be achieved until the second generation.

Conversation becomes an essential tool for concentrating on the subject-experience (Carson, 1984). One is able to engage in a dialogue that highlights themes and questions issues rather than either opposing or supporting them. Through conversation with the stranger we come to understand the two lifeworlds better - particularly the fact that for each of us the lifeworld is pregiven and natural - as well as share and clarify subjective meaning about our experiences with those lifeworlds. A conversation such as this which maintains the interest of the two people is referred to by Schutz (1970) as a "we-relationship." It represents an immersion into the other person's experiences; initial ideas about the other person's lifeworld undergo revision as the conversation continues. The "we-relationship" is not observed but lived through (Schutz, 1970), and the attention to the other person is not superficial or transient. The purpose is to understand how he or she interprets and what they take for granted. Paulo Freire's idea of "cultural circles" involves a group conversation in which the informants and researcher engage in a "breakdown" of specific themes which express their reality (Freire, 1970, p.72). For purposes of this study, informal interviews were used as a way to establish a we-relationship with the three refugees and thereby to gain entry into their lifeworlds.

My prolonged stay at Job Corps was useful in gaining the confidence of the participants. I was seen as someone who was non-threatening and
interested in their experiences. My unique position within the Job Corps programme and the we-relationship that existed with the informants illustrates this point. Since I was not a part of the regular staff, this made the trainees feel that they did not have to be as "polite" or as careful in conversing with me. The feedback I received seemed to reveal a failure of the programme to provide some of the youth with an adequate "definition of their situation" (Cox, 1978). Many trainees, for example, were not sure how to express concerns that arose while at a trial job-site. Through casual conversations I was able to hear of significant anxieties that the immigrants were experiencing about their employment situation.

One particular situation involved a Hungarian immigrant who was working as a waiter in a reputable restaurant. Things seemed to be going fairly smoothly for Edward (not his real name). The restaurant manager was pleased with his performance and, in fact, often praised him. However, Edward's co-workers who had worked at the restaurant for some time, told him that they would be surprised if the manager hired more staff because the restaurant never had more than four employees on permanent staff. Edward was the fifth. Logically he began to wonder whether he would be hired once his job-trial period was over. Edward's hesitation to communicate his anxieties to the staff at the Job Corps came from his assumption that his interests were being looked after through the negotiations that took place between the Job Corps manager and Edward's employer. He also did not want to inconvenience the staff at Job Corps by sharing feelings that he was not sure were well founded. He believed

\[1\text{We-relationship implies that my informants and I had a rapport such that we exchanged information without inhibitions.}\]
that he had to demonstrate gratefulness for being able to participate in this programme which was providing him a job.

Individuals involved in a we-relationship also create a common lifeworld (Schutz, 1970). The we-relationship shared by the three refugees and myself was expressed in the language (Spanish) and culture (Hispanic) that we had in common. Furthermore, we had come to Canada with similar taken-for-granted knowledge of Latin American societies. This commonality became increasingly clear to me as I spent time at the Job Corps. I could understand them because in some respects my own personal history of immigration was similar to their own. The "closeness" of experience that emerged from our conversations helped me to interpret the three refugees. One has to understand where they are "coming from" both literally and metaphorically, and how they define their present situation which has a direct influence on their future plans. This can be done through conversation which becomes an important avenue for studying a person's life; it allows for an understanding that people give personal meanings to experienced situations, and that these meanings may differ.
CHAPTER TWO

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

This chapter provides some biographical information on Esperanza, Alirio and Maria. Their stories were constructed from their responses to the questions on how and why they came to Canada, and what their initial experiences were as immigrants. The chapter expresses their views of the "refugee experience," and thereby provides a context for the next chapters. Since the prime source of information was the interviewees themselves, the information is designed to convey their perceptions and feelings. The opinions of employers, landlords, teachers, and Welfare and Immigration officials are therefore absent.

ESPERANZA from Guatemala

Esperanza comes from a one child family. Her mother had been "abandoned" as a child and was adopted (without any official papers) by a couple who Esperanza calls "grand parents." When she was an infant her father abandoned the home, and the only connection her mother had with the infant's father was to receive a monthly allowance. Esperanza did not know her father and she says he never cared enough to come to see her. However, she felt she had a happy family life. Her mother did not go out to work, but stayed home to build a close and caring relationship with her daughter. Esperanza's "grand parents" were very kind to her and her mother. With the allowance from Esperanza's father and the house that her mother owned and shared with
Esperanza's godmother, they led a simple and "comfortable" life in which they did not lack any necessities.

Even though her mother only had a primary school education, Esperanza finished grade twelve and immediately enrolled in a three year bilingual secretarial course (Spanish-English) which she completed in October 1982. Three months later she began to work as the manager's personal bilingual secretary in an importing company where she placed and processed orders as well as supervised other staff. After one year she took another job as a bilingual secretary and as a sales manager's assistant; this work involved taking inventory, placing orders, handling international telephone calls and supervising other personnel.

Esperanza met her husband Alfredo through an athletic team to which they both belonged. They practiced together and often travelled with the team to different parts of the country. As she says, they met "on the run." The emerging friendship between them became stronger, largely due to the support that Esperanza felt she gave him. When she met Alfredo he was living in fear because his family was being "followed" by government agents. (The details of this persecution are only vaguely known to Esperanza). They were very good friends for about six months, and became engaged for another four months before they were married in June 1984. They then lived with his mother in a modest house in Guatemala City.

During the initial stage of their friendship, Alfredo was quiet and seemed
depressed. (She proudly admits that she helped him to "survive" that difficult time). He would often avoid questions she asked, and it was evident that he did not want to talk about what was making him so depressed. It was not until after they were married that she realized the enormity of his anxieties. He had trouble getting to sleep; during the night he would have nightmares, and wake up screaming at "someone" to leave him alone, or would deny knowing "something" that "someone" wanted him to talk about. It was only after some months of being married that he began to discuss his fear.

His family had been involved politically, and during the government of Rios Montt, Alfredo's brother was incarcerated. His mother had to sell some family property to bail him out of jail. Apparently, though, this was not enough. Alfredo and members of his family continued to be harrassed, questioned and followed by the police. His brother then decided to leave Guatemala and fled to Mexico. Now that his brother was gone, the responsibility of defending his family from accusations made by government officials fell on Alfredo. Fear and insecurity became a part of his daily life. He had already given up his studies at the university with only his thesis towards his degree in Architecture to complete; as Esperanza put it, he gave up everything to protect his brother, mother and sister. Continuing threats were made on his life and that of his mother and her family, and he was even shot and lost one finger on his right hand. He and his mother were kept for a month in a "police station" where they were constantly supervised and questioned. It was during this stay at the "police station" that he had his fingers mutilated. His mother suffered from severe asthma and when she was finally released after signing a "government
pact," she was frail and in poor health. Alfredo was released a few days later, thanks to a policeman who was a friend and who had testified that Alfredo was unjustly detained; this policeman argued successfully with his superiors that it was senseless to make Alfredo suffer for matters relating to his brother. When his mother signed the "pact," all their family thought their days of worry had ended, but to no avail. Even on the day of Alfredo's wedding he and Esperanza were followed when driving to the church. It became clear that their lives were in danger. Not knowing why all this was happening was bewildering to her. Nevertheless, she loved Alfredo and wanted to support him.

Alfredo not only feared for his life, but also for hers. They both talked about leaving but did not make any definite plans until his brother wrote from Mexico to say that he was accepted as a political refugee in Canada. He was making preparations to leave, and wanted Alfredo also to apply to the refugee programme. Alfredo and Esperanza realized that if they were accepted by Canada not only would their lives no longer be in danger, but also that they could hope for a better future in a land of "great opportunity."

Since she was six and a half months pregnant at the time of receiving news of Alfredo's brother's plans of going to Canada, she and Alfredo decided that if they were going to move they would have to do so quickly. Alfredo's sister also decided to come with them. Esperanza deeply regrets, up to this day, that she was only able to give her mother one month's notice of their intention to leave for Mexico to apply to come to Canada; the "profound" love, as Esperanza puts it, that she had for her mother was what she could not imagine
being without. Her only consolation was that she would do her best to sponsor and bring her mother to Canada, and if possible her grandparents. The uncertainty of how she was going to cope with the newness of what lay ahead without her loved ones exacerbated her anxiety. For Esperanza this was a sacrifice she had to make in an attempt to realize a better future for herself.

The journey to Mexico was uneventful. Salvadorans and Guatemalans often go to Mexico on holidays while some stay on as illegals. When Esperanza and Alfredo went to see the Canadian consul in Mexico, she said he took one look at her stomach (she was then seven and a half months pregnant) and said that he would consider her application immediately. She laughingly says, "you know how in Spanish pregnancy is literally translated as 'in a state of gravidez' (from grave, meaning serious)." Alfredo and Esperanza were told straight away that their application had been accepted and that they would be leaving in two weeks.

For this 22 year-old mother-to-be, October 11, 1984 (the day of arrival in Canada) was the beginning of a new life for her and her husband. Once in Vancouver, she was determined to improve her life-chances by making sacrifices for those opportunities which were denied to her in Guatemala.

One advantage Esperanza had over most Central American refugees was her knowledge of English. Although not extensive, she knew enough to get by. She also had the advantage of a brother-in-law who was already here. He met them at the airport. Shortly after their arrival and while they were staying at
Esperanza's first impressions of Canada were good. Her medical care was excellent and her hospital experience confirmed her notion that Canada was a land of advanced technology. She delivered Ricardo by a Caesarean section in November 1984. The birth meant that now she had someone who was indeed a part of her own family and who was Canadian. He would have opportunities which she could have never dreamed for him. Although she describes the birth of her son as a very happy experience, she was afraid because she did not know whether she would be capable of looking after a baby without help from her mother or "anyone else who knew about babies." Also, being at home with a baby brought a sense of loneliness; after being in Canada for four months, she felt "closed-in." "I got more angry and of worse disposition because I didn't
like to feel 'locked-up'" (I-690). Alfredo was attending English classes at Vancouver Community College (King Edward Campus). The only income Alfredo, his sister (who was living with them), Esperanza, and the baby had was $700 a month from Immigration. From that money, rent, utilities, food, and all the expenses of the baby had to be met. It was during these times that Alfredo and his sister would line up at the foodbanks.

Since Alfredo didn't know English, Esperanza felt as though the major responsibilities were on her shoulders. Upon her arrival in Canada, an Immigration official said that her English was quite good, and unlike the "other refugees" whose English was poor or non-existent, she was not going to have an opportunity to enrol in English classes, and she would be expected to look for work. Esperanza was disappointed, for her first intention when she arrived in Canada, was to enrol in courses that would help her to improve her level of English. She knew that if she started to work right away, she would have access only to very menial jobs that would not improve her English quickly. Immigration officials had shown her a list of occupations that she could pursue, such as chambermaid, janitor, or dishwasher. Esperanza expressed it this way: "taking on a job along those lines would mean I would be stuck there before I even started; having a new baby at home is exciting, having to leave him behind to go and wash dishes didn't make sense." Nevertheless, she heard from friends that if she did not look for work, Immigration would cut her off their assistance. Yet she saw little sense in working for a minimum wage, and having to pay a baby-sitter. Because she, Alfredo and his sister, were all classified by Immigration under the category "family," this meant that the initial "family
allowance" of $700 was reduced when Alfredo's sister got a job. Part of her wages were counted in the total allowance given to the family. In other words, Alfredo's sister had to put $400 of her total $500 take-home pay towards the $700 from Immigration. Now Immigration was giving them $300. Esperanza felt that her sister-in-law had been "punished" for finding work and on top of that had to support her brother and his wife. This situation didn't seem at all right, and so, using the information she got from friends at church and in her neighbourhood, she went to MOSAIC and explained her situation to one of the workers there.

Having made her application and having passed the interview, Esperanza was now officially enrolled in MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps programme which was to start on April 5, 1985. The future now seemed brighter, and she felt that the programme would place her in a job more in line with her capabilities. Even though she knew she would start a job at minimum wage, she would be doing something that allowed her room for financial growth and a sense of personal achievement. "You see," says Esperanza, "when you leave your loved ones behind you do so knowing that you will do what is necessary to one day be reunited again. First you have to get a job, then a better job so you can sponsor your immediate family" (I-311). The awareness was far too real that had she remained in Guatemala, a permanent limited income would have greatly reduced her life chances and that of her son Ricardo.

But to improve one has to have strength. That strength comes from support from the immediate family. Esperanza felt close to her husband's family,
yet she was resentful that she did not have any family here, whereas Alfredo had two sisters, a brother, and now his mother (who arrived in Canada in April, 1986) all of whom came as refugees. Esperanza was told by Immigration that her mother did not qualify as a refugee and that she would have to be sponsored. Once she completed MOSAIC’s programme, Esperanza expected to get a good job that would enable her to sponsor her mother. Having her mother here would mean she could overcome obstacles much easier. Above all, her mother would give her baby the love and care he needed, and Esperanza would have someone to share her innermost feelings.

Optimism and hope are strengths of Esperanza. In June, 1985 she completed Phase II of the programme at MOSAIC. She recalls being extremely tired after a full day of job-search: wearing high heels which were not comfortable, and the mental strain of having constantly to make a good impression. Esperanza claimed that the sense of this strain was difficult to get across to the teachers at Job Corps, although they repeatedly reminded the trainees how tiring the whole process of job-search was, and that they had been through it themselves. According to Esperanza her teachers could not be empathetic because they had never had to look for a job using a language which was not their own and that they were just learning. Going home was a relief, where she could speak Spanish and share her feelings with her husband. (She is conscious that the only way to learn a language is to speak it. She takes advantage of opportunities which allow her to speak in English, namely at church, community centre programmes, and at work). For Phase III she was placed in a jewellery wholesale company as an office assistant. Her duties
included preparing invoices and accounts receivable, typing of customer statements, and dealing with wholesalers who came into the office. She began making $5.00 an hour, working seven and a half hours each day; she retained this job for close to seven months. Her boss, a German immigrant herself, constantly criticized Esperanza (and other employees). Esperanza tolerated belittling comments such as, "is it that you can't think; don't you think?" ("I don't know why her husband had put up with her for so long; she humiliates him so cruelly." It is interesting to note that there is a feeling among my interviewees that Hispanics can better tolerate injustice, because they are generally raised within large family circles, where they need to cohabit with people of different temperaments. They also have to work from the time they are very young: at home they have significant responsibilities such as looking after small children, cooking meals and going to the market. These tasks are often undertaken at an age as early as seven years). She felt abused, but retaining her job meant a lot to her because Alfredo was not working. She saw her job as a growing experience: "I was always very nervous around my boss, and I did the best I could and I tolerated a lot because I liked the job. I even stayed additional hours to learn things. I wasn't like the Canadians who don't stay one minute more passed their payed working hours. There was a lady who worked there temporarily and when she saw me staying overtime she would say that it was silly for me to stay longer when I was not getting paid for it. She asked me whether I was stupid or something. I knew that since it was harder for me to understand because of the language, I stayed without getting paid because I wanted to do my job properly. My eye was becoming educated" (V-E). At the end of February 1986, when she was earning $5.85 an hour, Esperanza resigned. Before she left she wanted
desperately to explain to her boss what she thought and felt, but due to the language barrier it was difficult: "If one could, maybe these people would see our individual situations under a different light."

Esperanza's personality is conducive to meeting people: she's sociable, humourous, enthusiastic, takes good care of her personal appearance and is willing to make the effort to integrate. I remember meeting Esperanza at her MOSAIC graduation ceremony which she attended with Alfredo and Ricardo. Alfredo was standing to one side of the room looking after Ricardo. I pointed out to Esperanza that he was not getting much of a chance to meet other people because he was so busy looking after Ricardo. She laughed and without hesitation replied that what Alfredo was doing was a deliberate effort to avoid having to talk to people. She had apparently offered to look after Ricardo, but Alfredo had refused. Esperanza went on to say that it was difficult to take Alfredo to social gatherings, because he was shy and does not enjoy socializing. But in her determination to help him acquire more English, she tried unsuccessfully to make it a common practice to speak English at home. But Alfredo refused to cooperate; having spent the day at school trying to understand and express himself in English, once he got back home he did not want to continue that strain. Fortunately, he was able to get a job in a glass factory as well as find work remodelling houses; he found it difficult to do physical labour during the day and then attend night school three times a week. Nevertheless, they accepted these sacrifices as necessary prerequisites to get somewhere: "The force that keeps us going," she says, "is our own firm conviction that what we sacrifice now is what is going to improve our chances for a better life. We will
be able to give Ricardo what we want for him and he will appreciate our efforts. He will be stronger knowing that he doesn’t have parents who give into defeat" (IV-735 E). Esperanza pointed out the importance of setting "a goal in your head; if one has been studying while working, later on one has English" (IV-776 E).

She believed that it was degrading for refugees to be dependent on the government. She recognized that they needed initial help until they become oriented, but that later they should not continue to be dependent on social assistance programmes. (The experience of such assistance programmes is foreign to Central Americans). Farther, she saw it as unfortunate that refugees in her age group have the "bad example" of some "Canadians" of the same age bracket who seem to abuse the welfare system. Some refugees, she added, imitate these young Canadians. For Esperanza, to work was to feel satisfaction; she could not understand why anyone would choose a lifestyle of "vice" and not work. However, according to her, the government was partially responsible for producing "lazy" refugees because, when given assistance and the right to enroll in English classes they had time to learn the "tricks" of getting the most out of the welfare system, and to make full use, or abuse, of it.

Esperanza is presently (1986) enroled in a new programme funded by the federal government. There she is studying computer operations to make her job skills more marketable.
I saw Maria for the first time on April 5th, 1985 as she entered the classroom of MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps. She took a few minutes to familiarize herself with the surroundings and was soon seated at one of the tables in the front of the room. Her oldest sister, Luz, sat beside her and very soon Maria's table was taken over by her Central American friends. She was friendly and gave the impression of being fairly quiet, yet at the same time enthusiastic.

Maria enroled in the Job Corps programme quite by chance. Her cousin, Roberto, who had arrived in Canada earlier, went to MOSAIC for help with completing forms in written English and Luz and Maria accompanied him. One of the Spanish workers there, who was often referred to as the "Saviour" of the Spanish-speaking refugees, asked the two sisters about their present job situation. It was just the right time: both Luz and Maria had already waited three months for the commencement of English courses at the Vancouver Community College (King Edward Campus - K.E.C.). During this period, Maria had enroled in an English course held close to her home; a Chilean friend whom she met at church, told her how relatively inexpensive, yet useful, these classes were. The two sisters had also devoted time to going downtown, taking different buses and getting to know different areas of the city. During the month prior to receiving confirmation that they would be accepted into the Job Corps programme, Maria looked for a job. As a job-search procedure, she would often go with Luz early in the morning and inquire about work in small grocery stores; people's immediate response was to say no. She then decided to ask larger store owners
if they needed help, and she did get odd jobs at $3.00 an hour. In her neighbourhood, which was multi-ethnic, Maria also did some babysitting of Spanish and Portuguese speaking children. However, babysitting was not profitable, and there was not any steady work.

When asked whether she looked for a job during the whole day, she said she went only in the mornings because at noon she had to return home to have lunch; it was too expensive to eat downtown. (The practice of taking lunch to work is not common in Central America. The notion of a "bag-lunch" is an adjustment for Central American immigrants because in their home countries they are used to a long lunch-break which includes a siesta, and most importantly, a hot lunch).

Because Maria arrived in Vancouver in January 1984 with her sister and brother, she was classified by Immigration under the "family" category. Within this category she was entitled to $400 a month and Immigration paid for rent and utilities. Maria said that they really had to watch their expenses and certainly couldn't indulge in any luxuries. A few months later her cousin arrived from El Salvador, also as a refugee, and Immigration told him that he could live with his three cousins. However, according to Maria, Immigration now expected them to stretch their $400 allowance among four people. There were weeks, she said, when they did not have much to eat. She felt humiliated and confused because she had been told by the Canadian Consulate in Mexico that she would be "well looked after" during her first year in Canada. What was happening now? Maria relied on information from Latin friends at church, and
other acquaintances she had met through her courses at K.E.C. Many had similar experiences; "the thing to do," she said, "was to go to the foodbanks. At least some of the money that would have to be devoted towards food could now be used for other things."

There was another condition that Immigration required of these refugees: once their course at K.E.C. was completed they would still get their family allowance, but only after providing proof of having contacted twenty employers each month. According to Maria, Immigration justified this request on the grounds that now the refugees had acquired a level of English to enable them to look for a job. It was difficult, however, to know where to go to collect twenty signatures a month. Maria felt that she could not go to the same potential employers each month because they might get angry. (Most refugees live in East Vancouver and understandably it is within this area that they would look for work. Many employers would express annoyance at being constantly asked about job vacancies. Some resorted to posting signs outside their business: "No job vacancies"). What was even more disconcerting was that other refugees who had arrived before Maria, and who had been here for over a year, were now eligible for welfare benefits. Welfare, she said, gave such refugees $350 a month each after one year, so it seemed that they were expected to "survive" their first year in whatever way they could. (Maria as well as some of her other refugee friends had devised a "system," as they called it, of coming up with the twenty signatures. Neither Maria nor the others interviewed wanted to elaborate on this survival strategy).
Her parents knew that life would be much better somewhere else. When she was just a toddler her parents went to the United States where they lived for two years before returning to El Salvador. (When asked why her parents had decided to return to El Salvador, she said that the situation then in her country was not as bad as it is now. Also, her parents missed the warm climate, the food, and support from the network of friends and relatives already established in El Salvador). The visit to the U.S. gave Maria's mother an opportunity to visit her son from her first marriage, who lived in Los Angeles.

Maria said she came from a "middle class" family. They owned their home which was not more than fifteen minutes away from the capital, San Salvador. Maria and her brothers and sisters went to school close to home, so that security was not a problem. Her father, who had a grade six education, was a carpenter at San Salvador's National University, situated within the city limits. Her mother, with a grade nine education, worked as a seamstress in downtown San Salvador, and often delivered goods while street shootings were taking place. Maria said that at the university there were often clashes between students and security forces. Her parents were in constant danger, and on occasion had to hide to avoid being caught in crossfire. It was not that they were involved politically or in anti-government activity, but that as civilians they lived with the threat of being hurt in the clashes between government forces and supposed dissidents.

She attended an "official" school which meant her parents only had to pay twelve colones per year during elementary school and twenty five colones
per month during secondary school. Post-secondary education was out of the question given their financial situation; the family felt that educational and economic opportunities would be somewhat better in Mexico. They decided to go to Mexico in 1980, and they lived there for three and a half years as "illegals." Prior to arriving in Mexico, Maria's parents had envisaged a life for their children where studies and work could be combined. As it turned out Maria worked for poor wages and did not continue her education beyond grade nine, which she had completed in El Salvador in 1980. Maria's own words described her experience: "when one arrives in Mexico and one comes from another atmosphere, one felt more, more, how can I say it... oppressed, more exploited. In other words, we come from a country, that is we come from one exploitation to another exploitation which is worse" (II-368).

While they were still in Mexico, Maria's father received a letter from a close friend who was in Winnipeg and who had applied from Mexico successfully to come to Canada as a refugee. He told them to go to the Canadian Embassy in Mexico, which they did, and eleven months later, in January 1984, Maria, her sister and her brother were on their way to Canada. Maria's parents decided that their children should go first, so that they would have a good opportunity to begin learning another language and culture. "My parents said it would be better to come here to Canada, to a country where opportunities do exist. Here there is more opportunity to some day have a career or a good job" (II-379). Maria's parents arrived later, in November 1984, also as refugees.

I asked Maria about the process of applying to come to Canada. "You
get all the information on how to do it from friends," she said (II-200); "They told us what we had to say, that we had to put it very tragically, so that one gets results or else there are no results." The latter happened to some of her friends. They were at first told by Canadian officials in Mexico that their situation was not serious enough to be considered under refugee status. According to Maria, her friends applied successfully the second time, but only because they told Canadian authorities that initially they were afraid to tell the truth in case they would be "punished" by agents of the Salvadoran government. (According to Maria, Alirio and Esperanza there are many Guatemalans, Nicaraguans and people from other Central American countries who know about Canada's refugee programme, and that they construct stories to give themselves a favourable hearing). During the eleven months they waited for refugee status, each member of Maria's family had three interviews, and only in the final interview were they all together. The reason given by the Canadian authorities for this practice was that they had to insure that information given by members of one family was consistent. "We had to practice what we were going to say; our friends had told us more or less what questions we would be asked, so we practiced the answers. We knew we had to paint our situation as 'tragic' " (II-204).

Now that she would be coming to Canada, Maria's mind was filled with uncertainties about the future in a new country. Her biggest concern was leaving her mother. "Mothers and daughters are very close to each other in our countries. It is harder for a daughter to leave her mother than it is for a son to leave his father" (II-390). The distance from home, the separation and the realisation that now they were not going to be under their parents' care, also
occupied Maria's thoughts. She was not certain whether she would see her mother again. In fact, when they arrived, in the middle of the Canadian winter, Maria and Luz were certain that their parents could not survive such cold. However, once the early signs of summer began to appear, they phoned their parents encouraging them to come. But for her parents, in their late forties, the perceived harshness of the climate was a concern. Maria added that people of her parents' age have a much harder time trying to decide whether to come or not; for them, coming means leaving their friends, the food, and the beautiful climate, as well as having anxiety about coming to a "new" country with a "new" language. Not knowing the language "kind of paralyses them," said Maria.

Friends and rumours had led Maria to believe that Canada was almost identical to the United States. While still in El Salvador, she was convinced, and this thought scared her somewhat, that in Canada there were a large number of street gangs. Yet there was that element of new possibilities: "to think of travelling, getting to know Canada... learning English, studying something, working and all that; one really gets excited about it all" (II-277). It was evident to her that if she remained in El Salvador, where it was virtually impossible to study and work at the same time, she would likely never have a career. Her parents did not have the means to pay for her post-secondary education, and "even if they did," she said, "university there does not offer any security. It is constantly under attack and being closed down" (II-295).

Maria also had many preconceived ideas of what Canadians were going to be like: she had been told by friends that Canadians, as neighbours, were not
very friendly, and that they kept to themselves. "For example," she said, "if they hear that a neighbour from another house is dying, or that he's yelling, they (Canadians) don't go to see what is happening. Whereas in Latin America there is concern so that even if a husband is hitting his wife, one goes to ask what is happening. Here people don't want to interfere. They (back home) had told us that Canadians live only for themselves and they don't care about the rest" (II-313). Her actual experience in Canada was a little different, Maria observed.

When Maria came to Canada her knowledge of English included the alphabet, how to count up to a thousand, and a few other words. She felt very scared; however, she was not alone, and could not imagine what it would be like coming here without all members of her immediate family. Despite the reassurances she received in Mexico that when she arrived in Canada "everything was going to be taken care of," she found things not to her expectations: "Immigration (at the airport) does things poorly. They only bring you to the hotel. When we arrived, there was a lady there who asked, "Do you speak Spanish?" (in Spanish) "Yes," we said, so she then said, "I will be there momentarily, go to the Immigration booth." We just followed the rest of the passengers, as she never even pointed us in the direction of the booths. As we had done at other airports, we followed the crowd with our luggage. When we arrived at Immigration we didn't even know what they were asking us. The man there only told us, "no espanol," and that was all we understood. The lady never came back. We waited, watching people coming in, going out, grabbing bags, and finally we were the only ones there. Then another man came to ask
us what we were doing there. All we could do was look at each other; then we attempted by way of hand movements to explain that we were waiting for a lady who spoke Spanish. He just said, "passports, papers" and that we understood. He started filling out a form and asked us questions, and all we could say was "no understand, no understand." The man then drew us a taxi on a piece of paper with a hotel beside it, just as if we were deaf and dumb. "They will give you money to eat," he said to us with hand movements. So the man took us to the taxi; he paid the taxi driver and the latter took our bags and drove us to the hotel. When we gave our names at the reception desk it was evident that they were expecting us. The receptionist gave us money which she indicated was for food and showed us up to our room. As we entered our room we were relieved to find a kitchenette, beds and a table. Then someone else came up the stairs, and by way of drawings told us that we had to go to Immigration the next day. He gave us the address, and we... we didn't know anything or how to get there" (II-520).

Prior to coming to Canada, she held an image that it was a country where everything was well organized. Her belief was now being shaken. She began to feel lost, not knowing what she was supposed to do next. The only thing she had been told at the airport by Immigration was that she would be taken to a hotel. The next day she met another Salvadoran family who was also staying at the hotel. Between the two families they put together the little "English" that they knew and found their way to the Immigration offices downtown Vancouver. Maria remembers vividly that the journey was long, they walked extensively, took the wrong buses and recognized places where they had
been before. They were obviously going around in circles not knowing in which direction they were travelling. When they arrived at the offices, the experience was similar to the one at the airport: the interpreter "kind-of" spoke Spanish. They were told that they should look for work and for a house, and that they should submit an application to Manpower for English classes. (This discussion Maria understood well because by coincidence there happened to be a Salvadoran who then served as interpreter). Overall, though, "confusion" was the word Maria used to describe her experiences at Immigration because of the lack of an interpreter at the airport, the hotel, and the main offices.

A major task was looking for a place to live. She had not imagined the struggle an immigrant without English goes through trying to express to a landlord that one is looking for a place to live. After a day of frustrating house hunting, Maria met a man, a Salvadoran, on the street who heard them speak Spanish. He was looking for a "group" to share accommodation because he could not afford to live alone on his Immigration allowance. "We just thought," she said "may God's will prevail and come with us, right? Really, here are people one doesn't know. One doesn't even know where they come from, or whether what they say is really true" (II-638). After eight days, Maria, Luz, her brother and their new "friend" found a house in East Vancouver.

When I visited Maria in her new house in July, 1985, nine people were living there: her parents, her sister, Luz, two brothers, a cousin and their "friend." (The house had six bedrooms, but they were only using four because the two bedrooms downstairs were rented out to someone else). I was welcomed
by Maria at the door and we both sat on a couch in the living room. The T.V. was on when I entered their house and it was on when I left; they had obviously subscribed to one of the pay-T.V. channels. From talking to Maria, I gathered that most of the leisure hours of the household were spent in front of the television. "It is an entertaining way to learn the language," she says, "the only trouble with that way is that you understand a lot of English, but there is no way you can learn to speak it." (After a brief chat with Maria’s brother, she and I decided to go elsewhere, as it was obvious that the house was too distracting to conduct an interview. While I was there, two friends dropped by, were offered a hot drink and biscuits. I was taken by the relaxed way everyone acknowledged visitors. There was a sense of warmth, of friendship and mutual support in the room). I asked Maria whether she found it difficult to live with so many people. She said she was used to it from San Salvador, and she quite enjoyed it. However, she said, since she was working she left home early and only came back to eat supper around 6:30. Her mother prepared the meals with help from any member of the family who happened to be there during meal-preparation time. For Maria it meant a lot to come home to "pupusas" and to properly seasoned meals. She found Canadian cooking salty, but bland.

Maria told me a little about her life in San Salvador. None of the children in her family worked outside of the home while they attended school. She would occasionally go to her aunt’s small clothing shop, to help her put price tags on clothes, and occasionally sell merchandise. Otherwise, she would help her mother with mending, cooking and other domestic chores. Sunday was set aside for the family to be together. Frequently, the day was spent at the
beach where the family would swim, play and enjoy a variety of foods sold in small stalls. At other times, the family would take a bus out to the country and stop at a well-known roadside restaurant, more like a "family" dining-house. (Maria was talking with her whole body. Her arms moved in a circular motion, her eyes sparkled and her smile indicated that she remembered Sundays fondly and with nostalgia).

Maria firmly believed that everyone has to make sacrifices to reach their goals, and that there was opportunity in Canada. Her oldest brother planted trees, then collected Unemployment Insurance and Welfare when there was no work. Her youngest brother was a cook earning $5.00 an hour and moved to Coquitlam (a suburb of Vancouver) to be closer to his job. Luz went to MOSAIC with Maria, and although she had a job which lasted a few weeks, she had not been able to find employment since. The parents applied at hotels, hoping that EXPO 86 (the world fair held in Vancouver) would bring openings for chambermaids and janitors. The mother had occasional house cleaning or babysitting jobs. Neither of them wanted a job where they had to express themselves in English.

In her family, Maria had been the most persevering. She held her first job as an electronic assembler in Mexico. When she applied to MOSAIC (March 1985), she stated explicitly that she wanted to begin work as a cashier or a store attendant. When she mentioned these job aspirations in an interview with the Job Corps manager, she felt that he belittled her and told her to "face reality." But, as Maria said, this encounter with the manager was not the only
humiliating experience during the programme. As an example, during a class she was asked what she would like to improve about herself. Being the first one to be asked this question, she began to answer while seated. The teacher then asked her to stand up in front of the class and to tell everybody. She blushed, yet met the challenge and said there was nothing about herself which she wanted to change. The teacher said, "well surely there must be times when you want to blow-up at an employer, for example, and because you can't express your anger to him in English you feel like yelling." To this Maria replied that she 'had never had the opportunity to be angry at an employer in another language, because she had not yet found employment in Canada. Later, when I spoke to Maria about this incident, she said that she would not shout at an employer because "that would be an ignorant thing to do." She would rather wait until her English was improved so as to be able to express something compatible with her thinking.

During her first job-placement while at Job Corps, Maria felt that if the work situation was "fair," as she called it, (and by this she meant just) she believed she could perform almost any job. She worked as a waitress in a tea room, but did not enjoy it. Customers would complain to her about menu items being priced too high. Others would delight in trying to make her explain what each pastry item was made of and in the end would leave without buying anything. The pressure built up. The employer asked her to be more aggressive with such customers. In the end Maria and her manager parted amicably. A few days later she got another job, at a furniture store, while still in MOSAIC's programme, looking up price lists of furniture and estimating costs. Within two
months her responsibilities included the preparation of display boards that sales representatives would use in presentations, and then she was placing orders over the phone, writing invoices, taking phone messages from prospective buyers, and selecting appropriate brochures for buyers.

The discouraging reality, however, was that after starting this job in July 1985 at $5.00 an hour, by June 1986 she was making only $5.38. The business manager still asked her to clean his car, for example, if he saw her "not doing anything." However, both Maria and her employer shared a concern about improving mutual communication. "It is difficult especially because of the language, the customs, and other things like that. In Spanish, if one has a problem, one knows how to speak and how to speak for one's rights. Here, if one tries in English, one stutters and then it's best to keep quiet" (IV-36). Her employer complements her and tries to explain things to her. "He is always calm with me," she says, "and stands beside me to make sure I do it right, but not threatening. On the contrary, he stands there in case I need help."

Her manager sent her to night school for a word processing course so she could process invoices and records. Maria resigned herself to the poor remuneration she received and justified it by saying that she was learning a great deal on the job and was also getting additional training. She felt that things were working in her favour, and that she was more fortunate than many of her refugee contemporaries.
ALIRIO from El Salvador

He arrived in Toronto in February 1984. What took him by surprise was the darkness that still enveloped the city at 9 a.m. To him this was "lonely, cold and so strange...." He was relieved that winter was already half over. He chuckled as he recalled his experience of seeing snow fall for the first time. ("It was marvellous to see the white flakes falling to form such a white and clean ground") as the taxi took him from his Toronto hotel to the airport for a flight to Vancouver. It was in Vancouver that he was finally able "to touch it, to eat it."

Alirio's situation was different from the other two cases. He had been in Belize for three months when he heard from friends about Canada's refugee programme. He applied immediately and after eight months was granted asylum in Canada in 1983. He travelled to Miami with a passport, where Immigration officials gave him other documents. Once in Toronto he was given a Ministerial Permit.¹ Two years later he still had this permit despite the assurances he thought he was given by Canadian officials in Belize that he would get permanent resident status shortly after his arrival. This permit, Alirio said, did not give him the same rights as a Canadian resident, and what was worse, his two years of residence under the permit could not be counted towards the three year period required to apply for Canadian citizenship. "The two years I've been here have been lost. I'm nobody right now," he said, and in his face one could see the frustration he felt. His perception was that other refugees who came

¹An interim permit issued until a refugee's position is decided upon. It has an expiry date and should be renewed until such time as his/her status is clarified.
with him to Miami with the same documents, were then given landed immigrant status when they arrived in Toronto.

Alirio and I first met at MOSAIC during a lunch break. He was friendly and enthusiastic about this stage of his new life in Canada. He was elated, he said, when accepted into MOSAIC’s programme in April 1985, and viewed his participation as an opportunity to improve his chances of getting a good job. He was confident of finding employment at the end of the programme, which meant that he would have the opportunity "to show himself what he was worth." He also felt indebted to the Canadian government and wanted to prove to them that he could fend for himself; he appreciated government funded programmes designed for people in his situation, and wanted to show that opportunities given to refugees like himself would be well used.

After becoming acquainted with Alirio, it was easy to recognize that he was ambitious, capable, enthusiastic, and bright. He lived in San Salvador and came from a middle-class family of three older sisters and his mother; his parents had separated when he was eight years old. His father completed high school and worked as an accountant, whereas his mother had a grade nine education and worked in a steel factory. According to Alirio, the family had enough income to lead a comfortable life, despite the fact that his mother was paying the mortgage on their house.

At age fourteen he worked as a part-time bus driver's assistant in his uncle's company. He collected the fare from passengers as they boarded the bus,
and advised the driver of traffic conditions. He was also fortunate in having a brother-in-law who worked in an accounting firm; Alirio was able to work part-time as an accountant’s assistant while he was still attending high school. He said that he was well liked by the employees in the accounting firm and that he gained considerable experience, and so worked there for a year after completing high school.

Unfortunately, unpredictable events ended his chances of a peaceful future in a land which he to this day loves profoundly. It began one evening in the "colonia" where his house was situated. He (then 19 years of age) and two friends (15 and 16 years old) were chatting at his home when they decided to go out to have a beer; it was around nine o’clock in the evening. They went to a nearby corner store to buy a bottle each and began drinking while walking back to their "colonia." Suddenly someone from behind ordered them to stop and to turn around. Two policemen, each with a flashlight, searched them, took their bottles of beer away, and asked them to hand over the marijuana they were smoking. Alirio, being the oldest, said that they did not have any marijuana, but were in fact smoking cigarettes. The policemen disregarded their objections, and claimed that all young people "said the same thing." During these intense moments the flashlights were focussed on their eyes by one police officer, while the other one searched them. (Alirio said he will never forget how scared, angry and humiliated he felt; the officer’s scornful smile remained vivid to this day). The three young men were "pushed around" and finally walked by the police to their respective homes. This was not the end of the incident. Later on that

1Group of houses built closely together and which form a small subdivision.
night, Alirio was taken out of bed by the police as the rest of the family stood by dumbfounded. He remembered his mother and two of his sisters standing at the door, terrified, but there was nothing that anyone could do. He was taken by two police officers to a car, and to his surprise his younger friends were already there. All three were jailed for three days, and according to Alirio, were subjected to torture and severe questioning. Every morning they were hung naked from the ceiling tied by one ankle, and from the back were hit on their hips with a wooden plank. In the afternoon they were put in a cell, blindfolded and with their thumbs tied together. At night they slept on the bare brick floor. Tortillas were provided three times a day; water and bread twice a day. Alirio admitted he was too depressed and weakened to eat. During the third day of torture Alirio said that he felt the police seemed to take delight in hurting his younger friends because they were "weaker in mentality and in feelings."

Through this treatment, the police wanted Alirio and his friends to admit that they were involved in spreading anti-government propaganda: "They (the police) thought it was us; they had to find someone to blame it on." His days in jail came to an end thanks to a friend of his family who was in the military. This family connection "prompted" his release. (Alirio related this incident while he fiddled with the serviette at the restaurant where the interview took place. His eyes looked down, his shoulders hung low. He paused and then said, "my experience in jail left me and my friends totally traumatized. When I arrived here I couldn't even bear anyone touching me on the back. Up to now, I don't like people standing behind me.")

"In El Salvador I felt constantly persecuted, and what was worse, I did
not even know why." This personal insecurity compounded by his experience in jail made him decide to leave in 1983. He went to Guatemala for one month, but did not think things were much better there. He returned to El Salvador for a few weeks, hoping to find that things had calmed down; he was disappointed. He heard through friends that it would be better in Belize. Nevertheless, Alirio did not want to leave his family and country: "My life in El Salvador was happy; on Sundays my friends and sisters would all meet at a public bathing place. My mother always stayed home looking after the grandchildren (Alirio’s oldest sister was married and had two children). During the week, when I arrived home, my mother and two sisters would be there waiting for me with a wonderful, home-cooked meal. I was the only boy, you see." "Despite all this," he regretfully admitted, "a decision had to be made." His family wanted him to stay and did not want him to run away from something he had not done. "And frankly," Alirio said, "I didn’t do anything. My family tried to encourage me by saying that because I had not done anything, things could only get better for me. I even went to the police station to find the reason why the harassment was continuing, but they (the police) said they weren’t interested in me. When I left the station I began to have a bad sensation: that I couldn’t walk along the street in tranquility" (III-95).

Alirio put together some money he had managed to save and his mother paid his air fare to Belize. It was his first flight in an airplane. Even though he was sad to leave, the proximity of Belize to El Salvador gave him some comfort. Once in Belize, he made frequent trips to El Salvador to visit his family. But Belize did not offer him much opportunity. His first job was as an
assistant mechanic in a garage and his second job was as a brick layer's assistant. He felt little personal achievement and that the future did not look promising. In comparison with El Salvador, in Belize he did not have family connections or friends to help him find a job more in line with his personal goals.

After being in Belize for three months, Alirio applied to come to Canada as a refugee in 1983. He heard from friends that the probability of being granted asylum depended on how "tragically" he could portray his situation. Out of the group of applicants who applied at the same time, he was the only one accepted, and he admitted that he resorted to "merciful lies" because he was determined to improve his life chances in Canada.

He arrived in Vancouver in February 1984 with a family of four: two young ladies, a woman in her late forties and a baby. This family was unrelated to him, but they travelled together as a group of five Central Americans. When they arrived at the airport, their papers were checked by Immigration officials and they were driven by taxi to the hotel for refugees where they could remain for ten days (or "even fifteen," Alirio told me as he chuckled). Within days he and the two young women decided to look for a place to live. He admitted that he did not know them well, but coming to new country under the same circumstances brought "strangers" together very quickly; "It is a means of support," he added. However, after eight days this family found an apartment because a Salvadoran whom they met at Immigration had helped. According to Alirio, it was easier for this family to find an apartment,
because they were admitted to the refugee programme under the category "family," and therefore, their income was greater than his.

He had been encouraged by Immigration officials to find a group of refugees who were sharing a house that he could also join. "I stayed in the hotel an extra week because I really didn't know who or where to turn to next... (laughs nervously). Immigration, when you arrive here, wants you to look for a place to live right away. The trouble is, without the language, how does one even begin?" (III-345). (Repeatedly, he emphasized the fear he felt when Immigration left it up to him to look for a place to live; he believed that Immigration should assign an English-speaking person to help). Not having the language was such a handicap for Alirio that despite invitations to visit other Central American refugee "friends," he did not dare. "When one just arrives here one truly feels fearful, that is why I decided not to go out, I only stayed there in the hotel" (III-385). He did not understand the bus system, and what was worse, he was not able to ask for directions. The only thing that he felt confident doing was purchasing groceries: "This does not involve talking, though, one just picks up the priced item and you take it to the cashier." Alirio compared the feeling of not being able to express oneself with not being able to "move," as if "one's hands were tied" (III-463). An enveloping sense of desolation Overpowered him as his days in the hotel room were spent thinking how he could get more courage. "Yes, I felt cramped because frankly I couldn't do anything. There I was in my room alone...thinking...how am I going to do it? The first problem is the language; that is the factor that doesn't provide a way out. I would tell myself, with the language you can go out, talk, and ask,
but...without the language" (III-470). Within a few days the same Salvadoran who had helped the family then asked Alirio if he wanted to move in with him and share a house with three others; one of the tenants had left, so there was a vacancy. He accepted the offer.

The remaining part of 1984 was spent exploring the city, becoming acquainted with possible places of employment and attending a language training course at the Vancouver Community College (King Edward Campus). He attended from June to November 1984 and completed his intermediate English level. In November 1984 he actively sought a job; according to Immigration he now had enough English to look for work. Like the other refugees, he had to contact twenty employers a month to be eligible for the Immigration allowance of $380. Apparently, this list of contacts was often "faked" through an efficient method devised by the refugees themselves (which he absolutely refused to discuss). Alirio felt the same way as Maria did, that it was unreasonable for Immigration to expect refugees, who were new to a language and culture, to collect that many signatures; they felt a more reasonable number would be ten or at most fifteen. "One doesn't even know the city or what resources are available. One is beginning to make friends with fellow students from King Edward Campus and finally daring to look around and to discover the newness of everything. To actually talk to twenty employers in one's truncated English and to get them to sign the form seemed too big a task to fulfill every month" (IV-1080). Nevertheless, for a brief period he found work as a mechanic's assistant in a gas station and as a dishwasher.
When Alirio’s year of sponsorship as a refugee was completed in February 1985, he applied for welfare assistance because he did not have a job at the time. Because he was still on a ministerial permit, Welfare refused to give him assistance. Immigration then told him that he would be getting his resident’s visa soon; however, this did not happen. (He got his permit renewed for one more year and received Welfare for two months). Fortunately, his roommate suggested that he go to MOSAIC where they would help him resolve his situation. During this visit to MOSAIC, he registered in the Youth Job Corps programme.

Being accepted into this programme in April 1985 meant that after twenty weeks (or even sooner) he would likely have a job. It was his understanding that the programme’s objective was to train immigrants to look for work by themselves; there would be some initial language instruction, followed by a period of job-search skills, and finally a job-trial placement. His expectations were high because his roommate had participated in the programme, and had learned to look for employment through the newspaper, the yellow pages, etc. Contacting employers was done by members of the Job Corps staff, and Alirio’s roommate was happily placed as a cook’s helper at a restaurant. According to Alirio, what was impressive was that his roommate, prior to this job, had never done cooking but had worked as a mechanic.

Alirio’s expectations from the programme were directly related to his roommate’s experiences. He was optimistic over his first job trial placement, but when he was dismissed it had a terrible effect on him. He had begun working
at a gas station as a mechanic’s assistant and felt that he worked harder than other assistants; however, he was paid six dollars an hour less than they were. He accepted this "fact" because from the time he had made the decision to come to Canada, he was aware that he would initially have to accommodate to any employment situation (III-921). As he explained to me, "frankly, I firmly believe that the majority of us immigrants accept the reality that when we come here, we have to work at whatever we are offered; in other words, we have to shape ourselves to the mould we are put into" (III-925). This "moulding" he accepted in order to facilitate the opportunities that he wanted and the chance "to prove himself." He was the first trainee in the programme to get a job placement and everything seemed to be going well. His manager praised his good work and reassured him that after one week he would have a permanent job in the garage. Since he had to travel by bus every day for four hours (the gas station was in Coquitlam), he made plans to move closer to his job-site. With only a few more hours left on Alirio's job trial placement, a young man came into the garage to talk to the manager. The next day Alirio was told by his manager that he would no longer be needed. He felt that the manager had "dumped" him just as the free service was no longer available. ¹ This experience had a demoralizing effect: "one gives everything one has and after twenty or twenty five days they tell you that you are not needed any more. Well, one feels really down. One becomes traumatized. Throughout the entire trial placement I worked hard, giving everything I had. The employer oppressed me" (III-1004). As a result of this experience, Alirio dropped out of the Youth Job Corps.

¹During Phase II of the programme, trainees spent a total of 80 hours at trial job placements. These hours constitute "free" labour for the prospective employer. These 80 hours may be spread over a considerable period of time because the employer may not provide full-time work.
I went to see Alirio shortly after he had left Job Corps because I was curious to know why he quit. He was depressed. We sat at a small table in the middle of his kitchen while his two roommates were in another room watching T.V. at 8:00 p.m. As he chain-smoked, I urged him to talk to MOSAIC's project manager as soon as possible. He agreed perhaps because I told him I had talked with his teachers and told them I was going to see him. It was clear that there had been a misunderstanding. He felt he was not offered enough support and help from the programme's staff, and conversely, the staff thought he was not "pulling his own weight." When Alirio entered the marketing stage of the programme he had to look for jobs he was interested in and contact the employers himself. His roommate had told Alirio, on the other hand, that he had only made a list of prospective employers; all the arrangements for job interviews were done by the staff. "The first group received far more help," complained Alirio; "frankly, many of us here do not speak English, and that is what makes it more difficult... to go out to talk to people...One always goes with the fear of having to talk, to initiate conversation; you don't know what to say, how to ask questions; it's a lot harder, you know?" (III-564). As if to prove his point, he went on to say that his roommate's group in the programme did not have any drop outs, compared to several drop outs in the current group.

Alirio's disappointment added "pressure" which he explained in this way: "When one comes here, one comes with pressure; then when one can't do anything, no job, no language, 'waiting' turns into a period of desperation. My first days here in Vancouver were spent staying at home, right? I spent five or six months doing absolutely nothing. In other words, while at home, all one does
is get up, sit down, eat, sleep. It is all very monotonous" (III-1010). To be layed-off his job added to his frustration.

After the traumatic experience of being dismissed from employment, the reception that Alirio received from the Job Corps staff was that "things like that happen, and one has to pull oneself together and keep trying." This advice he reluctantly accepted. The staff expected him to initiate marketing once again, although he admitted that he did not have the same motivation to pursue another job-trial placement for fear of "being dumped again." But one day he noticed a gas station under construction, and mentioned this to a teacher at Job Corps who reassured him that she would try to contact them. (Alirio had taken down the phone number posted at the gas station site). Later when she told him for the second time that she had not yet contacted anyone, Alirio wondered whether she had even tried. Most of his fellow trainees already had jobs, and he felt that the programme's twenty weeks would soon be over and that he would be left without work. He saw this gas station as a real possibility, and did not want to risk having to express himself awkwardly in English to the manager, for fear that the manager would perceive him as a "stupid person." (On many occasions he made the point that for an immigrant the key to a job search is to be able to demonstrate that one can do something as opposed to saying it. "With a language handicap, people often assume that the rest of you is also handicapped. They treat you like a child.") After the third inquiry he found that the teacher had not contacted the gas station; he then decided to quit Job Corps. "The support I expected was not there, because when one comes to a new culture and a new language, one needs the support of a person who
already knows the system here, someone who speaks English for you, and who can guide you" (III-1173).

Six weeks went by with little to eat and an emerging sense of destitution made Alirio consider going back to MOSAIC's project manager. Welfare had refused to give him assistance because they claimed he had "quit" the programme which was intended to help him find a job; he had been given the chance to obtain employment and he had turned it down.

After finally accepting the reality that he was not going to find a job on his own, he talked to MOSAIC's project manager. The end result was that the manager found him a job at a restaurant in August 1985. As Alirio said, "one has to accept the fact that in Vancouver it seems that the main, if not the only sources of work, are in hotels and in restaurants." He started working at the restaurant as a dishwasher, and found a second job as a janitor at night. He carried these two jobs simultaneously for a period of six weeks, and then quit as janitor because he found it too exhausting. He was soon promoted to a cook's assistant, his wages increased from $4.75 to $5.50 an hour, and he was assured that with experience his wages would increase. Working at a place where his co-workers trusted him, meant a great deal, and he felt his present job had room for growth. For example, his employers helped him get a driver's license, and since the business was expanding there was training for a possible promotion at a new location. He also felt that he was learning more English, and planned to take courses in accounting to prepare himself for a better job. He said he made good friends with his co-workers, and claimed jokingly, "I know
that my bosses like me, after all I am not that bad, am I?" He wanted to work hard: "when one works, one feels one is contributing something; it is important for one’s self-respect." He had half an hour for lunch break, and occasionally coffee breaks depending on how busy they were. "I am allowed to eat whatever I want except anything with meat in it. If dishes are left at the end of the day, then we can eat them. However, all the food is diet food. That kind of food doesn’t taste like anything, it lacks salt or something... I honestly prefer to go back home and make myself some good tortillas" (V-A).

He now projected optimism about the future and felt certain that he had opportunities to progress. "I see hope for a good future far away. One thing I do know, however, and that is that I do not want to be a cook for the rest of my life" (IV-492). "Unlike other immigrants who arrive in their mid-thirties, we arrived at a good time. We are young, we have a long life ahead of us. I look around and I am convinced that the successful immigrants that I see driving fancy cars have reached that status, because they were our age when they arrived" (IV-794 A). Alirio saw himself enjoying "a good life" in a distant future, which he defined in the following way: "I want to have something of mine: my own house, my own car, and in general to be well settled within the economic system" (IV-485). He also wanted to have enough means to be able to bring his mother to Canada for a visit. He had a Canadian girl friend, and was going to try the "Canadian way of moving in with her" to see how the relationship progressed.
Concluding Remarks

These biographies provide some insight into the lifeworlds of three Central American refugees. All three were between the ages of 20 and 22 when they arrived in Vancouver. Esperanza came with her husband and sister-in-law, and Maria with her sister and two brothers. Alirio came on his own.

Important differences are evident in their biographies. Their economic backgrounds differed, especially between Esperanza and Maria. The family circumstances of Alirio and Esperanza enabled them to acquire an education beyond high school, and they individually took the step of coming to a new land in search of broader opportunities, while at the same time leaving their loved ones behind knowing that they may not see them again. Maria’s parents, however, could not pay for her post-secondary education; having lived in North America, they knew that their children would have better educational opportunities by coming to Canada under its refugee programme than by staying in Central America. They encouraged Maria to avail herself of this programme because it provided financial and other means of support during the first year.

For all three, the initial refugee experience was defined by a fear of leaving a world they knew to face one that was largely unknown. That fear continued as their expectations and preconceptions about life in Canada were challenged. They had overestimated the "welcome" that Canadians would give them, and the accompanying uncertainties were frustrating (this was less true for Esperanza who had her brother-in-law already living in Canada). Their
misconceptions about Canadian life (including the purposes of Immigration, Employment and Welfare services) could be attributed in large part to their poor language fluency.

With this biographical information as a background, the next two chapters examine the theme of "opportunity" that emerged as dominant when Maria, Esperanza and Alirio discussed their expectations of and experiences in Canada. Chapter Three focuses on what they meant by opportunity, and Chapter Four on how they defined it.
CHAPTER THREE

THE WHAT OF OPPORTUNITY

One of the central themes highlighted by the three refugees was the belief that they would have "opportunity" in Canada as compared to their home countries. What did they mean by "opportunity?" This chapter discusses the content of opportunity as seen by them individually and collectively. This content referred to their goals. Analysed here are the aspirations of these particular refugees. In all three cases their sense of opportunity was future-oriented and included a social dimension pertaining to "wanting to become someone," a material dimension concerned with "wanting to have things," and a familial dimension of "wanting to maintain the family unit." To realize these goals, the three refugees felt that they had to attain a mastery of the English language and find secure employment quickly.

Social Dimension: Opportunity "To Become Someone"

Opportunity "to become someone" was a vaguely expressed notion that captured a number of expressed hopes. Each refugee had left a home country where they had a community and cultural identity, to come to a place where they had little identity except as "refugee." Opportunity included therefore, a desire to become independent individuals who once again controlled their own lives. Their self-expectations were to enjoy personal growth through education, the ability to express themselves freely in English, having jobs where they would be
respected and trusted by fellow-workers, and acquiring the necessary cultural knowledge that would allow them to compete with other Canadians as equals, not only for jobs, but in other aspects of Canadian life as well. The three youth wanted to avoid becoming part of the "immigrant ghetto" by succeeding economically and not becoming trapped in menial jobs. "Becoming someone" included changing their status from "refugee" to "permanent resident;" what was not clear, however, was how this notion related to feeling "Canadian" and to maintaining their identity as Central Americans.

While still in Central America, their anticipation in coming to Canada was linked to the social aspiration of "becoming someone." They believed that in Central America, there were few opportunities for upward social mobility. As Esperanza says:

At least here (in Canada) there is Welfare. In our countries there is no assistance. It is so sad to think that those who are born poor will always remain poor; always oppressed or always exploited. (IV-866 E)

Life in their homelands was seen especially by Maria, as a continuous economic struggle with little hope of getting ahead; the fortunate few were those who came from upper class families who had some political influence. These three refugees came to Canada with intentions to achieve; they saw opportunities available to them here, and wanted to maximize the chances for creating a better life than the one they left behind.

This social dimension of opportunity was defined in three ways. First, in order "to become someone" fluency in English was necessary; acquiring language
competence was seen as the basis for improving one’s life chances and ensuring a better future. Second, being employed was important as a source of income as well as for self-esteem. Third, there had to be personal initiative and courage to overcome the numerous obstacles that would be encountered in trying to "become someone." These three aspects of opportunity - learning English, getting and keeping a job, and personal initiative and courage - were seen as necessary for developing a social role different from the status of "refugee;" however, within their discussion of these three aspects there were also some noticeable contradictions.

a. Learning English

English was obviously seen to be important to avail themselves of opportunities to feel "Canadian" and socially significant. The need to learn English was manifested variously. There was a feeling of frustration as language proficiency and social opportunity were seen as inseparable. Without a good grasp of English there would be fewer opportunities for improving their social status. As a result, they wanted to study English while receiving financial support from the government during their first year in Canada. Language was essential for "making something" of themselves. This recognized need accounted for much of their frustration, fear, and lack of self-confidence.

When they first arrived in Canada, they were told that they would be enrolled in English language training courses. However, Alirio and Maria found that they had to wait for several months before beginning the course, a period
which for Alirio meant "wasting time." (He would sit in his room wondering what he would do that day. The options he claimed, were simple: waking up, getting dressed, planning breakfast, sitting down, standing up, reviewing his route to the grocery store, buying food, and then coming home with a challenge no greater than that of planning his next meal). For Esperanza, she became frustrated when she believed she was being denied the chance (given to other refugees) for improving English fluency.

I had some English because I was a bilingual secretary in Guatemala...I wanted to study and practice English, but Immigration didn't want me to...I wanted to improve my level of English, but they told me in Immigration, "you know enough English; you don't need any more." (I-710)

This perceived denial of an opportunity to improve English meant that she would have to accept menial jobs, at least initially. She saw herself thereby "stepping back" rather than moving forward. As with the others, she wanted to avoid getting trapped in jobs where there was little opportunity to talk in English.

Despite such anxieties, all three were willing to accept any employment available; however, they also realised that to take on "silent" jobs without learning English may confine them indefinitely in what one refugee described as the "mop circle." Initially their job expectations were high, but once in Vancouver, and with some reluctance, they accepted janitorial or dishwasher work, on the assumption that at least this would provide an opportunity to practice English.

There was also a sense of fear because of language difficulties. For
example, Alirio felt threatened as soon as he arrived in Vancouver because of his lack of English. Fifteen days of being in a hotel for new refugees had elapsed and he was very concerned he would be asked to leave before he could find alternate accommodation. He was beginning to feel afraid of his surroundings and declined social invitations from other Salvadorans for fear of getting lost. He could not accept his inability to ask directions in a city totally unknown to him. His words speak for themselves:

Yes, those other Salvadoran girls invited me to visit them, but without knowing the bus system, the language, the city...I just stayed in the hotel. I didn’t want to take chances and not be able to return to the hotel. (III-373)

Without language it’s impossible. I only stepped out as far as I could remember walking: two blocks to the right, one to the left...but further than that I did not dare. (III-390)

The need to learn English was also directly related to these refugees’ self-esteem. Their desire to do well was stifled by their inability to express themselves in a strange world, and as a result, they experienced fear. They had already experienced fear before coming here, yet this new fear that they felt during their initial "silent survival" in Canada was especially pernicious because it undermined confidence in themselves. They had so many questions they wanted to ask, suggestions they would liked to have made, chances they wanted to be given. But they could not express these in English, much like a child who cannot yet speak and is therefore even more dependent. Even after being here for over two years, the fear of expressing themselves inadequately continued to be a part of Maria’s and Esperanza’s daily anxieties.
I'm still afraid to ask questions. My English has to get better and it is already getting better. (IV-1410 M)

I think everything boils down to the insecurity of not being able to express oneself. That is why one is so afraid. (IV-173 E)

This fear caused by lack of English proficiency occurred not only when they had to make themselves understood, but also when they tried to understand what others were telling them.

b. Having a job

Part of the opportunity to become somebody was tied also to having a job. Through employment they saw themselves as contributing to society, having a sense of purpose, getting to know other Canadians and their "ways," and most importantly, learning English as well. All these factors contributed to diminishing some of their initial fears and provided encouragement that they would be granted resident status. ("One has that feeling of satisfaction, of contributing to society by working" IV-576 E).

The realization that language acquisition would be a slow process was the main reason why they so desperately wanted to have "a job;" through employment they would improve the necessary linguistic and social skills. However, there was a feeling that they had to prove themselves on the job because of their language difficulties. In Esperanza's words:

I believe that since we are at a disadvantage, one gives more to one's job. One cares. (IV-1355 E)
The fear of doing something wrong on the job was a situation that those who lived in a "silent world" could understand. Many times they had job-related questions but did not know how to ask their employers. Since they needed to prove their abilities, they took the chance of being misunderstood and hoped that the results would be positive. They relied largely on the tone of what was being said to them, and less on the content. Throughout this period of trial and error, they knew they were being scrutinized by their managers and other employees. Fellow workers did not seem to have the time necessary to help the immigrants in the type of jobs they had to accept initially, and they became afraid when they detected impatience. When they were treated with understanding and empathy they felt much more confident in what they did. At one point Esperanza said:

I feel like bursting. I have to contain everything inside. I wish I could say everything I want to say so that she (referring to the manager) can become more reasonable. (IV-216 E)

The two women of this study were clearly more reluctant to ask questions.

I don't dare ask for a raise. Fear gets a hold of me. I feel my manager might disagree and tell me that I should leave. (IV-384 M)

They were fearful of annoying their employers and perhaps losing their jobs, so they took more abuse than the male interviewed.

I ask questions when I know the manager is in a good mood. If she's not, she always says to me, "think, think," and her voice goes up. I get scared. (IV-1405 E)
It is possible that the gender difference in the responses was partly accounted for by the way they were brought up in their cultures, namely, that women had more domestic responsibilities and complied with men’s wishes. The result is that Central American men may be more demanding and aggressive than the women.

Another reason for wanting a job was because it provided an entry-point into, and helped them deal with their fears about Canadian life. Alirio expressed it in this way:

With the first job one has a first experience in a world of strangeness. I know the job I have now is not great, but I am gaining experience, getting used to the system, working with the same people. Relating to the same people takes away the great fear one lives with here. Yes, ...the fear is natural, you’re always afraid. (IV-165 A)

With time they begin to feel that they were trusted by fellow-workers, and this respect encouraged them to perform better. Experiencing mutual trust meant some loss of the fear they so often experienced during their initial days in Canada:

I’m not afraid to ask questions at work. I want my employers to like what I do. (IV-1402 A)

I am treated with respect by fellow employees and by my employer. That has only come with time, though; they trust me now. (IV-356 A)

When one’s manager does notice one’s efforts, one becomes more enthusiastic. One gains more confidence and therefore one dares to do more things. (IV-940 M)

Furthermore, with experienced trust they felt that they were being given equal
opportunities with fellow workers:

I feel that in my job they give me equal opportunity with everyone else. They ask me to do things, but the rest is left up to me. This, I consider to be given opportunity. (IV-340 A, 344 E)

Their determination to retain a job was important to demonstrate to themselves and to MOSAIC that they could work successfully, and also to avoid the hardships they encountered when looking for a job. Maria's desire to be employed was illustrated by the first job-placement she had through the Job Corps. She worked in a bakery where two regular customers consistently gave her "a bad time." One would ask Maria the ingredients of many cakes only to buy something very small, and the other customer who came in to have tea always complained about the price of some items. These two customers were known to the staff and management who seemed to agree that there was only one way of dealing with them: to appear sympathetic, yet not to let them "get to you." "Just be more aggressive," Maria's manager would say to her. Maria was conscientious about her work, yet some customers seemed to show no consideration. She even felt that maybe they knew she could not speak English well, so they intentionally asked her questions to embarrass her. Maria wished she did not have to work there, and shared this feeling with her mother:

It was with my sister but more so with my mother with whom I shared all my frustrations. She would tell me to leave (the job). (II-1444)

However, to leave her employment would mean she would have to start looking for another job. Her memories of spending long hours walking to prospective places of employment and having to go through interviews discouraged her from
resigning. At least she had a job. She was grateful she was doing something challenging, and she knew that if she stayed there longer she may be promoted to a baker and be able to learn the art of cake baking and decorating. Nevertheless, Maria admitted that she was relieved when she was dismissed from that job. Shortly afterwards, she got a job at a furniture business.

Another reason for the importance of a job was that they believed that if they could stay in a job for a period of time, however difficult the experience might be, that this would not only reflect well on their employment record, but help to speed up the acquisition of their landed immigrant status. However, they did not always find it easy to accept any job; all three felt that they were denied the opportunity to work in areas where they had prior experience. It is fair to say that they came to Canada on the assumption that they would work at whatever jobs were available. When they arrived, it appeared that Immigration officials asked them about previous work experience. Because they answered in highly truncated English, the nature of their work experience tended to go unacknowledged. The jobs suggested by Immigration were menial work that did not relate to previous experience. The refugees felt that had their English been better they could have conveyed to the Immigration officials their employment experiences and preferences. All they could do was to "keep silent" (as one of them said, "nod - because one doesn't understand") and take what was given.
c. Personal initiative

Opportunity could only be realized through individual effort. The lack of an established social network meant that the three youth had to take initiative to become someone; personal determination was seen as indispensable.

They had chosen to leave their own homelands for two reasons: one, to realize themselves more fully in a country where they believed there were greater opportunities, especially economic opportunities, and second, to escape from situations of personal insecurity.

I do feel better here than in my country. In Guatemala it was o.k. I belonged to the middle class. But here we have personal security and the opportunity to advance. (IV-535 E)

Insecurity at home is the main reason why I left Guatemala. (IV-704 E)

However, having opportunities was not a guarantee of a better life. Once their hope of coming to Canada had materialized, they were prepared to make sacrifices, knowing well that their life would not be easy initially. They all agreed that to be passive in an unsatisfactory situation was, in the long run, demeaning. That is why they viewed their initial difficulties in Canada as temporary; this situation required personal strides in preparation for a better future. Esperanza expressed this clearly when she said:

Well, I think that if one charges one's batteries, one can accomplish personal goals. But it costs one, if one wants something; well, one has to make the effort. Here there's opportunity to advance, but it is up to you to achieve. (IV-510 E)
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Success could be attained through initiative in three ways: by acquiring additional education, by persevering in their jobs, and by overcoming frustrations. The decision to go to night school was an entirely individual one. However, for Esperanza acquiring an education was important enough to make "sacrifices:"

One feels one has to make more of a sacrifice, because to work and study at the same time is not easy. (IV-752 E)

She attended courses at night while she was not working and looked after her son during the day. At night her husband would look after Ricardo. This arrangement avoided babysitting costs. She admitted that it was less trouble to stay at home, but at the same time she saw education as the way to improve her chances of getting a better job. Night school had to be financed, and that was why keeping an unsatisfactory job (however temporarily) did require personal determination. (Maria was also attending night school at the time of her interview).

Nevertheless, despite taking initiatives to face difficulties, they thought that there should be a logical sequence to their life experiences here: first, while on government assistance for one year, they should be allowed to take English classes regardless of their proficiency level; second, after a year they should be granted landed immigrant status in order to enjoy equal rights with Canadians. They were prepared to work at "whatever" job, only because they saw this first year as "useful" for gaining knowledge of English and of Canadian culture. The other alternative they had was to go on Welfare, but as Esperanza said, that would be a "life of vice:"
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I couldn’t see living off Welfare like other Canadians or other immigrants; that is a life of vice. They are not getting experience, and they are losing courage. (IV-560 E)

Esperanza’s faith that her future expectations would some day be fulfilled helped her to persevere during her first significant job. When she was working in a jewellery wholesale company as an office assistant, she often stayed extra hours so that she could learn more about precious gems. Temporary employees, who would not tolerate Esperanza’s employer’s inconsiderate demands, pointed out to her that it was foolish to work extra hours without pay. However, Esperanza saw the opportunity to learn something she did not know anything about; therefore she stayed on.

Despite all their personal initiative, the three youth had to deal with four sources of frustration: the inability to express themselves in English, a fear of failure, perceived exploitation, and the uncertainty of their Immigration status. Their desire to prove themselves as capable and intelligent clashed with their not having the language to do so. They had set high standards and expectations for themselves and consequently encountered many language frustrations. Delays in beginning their English courses, or as in Esperanza’s case being denied the right to take these courses, were cause for great disappointment.

The frustrations experienced by the three refugees were exacerbated by the fear of failure. Where this fear became most evident was when they were at work. In a previous section it was noted how initially Alirio, Maria and Esperanza "lived" through their jobs very cautiously. To them working was a means of learning English as well as learning about their new way of life,
gaining self-confidence and earning the confidence of other workers. The discussion also alluded to gender differences in handling work-related stress; the women of this study were more cautious and the man more assertive. However, in all three cases, they took special care not to offend their employers because of the fear of losing their jobs.

Another important aspect of the frustrations experienced by the three refugees was the sense of exploitation that they felt. They were very conscious of the fact that when their efforts were not adequately remunerated, they were being exploited by the employer. The notion that immigrants worked hard often meant that they worked for less than the going rate. Perhaps it was in the employer's interest that the refugee did not think that he/she was performing well in the job. To acknowledge good service might have encouraged demands for more pay or a promotion. Such feelings were expressed by Esperanza and Maria. Maria's words were:

Because of one's language barrier one is ordered around. One is held at a lower level and exploited. Some employers don't want to see you progress. (IV-430 M)

Alirio only experienced this form of "exploitation" during his first job-trial placement: he was receiving praise from his manager and yet was fired just before he was entitled to be payed as a regular employee (outside the Job Corps programme). This "exploitation" they saw as the price they had to pay for their gradual progress towards integration. The one consolation they saw in the whole process was that they were getting "Canadian Experience," thereby escaping the Catch-22 for most new immigrants, that of being denied employment for lack of
Equally problematic was the uncertainty of their Immigration status; however, this was one area of frustration in which personal initiative had little effect. They arrived here with a minister’s permit which presumably would last for a year, after which they were to be given landed immigrant status. At least this was what they were told by the Canadian Consulate before they came to Vancouver. The landed immigrant status, they felt, would have a marked effect on the way they were treated by employers and government officials. They claimed that under a ministerial permit they did not have equal rights as fellow Canadians, and therefore were easily exploited by employers. Esperanza certainly felt this way.

By not having resident status one cannot have the same opportunity to get a good job. Work is denied to a great many because they are not residents. Until they get their permanent residency, they cannot aspire to much. (IV-1204 E)

In all three cases evidence suggested that confidence was gained when they not only acquired better English, but also when they foresaw themselves as soon becoming landed immigrants. Having landed immigrant status was thus seen as a prerequisite to gaining rights as Canadian citizens and therefore enjoying equal status under Canadian law. Unlike Canadian citizens, refugees who lost their jobs were not immediately entitled to government assistance. Alirio’s words helped illustrate this point:

For immigrants it is different. For Canadians, they leave their job when they want to and they don’t care. (IV-392 A)
And later he added that:

Canadians don't care to quit a job, as I see it. For us it is a matter of concern, if we quit, we cannot receive help from Welfare. And if we haven't been advised to complete the unemployment application form, we can't receive assistance from them either. (IV-403 A)

Landed immigrant status would also improve their chances of finding satisfactory employment. Employers generally did not want the "problem" of hiring someone without proper documents.

**Familial Dimension: Maintaining the Family Unit**

The content of opportunity also had a familial dimension. The interviewees wanted the opportunity to maintain their extended family unit which had been broken when they left their countries of origin. This desire was related in two ways to their experience of being refugees.

First, the experience of being a refugee entailed leaving their family under uncertain conditions. As refugees, they left knowing they could not return. This knowledge was painful because generally the family is a closely knit unit in Central and South American countries. Sons and daughters normally do not leave their homes until they are adults, and even then contacts between family members continue to be frequent. It is not uncommon for married children to seek advice from their parents and vice versa. This mutual consultation is to them a way of caring for each other. Alirio's family, for example, did not want him to leave El Salvador; nevertheless, they supported him financially and
otherwise because they respected his wish to leave. Although all three interviewees expressed sadness in leaving their families, Alirio seemed resigned to the uncertainty of not seeing his loved ones again. When asked if he would like to bring some of his relatives to Canada, his response was that he didn’t think they would come anyway. His mother was content staying with his married sisters and enjoying her grandchildren. From their discussion it was apparent that the two women of this study found it difficult to leave their families. Maria felt this way:

There was a great risk in leaving the security of home. Even more so for me to leave my mother; with Latins, daughters are more attached to their mothers than sons are. (II-384)

The separation from my mother was one of the things that I felt more deeply. (II-394)

Esperanza equally wanted to be reunited with her mother, and lamented the fact that whereas most immigrants can visit their relatives in their countries of origin, a refugee like herself can see loved ones only if they bring them to Canada.

Alirio, who apparently seemed less concerned about not having his relatives here, was nevertheless depressed during the early months when he had not heard from them. For all three it was of paramount importance that they had regular contact with their close relatives. Coming from societies with a strong sense of community, they soon realized that Canadian society was individualistic. Maria’s words were very explicit:

Canadians are not very friendly. Even if a husband is choking his
wife to death and neighbours hear screams, people here wouldn't interfere. (II-316)

This unfriendliness was seen by Alirio as a way of being only concerned about themselves:

> From a young age, children here are embedded in "practicality." Friendships are superficial and people don't seem to want to commit themselves. (III-754)

It was understandable that these three refugees looked to other groups for support, especially Central Americans and sometimes Native Indians (III-1070). The added advantage of living in a multi-ethnic milieu, such as East Vancouver, was that they appreciated the diversity of Canadian society. Maria illustrated this point:

> We had been told in El Salvador that Canadians only care about themselves, but since we've been here, there aren't only Canadians; there's people from other places; there is not only one culture that we are getting to know, there are many. (II-320)

Other ethnic groups offered an alternative if "Canadians" seemed difficult to get to know. Yet this leaning for support on other immigrant groups was seen as a temporary measure; they realized the advantages of relating to English-speaking people in order to improve their command of the English language.

One way to maintain a link with the family left behind was by making phone calls. Maria had come with her sister and brothers. However, many hours were spent phoning her parents and asking them to come to Canada:

> We started persuading my parents to come once the weather got warmer. We became convinced that they wouldn't get sick because
Maria admitted that there was some reluctance on her parent's part: "older people find it more difficult to leave their friends." Also, they saw their opportunities limited because of the disadvantage of age and the difficulty of learning a new language. In addition, there would be the adjustment to the climate and the food. However, because of the insistence of their children, Maria's parents also came as refugees.

Second, the experience of being a refugee entailed coming to a "strange" situation without the support of a larger family network. The hope of one day being reunited with their loved ones was a somewhat comforting substitute. Perhaps, that was why Esperanza consistently maintained that one of her main goals was to sponsor her mother:

...what I want to be now is the sponsor of my mom because we never lived with my father and she is lonely. I'm the only daughter. (I-192)

Her husband's mother was allowed to come as a refugee, but her mother was refused. Immigration officials said that she would have to sponsor her mother. The only way that Esperanza felt she could do this was by having a job that paid well and which had some security of tenure.

In summary, part of the refugees' opportunity of living in Canada was defined in familial terms. They had a desire which they wanted to realize - to maintain the family unit - as part of attaining a better life. This was why, in
all three cases, MOSAIC's Job Corps programme was thought to be important for realizing opportunity; for example, Esperanza was aware that the programme provided her with the necessary skills to obtain employment, and therefore enhanced the possibility of sponsoring her parents in the future:

I think in this programme I will start to work in a few days, or maybe in a month; I am sure I will get a job. And I'm sure I can be the sponsor of my mother. (I-310)

All three young refugees had to overcome many frustrations without the support of former family networks. The desire to maintain the family unit motivated Maria and Esperanza. Sponsoring parents, however, would necessitate that these refugees realize another dimension of opportunity. They would need to be secure materially.

Material Dimension: Opportunity "To Have Things"

A third dimension of what constituted opportunity pertained to the three refugees being able to acquire material possessions and feel economically independent. Alirio put it thus:

To have something which belongs to you is like feeling established, in other words, feeling settled within an economic system. (IV-487 A)

The notion of being "established" meant in large part not being economically dependent on others.

They defined opportunity in terms of being able "to have things." This
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material dimension was to be realized by having a "good job" that would, on the one hand, allow them to acquire possessions that they saw as indicative of "success," and on the other to enjoy a "career" where they would be able to advance. The aspiration for a "good job" translated to having a "career" (as opposed to sporadic employment) in one line of work where there were possibilities of "getting ahead." Occupational stability and advancement would provide the financial resources to acquire their own car and home.

For all three having a job was not only a means of acquiring possessions, but, more importantly, a way of avoiding the economic hardship that they experienced during their first months in Canada. They remembered, vividly, having to go to foodbanks because the assistance they received from the government was inadequate, as Maria recalled:

We were four people living on the reduced allowance for three people. We became desperate. There were weeks when we didn’t have anything to eat. We only ate what we could get at the foodbanks. (II-973)

Additionally, for Maria and Esperanza it was very important to secure enough income to assist their relatives.

In all cases they referred to selective immigrant groups when discussing material opportunity. For example, Esperanza claimed that:

I know a Frenchman who is an immigrant. He learned English by consciously mixing with English-speaking Canadians. Now he has a beautiful house and a good life. (IV-895 E)

In particular, their anticipation for a better life was influenced by their
perceptions of the success of young Chinese-Canadians. They saw them driving "flashy" cars, and this made them feel that they too could aspire to such a lifestyle. As Maria said, this group provided proof of the attainability of possessions she hoped to have one day:

For example, look at the Chinese driving such fancy cars, and they own their homes. (IV-785 M)

However, they believed that the young Chinese-Canadians enjoyed their lifestyle because their parents, who were immigrants, had struggled and were determined to overcome hardships.

All three were confident that eventually their material goals were attainable. In the meanwhile, however, have resigned themselves to anticipated sacrifices:

We always look to the future; perhaps that is why we put up with so much. We know there will be better times ahead... I think it's because one has so much faith in the future, that one doesn't quit work just like that. One has to put up with everything. (IV-828 M)

The sacrifices they had to make while trying to avail themselves of the material aspect of opportunity resulted in two distinct forms of frustration: one form of sacrifice they thought they made was that of accepting minimal and unfair pay from their employers. Alirio, for example, felt reluctant to claim his perceived rights for fear of losing his job. This is how he expressed his feelings:

If one should be paid $9.00 an hour and one only makes $3.75 an hour, I see that as a form of exploitation. (III-980)
Maria and Esperanza were even more afraid of their employers than was Alirio. They complied with their managers’ demands whether they agreed or not, in order, as Esperanza says, to gain economic benefit:

I have really made the effort (at the job). I admire myself at how much I’ve put up with. I feel inside me that maybe she will give me a raise. (IV-956 E)

Yet they never discussed with their managers the topic of a raise in salary. Esperanza and Maria felt that if they even suggested a raise their managers would object and perhaps consider dismissing them. They observed that even though some Canadian-born workers knew employment was scarce, they would not accept “unreasonable” wages, which was what new immigrants generally received. All three felt that they experienced exploitation at the work place because they could not express themselves adequately in English and did not have the confidence to object. Yet they were not discouraged if, by accepting low wages, they felt that at least the job provided language and work experience and a potential for improving their skills. They were confident that time was in their favour, and that despite the difficulties, they would ultimately realize material opportunity.

Another form of frustration was directly related to their status as refugees. Alirio and Esperanza both feared that, as a result of not having landed immigrant status, they were not entitled to the same Welfare and Unemployment Insurance Commission (U.I.C.) benefits that Canadian residents enjoyed. This point was made by Maria when she related her brother’s experience:

My brother didn’t get U.I.C. benefits. The money he had put
towards it was his. Just because he couldn’t explain himself well at Manpower, or understand what they were telling him, they were taking advantage of him. (IV-450 M)

Another implication of being refugees was the ambiguity of their medical coverage. Both Alirio and Esperanza were on ministerial permits. However, although Alirio was accepted by the Medical Services Plan, Esperanza was refused. Esperanza found the ambiguity of this situation frustrating. Even more so, she could not understand why her Canadian-born son was not covered by the Medical Services Plan. On several occasions he had to be taken to the doctor at her own expense. Circumstances such as these made it impossible for her to save money, given her low wages. Therefore, a hindrance to these young refugees’ self-confidence concerning material success was the delay they experienced in obtaining their landed immigrant status. Without proper status they thought they were denied services under the Medical Services Plan, as well as U.I.C. and Welfare benefits, as was shown in the case of Esperanza. It was no wonder that Maria experienced a great sense of relief when she obtained permanent resident status.

Conclusion

It should not be surprising that their discussion of opportunity revealed some contradictions. Some examples are illustrative. On the one hand, they recognized that the available employment consisted of mainly entry-level jobs with low pay. However prepared these refugees said they were to take whatever jobs were available, the reality of these jobs came as a shock to them. They felt
discriminated against when given entry-level jobs. For example, Alirio claimed in the first interview that he was prepared to work at anything:

My roommate told me the programme (at Job Corps) would find me a job. I really didn't care what job. From the time I made the decision to come to Canada...I knew I had to work at whatever...and frankly I think most immigrants think that way. (III-920)

This sentiment was in tension with his expectations for job opportunities:

I see a lot of discrimination at the Manpower office. Officials there prevent you from trying to demonstrate by way of drawings or actions, that one has (occupational) experience in a certain area. They don't understand that if one cannot express oneself in English, that doesn't mean that one doesn't have skills. (IV-70 A)

He felt discriminated against by both Immigration and Manpower personnel when he was not given the opportunity to work in the field in which he had previous experience.

Another example pertains to English competency. These refugees agreed that fluency in English was necessary to obtain good employment. They strongly endorsed an increase in the provision of English instruction for refugees. And yet sometimes, they did not see that there might have been a connection between their difficulties with English and their difficulties in finding satisfactory employment.

There was also an element of contradiction when the three refugees referred to "Canadians" as only caring about themselves. They did not realize that their own search for the opportunity to become someone was also individualistic.
If one wants something, well one has to make the effort. Here there's opportunity to advance, but it is up to you to achieve. (IV-510 E)

Further, they claimed that the fastest way to be accepted as "Canadians" was to develop social contacts with other "Canadians;" and yet outside of the work place, they confined their circle of friends to other Hispanics. When asked whether she had tried to meet "Canadians," Esperanza stated:

I have met Canadians, but because they are good Latins. (I-653)

Part of the frustration of being a refugee lay in the realization that one's prior experience and biography seemed to count for little in realizing the opportunities that one desired in Canada. They realized that in many ways they were "starting anew," and yet this was difficult to accept in the reality of their day-to-day experience when trying to find employment, to learn a new language, and to establish a support network. Nevertheless, they maintained the strong hope that they would one day realize their desired opportunity in its social, familial, and material dimensions. How they defined this opportunity is the topic of the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE "HOW" OF DEFINING OPPORTUNITY

This chapter examines the "how" of opportunity by providing the frame of reference used by the three young refugees when defining opportunity (e.g., goals). The "how" refers to the reasons they give for their goals. The data suggested that opportunity was defined in terms of five major themes: first, in terms of the refugees' past experiences; second, their initial difficulties since coming to Canada; third, in terms of support systems available to them in Canada; fourth, in terms of their perception of the lives of other immigrants; and finally in terms of the age factor. These five aspects will be discussed separately.

These five themes can be thought of as the context within which their aspirations (the "what" of opportunity) was defined and interpreted. The "what" of opportunity was future oriented whereas the reasons for their goals were past and present oriented. The content of opportunity ("what") could not be expressed apart from their way of defining opportunity ("how"). "How" they talked about opportunity was based on relevant examples from their everyday experiences. They defined opportunity in the context of their past; in their homelands they had little hope for a prosperous future. Opportunities were further understood in the light of the difficulties experienced when they first arrived in Canada, as well as through their support networks, the success of "other immigrants" in attaining opportunities, and the perceived advantage of their young age which
provided a future for achieving their personal goals. These five themes of the "how" provided the frame of reference for the "what." As such, the discussions of the "what" in Chapter Three and the "how" of opportunity in this present chapter do sometimes overlap.

**Past Experiences**

One of the ways in which these three refugees made sense of their future aspirations (the "what" of opportunity) was in terms of their past experiences in Central America. They defined, interpreted, and evaluated opportunity in terms of the past and the lack of opportunities it afforded them (see Chapter Two).

According to Alirio, Esperanza and Maria, there was a continuous struggle in Central America to improve one's life or even to maintain one's present standard of living. It was the sense of hopelessness which they brought from their homelands which gave them hope for some future life in Canada. Even if they could not succeed during their first year in Canada, they felt that the government would not abandon them. Esperanza's words expressed a certain relief:

> At least here (in Canada), there is Welfare. In our countries there is no assistance. It is so sad to think that those who are born poor will always remain poor. (IV-866 E)

Things could only get better, they felt. They lived in hope.
Initial difficulties

Another way in which the three refugees conceptualized their future goals (the "what" of opportunity) was in terms of the initial difficulties they experienced since their arrival in Canada. On the basis of these ongoing experiences they continually redefined the future. Two factors already discussed contributed to the difficulties experienced in adjusting to Canadian life; the language barrier was largely responsible for their having to operate in a "silent world," and their initial negative employment experiences stymied their optimism. (For a discussion, see Appendix F).

Their language handicap meant that only entry-level jobs were realistically available to them. This was a hard reality to come to terms with. Consequently, the "what" of opportunity was redefined by the three refugees in terms of having to cope with a language that was alien to them; they realized that their language handicap severely curtailed their future prospects. The process of solving the problems that these strangers encountered seemed unending. For them it was like being "internally tied up," because they had such a strong desire to express themselves, and yet they could not. For example, it was easier for them to understand what an Immigration or Employment official was trying to tell them than it was to communicate their own concerns. Alirio's words expressed this anxiety:

It is very difficult to speak in English. To go out to talk to people (one) has that terrible feeling of having to talk, of engaging in a conversation where one doesn't know what to say next; one doesn't know how to ask. (III-560) qsize, eqt>
Even the seemingly simple task of finding a place to live proved to be a formidable endeavour. The following example illustrated this point. Immigration had given Maria, Esperanza and Alirio each a form which a prospective landlord had to fill out. The form required information regarding the deposit that should be paid by the tenant, the date the tenant could move in, the monthly rent, and information regarding utilities. There was a reluctance of many landlords to rent to "immigrants:"

When landlords realized that we didn’t speak English, they did ask themselves how we would manage to pay rent...The first thing they ask is, "What do you live off of, Welfare or...?" We say Immigration and they say, "Who is Immigration?" (II-660)

They tried to convey to landlords that they would have the money to pay the rent. Maria said that one landlord wanted reassurance that Immigration was not the same as Welfare:

Landlord: "You don’t speak much English, and how are you going to pay the rent?"
Maria: "Immigration gives money."
Landlord: "And who is Immigration, and where do you come from?"
(Maria hands the landlord the form from Immigration).
Landlord: "Oh, no, I don’t want to get involved, I don’t have an obligation to do it."
Maria: "Please, only sign here, please?"
Landlord: "You say that you will give me a cheque, but what about next month? Are you on Welfare? Who is going to guarantee that you pay me next month?"
Maria: "Immigration."
Landlord: "You are youngsters who like to drink, smoke, make parties in the apartment. Do you drink?"

Maria: "No, we don’t."

Landlord: "Do you smoke?"

Maria: "No, we don’t."

Landlord: "You always say that in the beginning, and then you have big parties, drinking, smoking and I don’t know what."

Maria: "We can leave a deposit."

Landlord: "Come back again tomorrow."

Next day Maria went back.

Landlord: "Imagine, the place is rented already."

Maria thinks, "He insults me." (II-660 M)

Another difficulty concerned the perceived disinterest of Canadian employers and government officials about the refugees’ employment history prior to coming to Canada. No one it seemed, including Immigration workers, was interested in their life histories. Their past was non-existent, and the refugees found it difficult to accept that their past work related skills now did not count for much. Esperanza referred to this feeling in this way:

Employers don’t care what experience one might have had outside Canada. If one has "Canadian experience" they don’t care about your past. (IV-120 E)

Alirio also supported this point:

It is so difficult to look for a job by yourself. One is always asked for the Canadian experience: That is a big obstacle for the immigrant. (III-930)
Support Networks

The support networks of the three refugees were an important part of the context that shaped their future aspirations. In particular, MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps programme provided guidance in seeking employment and also support in adapting to a new culture.

Esperanza and Maria attended church to meet other people who had overcome the kinds of difficulties they faced, as well as to make Canadian friends. In Maria's words: "At church we met a lot of other Salvadorans who gave us good information about things" (II-995). Alirio, on the other hand, tried other ways:

I've tried to go to Canadian parties, but there I was really an outsider...It is because of the language that I felt scared to strike a conversation. It seems that here parties are not for dancing, to have fun. People here just sit and talk and form their own small groups. (III-720)

The support network was extended by meeting other refugees at the Employment and Immigration Canada centre and at K.E.C.'s English courses, and by moving to neighbourhoods of similar ethnic and language background. Through such networks they heard about the foodbanks (a foreign concept for them), the ways in which other refugees managed to bring their families into Canada, the availability of jobs, and the existence of programmes such as MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps.

Discovering MOSAIC's Job Corps programme was a special moment for
the three refugees because it promised the opportunity to learn English and the skills of job-search, and ultimately to get a job. The workers at MOSAIC showed their concern for the refugees by arranging for interviews with a Job Corps administrator and by attending the interviews as interpreters. Maria, Esperanza and Alirio were nervous, because they thought that an administrator held unfavourable preconceptions about Central Americans; some MOSAIC workers had indicated that this administrator thought Central Americans were lazy, and were generally careless about personal hygiene. In Maria's words:

said to us that the one who was going to interview us had told her to make sure that the candidates for MOSAIC's Job Corps programme referred by her, would be bathed, had their teeth brushed, and met other hygiene essentials. (II-1132)

Because they knew that MOSAIC's programme was a real opportunity for them, the "pressure" they felt during the interview was considerable. Acceptance into MOSAIC's programme gave them hope that their life situation would improve:

The programme has made me more confident. Now I understand more about the resources I can use. I feel a lot more confident and I know I can get a job. (I-725)

Job Corps helped me a lot. It taught me how to acquire work experience, how to express myself to the employer, and how to look for work. When one comes here, one doesn't know the rules or anything. (IV-133 M)

The advantages of MOSAIC's Job Corps programme were obvious especially to Esperanza and Maria. They were made aware of remembering to shake hands with a prospective employer, how to dress for an interview and to be aware of what the employer might be thinking while the job-searcher was
introducing him/herself. Also, the value of the programme became evident to Maria when she acquired her first job.

Self-marketing was good because I felt that I didn't have to be under MOSAIC's wings so long. It was a gradual break-away and it was good. (II-1575)

The role playing exercises were very good, because I began to lose fear. I started to familiarize myself with the types of questions employers ask. (II-1290)

The video-taped sessions where we introduced ourselves to the employer were excellent. All the vocabulary we learned and the opportunities we had to practice were really helpful. We were made aware during the programme of what employers think. (II-1322)

Although the two female refugees had similar feelings regarding the good lessons they had at Job Corps, Alirio was not entirely in agreement:

With the "cold-run" interviews it isn't the same. One already knows the staff, but out there it's a different thing. People speak faster, they use a more difficult vocabulary to understand. They (potential employers) are not going to speak so that one can understand. (III-1200)

Job Corps might've been a help to some, but for me frankly it wasn't. I wasn't taught how to talk in an interview; I learned that at K.E.C. (III-1210)

All three refugees agreed that MOSAIC's "cover letter," which they presented to prospective employers, was a good introduction that enabled employers to consider the benefits of hiring immigrants participating in this programme:

That cover letter gave lots of support. It said that I would work eighty hours for free. Then they (employers) get interested in the
I really expected MOSAIC's programme to give me a lot more moral support. The only thing they really do is give you a cover letter, a resume. Then they make you look for employment... They don't really help. (III-1163)

They also claimed that sometimes some staff members were condescending and insensitive. The following were some examples they gave:

___ finished explaining something. Then (...) asked, "Are there any questions?" And since nobody said anything (...) said, "Well, stupid guys, don’t you have anything to say?" (I-810)

I didn't like it when (...) asked personal questions. I felt obliged to answer, so I had to lie... it's humiliating in front of the whole class. (II-1215)

I didn't like to be made the class clown. Sometimes (...) was very insensitive in the things (...) said. (II-1250)

Classmates referred to that staff member as impolite. (...) belittles one all the time and orders one around... It's true that (...) is addressing an immigrant, but really! (I-870)

There comes a time when one has to speak up. Once (...) said, "Is that all you've done today?" (referring to the number of contacted employers). So I said, "Don't you see that one has to wait for people, employers are not right there waiting for me..." When I told (...), (...) changed her attitude towards me. (I-948)

(...) has to realize that there is a bit of everything here. Different religions, customs, social classes, and (...) should empathize with all these differences. (...) shouldn't appear shocked at some comments coming from students; (...) doesn't know about life in some countries. (I-1078)

Staff members sometimes address those with better English; I can understand why. In my case, I have avoided the Chinese. I find it so difficult to try to understand them; I feel badly, but it's just
too hard. Yet they are so nice and so fine. (I-1171)

On the other hand, they were very positive about some staff members:

I found that (..) didn't seem to be at you all the time. With (...) one seemed to have more freedom. (...) is a lot finer. (I-982)

Yes, (...) was a lot more understanding; (...) tried to help the student who couldn't speak English. (III-800)

"Put-down" experiences were seen by the three refugees as reminiscent of the way Indians were treated in Central America. Esperanza admitted that it was only after she left her country that she began to understand how Indians were discriminated against there. She had discriminated against the Indians in the same way that she was discriminated against here:

Once being here, one realizes how racist one was at home. For example, we always referred to the "ignorant" Indians back home mainly because our families make those references. One learns (such attitudes). After all, one is Indian too. I only have thought about how exploited Indians are since being here and when I find myself in oppressive situations. Now I know what it feels like. (IV-870 E)

She pointed out that until a person was placed in a situation where he or she is constantly underestimated, he/she never appreciates the pain of being at the receiving end of prejudice and discrimination.

Other Immigrants

Other immigrants provided a fourth way used by the refugees to understand opportunity. After a few weeks of being here, they had made a
distinction between those immigrants they wanted to emulate and those they did not. They compared themselves to "successful" immigrants, thereby reassuring themselves that their hopes for a good future were possible. There was a strong wish to succeed. They also knew of other refugees who had given up hope of succeeding on their own, and who had decided to depend on the government's social services. Those refugees were examples of what they did not want to become; a life of dependence was defined as an unhappy life.

a. Positive models

Immigrants who had done well in Canada were an incentive:

Everyone who has what we want, and who were also immigrants, have reached their goals because they had determination. Why can't we do it too? (IV-770 A)

One sees what other immigrants have achieved. (IV-784 E)

I look at my manager, she was thirty when she came and now she has her own business, she has money, a home. But she had to struggle especially, she told me, with the language. (IV-836 E)

All three looked primarily to Chinese-Canadians as their model for achieving what they wanted out of life. Maria put it this way:

Look at the Chinese driving such fancy cars, and they own their homes. (IV-785 M)

They also wanted to own their own homes and cars, to have satisfying employment, and above all, to have a better life than the one they left
behind. Seeing other immigrants who have done well inspired them to pursue their objectives. Esperanza shared these feelings:

I know a Frenchman who was an immigrant. He told me that when he came he really had to make an effort to mix with English speaking Canadians. He speaks excellent English, has a beautiful house and a good life. He began from zero. He is a good example. (IV-895 E)

My manager told me how she had to make sacrifices. For example, her husband who was an engineer in Germany had to wash cars when he came here. Both husband and wife set an example for other immigrants. (IV-850 E)

Their comforting perception was that successful immigrants also had to struggle with the language.

All three agreed that in the future they wanted to have a "comfortable life" which meant the absence of money-related preoccupations. To achieve this economic comfort, they needed to "prepare" themselves, as Alirio said:

I believe the other immigrants have done this: they come when they are young, they prepare themselves well, and when they reach thirty or thirty-five they are well adapted. (IV-800 A)

Successful immigrants, they believed, had prepared themselves by acquiring education and/or by improving the education they already had, even if working and studying at the same time were difficult. They came to Canada with the belief that "if one studies, and one has the preparation, one can obtain a good job" (IV-727 A). In the United States, for example, Maria’s parents had seen how young people had opportunities
available independent of their parents' financial situation; they believed that although the opportunity to prepare oneself through education while working was not available in Central America, it would be in Canada. For Esperanza, for example, it was important that both she and her husband prepared themselves well so that they could provide a better life for their son Ricardo. Esperanza's words reflected her determination:

What we always have in mind is to continue forward, to study before anything else. These are sacrifices that we have to make now, or else we will find ourselves always in the same situation. Right now we leave our baby with a sitter, right? But if not so, what will we be able to offer him later? (IV-735 E)

The duration of the period in which they would have to make sacrifices was uncertain. To learn English while engaged in whatever job that was available they saw as a temporary stage, yet not necessarily a shortlived one:

Above all we have to learn the language, and that does not happen overnight; the main thing is not to give up. If you have your studies, your preparation, you can get your work. All immigrants, Latins, Polish, all, if they want to they can some day have everything they want. (IV-788 A)

One has to make sacrifices. But one also gets encouragement from seeing that others have managed to get somewhere. (IV-780 M)
b. Negative models

In contrast to some immigrants' achievements, Maria, Alirio and Esperanza were aware of the "failures" of many others. They defined failure as leading a "life of vice," being involved in drugs, turning to alcohol, or living on Welfare:

Other Latins try to get you involved in drug deals...I don't know if you know, but especially _____ get a lot of people into that. (III-1128)

We can see that one can lean towards a life of vice. This type of life is not only true of some immigrants, but also of Canadian young people who have chosen Welfare as a way of life. (IV-560 M)

Welfare is good to a certain point, but it is greatly abused by Canadians. Even some Latins are just content living off welfare. (IV-1020 M)

They accepted help when they first arrived, because as they said, without the language it was as though "their hands were tied." All three wanted to "set a good record" and therefore, they accepted government assistance for as short a period as possible. This seemed especially important in the case of Alirio and Esperanza because they had yet to become landed immigrants. Despite all the perceived obstacles they had to overcome working with the Canadian bureaucracy, they did not want to appear easily defeated. They regreted the numbers of Central Americans who seemed to be psychologically defeated from the time they arrived and were discouraged with the seemingly endless battle to acquire a new language. Alirio, for example, said that there were many young male refugees from Central America who, because they had never seen a Welfare cheque
before, tended to wastefully spend their money.

The Native Indians were sometimes thought of as negative models for Alirio. His early days in Canada included going to community centres to see what activities were taking place, but he had difficulty meeting people. He went to bars where he found Native Indians were the only "Canadians" who would establish relationships with him.

Friendships with Native Indian women were easy to make. When one arrives here, there is nothing to do, and they seem to be there; one can easily spend day after day drinking... (III-1103)

Alirio said that some Central Americans are so immersed in this "bar" life that they find it difficult to get out of it, and they have no one to turn to for help.

I have friends, for example, who can't even drink juice, they can hardly drink water because their stomachs become so upset. (III-1103)

The unfortunate fact was that drinking was not the only activity that took place in the bars. Other groups were engaged in drug trafficking. However, this exposure to "bar" life was for him a shortlived one, and furthermore, it confirmed what he did not want to become. Esperanza and Maria did not have this "bar" exposure. Esperanza already had relatives here, and Maria arrived with other members of her family.

Overall, opportunity was defined in terms of the personal achievements of their immigrant contemporaries and other Canadians. There were negative and
positive models that provided them with guidance. Opportunity was defined by comparing themselves to others: they felt that what others had done they could do also.

The optimism expressed by the three refugees was refreshing, even if it was the product of a limited vision. They had a sense of immediate strategy: they recognized that for immigrants to succeed, there would be a period of struggle, and that immigrants had the responsibility to make the best use of opportunities. However, the belief that success lay with individual initiative and sacrifice reflected a naivete that could lead to further frustrations in the future.

Age

The most hopeful way by which the three refugees made sense of their future aspirations was through their age. They believed that their youth allowed the time necessary to pursue opportunities and to adjust to their new life in Canada. Maria, Alirio and Esperanza saw their own youthful age as making their adaptation to Canadian life easier than their parents.

Now we have a language problem, but every day we learn more English. One can also study while one works. (IV-515 E)

The age at which we arrived here is perfect. Another age wouldn't have been as good to arrive in Canada. We are young, we have a long life ahead of us. (IV-796 A)

As far as I can see, (the reason why some) immigrants have something is because they came when they were young; they have used their time wisely and they have done well. (IV-807 A)
They realized that age played a large role in an immigrant’s personal achievement, as well as his or her adjustment to a new country and culture. Maria cited the example of her parents whose opportunities were limited here because they could not communicate in English. Her father only accepted "silent jobs" such as specific carpentry tasks which could be communicated by means of diagrams, or janitorial tasks. Likewise, her mother did the occasional house cleaning or babysitting for Spanish-speaking families. Similarly, Esperanza knew of "older" refugees who only worked as babysitters because of their inability to express themselves; even contacts with fellow refugees were made infrequently because of the fear of venturing outside the home and risking not being understood in public places. Also, the initial bureaucratic difficulties that young refugees had to overcome were that much worse for the older folk: "Those who suffer the most from the government’s inefficiencies are the children and older adults" (IV-1158 M). According to the three refugees of this study, once resident status had been established, these older refugees were more likely to be dependent on social assistance than younger refugees. This was especially the case for those who had limited education. Maria’s parents did not have more than a grade nine education and they felt that it was too late for them to aspire to a "career." They were aware that they would have to depend economically to some extent on their children and on the government. By comparing themselves to their parents and to older refugees, Maria, Esperanza and Alirio realized the age advantage they had, and how it was an asset in securing future opportunities.
Conclusion

The manner in which the interviewees discussed the "what" of opportunity was influenced by several factors: past experiences, successes of other immigrants, their own experiences since coming to Canada, their support networks, and their youthful age. There were, however, contradictions evident in how they defined opportunity. In relation to their past, for example, there was an exaggerated vision of a better life in Canada which did not match with their experiences once they came here. They had to modify their optimism and recognize that there were more difficulties to overcome than they had envisioned.

They defined many of their initial difficulties as being the result of their limited English language proficiency, and yet they often held "Canadians" responsible for these difficulties. A number of examples were evident. Transactions with the bureaucracy were never straightforward because Immigration officials were "not organized." Maria felt exploited when she was asked to perform duties which she did not consider part of her job description; however, she never stopped to think whether this might have been because her English was not adequate for other tasks in the office. Further, they lived and socialized in Latin neighbourhoods despite all three admitting that the best way to adapt to Canadian life was by mixing with English-speaking Canadians.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the meaning of "opportunity" as expressed through interviews with three recent refugee youth from Central America. Three aspects constituting the "what" of opportunity were evident: a social aspect of wanting to become somebody, a material aspect of wanting to have something, and a personal aspect of wanting to maintain the family unit. Also elucidated were the reasons for their goals: the "how" of opportunity. The interview data suggested that the "taken-for-granted" knowledge brought to Canada by the these refugees proved to be of limited utility when they had to function in a new language. This led to an initial hopelessness of silence, which Schutz has described as a period of crisis (Schutz, 1964). However, they perceived these difficulties as temporary and were optimistic that their young age would be an advantage in achieving their goals.

The conceptual basis for the study was provided by Alfred Schutz's notion of the "lifeworld." This world has various characteristics: its pregivenness and natural flow of experiences remain unquestioned and taken for granted; it is organized and interpreted through "knowledge" which is acquired through language, and from parents, teachers and cohorts. The refugees tried to interpret the new society in terms of their past cultural experiences. This was problematic, as Schutz has expressed in his study of "The Stranger."

The cultural pattern and its recipes represent only for the members
of the in-group a unit of coinciding schemes of interpretation as well as expression. The approaching stranger has to translate its terms into terms of the cultural pattern of his home group, provided that, within the latter, interpretive equivalents exist at all. If they exist, the translated terms may be understood and remembered; they can be recognized by recurrence; they are at hand but not in hand. Yet, even then, it is obvious that the stranger cannot assume that his interpretation of the new cultural pattern coincides with that current with the members of the in-group. On the contrary, he has to reckon with fundamental discrepancies in seeing things and handling situations. (Schutz, 1964, p. 100)

The refugee is therefore constantly testing situations and hoping for the best results.

Leaving Central America meant that the three refugees would probably never return to see members of their family again. It also meant that they left behind the language and culture which provided them with a "stockpile of typifications" and "recipes" for interpreting their lifeworld and acting within it (Schutz, 1964). They did not fully anticipate the difficulties they would experience in Canada. They expected that they would have to accept any job that was available and that their language handicap would be severe. They also knew that they would miss their relatives very much. Yet, they had the reassuring belief that because the government of Canada was bringing them here, they would be well looked after for at least one year. The gap between what they expected and what they experienced proved to be a source of considerable anxiety.

The taken-for-granted interpretations of the world they brought with them were immediately thrown into question when they had to communicate in a foreign language. Also, the "codes of action" of their own culture were of little
help, and sometimes misleading. They became victims of what typically happens to a stranger.

The stranger is called ungrateful, since he refuses to acknowledge that the cultural pattern offered to him grants him shelter and protection. But these people do not understand that the stranger in the state of transition does not consider this pattern as a protecting shelter at all but as a labyrinth in which he has lost all sense of his bearings (Schutz, 1964, pp. 104, 105).

Their initial Canadian experiences were dominated by an attempt to make sense of what was going on around them. In a sense they were being objective observers of the host community of which they hoped to become members.

Maria and Esperanza handled their frustrations differently than Alirio, as was discussed in Chapter Four. These differences suggest that even when the past lifeworlds of strangers may be similar, their interpretations and plans of action within the present may vary as each one experiences reality somewhat differently. As Campbell has put it:

The 'lifeworld' of every day experience is constituted, by a continuing awareness of the persons and things with which the agent has to cope in order to achieve his flow of objectives and purposes. (1981, p. 202)

Alirio's strong sense of persecution in his home country may have provided him with a scheme of interpretation that carried over into the Canadian context, and may have accounted for his feelings of being discriminated against: often he referred to others who were apparently less eligible than he was getting their residence status, whereas he had little success. During his enrolment at Job Corps he complained of not receiving support from the staff. When employment
and other matters did not go the way he expected, he was inclined to see discrimination. Such reactions were probably the effect of the persecution he had suffered before coming to Canada (Berdichewsky, 1984; Freire, 1970).

Through the interviews, attempts were made to recreate the nuances of the refugees' lifeworlds (Carson, 1984) and to decipher the meaning of experiences as perceived by the respondents themselves. Evidence from the study suggested that employment not only gave Maria, Esperanza and Alirio clarification of their new social world, but also that it provided them with a way of defining opportunity. They were grateful to Canada and they wanted to demonstrate that they were not exploitative of services provided to them. Not least was the fact that employment provided them with a source of income without which their objectives for their future, the "what" of opportunity, could not be achieved.

An important factor helping them to acculturate was the opportunity to participate in MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps programme, which attempted to provide the refugees with a Canadian "definition of the situation." The programme components of life skills, job-finding English skills and English for work skills gave them a clearer understanding of Canadian "ideal types," or in their words, "how the system works." By teaching how to do everyday things that may seem trivial to the already "established" population, the Job Corps provided the refugees with a means towards realizing their opportunities. The programme also helped them adjust to an objective reality as opposed to the world as perceived by the refugees (Campbell, 1981). By gaining better understanding of their
situation through the assistance and knowledge they acquired at Job Corps, and ultimately by obtaining employment, the refugees achieved a "status" in this new culture. They showed the refugees what were realistic aspirations and how they could achieve them. This was very important for Maria, Esperanza and Alirio. They had through their mother tongue acquired a set of "recipes" and "building blocks" on which to base their actions in their own culture (Schutz, 1964). Now they had come to a new culture with a language they did not understand. Without language they were not able to participate meaningfully in their new country of choice. They were "Strangers."

Because of their lack of comprehension, Maria, Esperanza and Alirio questioned the Canadian government's bureaucratic policies on matters relating to refugees. When they made inquiries they were given answers that they could not completely understand. They then had to go again to clarify the "skimpy" information they had obtained from Immigration and Employment officials. From their "system of knowledge" brought over from their countries of origin, they assumed that they had to be insistant when dealing with officials and continue to remind them many times over regarding refugee concerns. They were surprised when they found that this sometimes irritated these officials, were perplexed when they did not obtain results, and began to have doubts about the efficiency of government services. They became worried and made further inquiries. This is an illustration of how the stranger brings over typifications from his or her past and applies them (often inappropriately) to the new culture (Hekman, 1983).
The theme of opportunity discussed both collectively and individually provided an insight into the lifeworlds of the three young refugees of the study. In Chapters Three and Four it was made clear that what they meant by opportunity and how they defined it was directly related to their own past and present experiences and their perception of the experiences lived by others. This account allows the reader to better understand where they were "coming from" and through their experiences to understand what it was like to be a young refugee. It identifies some of their goals and the reasons for them. The findings thereby contribute to the literature relating to the growing numbers of Central American refugees arriving in Canada.

The findings suggest that E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) and employment programmes may be improved as the recipients' perspectives on opportunity are considered during programme planning. Furthermore, it points to the value of programmes (such as MOSAIC) that attempt to facilitate a smoother acculturation for refugees by combining a "knowledge-centred" curriculum with a "problem-centred" pedagogy; for example, the Job Corps is coordinated with the labour market according to the needs and wishes of the participants rather than postponing entry to the work force (Mastai, 1980). Additionally, this study shows E.S.L. educators the importance of the "transition" period to refugees of this age group. It contributes to the literature on the education of immigrants by providing an account of "opportunity" as defined within the refugee experience.
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MOSAIC

MOSAIC (Multicultural Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities) located at 1165 Commercial in Vancouver is a non-profit society which has been serving the Greater Vancouver area for over a decade. They seek to bridge the gap between non-English speaking people and Canadian educational, legal, medical and social services. MOSAIC promotes awareness and acceptance of cultural differences, and works to ensure that the human rights and dignity of all people will be respected, regardless of language or cultural origin. By enabling non-English people to receive the same services available to English speaking residents, MOSAIC assists people in adjusting to their new lives in Canada.

The agency consists of 22 staff members and more than three hundred volunteers (1985). They provide service in 70 languages. Each year they respond to about 35,000 requests for assistance.

MOSAIC's Bilingual Community Workers forge the vital link between non-English speaking clients and various services and aspects of Canadian culture. Their professional staff work with all non-English speaking residents: immigrants, refugees and citizens. Among others, MOSAIC provides services in these languages: Cantonese, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian,
Japanese, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Ukranian, and Vietnamese.

MOSAIC’s services depend upon private donations and memberships. As well, MOSAIC receives funding support from the federal Departments of Immigration and Secretary of State, the provincial Ministry of Social Services, the City of Vancouver, and the United Way.

MOSAIC’s Youth Job Corps' Programme

Job Corps is sponsored by MOSAIC. Its Youth Job Corps' programme is an intensive four-month programme designed to give New Canadian Youth a chance to contribute to Canada’s work force. Participants are instructed by two E.S.L. teachers in work, life and job-finding skills, as well as English as a Second Language. They take part in trial job placements in their chosen vocational field and undergo formal job searches during their stay in the programme.

The trainees are New Canadians between the ages of 19 and 24 and keenly motivated to find and maintain employment. Their ethnic backgrounds, countries of origin, vocational goals and skills are as diverse as the Canadian population. Areas of successful employment include retail sales, residential construction, electronic assembly and floral arranging.

Benefits to Employers
Through a trial job placement, the employer has the opportunity to observe the worker's attitude, competence and skills at no cost. Only appropriate candidates will be sent to their place of business. Pre-screening is done by trained project counsellors.

The trainees have the energy and motivation to fully apply themselves to their job duties.

The project's staff involvement with the employer and the worker need not end with the placement. Programme counsellors are available during the worker's entire first year of employment with a company.
Interview Questions (Individual)

Esperanza, Maria and Alirio were interviewed individually for the first time using the following questions. (These questions were extracted from the transcripts.) These taped interviews were transcribed in Spanish. Follow-up interviews with each individual were designed to clarify and extend these transcripts.

Esperanza

1. Cuando llegaste al Canada?
   1. When did you arrive in Canada?

2. Y luego fuiste a Inmigracion?
   2. Did you have to go to Immigration?

3. Las preguntas te las hicieron en espanol?
   3. Were the questions in Spanish?

4. Habia traductores de otras lenguas, o por lo menos personas que pudieran ayudar?
   4. Did you notice whether there were other translators there, or other people who could help you?

5. Y despues de que Inmigracion te dio el dinero empezaste a buscar vivienda?
   5. What did you do after Immigration gave you the money, did you have to start looking for a place to live?
6. Donde estaba Ricardo?
6. Where was Ricardo?

7. Solo tu y tu marido salian a buscar donde vivir?
7. Just you and your husband went to look for a place to live?

8. Cuanto se demoraron en conseguir apartamento?
8. How long did it take you to find the apartment?

9. Donde durmieron durante esos diez dias?
9. Where did you sleep during those ten days?

10. Les costo trabajo conseguir alojamiento?
10. Was it difficult to find an apartment?

11. Llegaste el 11 de octubre. Empezaste este programa en abril del '85. Que paso entre octubre y abril?
11. You arrived on the 11th of October. You began this programme in April of 85. What happened between October and April?

12. Estabas contenta de tener tu bebe en el Canada?
12. Did you feel happy to have a baby in Canada?

13. Debio ser dificil para ti el no tener a tu mama aqui; la llamaste?
13. It must have been hard for you not to have your mother here. Did you phone her?

14. Cuando decidieron venirse de Guatemala?
14. When did you make the decision to leave Guatemala?

15. Todavia estas segura de que fue lo mejor que hubieras podido hacer?
15. Are you still sure it was the best thing you could have done?
16. Y tu familia podrá algún día venirte a visitar?
16. Will your family be able to visit you?

17. Eres hija única?
17. Are you an only child?

18. Si pudieras patrocinar a tu madre, crees tu que ella se vendría al Canadá?
18. If you were able to sponsor your mother would she come to Canada?

19. A ella no le da miedo de pronto no adaptarse al clima, a una lengua extranjera?
19. Is she not scared of the climate, a different language?

20. Llevabas mucho tiempo de casada antes de venirte?
20. Had you been married for a long time before you came here?

21. ¿Cómo supiste del programa que tenía el Canadá para refugiados?
21. How did you hear about Canada's refugee programme?

22. ¿Por qué te decidiste a venir aca?
22. What made you decide to come?

23. ¿La inseguridad fue la razón principal por la que te viniste?
23. Was insecurity the main reason why you left?

24. ¿Tenías miedo de más acusaciones y lios que se podrían presentar?
24. Were you afraid the accusations and more complications would arise?

25. ¿La decisión de venirte aca la tomaste junto con tu marido?
25. Was the decision to come here one that both you and your husband made together?
26. Tienes esperanzas de poder traer a tu mama?
26. Are you hopeful that you can bring your mother?

27. Qué prerequisitos necesitas para poderla traer?
27. What is the most important thing you must do or have in order to bring your mother?

28. Y tu marido tambien quiere traer a sua familia?
28. How about your husband, does he feel he wants to bring his family too?

29. Pueden venir como refugiados?
29. Can they come as refugees?

30. Cuanto tiempo tuvieron que esperar desde el dia en que presentaron la aplicacion hasta la fecha de venida al Canada?
30. How long did you have to wait from the time of your application to come and actually coming to Canada?

31. Por qué dices que la situacion economica en Guatemala estaba muy mala?
31. Why do you say that the economic situation in Guatemala was hopeless?

32. Qué quieres decir cuando hablas de una vida comoda?
32. What do you mean by living in a comfortable way?

33. Si te hubieras quedado alla, hubieras podido trabajar y estudiar al mismo tiempo?
33. If you had remained there, would you have been able to work and at the same time further your education?

34. Tu situacion entonces era muy insegura?
34. Was your situation one of not being able to feel secure?
35. Habian hecho un pacto con el gobierno en que les garantizaban protección?

35. So there was an agreement with the government to protect you?

36. Y la policia te estaba persiguiendo a ti tambien?

36. The police was also after you?

37. Ahora lo que quieres hacer es patrocinar a la madre de tu marido y a tu madre, no solo por razones de seguridad sino para poder estar juntos?

37. So now what you want to do is to sponsor your husband's mother and your mother, not only for security reasons, but to be together?

38. A veces te sientes culpable de haberte venido?

38. Do you sometimes feel guilty that you left?

39. Tienes mas amigos a quienes les gustaria venir?

39. Do you have other friends that would like to come?

40. Qué impresiones te empezaste a formar cuando llegaste aca?

40. What were your first impressions when you arrived here?

41. Tenias a alguien aqui que te pudiera prestar ayuda?

41. Did you have anyone here who could help you out?

42. Qué hacias en tu tiempo libre?

42. What do you do in your spare time?

43. Como supiste de MOSAIC?

43. How did you know about MOSAIC?

44. Has logrado conocer a algunos canadienses?
44. How do you meet Canadians?

45. Vas a la iglesia catolica?
45. Is the church you attend the Catholic church?

46. Cuando decidiste buscar empleo?
46. When did you decide to look for a job?

47. Hablabas algo de ingles cuando te viniste?
47. Could you speak any English when you came?

48. Cual ha sido el mejor beneficio que te ha brindado el programa de MOSAIC?
48. What is the most important thing that MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps' programme has done for you?

49. Qué ejercicios de los que hicieron durante el programa consideras tu que valieron la pena?
49. Which exercises within the programme did you find useful?

50. _____ los dejaba hablar y luego resumia lo que ustedes habian dicho. Te gusto ese metodo?
50. _____ let you talk and then she would sum up what you had said, she didn't interrupt. Did you like that approach?

51. Te sentias herida a veces?
51. So your feelings were hurt sometimes?

52. Te sentias que _____ a veces te cortaba?
52. Did you feel she (.........) cut you off sometimes?

53. Te molestaste al tener que pedir permiso para ir al bano?
53. Did it bother you to have to ask to go to the washroom?
54. Did you find that the counsellors provided good assistance to you?

55. Did you find the job-search phase of the programme difficult?

56. Did it bother you to have to read aloud in front of your classmates the paragraph, "What I'd like to improve about myself?"

57. Would she have done better not to mention names when she talked about and individual's level of English during class?

58. Would you have preferred to sit in a place of your choice within the classroom?

59. Did you think there should have been more social occasions to allow you to get together with fellow trainees throughout the programme?

60. How would you describe the manager's role throughout the programme?

Maria

1. Did you finish high school in El Salvador?
2. Hablabas algo de inglés cuando llegaste a Vancouver?
2. Did you speak any English when you arrived in Vancouver?

3. Me dijiste que te habías ido a México en 1980. Tu fuiste con toda tu familia?
3. You told me before that you left El Salvador to go to Mexico in 1980. Did you leave as a whole family?

4. Por qué se fueron?
4. What made you decide to leave?

5. Tenías miedo de tu propia seguridad en la calle?
5. Were you worried about your own security on the street?

6. Qué cosas pasaban para que te sintieras insegura?
6. What happened that made you feel insecure?

7. La mayor razón por la que te fuiste fue la inseguridad?
7. Was insecurity the main reason why you left?

8. Por qué decidieron ir a México en lugar de aplicar al programa canadiense para refugiados directamente desde El Salvador?
8. Why did you decide to go to Mexico instead of applying to Canada's refugee programme directly from El Salvador?

9. Por qué dices que la situación en México estaba muy mala?
9. You refer to Mexico's situation as being hard, what do you mean by that?

10. Como supiste del programa para refugiados que tenía el Canadá?
10. How did you hear about Canada's refugee programme?
11. How long did you have to wait from the time you applied until you were accepted?

12. You said you had to plan what you were going to say during your interviews, why was that so?

13. How did you feel when your trip to Canada finally became reality?

14. What did you think Canada was going to be like?

15. If it wasn't for El Salvador's present situation, would you say that otherwise you would have been able to study and work too?

16. Are "Canadians" what you expected them to be before you came?

17. The friends that you have now, where are they from?

18. Are your parents still in Mexico?

19. Why did you not come with them?
20. Por qué decidiste venirte sin tus padres si siempre habían vivido juntos?
20. If you had always lived as a family, why did you come without your parents?
21. Pensaste que de pronto no los volverías a ver?
21. Did you think you would never see your parents again?
22. Y tus padres vinieron como refugiados?
22. Did your parents come as refugees?
23. Cuentame un poco sobre tu llegada. Había alguien en el aeropuerto que los orientara un poquito?
23. Tell me what happened when you arrived at the airport. Did anyone help you to find your way around?
24. Había alguien que hablara español en la oficina de Inmigración?
24. Was there anybody who could speak Spanish at the Immigration office?
25. Como te sentías en el hotel?
25. How did you feel when you were in the hotel?
26. Comenzaste a cambiar las opiniones que tenías del Canada?
26. Were your impressions about Canada beginning to change?
27. Y en Inmigracion no te sugirieron ir a MOSAIC?
27. Did Immigration not suggest to you to go to MOSAIC?
28. Y en cuanto a encontrada de casa encontraron dificultades?
28. What was the experience of looking for a place to live like?
29. Dirías tu que los propietarios siempre tenían ciertas preferencias en cuanto a quienes querían como inquilinos?
29. Did you find that landlords had preferences as to whom they wanted to rent their places to?

30. Did you know what it meant to be on Welfare?

31. With all those questions, you must have felt annoyed, frustrated, how did you feel?

32. How long did you have to wait until your English courses began?

33. How did you learn what buses to take to go to different places?

34. How did you spend your days?

35. Did you find that K.E.C.'s courses helped you?

36. How long was the course?

37. What did you do between the time that you finished K.E.C.'s English courses and the time that MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps' programme began?
38. Como te fue en la buscada de trabajo? A que clase de sitios ibas a preguntar si tenian empleo para ti?

38. How did you look for work? What kind of places would you go to to ask for employment?

39. Fue facil hacer que te firmaran el formulario de Inmigracion?

39. Did everyone want to sign your form from Immigration?

40. Si Inmigracion te estaba prestando ayuda cual era tu afan de conseguir trabajo?

40. Why did it seem so urgent for you to find employment right after your English courses, if Immigration was giving you a living allowance?

41. Quien te dijo de los bancos de comida?

41. How did you hear about the food banks?

42. Como supiste del programa de Job Corps de MOSAIC?

42. Who told you about MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps' programme?

43. Durante la entrevista que te hicieron para ingresar al programa qué impresiones te formaste del director?

43. What impressions did you have about MOSAIC's Job Corps' manager during your interview?

44. Una vez que empezaste el programa te importo que te asignaran donde sentarte, o hubieras preferido tu misma escoger?

44. Once you started Job Corps, what did you think about being moved around within the classroom?

45. De que manera te ha ayudado Job Corps? Por qué decidiste participar en el programa?

45. How has Job Corps helped you? Why did you decide to enrol in it?

46. Te gustaron los metodos de enseñanza?
46. What did you think of the instruction at Job Corps?

47. Did you accept being asked directly to answer a question in front of the rest of the class or did you prefer to volunteer your answer?

48. Did you agree having to raise your hand to go to the washroom?

49. What role did you think the manager of the programme performed?

50. Were you afraid of the manager?

51. Would you have welcomed more social opportunities which would have allowed you to get to know other trainees better?

52. Did you like having two instructors during the programme instead of one?

53. Which exercises did you think were most helpful during the programme?

54. Once you finished the programme, did you find a real difference in your job-search strategy?
55. Como te sentiste en tu primer puesto de trabajo?
55. How did you feel when you got your first job?

56. Te sentiste mal cuando te dijeron que no te necesitaban en ese primer puesto?
56. Were you quite disappointed when you were dismissed from your first job placement?

57. Por qué te sentías que la clientela se estaba aprovechando de tus conocimientos limitados de inglés?
57. Why did you feel people were coming down on you?

58. A quién le contabas tus problemas?
58. Who did you share your problems with?

59. Alguna vez le dijiste a la consejera de Job Corps algo acerca de las preocupaciones que tenías?
59. Did you ever tell the counsellor at Job Corps about your concerns?

60. Consideras que les dieron suficiente tiempo para compartir experiencias de trabajo?
60. Did you feel you were given enough time to share job-related experiences?

**Alirio**

1. Por qué te decidiste venirte de Belize al Canada?
1. Why did you decide to come to Canada from Belize?

2. Fue difícil que te aceptaran?
2. Was it difficult to get accepted?

3. Como supiste del programa para refugiados del Canada?
3. How did you hear about Canada's refugee programme?

4. Cuanto tiempo transcurrio desde la entrevista de aprobacion y el viaje?
4. How long did you have to wait from the time you applied until your actual trip to Canada?

5. Cursaste todo tu colegio en El Salvador?
5. Did you do all your schooling in El Salvador?

6. Vienes de una familia grande?
6. Did you come from a large family?

7. Trabajabas tu durante tus vacaciones?
7. Did you work during your school holidays?

8. Cuando te fuiste para Guatemala?
8. When did you go to Guatemala?

9. Por que te fuiste a Guatemala?
9. Why did you decide to go to Guatemala?

10. Me dijiste que te quedaste en Guatemala dos meses, a donde te fuiste despues?
10. You stayed in Guatemala for two months, where did you go to after that?

11. Cuando estabas en San Salvador y te fuiste a Belize, decidiste en ese entonces que ya nunca regresarías a El Salvador?
11. When you were in San Salvador and decided to go to Belize, was that the time when you made your decision to never return to El Salvador?

12. Y tu familia te ayudo cuando te fuiste para Belize?
12. Did you receive help from your family when you went to Belize?
13. Did you go to visit your family in El Salvador while you were in Belize?

14. Was it in Belize then that you were given the necessary documents to travel to Canada?

15. Did you arrive in Vancouver directly?

16. What kind of documents did you have when you arrived?

17. Why are you not eligible for Welfare?

18. You were told in Belize that after one year here in Canada you would get your resident's visa. That hasn't happened. Do you not still have the same rights under your extended ministerial permit as under resident status?

19. When you arrived in Vancouver, who met you at the airport?

20. Where did you go from there?
21. How long did you stay at the hotel?
22. What did you do with your time while you were in the hotel?
23. Did you get support or help from anybody?
24. Why did you not go out to visit the Salvadorans you had met in the hotel?
25. Why were you so afraid of getting lost?
26. How did you finally find a place to live?
27. Didn't anybody tell you about service agencies such as MOSAIC?
28. How did you hear about MOSAIC?
29. Once you had moved in with _____ how did you spend your time?
30. How did you feel during the interview at MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps?
31. Quedaste contento cuando te aceptaron en Job Corps?
31. Were you glad you were able to participate in the programme?

32. Que métodos de enseñanza encontraste mejores: los de K.E.C. o los de Job Corps?
32. Did you prefer the teaching methods at K.E.C. over the ones at Job Corps?

33. Volviendo a tus primeros días aquí, cuando llegaste qué te produjo más impacto?
33. Going back to when you arrived here in Canada, what was the one thing that you remember impressed you the most?

34. A tu modo de ver, crees que los jóvenes canadienses pasan el tiempo lo mismo que tu por ejemplo lo pasabas en El Salvador?
34. Do "Canadians" your age spend their free time in similar ways as you and your friends did in El Salvador?

35. Por qué dices que el ambiente de las fiestas aquí es diferente al de las fiestas en El Salvador?
35. How is the atmosphere at parties here different to what it was like back in El Salvador?

36. Piensas que las profesoras de Job Corps desempenaron bien su papel?
36. Do you think the teachers at Job Corps did a good job?

37. El hecho de tener dos profesoras te molesto?
37. Did you mind having two teachers?

38. Crees que el director desempeño un cargo importante en el programa?
38. Do you think the manager played an important role in the Job Corps' programme?

39. Que específicamente te disgustó de la manera como los trataba el director a ustedes?
39. What did you not like about the manager's approach to trainees?

40. Consideras que el programa resulto lo que tu esperabas?
40. Did the programme meet your expectations?

41. Qué quieres decir cuando dices que sentias presion esperando que empezaran los cursos en K.E.C.?
41. Why did you say you felt pressure while waiting for the courses at K.E.C. to start?

42. Habia otras instancias en que te sentias presionado?
42. Were there other instances when you felt pressure?

43. Encontraste a alguien que te brindara el apoyo moral que estabas necesitando?
43. Were you able to make friends with anybody who could give you the moral support you needed?

44. En algun momento te sentiste vencido y te daba por juntarte con los que no habian sacado provecho de las oportunidades aca?
44. Did you at any time feel inclined to join the lifestyle of those you say had given up?

45. Estas de acuerdo en que deberia haber mas programas como el de Job Corps?
45. Would you agree that there should be more programmes like Job Corps available?

46. Crees que las entrevistas esas del "cold-run" valieron la pena como preparacion para las verdaderas?
46. Did you think the "cold-run" interviews were a good exercise to prepare you for the "real" interviews?

47. Encontraste que en Job Corps te ayudaron a entender bien como se busca trabajo?
47. Did the staff at Job Corps guide you well in knowing what was involved when you were looking for a job?

48. Qué cambios harías al programa para que fuera de mayor beneficio para personas como tú?

48. What would you change in the programme for people who had needs similar to yours?
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions (Group)

The following questions were used when interviewing Maria, Esperanza and Alirio together as a group. (These questions, extracted here from the written transcripts, were asked in Spanish.)

1. From previous interviews which I had with you individually it seemed that the three main reasons why you left your countries of origin were one, the general sense of insecurity country wide; two, the political unrest; and thirdly, for personal reasons. Now I want to ask you, has your coming to Canada meant that now you have more opportunities? Have your expectations of Canada been met?

2. How did those situations make you feel; oppressed, disappointed or disillusioned?

3. What exactly did people do to make you feel discriminated against?

4. Did instances of discrimination also take place at the Employment Centre?

5. Did you find it difficult to convince Employment and Immigration officials that you had past work experience and skills that you would have liked to have been given the opportunity to demonstrate?

6. Was the language then the biggest barrier?

7. Did you think that the Job Corps programme gave you the opportunity to work in an area which was not familiar to you before?

8. What was it that made you so afraid of that first job? Was it a fear of not knowing how to ask questions or not understanding answers? Did you think you were going to exasperate employers or the people who worked with you?

9. You said you were at a disadvantage, can you be more specific about what you meant by that?

10. Did you think that your employer's husband just accepted all the negative comments from his wife as you accepted them from her?

11. In your case though, did you accept her negative comments as something within her personality, or did you feel that they were a way of discriminating against you because of your poor English?
12. How about you two (Alirio and Maria), did you feel intimidated in your present jobs when you were trying to explain something?

13. Have you been paid more for the "extras" you do at work?

14. Do you think you are given the same opportunity as other employees to learn about what is involved in the work you are doing?

15. Are you treated fairly? Respectfully?

16. When you have been working for one employer for a reasonable period of time do you feel you can ask him for a raise?

17. That fear you have of losing your job if you do ask for a raise, do you think it is also experienced by the non-immigrant?

18. Why would that be so? They would have to claim U.I.C. or go on Welfare like you.

19. I wonder what Canadians do? It seems to me that the same rules would apply to all.

20. Your anticipation of what Canada would be like was a place where you could improve yourself, study, raise your standard of living, etc. Do you think that the anticipation you had of Canada will come true or not?

21. Do you see your present employment as temporary?

22. For now then, would you say that employment grants you a source of income and an opportunity to improve your English?

23. So what you do with the opportunities available to you is entirely an individual matter?

24. Since in Canada you don't experience any of that insecurity you experienced in your countries, do you think that here you will go forward and succeed despite easy ways out that exist such as Welfare?

25. Why is having employment so important to you?

26. Is it easier to apply from Guatemala for Canada's Refugee programme?

27. Did the interview questions vary depending where they took place? Did you tell the truth or did you have to exaggerate?

28. If one isn't accepted the first time around, do you get another chance?

29. What other countries could you apply to go to?

30. Did you ever think of going to Australia?
31. Was it through friends that you knew where to apply?
32. So it is not worth it to be honest?
33. We touched on this subject during the individual interviews, but why again did you need to come here to Canada?
34. Why is that sense of opportunity you talk about so real?
35. So you see other immigrants as having achieved something?
36. Have you asked other immigrants what they have done in order to achieve here in Canada? How do you know what you must do to achieve like they have?
37. You know then that your success won't be achieved overnight?
38. In Central America, are you saying that if one starts by washing cars, one remains washing cars?
39. Do you continue to have mainly Latins as your friends?
40. Are your co-workers of the same age as you?
41. You say that Canadians just quit their jobs. Would it be fair to say that when one comes from Latin countries one is more tolerant?
42. You said that when you first arrived here you were paid $70.00 a week. While you were attending courses at K.E.C. did they pay you the same amount?
43. What happened when you completed your course at K.E.C.? Did they still pay you the same amount?
44. Did you receive Welfare immediately?
45. Who did you have to take the 20 signatures of contacted employers to?
46. Did you exchange information related to cooperative employers?
47. Did you sometimes find that the obstacles you had to overcome were too many? Was it like a never-ending battle?
48. How long can you be on a ministerial permit before you get your resident's visa?
49. Have you been in to see a Hispanic doctor that could understand your situation?
50. Where did you apply for your medical?
51. So your son, a Canadian, does not receive family allowance?
52. In what other instances did you feel put down?
53. Do you feel that people regard you as being less capable than "Canadians?"
54. When "Canadians" show their ignorance to you, do you feel better about yourselves?
55. In what instances would you say that Latins do not have the same opportunities as other immigrants?
56. Alirio, what do you mean when you say that Latins are not treated the same?
57. When you looked for employment, did you find that other ethnic groups were given preference over Latins?
58. Do you think those instances were due to your limited command of the English language?
59. If you had been given a manual, would you have tried to demonstrate your skills to the garage manager?
60. When you had to move, did you still find landlords discriminatory?
61. Are you still as fearful as before to ask questions?
APPENDIX D

Individual Interview Transcript Analyses

This appendix demonstrates in part how the individual interview transcripts were analyzed. (Only the analysis of Esperanza's transcript is provided here.) Themes were defined on the basis of supporting theme statements taken from each transcript. Subsequent to this analysis, a decision was made to focus only on the theme of "opportunity." All theme statements are translated from the Spanish transcripts and are abbreviated considerably. The abbreviated theme statements were used by the researcher to refer back to the transcript text. This analysis follows the procedure established by Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker, and Mulderij (1984).
## Esperanza

### Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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| 1. Esperanza experienced a sense of "pressure" when she was given specific time periods in which to meet demands made on her by the department of Immigration. She established support groups. | I-37 Ya... we had to look for a place to live. They just give 10 days to look.  
I-47 My sister-in-law helped a lot because she knows more English than I. She asked all the questions.  
I-628 Same day of arrival we were given a lot of information. Immigration...orientation paper...MOSAIC...any problem we could go to them.  
I-639 We had a strong family group here...established circles. Brought letter from a friend here...Latin people...no problem.  
I-664 ...My teacher helps me...At church everyone is helpful.  
I-670 ...friends who arrived here before I did took me to the church. First church Lutheran...now United. |
| 2. There seemed to be numerous places available for rent. However, often she didn't qualify as a prospective tenant. | I-86 No...some places don't want pets or children.  
I-104 They (landlords) feel more secure with immigrants and refugees who are receiving money from the government. They know...we always have the money. |
| 3. Esperanza experienced "happiness" to be in Canada in the anticipation of a new beginning. | I-144 I felt very happy to have a baby in Canada.  
I-160 When I had him I felt sure of myself, I felt confident...This was a new and different experience in my life.  
I-187 Ya...I feel happy about staying here.  
I-278 ...we know there is not a lot of jobs, but we have more opportunity here in Canada.  
I-609 I feel happy to be here. |
### THEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME STATEMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-183 I was always close to them (family) and for me was difficult to leave them. But I know it was the best thing I did.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-192 But at some time I want to be the sponsor of my mom...she wants to be with me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-222 ...profound love for my &quot;adoptive&quot; grandparents...won't leave my mom lonely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-303 Ya...but...I was very sad for my family, my mom...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-311 I think in this programme I will start to work...I am sure I will get a job...I can sponsor my mom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-586 No...no...it is really thanks to God that I am here...I don't feel completely deserving to be here...I'm fine here, but so many are suffering there.</td>
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<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
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<td>4. There were undesirable aspects of coming to Canada. Leaving her loved ones behind was hard, yet she had hope of being reunited some day.</td>
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<tr>
<th>THEME STATEMENTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-394 But if you don't have money what can you do...what can you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-408 I think we could live but not in a good manner...A lot of pain and hardship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-425 It would never be enough (the money)...you couldn't advance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-577 There is really no security for anyone. Prices are going up, less jobs every day, more poverty, more thieves, more...</td>
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<td>6. Esperanza had little hope of having opportunities that would enable her to live well in Central America.</td>
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<th>THEME STATEMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>I-173 In Canada there is more security for my husband...we were really not sure about our economic situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-288 I was afraid...</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-343 His (husband) mother is not secure there either. We want to bring her too.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-432 The thing was that my husband's family had to sell the property...members of the</td>
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### THEMES

7. **In Central America a person...cont'd.**

| I-467 | My husband was persecuted taking care of his mother, his sister,...he left all, his studies, his work...to protect family. 
...he lost his right finger. |
| I-490 | People who chase don't wear uniforms, they are police in disguise. |
| I-493 | They feel they have the power and they do what they want...calling us... following our car...threatening us. |
| I-512 | We had an agreement with the government that would protect my husband. However, the day of our wedding we were followed again...not free at all. |
| I-520 | He was afraid for me too. |
| I-539 | No freedom to say what you want to say. |
| I-545 | In Guatemala the dead would appear all over the place. Then there seemed to be less killings...then again killings every day. |
| I-566 | One is not really secure anywhere. Downtown one is walking and Pa...pa...pa... (machine gun). Because they want to kill someone else they kill 3, 5 or whoever's around. |

8. **A means of support is getting to know other Latins who live in the same neighborhood.**

| I-654 | You meet Canadians who are also good Latins. |
| I-658 | Many Latins live close to each other. Initially we lived in an apartment. We were isolated from Latin neighbourhoods. In same neighbourhood you start friendships. |
### THEMES

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<tr>
<td>9. It is important to get a job for their self-esteem, their sense of independence, and of contributing to Canada.</td>
<td>Well...after 4 months...I wanted to go out. Never enjoyed being cooped up... Get out of the house.</td>
<td>I used to become angry and of a worst character by being with my baby all the time.</td>
<td>Whether I wanted to or not I had to get a job...Immigration wants a sheet* every two weeks.</td>
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*List of prospective employers contacted.

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<tr>
<th>I-697</th>
<th>I-708</th>
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<th>I-734</th>
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<tr>
<td>I wanted to start gradually with a course. I had some English. Though I was a bilingual secretary I wanted to study..., practice English...Immigration didn't want that. I wanted to improve my level. They said, &quot;you know enough English, you don't need any more.&quot;</td>
<td>Esperanza felt that the Youth Job Corps programme would give her the opportunity to learn about the labour market. Acquiring a job at the end of the programme was the main incentive.</td>
<td>But I feel very well being here...it has helped me a lot. Now I understand more. I understand better. They helped me to know where I am...resources to use...to go about things.</td>
<td>...I feel more confident now. I can get a job. I can be persistent.</td>
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<td>I prefer to finish my sentence...not to be interrupted to be corrected in speech. Even _________'s way of interrupting the answer I was giving by saying...I don't agree...makes one feel stupid.</td>
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<th>I-783</th>
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<tr>
<td>I prefer to finish my sentence...not to be interrupted to be corrected in speech. Even _________'s way of interrupting the answer I was giving by saying...I don't agree...makes one feel stupid.</td>
<td>The teachers' personalities were important. Their sensitiveness and their approach to teaching had a direct bearing on how Esperanza participated in the programme.</td>
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<td>12. The teacher's personality is...cont'd.</td>
<td>I-798 The way _______ cuts you off is to me a sign of somebody without an education.</td>
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<td>I-810 Just because we didn't answer she said, &quot;stupid guys, haven't you got anything to say?&quot; You don't say that to a person.</td>
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<td>I-1039 Really, so many things bother her, that as we say in our country, she fusses like an old lady.</td>
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<td>I-1045 I benefited when she rearranged the seating within the classroom...I was put in a better place, but others were not.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I-1058 Maybe we shouldn't have been made to sit in a specific place. However, the advantages are evident, because one always tends to sit beside those who speak one's language.</td>
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<td>I-1075 _______ was more sensitive, she believes more in you, that is she trusts you more.</td>
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<td>_______ not only has a lack of trust in you,...but the faces she makes, and she seems so surprised.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I-1079 We have a bit of everything here...that is, religions, customs, some have been here less time, some come from a low social class, others from the middle class and there's differences; I think that everyone should be understood. We try too.</td>
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<td>I-1102 ...the teachers should try to understand, and more so because they have studied pedagogy and psychology.</td>
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felt by Esperanza when she is addressed with certain words that demean her. She feels wounded.

I-810 "...stupid guys, don't you have anything to say?" _______ said, "don't you know the meaning of that word?" In our country if you say that to a person it is like saying a bad word to them.
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| 13. A sense of humiliation is felt by...cont'd. | I-818 That word is used too many times. I don't like that. In my country a teacher has to take special care of her vocabulary, what she says and how she treats a person.  
I-828 One can't do anything because it is her personality. It's a personality which injures. |
| 14. "So many people underestimate one's capabilities. One feels very degraded when one knows one is being made fun of." | I-837 "...and do you think he is going to help you? He just got his (driver's licence), ja, ja, ja." She was making fun of him.  
I-843 I feel very bothered when they do it to someone else, I am bothered even more so when it is done to me.  
I-848 Someone should tell her (the teacher), because those are things that we get bothered by a lot.  
I-862 As my friend said, "when people are consistently picky, that is a sign of old age."  
I-864 Because we have such a deep respect for the teacher, we don't dare say anything, but even (Polish trainee) is very bothered by this. He says she's very impolite.  
I-1005 We were asked in what fields we wanted to look for work. I wrote down that I wanted to be a secretary. I said I knew I couldn't be a secretary right away because I was lacking in English. But she came and told us, "you have to be realistic (she was reading our choices to the whole class), for example wants to be a secretary, but her English..." This she said in front of everybody. I had just finished telling her; why was she going to embarass me like that? |
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<tr>
<td>15. &quot;We often wonder why we aren't addressed as capable, thinking adults. So often we are treated like children and basically ordered around - we are not ignorant.&quot;</td>
<td>I-872 And she has the nerve to say &quot;I need this, I need that.&quot; We are not asking much. It is true that she is talking to an immigrant, but we are not ignorant.</td>
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<td>I-878 I noticed the difference (edited) between the way we were addressed by different members of the staff. They (some staff members) were finer, different.</td>
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<td>I-910 ...to ask to go to the washroom.</td>
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<td>I-971 It is true that she was our teacher, but she should have seen how she was behaving.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-982 With another staff member there was a certain amount of freedom. She did not get bothered about as many things. She was not bothered by us not throwing orange peels in the garbage right away.</td>
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<td>was always the extreme, she was at you for this, for that.</td>
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<td>16. Denying one the opportunity to speak reduces one's chances to practice English. It seemed that those with better language skills had more opportunities to express themselves during class than those with &quot;poor&quot; English.</td>
<td>I-891 Some people were never asked questions. I think, they need more practice, but perhaps they are still too timid to speak because of poor English, but they really needed that opportunity more.</td>
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</table>
| 17. More empathy shown by staff would have made Esperanza feel better after a day's "job search." The purpose was to contact as many prospective employers as possible, but at times it seemed too much. | I-928 I felt obliged. We didn't have a minute. That is, we couldn't rest. We came here (Job Corps site) for one hour and a half - we had to work - and then out again to work all day. Don't they understand that one is human; one has the tendency to tire, wearing high heels,
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| 17. More empathy shown by staff...cont'd. | blisters on one's feet. On one occasion, I asked my counsellor, if we could do something different.  
I-948 My counsellor was very understanding and said that it was worse...with a baby at home. I remember I would come with my list of employers I had contacted, and all she could say was, "is that all you've done?"
I-953 I tried to explain that many times I had to wait a long time to see the managers. When I did say this she did seem to change towards me. Some things were unfair and I felt I did have to mention them to her. |
| 18. One's expectations of Canada as a country of opportunities are often destroyed. We are not given the opportunity to show our abilities in what we have been trained to do. | I-1025 I know I can't be a secretary of a company, but at least I can go into clerical work, I can work in an office. |
| 19. There were instances when these Esperanza felt that classmates could not express their feelings and opinions. | I-1043 ...but _______ was not seated in a good place (in the classroom), he didn't want to be there, he didn't even have enough room to write. She didn't care and acted as if we were in the programme because of her favour. I-1063 _______ didn't have a good seat and I felt badly for him, especially someone like him who didn't dare say anything. |
20. A multi-ethnic programme such as MOSAIC's Youth Job Corps gave Esperanza the opportunity to get acquainted with other ethnic groups.

I-1086 It has been difficult for me to understand _________. She isn't polite. I ask myself why? I have talked with her more. I asked her why she remained silent when she was addressed, or why she would look down and hide... I wondered why she was so impolite. Today I talked to her and she told me that she was ashamed to talk.

I-1133 ...is so beautiful, she shares so much with me. Initially, I noticed she was very quiet but now she approaches me and she talks to me. I didn't know that she doesn't like big groups.

I-1146 We need to get together so some don't feel so lonely. ...I have felt special towards _______ because of all the things that have happened to him. ...He doesn't have anyone to talk to about problems.

I-1171 It is difficult to understand the Chinese. I have avoided them because it costs me and I sometimes feel badly. They talk to me and I...I just don't understand them. I am close to _______ and (Vietnamese) and I find them very good people, they are nice, obliging. Many Latins are overwhelming, ...but they (Asians) are refined, they're very special. At least with me they've been special. I have also made lots of contact with _______ (Korean).
APPENDIX E

Transcript of Group Interview

Following an analysis of each individual interview transcript and follow-up individual interviews, a group interview with Esperanza, Maria and Alirio was held in order to clarify and extend themes from the original transcripts.

1. I: Según entiendo había tres razones principales por las cuales decidieron venirse al Canadá. Primero, para escaparse de la inseguridad personal del país de donde venían, segundo, una situación en la que no veían mejora alguna y tercero por razones personales. Mi pregunta es: la venida aca al Canadá les ha proporcionado los tres factores ya mencionados? Ha habido más oportunidades que ya se han cumplido y que sean prueba de que en realidad valió la pena haber venido aquí?

A: Francamente que cuando uno está en el país de donde venimos mucha gente te lo pinta diferente, no? Te dicen vas para el paraíso, bueno... bueno no tanto como el paraíso pero te dicen alla todo es mejor, la vida es mejor, y francamente cuando uno... pero cuando uno llega aca se da cuenta que tiene que luchar por vivir y... es difícil una adaptación y toda la cuestión y todo pero... como te digo las personas alla te lo pintan diferente pero cuando vienes aca, te das cuenta que no es lo mismo, que tienes que estar luchando.

M: Siempre hay problemas y hay que ver como resolverlos. Porque alla hay problemas y aquí hay problemas pero son problemas diferentes, pero son problemas que hay que resolver.

2. I: Exacto, alla es más fácil resolver ciertos problemas. Por ejemplo, pueden transferir problemas de alla aquí y pueden afirmar que aquí es más difícil?

M: Pues si aquí es más difícil mas que todo por la lengua, o por las costumbres o cosas así. Digamos, si uno tiene un problema en una oficina uno sabe como hablar y como reclamar sus derechos. Y aquí uno no puede hacer eso porque se traba todo... se queda uno todo tartamudo y ya uno mejor ni dice nada.

3. I: Entonces cuando no se dice nada, se siente uno como...

A: Con las manos... M: y A: atadas.
4. I: Pero se siente uno como oprimido, o se siente uno decepcionado, o se siente uno desilusionado?

M: De todo.
A: De todo un poco. Si, si, se siente uno decepcionado porque no puedes expresar tus sentimientos, no? Porque puede ser como tu lo dices: en una oficina puede ser que ellos estén actuando en una forma equivocada y tu tengas la razon y...y no lo puedes explicar porque ellos no te dan el derecho de explicarlo por la discriminacion, no? Porque siempre hay discriminacion contra el latino.

5. I: Hay discriminacion, pero que hacen ellos para que te sientas discriminado?

A: No, sinceramente ellos no te ensenan ahí al momento, la discriminacion pero imagina por ahí un ejemplo en la oficina de empleo...ellos te demuestran la discriminacion, no dandote un empleo en el cual tu tienes las cualidades para ese empleo, que tu consideras que ya sabes de esa cuestion y tu sabes que lo puedes hacer, ya tienes la experiencia necesaria para ese trabajo y no te lo dan, porque no hablas ingles.

E: No dominas la lengua.

(IV-72)

6. I: Y eso as cuando tu vas al employment centre?
A: En ese aspecto es así como ellos te demuestran la discriminacion, ellos no te lo ensenan directamente que te dicen vayase...
M: No, ellos no dicen no, pero si te ponen bastantes obstaculos que uno tiene que... que cada vez que uno dice algo, te ponen muchos peros...

7. I: Pero si tu llegaras a decir, bueno, déjenme ensayar porque no me deja tratar....

M: No, ellos simplemente dicen, no nosotros necesitamos a alguien con experiencia entonces uds. van a venir aca a ensayar... (risa).

8. I: Pero se siente uno con miedo de atreverse. Porque por ejemplo uno alla en nuestros paises dice, "mire, deme la oportunidad de demostrarle que yo si sé hacer de eso. Si no le gusta, pues me dice: "Pero... aqui es mucho el obstaculo?"

A: Bueno, es que influye para la mayoria de nosotros, no? Es el primer trabajo que venimos a hacer aca no? Pero si es el primer trabajo que venimos a hacer en un pais de donde uno no es, y nunca hemos tenido experiencia aca entonces yo creo que por eso es que la mayoria siempre temerosos de hacer esto no?
E: Si porque uno no ha adquirido la experiencia canadiense porque la mayoría que ya tienen esa experiencia canadiense a ellos no les importa lo que haya detrás, sino que ha pasado aquí en Canadá, pues si uno ha tenido alguna experiencia.

9. I: Entonces como uno recesita experiencia, un programa como el de MOSAIC si le abre a uno los puertas pues el trabajo que se consigue tal vez no sea en lo que uno tenga experiencia, pero si en alguna cosa ya sea para aprender o para ver si le gusta otro tipo de trabajo, no?

M: Para mí que ayuda bastante porque ahí mas que todo le ensenan a uno como adquirir la experiencia, como expresarte para convencer al empleador que le de el trabajo a uno, o como buscar un trabajo; todo eso ayuda bastante porque así para uno que viene que no sabe ni las reglas ni nada de eso.

10. I: Una vez en el trabajo, les da miedo hacer preguntas?

A: Bueno, es como te digo: esa es la primera experiencia que tiene uno en el trabajo porque yo este trabajo que tengo no es muy bueno por decirlo así. Ya experiencia de trabajo este que estoy haciendo, y si al principio me sentía temeroso de preguntar, pero ya con el tiempo se le quita a uno eso porque se va uno acostumbrando a ese sistema de estar trabajando, de estar con la misma gente, estarte relacionando con ella se te pasa el miedo, pero como te digo al principio como es la primera experiencia, o sea tienes miedo, no? No se... tienes miedo, es algo natural el miedo.

E: Es una inseguridad. La inseguridad de expresarse. Porque yo te digo, mi jefe es alemana, ella vino aquí como inmigrante, pero con mi jefe hay tantas cosas. Es alemana, porque las alemanas de si quieren todo perfecto. Cuando me contrató ahí, ella sabía, yo le dije todo: "yo soy inmigrante, no domino la lengua, pues yo trabajé en mi país como secretaria." Entonces ella me dijo que ahí lo que necesitaba era "office clerk"; alguien que le hiciera facturas de esto y de lo otro y que para adquirir experiencia en eso de las piedras... o sea que es mitad y mitad (risa) o sea que tenía que aprender yo de eso. Pero ya con los días ella ya no estaba muy contenta que digamos porque ella, ella se dio cuenta, y yo le dije que yo no sabía suficiente inglés, que yo necesitaba, que entendía todo pero no hablar como ahorita hablo yo el español, el inglés. No y además me estaba poniendo trabas y ella es una persona que hiere, que te lastima.

11. I: Por ejemplo; dame un ejemplo de qué hacía.

(IV-198) E: Me decía, well you *don't think*, dice, tu no piensas, es que eso es lógico, eso es lógico y no se que... (risa). Pero no es solo conmigo, ella es o sea, vieras yo se como es una gente y eso hubiera sido conmigo porque me las temía a mí; pero así trata a
su esposo; han llegado cinco señoritas a...seis a ver si pueden
trabajar ahí, y a todas las saca porque tienen esto, porque tienen
lo otro, porque no hablan, porque hablan mucho, como se visten,
porque no piensan, o sea pues yo... yo te digo que he soportado
eso porque necesito dinero y sé que no es solo conmigo por
decirlo así, o sea que sea algo personal, ni nada es que ya me dan
ganas de tirarle las piedras y todo en la cara, si... ay... me pongo
a guardar todo (grr... si porque no puedo decirlo todo lo que
quiero decir...

(IV-216)

12. I: Dices que estas en desventaja, por ejemplo en
comparación con el esposo? ¿Hay otra empleada ahí?

E: Si, o sea ha probado seis empleadas; a la penúltima le grito
y le dijo... fue una joven también, por ser joven que tal vez que
se atrevió; ella le dijo que ella era una persona que hería, que no
comprendía y que trataba así de menos a la gente y ella no iba a
soportar eso y que ella mejor se iba. Así le dijo y con su esposo lo
trata igual; ay... a mi hasta me da pena porque lo trata como si
fuera basura, como si no sirviera para nada.

13. I: Y el esposo no dice nada?

E: El también, el no dice nada yo creo... como tu sabes que si
tu le dices a una persona todos los días o le das a entender que no
sirves para nada, pues más se va la persona traumando y piensa
que es... que en realidad es cierto porque... o yo no se por qué;
también es que tiene ella es que sufrió un accidente y tiene los
dedos... (shows two middle fingers cut off) estos dos dedos no los
tiene, entonces debe ser algo... porque sabes que esas personas se
acomplejan y se sienten inferior, verdad? Y muchas cosas
pues...

14. I: Y en tu caso, lo que has hecho es aceptar la personalidad
de ella, no te sientes que es una discriminación porque tu inglés
no es bueno?

E: Bueno ella me ha dicho, es que no sabes tu inglés, es que no
se que... o cosas así, o me dice es que yo necesito a una persona
que sepa inglés. Y eso es cierto, necesita una persona que
domine el inglés porque ese es un negocio que es tan delicado,
tienes que explicar todo: como es una piedra, tiene un corte así,
tiene un fragmento, es tanto, verdad? Yo mas o menos lo
puedo decir pero no con la fluidez y a veces lo que mas me
cuesta es entender al canadiense, al que habla inglés, inglés
porque hablan a mil por hora y ahí es... cuando siento si...

(IV-262)

15. I: Y a uds. dos qué les pasa en situaciones similares?

M: Bueno yo tal vez no tengo que estar en tanto contacto con
otras personas de la fábrica. Por ejemplo si no ha llegado un
producto tengo que llamar a la fábrica y preguntar.
16. I: Como se sienten hablando el inglés cuando saben que el jefe los esta mirando?

M: Yo si siento que... digamos el me dice, habla por teléfono y pregunte por tal cosa. Ahí tengo que pensar: como pregunto, como digo.

17. I: Y el jefe se queda ahí mirando?

M: No, el no se queda ahí, el se pone a hacer otras cosas pero yo se que el esta pendiente de la llamada que voy a hacer y de lo que voy a decir.

18. I: Y te hace algun comentario después?

M: Si, a veces si, me dice, no digas asi, o la proxima vez di esto y esto... pero porque no mas bien me lo dice antes de que yo meta la pata. Cuando ya he dicho algo malo ya me dice tienes que decirlo asi y asi...

E: Pero por lo menos no te hace sentir de menos, no te hiere.

M: Bueno al principio si, mas que todo porque me ponía cebo, me explotaba. Supuestamente yo tenia que hacer un trabajo de oficina y cuando yo llegué me paso a pintar, a barrer, me pusieron a cambiarle las placas al carro, me pusieron a que limpiara las alfombras del carro y todo esto yo lo hacia por que? Porque yo queria conservar mi trabajo. Ahora el tenia otro empleado que le hacia no se que, y ahora que se fue ese empleado, quién hace el trabajo de el? Pues lo tengo que hacer yo. O sea que estoy haciendo doble trabajo. El me prometió un aumento, pero (giggle) hasta ahora yo no he visto nada. No mas que $20.00 de bonus, pero creo que eso no es un aumento.

19. I: Aunque estén haciendo el trabajo de otros, consideran uds. que las oportunidades que tienen en el sitio de trabajo si les abre campo para mejorar la habilidad que necesitan para ese tipo de empleo, o para mejorar el inglés?

A: Pues fijate que francamente yo si me considero que me dan la oportunidad ahí, no? Porque solo me dicen, tienes que hacer esto y esto y yo no lo he hecho ni una vez y solo me dicen ve a traer las cuestiones que tienes que hacer y me dejan a mí, y yo trato de hacerlo y me lo explican... Pero si considero que me dan la oportunidad, no? (E: igual a mí). Si porque muchas veces si ellos me ponen a hacer muchas cosas y yo nunca las he hecho, pero si me explican: primero tienes que hacer esto, después lo otro y va... y si me dan la oportunidad.

20. I: Y te tratan bien?

A: Si me tratan bien. Pero, eso ha sido nada mas con el tiempo porque al principio si considero yo que echaba de ver que
me tenían bastante confianza, no? Pero ahora porque ya tengo algún tiempo de estar ahí ya veo que ya me tratan de confianza. (E: bueno sí)

21. I: Y no es que ya hayas aprendido a hacer las cosas mejor?
A: Bueno, no sé a qué se deberá eso, pero ya siento que me tienen más confianza.

22. I: Cuando se llevan bien con el empleador, siguen tratando de hacer las cosas bien a ver si les dan aumento, o lo piden?
E: A mí me han subido $60.00 mas no es mucho, pero...
M: A mí me coge es un poco de miedo porque me imagino que si a él no le parece, me dice que mejor me vaya.
A: Si ese es el temor de uno, perder el trabajo porque uno no sabe que le va a decir.

23. I: Pero tu crees que es diferente para los no inmigrantes?
A,E,M: Totalmente de acuerdo.
M: Sí, ellos (los canadienses) a la hora que quieren, dejan el trabajo y no les importa.
E: A los canadienses yo me he dado cuenta que no les importa.

A: Bueno, a ellos no los afecta lo mismo por lo que veo yo. No sé, pero yo considero que a ellos no los afecta estar trabajando o cortando trabajo; no les importa a los canadienses. En cambio a uno, si corta uno el trabajo ya no puede recibir ayuda del Welfare. Y si no has completado el Unemployment no puedes recibir ayuda del Unemployment.

25. I: Pero, entonces cómo hacen? Por qué los canadienses tienen las mismas reglas que todo el mundo, o no?
A: Quién sabe... pero es por el landed.
A: Si yo creo que sí.
M: Por ejemplo mi hermano: él estaba trabajando y cortó. Ahí mismo tuvo problemas en su trabajo porque todos querían ser jefes y por eso él cortó. Ya tenía 7 meses de estar trabajando ahí, pero no le daban a él los derechos que le daban a los demás. Los canadienses que piensan que uno sin la lengua y siempre lo quieren tener a uno de menos o decir, tienes que hacer esto porque yo te digo o así... bueno el corto. Fue al Unemployment, hizo la... la aplicación y ya tiene tres meses de estar sin trabajo y sin recibir ni 5 del Unemployment.
26. **I:** Y el Welfare? (D: esa es otra cosa)

**M:** El Welfare no le da sino $100.

27. **I:** Al mes?

**M:** Al mes.

**E:** Yo no se por qué son así. Porque se supone que tu has pagado.

**M:** Si claro.

**E:** Y entonces, por qué no te dan el dinero? Eso paso con mi cuñada. Ella tuvo que dejarlo por una operación. Pero estaba en la ley de que le dieran el Unemployment. Bueno, vaya que le dieron los $95.00 por 3 meses. Es que no sé que pasa.

**A:** Eso lo hacen por castigo. Creo yo, ¿no?

**M:** Por castigo. Bueno por cortar mas bien. O.K. esta bien pero dicen porque son mes y medio o algo así vaya de castigo pero... pero al pasar ese mes y medio le tienen que dar a uno. Porque es algo que uno ha pagado, verdad? Lo único que están haciendo es darle la ayuda de regreso a uno y claro que cuando uno trabaja tiene que seguir pagando eso porque es algo que ya le descuentan a uno, verdad?

**A:** O sea tienes derechos.

28. **I:** Según entiendo yo hay una espera antes de que le llegue a uno el U.I.C.

**E:** Y qué hace uno mientras tanto?

29. **I:** Me imagino que les dan Welfare.

**M, E:** No.

**A:** Ese es el problema que tiene _________, porque el estaba trabajando y corto. Y paso sin ayuda creo que dos meses y estuvo recibiendo ayuda del Welfare pero una miseria.

30. **I:** Inmediatamente?

**A:** No, tuvo que hacer bastantes vueltas y le pusieron peros en el Welfare; pero como el siguió insistiendo y no se dio por vencido, ¿no? le dieron una ayuda pero no fue suficiente. Ahora ya está trabajando.

(IV-479) **M:** Del Unemployment lo mandan al Welfare y del Welfare al U.I. y así lo tiene a uno.

31. **I:** Así como están pintando la situación aca en Canada y de como se imaginaban ese país: estudiar, mejorar, trabajar, escalar clases sociales, etc.) Creen uds. que las ilusiones que tenían del Canada se van a cumplir o no se van a cumplir?
A: Fíjate que para mí ese futuro que yo espero que me llegue a mí si lo veo bastante lejano. O sea yo tener algo que es tuyo, establecido, o sea ya estar un poco más asentado en el sistema económico ya está bastante lejos.

32. I: Por ahora estas en un puesto muy temporal?

A: Si, porque yo no aspiro a quedarme como panadero toda mi vida... (chuckle from all 3) y primero tengo que aprender el idioma, no? Es bastante difícil, porque no lo voy a aprender de un día para otro y por eso te digo que lo veo bastante lejos de mi futuro.

33. I: Uds. me habían dicho que vinieron aquí dispuestos a aceptar cualquier trabajo. Mientras trabajan tienen una fuente de ingreso y están practicando el inglés, ya sea por lo que hablan y por lo que esta pasando a su alrededor. O... te la pasas amazando pan?

A: No, yo si he aprendido.

E: Yo ya en realidad he avanzado bastante. Pero, yo pienso que si uno se pone las pilas, puedes. Pero te cuesta, si tu quieres algo pues tienes que hacer el esfuerzo. Y yo se, yo si miro pues la oportunidad de que tu avances. Pues si, porque si tu quieres, tu puedes, o sea si tu te pones tu meta... y aquí lo podes lograr porque aquí hay medios. O sea porque tengamos ahorita este problema, pero cada vez va uno aprendiendo cada vez más inglés, tu te puedes meter a estudiar entonces ya...

34. I: Es cosa de uno, es individual.

E: Pues yo pienso que si. Además yo he tenido en realidad he tenido pues... eh... yo siento que estoy mejor aquí que en mi país. Pues no es que estuviera mal, o sea económicamente estaba... pertenecía a la clase media, verdad? Con una casa, mi familia, todos trabajando bien, pero ya se estaba poniendo muy mala la situación ahorita en Guatemala. Eso platicamos con mi esposo tenía dificultades... verdad (chuckles... she knows she told me about these problems before - signals that she does not want to repeat in front of others). Y en realidad yo aquí siento que al menos tenemos esa seguridad de que no te van a ir a asaltar en tu carro cuando tu estes a media calle. Tu tienes esa seguridad y ademas la posibilidad de subir.

35. I: Ya estando aquí en Canada, se sienten que Canada les va a brindar "lo prometido?" Porque a mí han contado varios inmigrantes incluyendo uds. que cuando se viene de un país donde no hay Welfare y aquí si lo hay, el idioma es muy duro de aprender, entonces la gente va a optar por la solución más fácil que generalmente es: bueno, si no hay empleo para que me
esfuerzo, yo mas bien me quedo sin hacer nada, se vuelven perezosos, los atrapa la decidia.

A: (Risa) Si, vacaciones permanentes.
E: De vicio!
M: Son personas que no piensan en el futuro. Porqué que va a pasar cuando el Welfare les diga ya nada mas, y qué van a hacer luego! Ellos no tienen nada. Ni de experiencia para buscar un trabajo, ni valor para buscar un trabajo. Ese es el problema que uno no siempre debe pensar que toda la vida el gobierno siempre va a estar manteniéndolo. Esta bien cuando uno lo necesita, cuando uno viene que uno esta amarrado completamente de pies y manos, pero como se mueve uno, sin saber absolutamente nada, no puede uno, ahí si esta bien que uno este aceptando la ayuda y todo eso pero después cuando ya sabe donde esta todo, puede uno movilizarse, por uno mismo pues.

36. I: Y también un proposito individual que uno tenga en la vida, no? Eso de trabajar lo mantiene a uno mas sano, verdad?

E: Si yo creo que esa es una satisfaccion. Yo pienso que nosotros los que trabajamos sentimos una satisfaccion de que no estamos dependiendo, que nos den como a un bebe, que solo lo este aceptando.

37. I: Cuéntenme una cosa: Es mas facil aplicar para venirse aca desde Guatemala, o Mejico? Desde donde es mas facil?

E: Yo creo que desde Guatemala no es mas facil; ademas no es muy seguro, o sea no creo que haya mucha seguridad para los salvadoreños alla.
M: Yo apliqué en Méjico.
E: Yo también.

38. I: Lo viste muy complicado aplicar desde Guatemala? Pensaste que te iban a decir que no?

E: Lo que pasa es que alla tiene... (risa, looks at Maria)
M: Si aplica uno alla y al siguiente dia ya desapareció. Al dia siguiente ya se fue para el Canada. (Carcajadas) Para los guatemaltecos en Guatemala no creo que sea tan seguro. Yo apliqué desde Méjico, porque alla estaba cuando supimos del programa.
E: Alirio estaba en Belize, no?
A: Pero a mi se me tardo 8 meses... los resultados.
E: Yo me vine aqui rapido por lo del bebé.

39. I: Y entonces qué pasa en Guatemala, es que el tipo de entrevista es mas dificil? Hay que ponerse de acuerdo en lo que hay que decir? Mejor dicho, dice uno la verdad?
M: Supuestamente tiene que decir la verdad. Pero a veces tiene que echar mentiras.
A: Si... una mentira piadosa, no?

40. I: Porque si a uno de primerazo no lo aceptan, ya no tiene una segunda oportunidad?
M,A,E: No.
E: Ya no. O sea a la primera si no te aceptan ya olvidate.
A: Yo me encontré con personas que aplicaron el mismo día que yo apliqué y no las aceptaron. Ahí mismo les dijeron que otra solicitud ya no se las aceptaban porque ya esa quedaba alla.
M: Pero entonces ellos ya saben que es lo que tienen que decir y van a otras embajadas. Por ejemplo de Australia, de Francia, hay mas. Si creo que eso es lo que ellos hacen si de verdad necesitan salir del país.

41. I: Para irse a otro país, y no necesariamente al Canada?
E: Si a Australia. Yo se de muchos salvadoreños que se fueron fue para Australia.

42. I: Y a Australia pensaron alguna vez uds.?
E: Me gustaria pero de viaje. Pero vivir hasta del otro lado...

43. I: Es porque Canada esta mas cerquita para ir alla?
E: Y estas en America.

44. I: Esa cercanía es importante. Y la nocion del programa canadiense fue a través de amigos?
E: Si, y también yo pienso que es por asunto político pues. Como va a aceptar el gobierno lo que no ha querido admitir que hay esos casos asi?
M: En el Salvador, por ejemplo, no hay embajada canadiense. Llega un consul cada 6 meses o algo asi, pero nunca esta en el mismo lugar. Siempre esta en diferente lugar y la gente tiene que buscarlo. Hay que tener cuidado porque no a cualquiera se le puede preguntar, es muy peligroso, entonces uno tiene que... no sé como es que ellos hacen para averiguar donde esta el consul, qué día y la hora.

45. I: Y tu desde Belize sabías donde aplicar, Alirio?

(IV-686) A: Si, por medio de amigos. Como yo ya conocía varios amigos. Varios fuimos y a todos les rechazaron la solicitud. Solo a mi me aceptaron, pero por lo que te digo; yo si supe responder. O sea, que otras personas que fueron conmigo no los aceptaron.
46. I: No vale la pena ser demasiado honrado?

A: Si, no vale la pena.
E: Hay que exagerar.
A: Yo te lo digo, la mayoría de las personas que estamos aca es porque hemos mentido. Ya sea en un aspecto o en otro.
E: Es cierto.
M: Uno tiene que mentir por necesidad. No mentir nada mas porque quiero conocer Canada!

47. I: Y la necesidad de venir aca son las razones que yo había mencionado?

E: La inseguridad.
A: La falta de oportunidad.
E: La falta de oportunidad.
A: O sea en nuestro pais no se puede lo mismo.

48. I: Y eso en qué aspecto?

A: Por lo menos cuando tu terminas tu bachillerato hay un mínimo de oportunidad para el nuevo estudiante. En todas partes se exigen experiencia y como tu acabas de salir de estudiar, como vas a tener experiencia? O sea, no te dan oportunidad.
M: Y tambien es que no hay trabajo. Si uno sale de bachillerato y quiere salir a una oficina a coger experiencia, practicar contabilidad, asi... No alla va a trabajar uno de lo que le salga, entonces de qué sirve tanto estudio?

49. I: Y aqui si?

M: Bueno, aqui si. Yo creo que aqui si ayuda.
E: Aqui, ya estudiante yo pienso que si.
A: Claro, eso digo yo, que si tu tenes tu estudio, tu preparacion, puedes conseguir tu trabajo.
E: Si eso es lo que pienso yo. Hay que tener en mente, nosotros pues, seguir adelante, estudiar ante todo. Y eso un sacrificio que uno tiene que hacer, o si no, nos vamos a quedar en el mismo lugar, verdad? Porque ahorita dejamos al bebe solo, verdad? Pero si no, qué le vamos a poder brindar después; siempre vamos a estar en lo mismo. Y si los 2 tenemos que hacer sacrificio, Alfredo y yo.

50. I: Cuando dicen que aqui hay mas oportunidad, a qué se refieren especificamente.

E: Las escuelas nocturnas, por ejemplo.
A: Hay mas oportunidad aqui.
M: Hay mas oportunidad, pero claro que tambien uno tiene que buscar la manera y sacrificarse por un lado para estar bien.
E: Para uno, es más cuestión de sacrificio; tiene uno que esforzarse pues estudiar y trabajar al mismo tiempo es más duro.

51. I: Y vale la pena?

E: Si, vale la pena porque en un futuro sabes que eso lo usas.

(IV-759) Y además si has ido trabajando a medida que estás estudiando, después ya tienes el inglés.

52. I: Y qué beneficios específicos les puede brindar esa oportunidad?

A: Bueno lo que todo inmigrante aspira es a tener una vida mejor a la que dejó. No como la que tu tenías en tu país, porque aquí no va a ser lo mismo. Pero si pues, vivir cómodamente, que no te falte nada o sea no como rey, no? Porque aquí todas las personas que lo han hecho son inmigrantes, entonces por qué no lo vamos a poder hacer nosotros? O sea que lo podemos hacer si nos proponemos.

M: Si, toca es proponerse.

(IV-776) E: Todo es tener esa meta en tu cabeza y llegarla a cumplir. Llegarla a realizar aunque te toque sacrificios, como te digo, a uno le va a tocar sacrificios.

53. I: El incentivo les llega entonces es de otros inmigrantes?

M: Si ese es el animo que uno agarra.

54. I: Y lo han sabido a través de otros inmigrantes?

M: Es que uno ve. Digamos a todos los Chinos manejando buenos carritos y con casa.

A: Eso los ves así: polacos, latinos todos inmigrantes. Si se preocupan pueden llegar a tener todo.

55. I: Como saben uds. qué es lo que tienen que hacer para lograr lo que han logrado los otros?

A: Para mi que estamos aquí en el tiempo perfecto para nosotros. Otro tiempo no hubiera podido ser mejor para viajar a Canada. O sea estamos jóvenes, tenemos una larga vida por delante. Así yo creo que ha hecho todo inmigrante; ellos vienen jóvenes aca, se preparan bien y ya cuando llegan a los 30, 35, ya esta bien adaptada.

M: Ya tienen algo.

A: Los inmigrantes que han venido aca y han aprovechado el tiempo, a todos les ha ido bien.
56. I: La recompensa la ven entonces a largo plazo.

M: Si a veces uno quiere dejar el trabajo, pero después uno piensa, y qué voy a hacer? Quizas si me voy a otro sitio no prospero o tal vez dejo este trabajo cuando tenga algo mejor que esto. Uno siempre va pensando en el FUTURO, en el FUTURO.

57. I: Quieren asegurar algo.

(IV-828) M: Si tal vez por eso uno no deja el trabajo así no mas. Si tiene que aguantar de todo.

E: Yo he tratado de comprender a mi jefa. Ella ha tenido una vida dura. Es de Alemania y del tiempo de la guerra. Dice que cuando era pequeña el tiempo tampoco estaba bueno. Sufrió y dijo que estaba pobre y ella vino aquí grande, ya tenía 30 años y ahora ya es dueña de su negocio, tiene dinero, tiene su casa. Pero a ella le costo sobretodo el dominio de la lengua.

58. I: No sabía inglés?


59. I: Y en los países de Centro América si se dedica uno a lavar carros así se queda durante toda la vida no?

E: La gente que tiene escasos recursos en nuestros países yo no sé como hacen.

M: Si en realidad la gente del campo cómo hacen?

E: Si es tan deprimente pensar que nacen así y mueren así. Siempre oprimidos o siempre explotados. Triste para nosotros, porque en Guatemala es el indígena quien esta bastante explotado y en realidad aquí se pone a pensar uno en ellos. Al darse uno cuenta que yo he sido racista, pero eso viene de la familia que dice que los indios son aquí y son allá.

M: Y todos en realidad somos indios. Después de estar aca uno comprende tantas cosas que uno en su país tal vez no las veía así tan claros.

60. I: Y todas las amistades que tienen son en su mayoría latinos?

A: Si conoce uno mas de ellos.

E: Un francés que habla español me dijo que cuando primero vino aca tenía relación con franceses. Pero luego se esforzó a luego conocer canadienses primero que todo para que le ayudaran con la lengua. Y ese es un buen ejemplo. El ha estado aca
viviendo bastante tiempo, pero ya está muy bien. Empieza uno desde cero. El tiene ahora una casa linda y una vida buena.

M: Eso conviene bastante, conviviendo con una persona que no hable más que inglés.

E: Eso es lo mejor para uno.

61. I: Y entonces por qué no buscan más personas que hablen inglés entre uds.?

M: Porque hay personas con quien uno puede platicar sin ningún problema, entonces para qué me busco problemas. Si uno no puede expresarse, es tan difícil.

A: Lo mejor es cuando en el lugar donde trabajas te dan confianza no? Porque saben que tu no hablas bien el inglés, pero ellos entienden y te ayudan, cuando quieres darte a entender. Ellos te explican esto es así o asa, o sea te sientes como en confianza. Estas aprendiendo mas. En mi trabajo muchos de mis compañeros si me ayudan bastante, o sea son comprensivos, me ayudan y por eso me siento en confianza de platicar con ellos.

62. I: Son de tu misma edad?

A: Sí, son de mi edad, pero las personas mayores también son muy buenas. No sé si sería suerte la que tuvo, pero me tratan como a cualquier otro. Fijate que cuando comenzé a trabajar ahí empezé a $4.25 la hora y con el tiempo ellos me dijeron que estaba trabajando bien, yo me preocupaba por hacer lo mejor posible y ellos mismos me dijeron qué tanto me iban a aumentar. O sea, no tuve necesidad de pedir yo el aumento.

M: Eso es lo bueno cuando uno tiene suerte, se encuentra con buenos jefes así en el trabajo. Ellos se fijan en el trabajo de uno, en el esfuerzo que hace uno por hacer todo casi a la perfección. Y es bueno cuando ellos se fijan, eso le da a uno... como que uno se anima más. Uno dice esto lo hice y lo puedo hacer y lo hago.

E: Inclusivo mi jefa cuando está de buenas hasta me dice que muy bien, que como he aprendido; pero cuando está de malas, sí que lo echa a uno abajo, pero te digo que yo sí me he esforzado porque como es ella yo no hubiera aguantado. Ella sí se ha dado cuenta que yo me esfuerzo y todo. És que es un trabajo muy minucioso. Trabajamos con cosas de valor y es muy perfeccionista. En realidad ella se da cuenta de mi esfuerzo. Siento que dentro de poco me va a dar un aumento.

63. I: Ya sabes con seguridad?

E: Si porque ya entiendo bien lo que quiere. Al principio yo no sabía qué quería decir cada cosa. Hasta las formas de las piedras. Todo me ha tocado aprenderlo. Fue muy difícil en realidad.
64. I: Pero ella te ha ido ayudando.
E: Cuando ha tenido paciencia, sí.

65. I: En una ocasión anterior, me habían mencionado que los canadienses cortan trabajo y se va. Me dijeron que los latinos por lo menos aguantan mucho más, a qué se debe eso?
M: Por la necesidad, tal vez. Uno se siente así como obligado a aguantar un poquito, claro que también hay un límite, pero uno sabe también hasta donde puede aguantar uno y hasta donde uno dice, ya no aguanto más.
E: Sí, eso es cierto.
(IV-984)
A: Creo que lo que también influye es que la persona latina está acostumbrada a trabajar. No importa la clase de trabajo que hagas. No importa si es pesado o fácil. El latino es trabajador. El salvadoreno sí está acostumbrado a trabajar.

66. I: El que no trabaja, no come.
M: Aja, así es por alla, trabajar.
A: Exacto. Por eso considero que somos más tolerantes. Lo que hemos comentado aquí de que el canadiense corta es porque el empleador les ha llamado la atención o les dice así. Pues al día siguiente el canadiense ya no llega. Les dice que ya no quiere trabajar.
E: Sí, así son.
A: Yo lo que no se es cómo hacen ellos para sobrevivir. Si... para el latino el Welfare no te ayuda, si no completas "unemployment" no recibes ninguna ayuda. Eso es lo que me pregunto yo. Como hacen ellos para sobrevivir? Porque la situación de trabajo no es que este muy bueno para nadie. Pero, entonces, cómo hacen? Si por ahora cortan, cómo van a hacer manana para recibir dinero o comer?

67. I: Yo todavía tengo curiosidad por saber si el nivel de tolerancia del latino es en realidad más alto que el del canadiense. En ambos grupos hay gente muy perezosa.
A: Pero aquí en Canadá es el sistema el que contribuye a hacerlo perezoso.
E: Yo pienso que Welfare es bueno y todo pero hasta cierto punto, porque tanta gente lo abusa.
M: Y hay cantidades de latinos que hacen lo mismo y lo mismo.
E: Sabes qué dicen? "Nuestra familia es muy grande y para irme a matar trabajando para ganarme lo mismo que me da Welfare..."
M: Y es que a veces ganan menos de lo que el Welfare les paga.
E: Ese es el problema.
M: Aja, tienen tres o cuatro niños y el Welfare les da una cantidad de dinero por los niños y vienen y consiguen un trabajo de $500 o $600.
E: Para qué van a trabajar si el Welfare les va a dar cierta cantidad?
A: Ese es el problema para familias cuando llegan aca. Pero para uno solo si con el salario mínimo que empiezas tu a ganar, ganas un poco más que el Welfare. Pero las familias tienen más problemas aca en ese sentido. Muchos de ellos no van a ir a trabajar por $5.00 o $6.00 con una familia de 2 niños y esposa. No les sale. Siempre tendrán que estar recibiendo ayuda del Welfare.
E: Aja.

68. I: Cuando primero llegan les dan $70.00 semanal y luego, mientras que estan en K.E.C. continuan con las misma suma?
A,E,M: lo mismo.
E: Eso nunca sube.
A: La única diferencia que sienten es que te lo dan cada 15 días y en Inmigracion a muchos es mensualmente que lo dan.

(IV-1050) M: Pero es el mismo dinero. $70.00 semanales.

69. I: Y después de terminar en el K.E.C. qué pasa?
M: Nos da el Welfare.
A: Pero te dan menos.

70. I: Y les dan Welfare inmediatamente?
M: A mi me lo dieron la semana que apliqué. Tuve suerte. Muchos tuvieron que esperar.

71. I: Y mientras que esperan al Welfare, a quién le tienen que presentar los 20 firmas de empleadores con quienes se han puesto en contacto?
M: A Inmigracion.
E: Aja.
A: La lista de 20 firmas se la llevas a Inmigracion cuando el dinero lo estas recibiendo de ellos.
E: Inmigracion te da un cheque mensual.

72. I: Se intercambian uds. listas a veces?
A: Fijate que el Salvadoreño ya descubrió otro sistema, pero yo creo que no conviene decirlo. Es secreto.
(I turned the tape recorder off to see if they would tell me - NO LUCK.)
M: Si, uno de buena fé se va a buscar firmas. Pero por ejemplo en los 5 lugares donde entré me achicaron. Cosa que
uno se siente tan feo, que a uno le dan ganas de llorar. "Y yo por qué voy a firmar", me decían. Y entonces como es la primera vez que uno sale, uno no halla que decir en el momento, uno se queda callado. No tiene la experiencia ni la lengua.

E: Es que es algo muy ilógico. Tu no sabes nada.

A: Francamente yo no recuerdo listas. Siempre tuve problema en el Welfare. La oficial de Inmigración me dio una carta para que la llevara al Welfare para que ellos me dieran ayuda y cuando llego al Welfare, la trabajadora social me dijo que a ella no le interesaba y ni quiso leer la carta. "Eso no me interesa, tu no vas a recibir ayuda", me dijo.

E: ¿Qué es eso?

A: Te vas para abajo tu. Allí no mas te achican. Aquí no nos interesa que traigas carta del Primer Ministro.

M: Porque como uno llega pidiendo ayuda, no? Y como le dan esas cartas a uno, para donde agarra uno entonces?

E: Yo tuve un problema con Welfare por lo de la babysitter y yo solo estaba trabajando, no mi esposo.

(It seems that E ended paying for the babysitter without any subsidy - it was not worth it.)

I: Parece que tienen que superar muchos obstáculos uds.

E: Si es casi igual con la gente latina.

M: Y cada vez hay mas problemas. Ahora no les quieren dar ni Medical Plan, ni aunque uno lo pague, no tiene uno derecho al M.P.!

E: Ese es el problema que yo tengo, porque yo estoy con permiso ministerial, me dijeron que en menos de un mes me iba a dar residents status. Entonces yo escribi una carta diciendo que llevaba tiempo de estar aca, que me iban a dar residents. Me respondieron diciendo que no me lo podían dar (M.S.P.) y que eso tardaría otros nueve meses mas.

M: Y si a uno se le enferma el niño?

E: He tenido problemas. Siquiera mi médico es consciente y me deja verlo a "crédito". En noviembre se me enfermo y todavía le dan temperaturas, pero como hago para saber? El Medical no me lo quieren dar y yo no lo estoy pidiendo gratis, y yo lo quiero pagar! Te mandan de MOSAIC a un insurance donde te vale $130.00 y pico al mes! Uno no puede!

M: Si, a todas las familias que llegan con niños yo les digo de MOSAIC y cuando van alla les dicen que ellos no pueden hacer nada, porque esas son cosas del gobierno. Dicen que todas las personas con el permiso ministerial no tienen derecho a recibir el medical.

E: Lo están desamparando.
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75.  

I: Cuanto se demora la adquisicion Residents una vez que uno tenga el permiso ministerial?

E: A mi en Mejico me dijeron que un ano. La vamos a mandar ya, pero sus papeles de residencia se los vamos a mandar en 15 dias. Pero alla le haran todo su papeleo y dentro de un ano le daran su residencia.

M: Pero supuestamente son los mismos derechos que uno debe tener.

E: Si el gobierno lo ha traido a uno, lo tiene que amparar.

M: Y los que sufren son los ninos y la gente adulta. Uno de joven como sea va a la farmacia y compra aspirinas y se le pasa el mal.

E: Aja... Aja...

M: Eso le dije yo a Inmigracion. Que uno aguanta pero el nino no, y eso que uno ni sabe qué es lo que tiene tampoco.

76.  

I: Y no han ido donde un médico de habla hispana que les entienda la situacion?

M: Si, claro y dicen, la puedo atender pero son $20.00. Mi mama por ejemplo, vino al mismo tiempo con mi papa y a él ya le salio todo el papel de residencia, los papeles y todo.

A: Yo no entiendo esa situacion porque yo estoy con permiso ministerial y yo ya tengo mi Medical.

E: Y por qué te lo dieron?

M: A lo mejor porque estas trabajando.

A: Pero cuando lo recibí, no estaba trabajando.

E: Es que esa gente no tiene sistema. Cuando se les da la gana hacen das cosas y cuando no, no.

M: No hay organizacion. Entre ellos mismos se contradicen.

A: Ahora me acuerdo que ese plan lo saqué en el curso (Job Corps) cuando hablé con la consejera. Se me iba a vencer el medical, y el gobierno mando una carta para ver si quería renovar el medical.

M: La nueva ley: el nino no tiene derecho al medical asi se muera.

A: Recibi el Permiso Ministerial y el social, pero me toco esperar un ano para recibir el resident segun me dijeron. Hasta ahora no tengo resident. Al llegar aca, yo vine con permiso pero me dieron el social de residente. No reconocen el error.

E: Son como impotentes.

M: Ellos cometen los errores y no saben reconocerlos. Uno es el equivocado.

A: Lo unico que te dicen es, lo siento y con eso queda todo arreglado.

E: Si, es que eso de no tener la residencia te quita la oportunidad de no tener un buen trabajo. Porque a la mayoria no les dan trabajo si no son residentes. Hasta que no tengan residencia, no pueden aspirar a mucho. Es que a este gobierno yo no lo entiendo. Fijate que Ricardo es canadiense. Tiene los
derechos de un niño canadiense. Es igual a todos, y no tiene ni Medical Plan. Me dijeron que eso se toma por familia. No tiene familia.

77. I: No tiene family allowance?

E: No.
M: Y como ella hay muchos casos. A esta familia lo que les dijeron es que los latinos lo que debíamos hacer era organizarnos, recoger firmas, así por que es verdad que los latinos tenemos menos derechos que los chinos o los polacos. Ellos mismos, que trabajan en esa organización dicen que nosotros tenemos menos derechos que los demás. Que somos nosotros los que tenemos que organizarnos. Pero eso ya viene como una organización política y entonces la gente dice, vengo huyendo de eso qué me vuelvo a meter aquí. Entonces la gente se queda así aguantando.

78. I: Pienso ahora en el programa, encontraron alguna situación discriminativa?

E: Cuando yo tuve mi entrevista, y me preguntó qué clase de trabajo quería y yo le dije que de oficinista... se queda haciendo muecas.
M: Como es que un inmigrante viene y aspira a trabajar de eso! Así me dijo a mi, porque yo le dije que quería trabajar de cajera. Que para mí es algo muy sencillo, verdad? Pero uno no sabe y por lo menos uno trae una idea y el no tiene ningún derecho a botarle la idea a uno.
E: Y piensa uno es en un trabajo donde pueda uno aprender más inglés.

79. I: Se dan cuenta uds. que a veces los tratan como si fueran menos capaces?

E: Yo creo que muchos canadienses piensan que uno viene de la jungla.
M: Muchos nos dan la impresión que ellos piensan que uno viene de un país donde no existen ni las gradas eléctricas. De veras, porque le preguntan a uno que si hay edificios o si hay casas de cemento. Un señor en mi trabajo me preguntó que si había luz. Y de ahí uno se da cuenta que no es uno el ignorante, son ellos los ignorantes.
E: Otros me preguntan que donde queda Guatemala?
M: A mí me preguntaban si yo hablaba mejicano guatemalteco... por último uno dice que los ignorantes son ellos.

80. I: La ignorancia de los otros, los hace sentir mejor?

M: Si, un poquito.
A: Hm...mm... bueno cuando a mi me salen repugnante yo les contesto igual. Yo sé que tenemos los mismo derechos que a
cualquiera aquí. Yo no me les quedo callado. La cuestión es no dejarse humillar. Al principio, si porque no tenía nada de experiencia, no estaba adaptado a la vida y me dejaba manejar. Pero ahora no. Ya sé como es la vida aca y mas o menos yo no me dejo.

E: Sabes tus derechos.

81. I: Volviendo al día que llegaron, habría una diferencia muy marcada si la persona que los recibiera en el aeropuerto hablara español?

M: Si, es muy necesario porque la gente que viene directamente de El Salvador, el cambio es exageradísimo. Esas son los gentes que les viene a dar en la cara, porque las traen, las vienen a dejar en el hotel y de ahí, qué hacen?

A: Desde que yo llegué por primera vez a Inmigración, yo no tenía ni idea que existiera MOSAIC o cualquier otra oficina que ayudara a latinos.

M: Ahora parece que si hay un señor en Inmigración.

A: Si ayudaría, porque ni con tu nombre; no sabes ni que te están preguntando. Pero yo creo que sí ha mejorado un poco la situación. Creo que ya tienen un hombre.

82. I: En una ocasión me dijeron uds. que el latino de primerazo no tiene las mismos oportunidades que los otros.

A: Si, en el mismo gobierno se ve que al latino lo tienen bien reprimido.

M: Yo creo que son los que mejor trabajan, los que mejores esfuerzos hacen, creo yo porque uno no esta relacionado con los demás. O como dice el (Alirio) como uno esta acostumbrado a trabajar.

83. I: Cuando tu estabas diciendo que al latino no lo tratan igual, a qué te estabas refiriendo?

A: En el aspecto de inmigración. Allá había una persona para inmigrantes europeos, asiáticos, pero no para latinos. Esto todo le da a uno la impresión que hay discriminación.

M: Porque una se da cuenta que están hablando otro idioma, y esta el intérprete,... el chino-canadiense. Y llegan a uno y le preguntan algo y uno no sabe siquiera qué le han preguntado, uno quiere preguntar pero, cómo hace uno?

IV-1336

84. I: Y en el caso de buscar trabajo, encontraron que había preferencia por ciertos grupos?

A: (relates his experience at first job - details are included in his first interview - individual)
85. I: Y tu no crees que de pronto el sabia mas ingles que tu?

A: No, antes de que el llegara, mi jefe me dijo, "si tu sigues trabajando de esta manera considerate con trabajo." Y cuando llego esa otra persona a los dias me dijo ya no hay trabajo para ti. Y por qué me habia dicho: ahi me disilusiono, por qué me dijo lo que me dijo.

86. I: Muy desmoralizante el asunto no?

A: Claro.
E: Yo creo que por la desventaja en que esta uno, uno aporta mas que una persona canadiense. Uno aporta mas, se esmera mas en su trabajo, lo haces mejor porque sabes que estas en desventaja. Digamos, como Alirio que estaba trabajando lo mejor que podia, el senor reconocio y entonces por qué... por qué...

87. I: Si a ti te hubieran dado el manual de instrucciones tu hubieras podido demostrar tus habilidades tambien.

A: Un trabajo por mas dificil que sea, pero si tu tienes interes de trabajar puedes aprenderlo, pero eso es lo que ellos no saben, o no entienden.
E: En mi trabajo yo tengo una hora de lunch, pero cuando hay mucho trabajo, pues yo me quedo. O sea que de mi hora de lunch yo tomo tiempo para hacer un poco mas.

88. I: Y te pagan extra?

E: No, pero se balancea porque un dia que tenia que ir a Inmigracion, ella no me dijo nada. Otro dia que falté porque estaba enferma y mi hijo tambien, ella me lo pago.
A: Toda esta lealtad se demuestra por tu dedicacion, puntualidad al trabajo. Tal vez es suerte, pero yo si siento que me comprenden.

89. I: Cuando tienen que mudarse y buscar alojamiento, todavia encuentran discriminacion?

E: Si los chinos quieren a chinos. Y con ninos hay discriminacion.
M: Nosotros como eramos muchos jovenes, entonces no querian.
E: Es que piensan que van a hacer parties, porque los canadienses son asi.

90. I: Todavia les da miedo hacer preguntas en el trabajo?

M: Si, a veces me siento mal, es pena que me da de preguntar mucho. Pero siempre pregunto que me lo expliquen si es una cosa nueva.
A: Si a mi me toca hacer una cosa por primera vez, siempre pido que me lo expliquen hasta el más mínimo detalle. Por eso casi no tengo problema. Yo quiero que a ellos les guste lo que yo hago.

E: Conmigo si depende si esta de buenas o de malas. De malas me dice THINK, THINK y entonces procuro hacerlo yo misma.

M: Mi jefe admite que el embolata las instrucciones y me pide que pregunte. Pero siempre tengo ese temor.

A: Es natural sentir ese temor.
Initial Difficulties

This section summarizes the initial difficulties experienced by the three young refugees since they arrived in Canada. We see how they tried to make sense of the "system" in a new country (in a language they did not understand) and what constituted their employment experiences. Their initial difficulties provided a context for defining opportunity in terms of their future aspirations.

Language of a "silent world"

When Esperanza, Maria and Alirio arrived at the Vancouver airport, they experienced a sense of joy mixed with a sense of uncertainty. Their hope for change in a different country made them feel optimistic yet there was an undeniable feeling of strangeness.

Seeing other refugees welcomed by their "country folk" was comforting. The Polish were met by a Polish-speaking interpreter and the Chinese by a Chinese-speaking interpreter. Alirio and Maria, who arrived within a month of each other and with other Hispanic refugees anxiously awaited a similar welcome. When finally someone from Immigration came to meet them it became evident that he did not speak Spanish. The struggle to understand each other was acute. The most efficient way of communicating was through drawings on paper. After
all the documents were looked over, the Immigration official drew a building and a car which he labelled HOTEL and TAXI respectively. They understood that they would be taken to a hotel by taxi. The Immigration official then gave them money for food, asked them to report to the Immigration Department the next day, and then left. They were then taken to a hotel where refugees were lodged. Living these first experiences had an effect on Alirio which he expressed thus:

It is really scary to arrive here, be left in a hotel and then for Immigration to expect you to find a place to live. Without English.... (III-341)

For Maria the absence of an interpreter came as a surprise:

We were under the impression that in a country like Canada, there would be interpreters in the hotel, at the offices. At least having things translated, one can somehow manage from there... (II-612)

An introduction to Canada like this affected Alirio quite seriously, given the fact that he had come alone. He described how he felt:

I felt insignificant, I frankly couldn’t do anything. Just me in my room, thinking...what could I do? One doesn’t see a way out. (III-467)

The hotel was perceived to be dark and dirty. A sense of desolation overcame both Maria and Alirio. Their initial hopes were now modified by the painful reality that they were experiencing. There was nobody they could turn to. Maria’s words depicted her sense of feeling lost:

Immigration does things poorly. They only take you to the hotel and have no one to explain things in one’s language. Not even at
the airport. We felt on the moon...we didn't know what people were asking us. (II-454)

They felt equally lost when the day after their arrival, they had to find their way to the Immigration offices. Maria recalled that experience:

But we didn't even know how to get there or how to ask. People on the street tried to help. (II-520)

The three newcomers found out that the hotel where they were initially taken was occupied by other refugees. All of them were desperately trying to "make sense" of Canada in the ten days that they were permitted to stay in the hotel. After that time they would have to find another place to live. These refugees helped each other, and combining the few English words they knew, they made progress in coping with the immediate situation. Alirio related his experience:

The same fellow who helped the other family find a place, also helped me. He was rooming with other guys, but decided to move and live on his own. His vacant spot was given to me. (III-425)

Dealing with Immigration made Maria, Esperanza and Alirio skeptical and confused about the efficiency of the Canadian government in the implementation of the refugee programme: "What I could never understand was why Immigration gave the same assistance to those on Immigrant visas as those on permits" (III-228).

Maria's experience was equally confusing, and as evident in the following quote, her information was faulty:

I arrived with a ministerial permit, yet they still gave me a social insurance number as if I was a permanent resident. They (government officials) make mistakes, yet they don't recognize them;
one (the immigrant) is always wrong. (IV-1180 M)

For Esperanza, the uncertainty of what services she was entitled to under a medical plan affected her baby:

I had that problem because I was still on a ministerial permit. I was told many times that I would get my resident status in nine months, after I had already waited the period they had promised before that. My baby has been sick and we can't get M.S.P. (Medical Services Plan) because of our status. What does one do? (IV-1120 E)

Esperanza went to the Immigration Centre with her brother-in-law as interpreter.

When Alirio and Maria went to Immigration they were welcomed by an official who did not know Spanish. He informed them through a combination of drawings and gestures the steps involved in finding a place to live, enrolling in English classes and trying to look for a job. Alirio expressed his opinion regarding this task like this:

Immigration just asks you to look for a house; but they don't even provide a person who can speak English or be an interpreter. At least that would help greatly in that basic need of finding a place to live. (III-456)

Language difficulties were confounded by expectations concerning employment. Acquiring a job was important for three reasons: it was a way of getting to know the "ways" of the new country, it provided an opportunity to learn English, and it gave a sense of independence important for self-esteem. This is why they accepted "any" job available. After taking five months of English language instruction, Maria and Alirio wanted to continue such studies.
However, Immigration officials argued that they were now qualified for work and should look for employment rather than spend time attending classes. This insistence on their looking for work as soon as possible led to frustration because they realized that its effect would be to confine them to menial jobs. All three refugees felt that they should have been given better opportunities to learn English so that they could apply for better than entry-level jobs.

A sense of desperation and hopelessness overcame Alirio, Esperanza and Maria in the early days. They reached a stage where they thought they would never find a job. Their hopes for a better life were being shattered by the painful reality that there was no work. They discovered that looking for a job was not merely a question of going up to a potential employer to ask if he/she had work for them. Coming from countries where they were used to helping in the home from a young age, they now found it hard to accept a life without purposeful activity. The pressure was accentuated by the need to prove to Immigration that they had contacted twenty prospective employers per month. They often had to plead with reluctant people to get the form signed. The following was Maria’s explanation:

When one completes the English courses, then Immigration gives an allowance, provided one completes twenty signatures to prove one has contacted employers. Without that list of employers, one doesn’t get a cheque. Employers don’t know about Immigration policies, and when one tries to explain in one’s truncated English, they don’t want to sign. (II-890)

Alirio mentioned that the difficulty of the task forced them to find other ways of obtaining the twenty signatures:
We devised a system to collect the twenty signatures. But I think it is not advisable to talk about that here. (IV-1070 A)

A frustrating experience was not being able to explain their past, and they felt that this placed them at a disadvantage. This frustration was exacerbated by feelings of discrimination. Maria felt that on occasion many unnecessary questions were asked by prospective employers:

So many questions demonstrate suspicion. One often thinks, "who is he to doubt me, and why does he want to know so much?" Then one feels like not talking...it's so difficult to talk. (II-720)

For Esperanza, their suspicion was a reflection of their ignorance. "I believe many Canadians think we come from the jungle" (IV-1250 E). Alirio and Maria perceived condescension even within the Job Corps programme:

I found an administrator harsh and disrespectful at times. When I talked with him he often said things that he shouldn't even say to a child. He underestimated me. When he made humiliating and belittling comments, I used to think to myself that I was "an immigrant" but not "ignorant." I can think, but he used to treat one like a child. (III-896, 900)

A Job Corps' administrator said to me, "And how is it that an immigrant comes here and aspires to work at that!" That's what he told me when I told him I wanted to be a cashier. I always thought that job required math, not language skills. He had no right dismissing my idea in that manner. (IV-1240 M)

With an administrator we often didn't dare speak. He asked a lot of questions, but we were afraid of him. (II-1264)

A sense of hope that things would get better in the future gave them the strength to cope with their inability to express their emotions and frustrations.
Maria was well aware that her lack of English contributed to her frustrations:

Problems here are more difficult to solve mainly because of our language handicap. Also, one doesn't know the customs. In the office I can't even express myself when I have a problem; it is difficult to claim my rights. (IV-36 M)

They agreed that it was best to "keep quiet," because they did not want to draw unnecessary attention to themselves. At least initially, they knew that to be considered competent they would have to make their accomplishments very visible, but they themselves would have to remain silent. Silence was preferable to a display of their language inadequacies or to be thought of as ignorant:

The biggest problem is the language - that is what I don't see a way out of. I tell myself..."with the language one goes out, one talks, one asks questions;" but...not without the language. (III-470)

The three refugees felt that Canadians were prone to define poorly, slowly, and unclearly spoken English as a sign of lower intelligence or of being from an "underdeveloped" country:

Some Canadians think that we come from a country where we don't have electricity. Really, they ask if we have buildings and concrete houses. That's when I realize that I am not the ignorant one. (IV-1260 M)

The first task was to find a place to live. This seemingly simple endeavour presented certain difficulties:

Looking for a place to live was another big problem without English. Fortunately we met another Salvadoran who had been through a similar situation. (II-622)
She realized that landlords were apprehensive about renting to "welfare types." Once it was made clear to the landlord that the government was supporting the refugees for a year, they become more willing to have them as tenants.

Esperanza's experience in looking for a place to live was made easier because her sister-in-law spoke better English than she did. The fact that she had someone to explain to prospective landlords that refugees were financially supported by the government had its advantages:

They feel more secure with refugees or immigrants who are receiving money from the government because they know they will always get...the money. (I-103)

Alirio was fortunate to find another Salvadoran for a roommate. Maria, however, had to find a place for three of them to live. Given her age and that of her siblings, she encountered some difficulties. They did not know the implications of being thought of as "welfare types" or as "excessive drinkers" because of their age. It came as a surprise to them that alcohol was perceived to play an important role in the lives of their "Canadian" peers. Another surprise was the idea of Welfare. It was a concept unknown to them, as were the "put-downs" such as being called a "welfare bum."

Employment experience

Alirio was disappointed when he lost his job-trial placement. He had envisioned working there permanently:

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I think that employers like free labour; when they realize that soon they will have to start paying out money, they let one go. That is when I felt totally disillusioned. Just imagine one wasting one month going to work every day, and...at the end they (the employer) says no (more work)...I had to start all over again when I could have been looking for other work during that lost month. (III-1380)

Similar cases to Alirio's occurred with other refugees in the Job Corps programme. He felt victimized by what he thought was a fault of the manager in not monitoring more closely the prospective employer's intentions with respect to the trainee.

I think if the manager did actually contact the employer he would have known soon enough whether one of the trainees would actually be hired eventually. I think after one week of a trainees' services the manager should personally ask the employer whether one will be needed or not. (III-1386)

Alirio's experience left him distrustful of employers and bitter towards the staff at Job Corps.

There was little similarity in the reactions of Alirio and of the other two when they were layed off. Maria, for example, expressed relief when she was dismissed from her first job-trial placement, because she did not like what she had to do and because she could not be as aggressive as her particular job seemed to demand.

The manager of my first job told me to be more aggressive. I didn't succeed. However, I was relieved when she let me go. She was very kind about the whole thing. (II-1432)

I had really tried to do my best at my job, and I felt badly. But somewhere inside I was torn between not liking the job and having to go through all the marketing again. The decision was made for
His dismissal came nearly at the end of Job Corps Phase III, when the trainee was expected to make a transition into full-time employment. He was confused and angry with the staff at Job Corps, so he decided to drop-out because he thought that he would have had enough time to find another job while he was still a participant of the programme. Alirio unsuccessfully looked for a job on his own, but admitted that he felt more depressed every day. Because he had dropped out of the programme, Welfare would not provide him with assistance. Matters became so acute that he went back to the Job Corps' manager who found him his present job: "I took hold of myself and went back to Job Corps after that blow of being dismissed" (II-1248).

Despite differences in experiences while participating in MOSAIC's programme, Maria, Esperanza and Alirio made significant gains in their preparation for the world of job-search. Acquiring employment through Job Corps meant that they were learning while working.

It is through my job that I get help with my English. My co-workers and bosses confide in me. My English is poor, but they understand that, so they take time to explain things. One learns more when one is trusted and one feels less fearful of expressing oneself in English. (IV-907 A)

Maria did not ask for a raise because she felt her manager gave her an opportunity to learn more by financing her night courses. Esperanza also felt she learned a great deal while on the job; she was not able to take the harrassment from her manager, and after almost seven months left her job. Immediately afterwards, she enroled in a government funded computer operations
course. Esperanza and Maria both agreed that education was important to ensure better opportunities for the future. Alirio, on the other hand, did not want to study while working, and was content with his present job; mutual trust developed between him and his employer, and he had been assured of promotions. When he had more control over the hours he had to work, he said he would consider furthering his studies in accounting. Because he had perceived problems with Welfare and Immigration officials, he felt that it was imperative to remain in one job long enough to establish a good work record that would enable him to get his landed immigrant status. Above all, he wanted to become a "Canadian" in his own right.

Being employed was for Maria, Esperanza and Alirio a necessity. Apart from the fact that they did not want to feel dependent on government assistance, their memories of resorting to foodbanks were still too vivid. They were puzzled by workers who "cut jobs:"

We often comment about that amongst friends. Canadians quit their jobs over small matters. What I don't understand is how Canadians survive by acting like that. If they can't file for unemployment immediately, what do they live off? (IV-1000 A)

These refugees felt that they did "extra" things on the job without remuneration, just to prove themselves. Maria, who was hired to do office work, believed that:

In the beginning my employer exploited me. I was supposed to do office work and yet I was sweeping, changing his car's licence plates, vacuuming his car, and I did everything to keep my job. (IV-300 M)
Esperanza worked for seven months, and up until her last day her boss still made unkind comments:

My manager is German and she says things that hurt. She would say to me, "Can't you think." That hurts, because one can't talk properly because of the lack of English, and also for fear of losing one's job. (IV-192 E)

Other "Canadians" who worked at the same place wondered how she tolerated such treatment. Similarly, Alirio felt that his work was not justly remunerated:

I think it is exploitation when one is working with others who do the same work, but they are getting paid $9.00 an hour while one is only paid $3.75 an hour. (III-973 A)

All three were amazed at how much they "put up with" because they were fearful of losing their jobs. "Many times I just wanted to cry," said Maria (IV-1079).